

EARTHLY SUFFERING
AND
HEAVENLY GLORY:

WITH OTHER SERMONS.

BY
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P R E F A C E.

WITH a single exception, these sermons were prepared and preached in the ordinary routine of the Author's Pastoral ministrations.

The closing discourse of the series was delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church at the opening of its Annual Sessions in Nashville, Tennessee, May 17, 1855. It was printed by order of the General Assembly, and is still issued from the press of the Presbyterian Board of Publication. It has seemed proper to include it in this volume, by reason of the persistent and increasing efforts put forth, alike in England and in our own country, to revive the noxious heresy of an Official Human Priesthood in the Christian Church.

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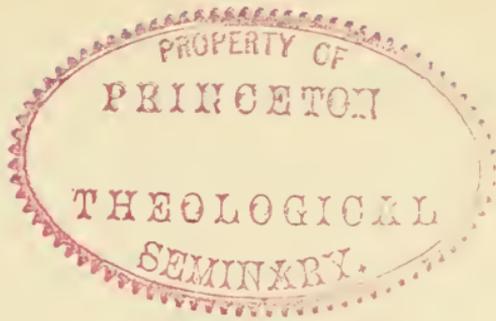
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EARTHLY SUFFERING AND HEAVENLY
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ROMANS viii. 18.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

THE Christian religion comes to us from heaven, and its whole purpose and aim is to prepare us for heaven. Our own tendency is to live in and for the present. We are engrossed with this world. We pursue its honors and enjoyments as the chief good. We struggle fruitlessly against its calamities, or sullenly bow to them as the greatest of evils. Our philosophy knows no better, and until we are taught in a different school we must endure the pains and penalties of these sad illusions. The Gospel of Christ supplies the needful corrective to them. It comes to call away men's thoughts from the seen to the unseen, from the temporal to the spiritual, from the present to the future. To this end conspire all

its doctrines, all its promises, all its threatenings, all its ordinances. Everything pertaining to it savors of another sphere and a nobler existence. Even a church-edifice, as we pass it in our daily walks, is suggestive of the invisible and the eternal; much more when the thronged worshippers meet to lay their sacrifices upon its altars.

No one ever understood this truth better, nor felt it more deeply, nor enforced it more eloquently, than the writer of the Epistle before us. When he defined faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," he spoke experimentally. For such was his own faith. It pierced the veil which hides the other world from us, and saw as well what is there as what is here. It took in, not merely this brief, precarious span that we call life, but the soul's whole duration; not merely the shadows of the present scene, which we misname realities, but the realities of the spirit-world, which we mistake for shadows. And it interpreted both the pleasures and the crosses of our earthly pilgrimage, by the light thrown back upon them from the resplendent walls and towers of the city of the Great King. Of this we have an instance in the text: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He appeals from the present suffering to the future glory, and declares that the suffering is of no

moment when compared with the glory in which it is to terminate. Let us consider this sentiment: it may minister to others of God's dear children something of the strength and consolation which the apostle derived from it.

“The sufferings of this present time.” Who is the man, you may ask, that speaks in such disparaging terms of these sufferings? Would he talk thus of them if he knew what they were? He does know what they are. If you imagine that you can teach him anything on this point, listen to his recital drawn from him by false teachers who impugned his apostleship: “In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often; in hunger and thirst, in fastings often; in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” (2 Cor. xi. 23–28.) Here is the answer to the question, Did the writer of the text know what suffering is? And it is the

man that endured all this variety and accumulation of trials who says: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Nor is it correct to say that to speak thus is to disparage the sorrows of earth. The Christian is no more insensible to trouble and pain than other men. Jesus of Nazareth was no stoic. He neither inculcated indifference to suffering as a virtue, nor set an example of it. So far from it, He was in full sympathy with suffering humanity in whatever form it appealed to Him. He felt His own sorrows as only a perfect man could feel them, and He felt the sorrows of others as if they were His own. Instead of discountenancing sensibility to want, and pain, and affliction, the whole tendency, both of His life and His doctrine, was to foster it. If there are regions where sorrow evokes no pity, and misery no relief, they lie beyond the sphere of Christianity. An unfeeling, stone-like Christian were an offensive solecism, a reproach to the Christian name, a blot upon the fair face of the Church.

We may go further. God means that we shall feel afflictions. There is a significance in the expression, "the sufferings of this present time." This present time is designed to be a time of suffering. The whole dispensation proceeds upon this idea. God might have taken His own directly to heaven, so that they at least would have escaped suffering.

But He adopted a different plan. He leaves them here, after they are renewed, to share in those sorrows under which (as the apostle goes on to say in the context) "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." And this He does, not from caprice, not in mere sovereignty, still less "for His own pleasure," but "for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holiness." This being the end He has in view, He intends that they shall feel the strokes of His rod. How, otherwise, should chastisement answer its disciplinary purpose?

There is no dictate, then, either of nature or of religion, which requires us to regard the "sufferings of this present time" as of trivial moment in themselves considered. We all know that contemplated in this aspect, they are not trivial. Look, *e.g.*, at the trials of poverty. Here are three-fourths of the race shut up to a life of incessant toil. From morning to night, work, work, work. In rain and in sunshine, in the summer's heat and the winter's cold, in health and in feebleness, with scant clothing perhaps and scantier fare, with a wife and children sick or well, with no respite but the blessed Sabbath, from the opening to the end of the year, and year after year continually, work, work, work! Well may the apostle speak of the creation as "groaning and travailing in pain." We see it, and hear it, and feel it, all around us—the bitter fruit of the primeval curse

—in the struggles and trials of the panting, care-worn, tribes of labor.

This, however, is but a small part of the “sufferings of this present time.” Suffering is no exclusive heritage of the poor. It belongs to earth; and whatever is of earth, must share in it. When sin came into the world, it brought death with it (Rom. v. 12); and “death,” in this affirmation of the apostle, comprehends all the types of suffering and sorrow to which humanity is subject. To enumerate and describe these were impossible. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” We cannot traverse the streets without meeting it. It has its symbols in the very institutions which Christian civilization points to as its chief jewels. These hospitals, these asylums for the deaf, the blind, the aged, the insane, these widows’ and orphans’ houses, these multiform benevolent societies,—what are they all but ensigns of sorrow and suffering, noble and generous devices of our heaven-born faith for stanching the bleeding wounds of humanity?

The moment you descend from a general survey of society to contemplate its constituent parts, you gain a still more vivid impression of the general prevalence of suffering. On every side you encounter cases of peculiar sadness, in the way of pecuniary reverses, sickness, bereavement, blighted affections, filial ingratitude, domestic alienation, and onward

through a dismal catalogue of woes which contribute each its several rivulet or torrent to swell the vast flood of earthly sorrow, There must be families here within the sound of my voice who could tell tales of woe that would move a heart of adamant. Such families form a part of every great community. They are witnesses not only, but examples, of the "sufferings of this present time,"—examples to prove that these sufferings are too many and too ponderous to be lightly spoken of.

And there are sufferings which exceed even these in severity: those which afflict the conscience; which bring darkness upon the soul, and fill the agitated bosom with remorse and anguish, with the sense of an angry God and the terror of coming judgment. These belong to the "sufferings of this present time;" and they are more intolerable than severe outward calamities.

St. Paul had known too much of these trials, both the temporal and the spiritual, to represent them as being in themselves of small moment. Yet when he looks at them in the light of the unseen world, he boldly affirms, they "are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* that shall be revealed in us." It was this conviction which nerved him to bear his trials with a heroism which may challenge comparison with the proudest exhibitions of martial courage. He looked abroad over this wide scene of misery and pain and

tears, and measured the sorrows of earth, his own included, by the glories of heaven. And he was compelled to say, "there is no proportion between them; the sorrow may be great, but it is nothing to the glory." And thus every one must feel who can attain an elevation sufficiently high to command the entire field; or even to command some transient glimpses of the realm beyond the flood. Here is our misfortune. We see the suffering; we do not see the glory. Nay, we do more than see the suffering; we feel it. It is all around us like the atmosphere. It is intermingled with our every allotment. It is part of ourselves. Scarcely a day passes that we have not to do with want and sorrow, with mental pain or outward woe, our own or others'. And ever and anon such examples of signal, crushing affliction appeal to our sympathies, that they absorb for the time our very being, and deprive us of all power to think whether there is or can be any solace for them. This is natural. But unbelief is at the core of it: for

"Earth hath no sorrow
That heaven cannot heal."

Even these trials would be deemed tolerable if we could see them from the point where the apostle stood when he penned the text.

But what does he mean by "*the glory that shall be revealed in us*,"—that glory which is to eclipse and turn to nought all the sufferings of earth? It is not

given us to answer this question, except in a very imperfect way. This glory is future; it is yet to be revealed. We cannot therefore describe it now. The venerable John, in affirming this, has nevertheless given us a hint of it: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." This may aid our conceptions somewhat. And it may further aid us to consider that the design of the present economy is to undo the effects of the apostasy, and restore man to his primeval image. Could we frame an adequate conception of the first man, as he came from his Maker's hands, while it would not at all exhaust the meaning of the phrase, "the glory that shall be revealed in us," it would supply some ideas not unworthy of the subject. One of our eminent New England theologians refers to Adam in these eloquent terms:

"His mind could trace the skill and glory of the Creator in the works of His hands; and from the nature of the work, could understand, admire, and adore the Workman. His thoughts could rise to God and wander through eternity. The universe was to him a mirror, by which he saw reflected every moment, in every place, and in every form, the beauty, greatness, and excellence of Jehovah. To Him his affections and his praises rose, more sweet

than the incense of the morning, and made no unhappy harmony with the loftier music of heaven. He was the Priest of this great world, and offered the morning and evening sacrifice of thanksgiving for the whole earthly creation. Of this creation he was also the Lord, not the Tyrant; but the rightful, just, benevolent Sovereign. The subjection of the inferior creatures to him was voluntary, and productive of nothing but order, peace, and happiness. With these endowments and privileges he was placed in Paradise,—no unhappy resemblance of heaven itself,—and surrounded by everything which was good for food, or pleasant to the eye, or fragrant to the smell. In an atmosphere impregnated with life; amid streams in which life flowed; amid fruits in which life bloomed and ripened; encircled by ever-living beauty and magnificence; peaceful within, safe without; and conscious of immortality; he was destined to labor only that he might be useful and happy, and to contemplate the wonders of the universe, and worship its glorious Author, as his prime and professional employment. He was an image of the invisible God, created to be like Him in knowledge, righteousness, holiness, His most illustrious attributes; and like Him, to exercise dominion over the works of his hands.”*

* Rev. Timothy Dwight, D.D.

Cancelling such of the relations and powers here ascribed to Adam as were peculiar to him in virtue of his federal headship of the race, we may accept this beautiful portraiture as bearing a near resemblance to the saints in glory. Whereinsoever the two may be unequal, the advantage lies with the ransomed. In our first parent we behold a perfect man. The same perfection, only of a loftier type, will attach to every one of the redeemed. I say, of a loftier type; for this will be true even of their physical organization. Although Adam was not mortal, or subject to death, until he sinned, yet his body was adapted to the world he was to inhabit. We may not deny the materialism of the "new heavens and the new earth;" but we are given to understand that it will be less gross in its forms than the matter which surrounds us here; and this will call for a corresponding adaptation in the bodies of the redeemed. Nor is this mere conjecture. In a passage quoted a moment ago, we are taught that at the resurrection the saints will be like Christ: "we shall be *like Him*." We read elsewhere that they will be raised "with bodies like unto Christ's glorious body." Once only before His ascension did He put on this "glorious body." In that wonderful scene, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." Moses and Elias, it is probable, were robed in similar splendors.

Brief as the description is, it seems to warrant the presumption that the bodies of the righteous will wear something of the glory which ravished the eyes of the three favored disciples as they gazed upon the transfigured person of their Lord. The possession of a body like this may well be taken as a part of "the glory that shall be revealed in us."

But "the King's daughter is all glorious within" also. And if this be true of the Church as a whole, it must be true of each of its members. Renewed in the image of God, they will be freed from the weaknesses, the impurity, and the discord which sin has entailed upon them. All their powers will be so balanced and adjusted, that none will be in excess, none in defect. The understanding will no more mislead the affections; the heart will no more tyrannize over the reason; the will and the conscience will blend in matchless harmony. There will be no "law in the members warring against the law of the mind;" no "lusting of the flesh against the Spirit;" no self-reproaches, no remorse, no confessions, no repentings. Very much of the conflict and trouble we experience here arises from the perversion or ill-working of affections in themselves innocent. These affections beguile us into attachments which at least menace the fealty we owe to God. They fasten upon some earthly object with a strength and a fervor which, unless checked, might rob the Lord of

Hosts of the paramount homage which is His due; and it is not easy to check them.

“The fondness of a creature’s love,
How strong it strikes the sense!
Thither the warm affections move,
Nor can we call them thence.”

Often it becomes needful to employ some painful chastisement as a means of dissolving the spell of these too ardent attachments; and then it is left us to gather up the torn and scattered tendrils of our affections, and lead them back to Him from whom they should never have been severed.

This trial will not be repeated in heaven. The ransomed will be in no danger of refusing to their Lord the reigning place in their hearts. Allied to each other, they will be with a love which is but dimly shadowed forth in the purest ties of earth; but this love will recruit itself perpetually from the still purer, nobler, more absorbing devotion with which every soul will cherish the image and the honor of “Him that sitteth upon the throne.”

In this particular not only, but in all others, there will be no danger of erring, since there will be no temptation even to go astray. There are few thoughts connected with the future glory more delightful than this, the absence of all temptation to sin. To spend age after age, cycle after cycle, yea, eternity itself, without being obliged to repel a single

enticement to evil, this passes our comprehension. It seems a reach of blessedness almost too exalted even for a people redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Yet it belongs essentially to the scriptural conception of the "glory that shall be revealed" in the saints; and we must believe it true.

It will meet with your ready response if knowledge be mentioned as another part of this glory. Reverence for intellect and knowledge is of the essence of our being. We bow before intellectual greatness with an unquestioning and willing homage. This universal instinct points to the destiny that awaits man hereafter, and the Bible confirms the mute prophecy. The disadvantages which wait upon the pursuit of knowledge here are too obvious to require specific mention. Look at the long and toilsome process that we call "education;" the time that must be spent in mastering the mere rudiments of learning; the score or so of years consumed in simply disciplining the faculties sufficiently to employ them to any good purpose in the search after truth. And then what hinderances and drawbacks from every quarter to the prosecution of this work! And how narrow a part of the vast field which invites attention is it given to the most successful scholars to explore before death steps in and arrests their labors! Perhaps there is no occasion upon which we feel more keenly the vanity and nothingness of

earth, than when we stand by the bier of a great scholar, and see all that was mortal of such a man committed to the grave. It is a sad memento of the vanity of man as mortal, and we must needs lament that he could not transmit to some survivor the intellectual treasures he has spent a life in gathering. But let it not be assumed that these treasures perish with the clay tabernacle. Pervaded with the sanctifying principle of the new life, it is reasonable to presume that they share in the soul's immortality, and may serve as a foundation for that loftier culture which is to be carried forward in the life to come.

Whether the methods of acquiring knowledge in that realm will bear any analogy to the processes we observe here is not apparent. We may be certain that study will bring neither perplexity nor fatigue. And it seems a rational presumption that intuition will largely supersede the slow and patient investigations which truth now exacts of her votaries. It will be something to be endowed with faculties of body and mind which are insusceptible of decay or weariness; never to feel jaded and worn; never to long to sit down and rest, or to find yourself invoking "balmy sleep" to come and refresh you. And no less auspicious will it be to have a place so near the great Source of knowledge, close by the throne of God. There, as here, the believer will see "but

parts of His ways ;' for how shall any creature compass the Creator? But how wide the survey, as compared with the broadest sweep of vision accorded to the most favored of the race in this life! If we feel our amplest toil rewarded by the discoveries we make in the three great volumes of truth in this life, what will it be to turn over the august leaves under the cloudless light of the heaven of heavens! to study the mysteries of creation, providence, and redemption, in the beatific presence of Him from whom they all proceed, and in whom they find their consummation! These studies, too, will borrow an augmented interest from the companionship in which they are conducted. In this, as in many other aspects, it is most interesting to reflect that the redeemed will have the presence and sympathy of the angels. It may bring this home to our experience, to consider how much we should any of us prize the opportunity of meeting daily, as a friend, a man like Plato, or Newton, or Milton. What, then, must it be to be introduced into the society of those exalted beings who stand at the head of the intelligent creation, and who have been observing the course of events throughout the universe for several thousand years? Who shall compute the progress of the soul in knowledge, and the ever-growing enlargement of its faculties, when placed in circumstances like these? Surely we cannot err in specifying this as one of the

elements of that "glory" which our apostle affirms is to be revealed in the saints.

The form of expression here must be noted: "which shall be revealed *in us*." We have indicated knowledge and holiness as pertaining strictly to this conception. And it were easy to specify other personal characteristics of the righteous; but St. Paul has in view something too grand and imposing to be reached in this way. As in explanation of the text he adds: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." And he goes on with singular sublimity and power to describe the whole creation as groaning and travelling in pain together, in anxious and longing expectation of the great epiphany of the redeemed, when they shall be seen as they are. All nature waits for this "*manifestation* [Gr., *apocalypse*] of the sons of God." Then all nature—all worlds—are concerned in it. The "sons of God" he styles them. And still more significantly in the verse preceding the text, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." These expressions baffle us. We cannot take them in. But this we know: they savor of a glory which "passeth knowledge." They point to the glory of the uncreated One: to "the glory which the Son had with the Father before the world was," augmented by the splendors of His Mediatorial throne. In this glory the ransomed are to share; for they, too, are

sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ. This glory is to be put upon them. And here is what is meant by the "manifestation of the sons of God,"—*their being arrayed in the glory of their Lord and Saviour*, in the presence of the universe. It is not merely the inherent glory of their perfected humanity; nor the glory of their final triumph over death and hell; nor the glory of the bright abode and the blessed fellowship into which they will have been introduced; but with and above all these glories, the yet more effulgent glory reflected upon them from their glorified Head and Prince, Himself "the Brightness of the Father's glory." This is to be their "manifestation." And that, because He has purposes to accomplish by it reaching far beyond themselves. Redemption has cost Him an infinite sum; and while He will account no blessedness too great for a people ransomed at such a price, He will also make the love and the mercy and the wisdom and the glory He lavishes upon them, subservient to His own glory throughout the universe. We have a hint of this in that saying of the apostle, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known [made known] by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii. 10.) Not earth and hell only, but all heaven, shall come to the "manifestation of the sons of God." Cherubim and Seraphim shall find their grandeur paled before the glory in which

He clothes the blood-washed company. From distant spheres and systems, possibly, the tribes of holy, happy denizens shall hasten to behold the strange, surpassing glory of these redeemed sinners; and to learn from them lessons excelling all that they had gathered in a sinless life of ages, concerning the wisdom, and the might, the love, and the mercy, of the Deity. Nor is this to pass away as a mere coronation pageant. The honor shown them in their resplendent "manifestation" will be perpetuated. The visions of the apocalypse reveal them as having their permanent abode in heaven, in the immediate presence of their exalted and reigning Lord. The lustre in which they shine is not like the transitory splendors with which the western horizon is often aglow as the sun goes to his rest; nor like the pomp and state which wait upon an earthly prince through life, and then disappear with him in the tomb. It is the glory emanating from personal qualities impressed with the highest conceivable moral excellence, enhanced by the possession of a happiness absolutely complete and perfect, and transfused and heightened by the reflected glory of their King which covers them as with a robe of immortal light and beauty.

We are dealing with themes beyond our reach. But even the faint conceptions we are able to form of that world may suffice to illustrate the judgment of the apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of this

present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." This avowal becomes still more significant when he supplies, as he has elsewhere done, the link which *unites* the suffering and the glory. It is not as though they were independent of each other; as though out of His mere pleasure God had assigned to His people an allotment of sorrow here and an allotment of joy there, with no recognized relation between the two. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) The affliction is in order to the glory: it has (as sanctified) a positive and most important agency in preparing believers for their future triumph. This is everywhere the doctrine of the Bible. It is too large a subject to be discussed here; nor can this be necessary. For who does not know that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;" and that the troubles of life are the crucible in which He purges His people of their dross and refines their graces? It is by this needful discipline He teaches them their frailty and dependence, humbles their pride, lays open the corruption of their hearts, exposes to them the vanity of the world, warns them against temptation, makes them prize the tenderness and constancy of their Redeemer, inspires them with a ready sympathy in the trials of others, weans them from earth and sense, brings them

nearer and nearer to Himself, and thus gradually prepares them for their rest. It is in this view, as hinted in the opening of the present discourse, and in this alone, that a man who had passed through the accumulated sufferings of the apostle, could speak of the whole as "a light affliction" lasting only "for a moment." What is any affliction when balanced against "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory?"

This was Paul's judgment. It should be ours. Are you ready, my brethren, to accept it?

There are not a few here for whom this question will have a peculiar significance. It is because suffering and sorrow are all around us that I have brought the subject before you. Many of these afflictions are open and visible. There are others which prey upon the heart in secret, too sad to invite the partnership and sympathy of any human bosom. But to one and all of these sufferers, however varied, however severe, however protracted your sorrows, the apostle addresses his consolatory, triumphant language, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Let the thought come home to you, "What is the suffering to the glory?" Let it dwell upon your minds. Recall it in your seasons of despondency, when you are pressed with the corroding cares of poverty; when you have to struggle with some subtle disease which

sets upon you like a strong man armed; when you are stung with ingratitude; when you encounter the indifference and rudeness of the selfish great; when the sense of your bereavements comes over you with the might and the desolation of a spring torrent:—“What is the suffering to the glory?” Turn away from earth to heaven. Send your thoughts onward and upward to the bright “*manifestation* of the sons of God,” in which you hope to have a share; to that effulgent glory which infolds the pious dead, and will, in due time, infold you.

What think they *now* of the sorrows which chequered their earthly lot? Are they counting the weary steps of their pilgrimage? Are they descanting upon the thorns that pierced their feet, and the rocks over which they stumbled, and the storms that beat upon their heads, and the hunger and thirst that beset them, as they slowly wended their way toward the holy city? Do they recall the privations and losses, the disappointments and tears, of this life with the feeling that their sufferings here were something vast, appalling, overwhelming? Oh, no. Could you bring down the very martyrs who were hunted like wild beasts, and tortured with the most refined and protracted cruelties, they would tell you, with one accord, that these were “light afflictions,” not worthy of a moment’s thought amidst the ineffable glory to which they conducted

them. And just in proportion as your faith and hope can lift you up to the contemplation of this glory as a sublime reality, will you feel that your sufferings are "not worthy to be compared" with it. "For a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." But consider the end your Father designs by it: "that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Rejoice," then, "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." It was "for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame;" and if His people "suffer, they shall also reign with Him." His joy is their joy; His glory, their glory. And all the more will this meet your case, because it will fully satisfy that inward craving after your Saviour's love which you felt so keenly, and with such painful misgivings, in the days of your exile.

I have spoken of knowledge and holiness as essential elements of the glory to be revealed in the saints, and of that Divine glory in which they are to be arrayed, reserving for this place a closing reference to one other ingredient in that cup of bliss. Were it unchastened language to say that even this tri-fold glory would not have been complete without

the presence of still another element? I hope not. For it is the nature God has given us:—*we cannot live without love*. There is no human heart that does not yearn after love. If it were a possible thing that heaven should be heaven without love, what would all its glories be to creatures formed as we are? Pure intellect might live upon simple, abstract truth; but the heart, never. We love before we know. The affections are through life the chief sources and inlets of pleasure (as of pain also); and we are not left in doubt as to the point, that we carry this same nature with us into eternity, as our Master did before us. Blessed be God, He has made ample provision for this law of our being in the future world. The glory to be revealed in His people is like the sun: it warms as well as shines. Redemption itself began in love, the infinite love of the Father. It achieved its crowning triumph in the boundless love of the Son. It is carried forward in our world by the unwearied love of the Spirit. The first emotion it enkindles in the renewed heart is love to its Deliverer. This love it enthrones as the dominant power of the soul. It burns with an inconstant but unquenched flame through life, and burns on with a purer fervor after death, there, as here, pointing ever to Him by whose love it was enkindled. Yes, and there far more than here, assured of His love not only, but loving and being loved by all with whom

it shared the hopes and fears of the Christian conflict on earth. We may not say that the "family" will re-appear in heaven, and our earthly friendships be renewed precisely as they exist here. But are these ties to be ruptured forever? Are these sacred attachments to be finally dissolved? Are the moulds in which the whole form and structure of our being has been cast to be so shivered by the stroke of the destroyer, that the fragments can never be gathered up and re-fashioned in some loftier type hereafter? No, my brethren, it cannot be. The voice of nature—of the new nature—on this point is confirmed by numerous intimations of the inspired writers; and we feel warranted in saying that the coming glory will bring you not only the perfect love of your Redeemer, but the tender, quenchless love of those who are one in Christ with you here. And beyond this hallowed circle—wherever there are ransomed sinners or rapt seraphs—you will love and be loved with a fervor and a constancy known only to those who have received their crowns.

Let this reflection assuage your grief as you dwell upon your sainted dead. Let it inflame your gratitude to Him who has admitted them, and will admit you to His love. And let it impress the conviction deeply upon your hearts, that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

MATTHEW xxii. 42.

“What think ye of Christ?”

OUR Saviour had shown His skill in answering questions; now He displays His sagacity in asking one. First the Pharisees and Herodians had tried to ensnare Him by the insidious question: “Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?” Then the Sadducees, by inquiring concerning the woman with the seven husbands: “Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?” And then a “lawyer,” put forward by the Pharisees again, by asking: “Which is the great commandment in the law?” All were confounded and silenced by His replies, and then He in turn puts a test question to His inquisitors: “*What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?*” They answered correctly, “The Son of David;” not anticipating the question which this answer would invite: “How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my

right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?" They saw, perhaps, where this was likely to carry them, and made no reply. It cured them of asking Him questions.

Every one sees how pregnant a question this was with the Jews: "What think ye of Christ?" It is no less significant with us. There is far more involved in it than meets the eye. If we were properly alive to its importance, it would be as much canvassed and talked about in all circles as the alleged Messiahship of Jesus was during His public ministry throughout the towns and villages of Judea. It is of as much moment to us to have right thoughts of Christ as it was to the Hebrews to know whether or not He was their predicted deliverer, whose kingdom should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and stand forever. Nor is this a matter which affects a few individuals only, or which pertains merely to Churches and Christian professors. It concerns us all. The individual cannot be found who has not a deeper stake in the question, "What thinkest thou of Christ?" than he has in any and all questions pertaining to his business, his family, his country, and all other earthly interests combined. On this topic I propose to enlarge. It is my purpose to illustrate the pre-eminent importance of the question, "*What think ye of Christ?*" by way of inciting

those who may listen to this discourse to compare their views of Christ with the teachings of Holy Scripture, and to examine into the practical influence these views exert upon their hearts and lives.

1. *Your entire theological creed* must, logically, be determined by the answer you give to this question.

It is no isolated or subordinate topic to which the inquiry points, but one that touches the very foundations of religion. Our religion takes its designation from Christ. We ourselves bear His name. And it is His name which divides off the nations that have received the Bible from those which have not received it. Whatever importance, therefore, may attach to an inquiry into the nature of Christianity must attach to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" So far from being a mere incident in a theological system, the position assigned to Christ will be decisive of the whole scheme. So implicated is this doctrine with the other essential truths of revelation, that they uniformly and necessarily derive their coloring from the views which are entertained respecting the Mediator. This will not appear surprising when it is considered that it is a controverted question concerning Christ whether He is GOD or man; the Creator and Lord of all, or a mere creature. It is unavoidable that a scheme of faith shall receive a positive and controlling impress, according as one or the other of two elements so infinitely dissimilar is infused into it.

A system which recognizes the self-existent and unsearchable Deity as pervading every part of it, discharging its chief functions, and administering all its affairs, cannot blend with a system in which these offices are devolved upon a creature. Nor is it material what may be the rank and endowments of that creature. The difficulty is not obviated by making Christ an angelic or super-angelic being; unless you could simultaneously abridge the attributes of the Infinite One and bring the amplitude of His nature within the compass of our conceptions. While God remains God, you do absolutely nothing towards lessening the disparity between Him and His "only-begotten Son," by exalting the latter to a precedence, indefinite if you will (so it does not overpass the limits of created nature), above the Seraphim. The approximation you effect of the creature to the Creator, by this arrangement, is less than the measure of assimilation to the intelligence and wisdom of an angel, involved in a single day's progress of a newborn infant. For here there is some conceivable proportion between the terms of the comparison; which there cannot be where one term is finite and the other infinite.

The resolution of this question concerning the proper rank and authority of Christ, I have said, must tell upon every leading point of theology; precisely (for the illustration is not too strong) as the

position assigned to the sun must rule any planetary theory. Its connection with the conceptions we form of the nature of the Godhead is too palpable to require comment. According as we hold to one or another belief respecting the person of Christ, do we admit or deny a Trinity in unity in the Supreme Being. And a thorough analysis of the conflicting views on this point will lead us out, by a logical necessity, into one or the other of two incompatible systems covering the whole ground of man's moral character and condition, the design and efficacy of the crucifixion, the offices of the Holy Spirit, the mode of reconciliation to God, the nature of true worship, and, in fine, the entire Gospel economy.

2. It is only giving this general observation a specific direction to remark, that your answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" must determine *your views of the way of salvation*. Wherever the Gospel is known, the profound and solemn inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" affiliates itself in every breast with another inquiry: "What was the nature and design of Christ's mission to our world?" And on this point there is an endless diversity of sentiment. There are those, as already hinted, who see in Jesus of Nazareth simply a man of pre-eminent purity and benevolence, an incarnation of all the virtues, who, having instructed the world by His wisdom and improved it by His piety, consummated

a life radiant with goodness by a death of correspondent meekness and resignation; and thus taught us in the most touching of all methods the two most important and difficult of all lessons, how to live and how to die. Others go quite beyond this, in that they yield a speculative assent to the orthodox formulas of faith, and recognize the fact of an atonement. But why, precisely, an atonement was necessary, or what the atonement was, are points concerning which they have no definite ideas. Indeed, they do not much concern themselves about the subject. Scriptural views of the atonement are inseparable from certain impressions respecting human nature, which this class of persons find somewhat irksome. By depreciating the evil to be removed by the death of Christ, they of course lower the significance of His sacrifice, and open the way for perverting it to very mischievous purposes. "Jesus Christ is regarded rather as having added to our moral advantages, than as having conferred that without which all the rest were in vain; rather as having made the passage to a happy futurity somewhat more commodious, than as having formed the passage itself over what had else been an impassable gulf." If He is in terms acknowledged as a Saviour, it is really in the illusive and irreverent sense of His having put us in a situation where we may save ourselves; or of supplementing our imperfect righteousness by the merit of

His own obedience. Christ is not to them "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." They are very little in sympathy with the spirit of a passage like this: "I count all things but loss that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Christ occupies no such place as this in their scheme. They are, in fact, essaying to get to heaven by the abrogated covenant of works; by a refined legalism which, though pretending to honor Christ, impugns all His offices.

This is a very common and very dangerous error. It has been in the Church from the days of the apostles until now. It marred their work, as it continues to mar the work of those who preach the same glorious Gospel. "O foolish Galatians, . . . this only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If salvation be "by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." These two schemes can no more coalesce than fire and water. We must be saved wholly by Christ's merits or wholly by our own. He will have

the entire glory of our salvation, or He will have none. He came into the world "to save sinners;" not to make it practicable for them to save themselves; not to impress a saving efficacy upon their services or upon their prayers; not to transfer His own merit to His church and make that a Saviour in His stead; not to act any subordinate part in the deliverance of the race from sin, but to "save" them. And those who decline receiving Him as a Saviour, in the plenary import of this term, must not hope to make His intervention subservient to their salvation through some scheme which will exempt them from the humiliation of confessing that they are in themselves miserable sinners, too polluted even to think a good thought and too impotent to perform a single righteous act.

There is still another error, tending to the same pernicious result, in respect to the design of Christ's incarnation. Those who have embraced it, if asked, "What think ye of Christ?" would reply: "We think that He came into the world to save sinners, but not by enduring the penalty of the law in their stead. The object of punishment under the Divine government is to prevent crime and promote the good of the universe. The ground of Christ's sufferings lies neither in the inherent ill-desert of sin, nor in the inflexibility of the moral law, nor yet in the essential repugnance of the Divine holiness to all

sin. There is nothing in the character or the law of God to forbid the suspension of the penalty and the pardon of the sinner, provided only that some expedient can be devised to exhibit to the universe His abhorrence of sin, and to deter others from rebellion. This was what Christ came to accomplish. He did not stand in the 'law-place' of His people. His sufferings were not in any sense legal: they constituted no part of that curse which was threatened against the transgressor. The whole legal system has been suspended, at least for the present, in order to make way for the operation of one of a different character. In introducing this system of mercy, which involves a suspension of the penal curse, God has required a satisfaction to the principles of general or public justice; a satisfaction which will effectually secure all the good to the universe which is intended to be accomplished by the penalty of the law when inflicted, and at the same time prevent all that practical mischief which would result from arresting the hand of primitive justice without the intervention of an atonement. In this way it has become practicable for the sinner to be saved without jeopardizing the great moral interests of the universe. We do not say that his salvation is secured by this arrangement. All that the atonement has effected for the sinner is to place him within the reach of pardon. The door is open. Mercy can now operate."

This ingenious speculation cannot stand. Undoubtedly one end of the death of Christ was to exhibit God's abhorrence of sin, and to deter others from sinning. But these ends can be accomplished only in subserviency to that which the Scriptures make the great design of this transaction, viz., to satisfy the claims of Divine justice against sinners by a strictly vicarious and adequate atonement. If the Bible teaches any doctrine, it is that Christ Jesus died as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of His people; that He stood in their place, bore their sins, endured the curse for them, and thus *secured* their salvation. He was "made the Surety of a better testament." He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He was "made sin for us." "In whom we have redemption through His blood." "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." "Who gave Himself a ransom for all." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This is the current phraseology of the Scriptures. It is the burden of prophecy. It pervades and vitalizes the whole Levitical ritual. It is the constant teaching of the Redeemer Himself. It is the harmonious, joyful testimony of the apostles. It is the sublime song of the redeemed in heaven. All, all concur in declaring, not that Christ died for the good of the universe in

general, but to redeem His people from the curse of the law, and make them kings and priests unto God and His Father. That the good of the universe will be promoted by His intervention in various ways, in many, doubtless, of which we can form no conception, will be readily admitted. That it must, in particular, impress all intelligent creatures with God's holiness and justice, and His determination to punish sin, is no less evident on the true view of Christ's sufferings. But how is this result to follow, if His sufferings were not legal; if the iniquities of His people were not visited upon Him; if His death was simply an imposing pageant, "a satisfaction to the principles of general or public justice," in which the victim was no representative or substitute of transgressors, and His sufferings had no specific reference to individuals? If He voluntarily assumed the legal responsibilities of sinners, and, with a perfect right to dispose of His own life, offered Himself as their Surety, it is easy to see how His death might illustrate the Divine justice and the evil of sin. But where is the justice of consigning Him to the cross, if, being spotless and innocent Himself, He had no legal liabilities for the offences of others? How could His death exhibit God's abhorrence of sin, and repress disobedience in others, when He did not, in any intelligible sense of the terms, bear the penalty of sin? And if the principles upon which the Di-

vine government had been administered were to be "suspended," and an amnesty published to our race, why could not this be done without subjecting the Son of God to the humiliation and agony of the cross? How could this transaction guard the Divine clemency from abuse, or make it safe to exercise it? With the views of the atonement which you, Christian brethren, find on every page of the Bible, these questions are easily answered; but they admit of no rational solution on the scheme I am examining.

Nor is it a trivial objection to this scheme, that it leaves the salvation of men in a most precarious and uncertain state. All that it does is "to place the sinner within the reach of pardon!" You have not so learned Christ. It is your comfort to know that His people will certainly be saved; that in the same covenant which stipulated for His substitution their coming to Christ was guaranteed; that as He was "made sin" for them, so they shall be "made the righteousness of God in Him;" that, "having made His soul an offering for sin," He shall, without fail, "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." But I have no disposition to enlarge upon this topic. It has simply been adduced as one of the popular errors of the day, which go to disparage the sacerdotal work of the Redeemer, and to beguile the unstable into perilous paths. It is apposite to my present purpose, as exhibiting another of the ways-

in which even serious-minded persons may entertain unworthy thoughts of Christ, and as showing that the views we take of His mission must be decisive in moulding our conceptions of the method of salvation.

3. Restricted as I am by the magnitude of this subject to mere hints, I observe, in the third place, that the importance of the question, "What think ye of Christ?" may be seen in the fact that *your answer to it will decide your whole character and experience.*

There are two very different types of virtue or "goodness" current in every Christian community. One is the good man of the world, the other is the good man of the Bible. Both have some amiable qualities in common, but an analysis of the two respectively would show that they are made up of very dissimilar materials. Not to go into this analysis beyond the exigencies of the present argument, there is no point in respect to which these two typical men will be found to differ more widely than in their feelings towards the Son of God. The good man of the world, whom we meet with so constantly in our polite literature, "never talks with affectionate devotion of Christ as the Great High Priest of his profession, as the exalted Friend, whose injunctions are the laws of his virtues, whose work and sacrifice are the basis of his hopes, whose doctrines guide and awe his reasonings, and whose example is the pattern which

he is earnestly aspiring to resemble. The last intellectual and moral designations in the world by which it would occur to you to describe him, would be those by which the apostles so much exulted to be recognized—a disciple, and a servant, of Jesus Christ; nor would he (I am supposing this character to become a real person) be at all gratified by being so described. You do not hear him avowing that he deems the habitual remembrance of Christ essential to the nature of that excellence which he is cultivating. He rather seems, with the utmost coolness of choice, adopting virtue as according with the dignity of a rational agent, than to be in the least degree impelled to it by any relations with the Saviour of the world.”*

On the other hand, nothing is more observable in the character of an enlightened and earnest Christian than the prominence which Christ has in his whole interior life. So far from shunning the mention of His name or referring in an occasional and formal manner merely to the assistance he has received from the contemplation of so rare an “example” of virtue, he is bold to confess that he derives from Christ his very spiritual life. The life which he lives, he lives by the faith of the Son of God; nay, it is not he that lives, but Christ lives in him. The sentiment which sways his entire being is the constraining love

* Foster: Essay iv.

of Christ. The end for which he lives is not himself, not his own ease, honor, or aggrandizement, but Christ: it is Christ for him to live. To be taught of Christ; to bear the yoke of Christ; to bring others to Christ; to extend the empire of Christ; if need be, to suffer for Christ,—this constitutes his life. To the blood of Christ he looks for pardon. On the righteousness of Christ he rests his hope of heaven. The commands of Christ are his rule of duty. The arm of Christ is his defence in danger. The sympathy of Christ is his comfort in affliction. The intercession of Christ is his reliance under conscious ill-desert and backsliding. The reign of Christ is his confidence amidst all changes. In a word, he has no higher aim or aspiration than to bear the image, and do the will, of Christ here, and to dwell with Christ hereafter.

Nor is there anything mysterious in this. It results from the very nature of the case that where Christ is fully received into the heart, He must assume the chief place, and subordinate all its powers and passions to himself. I am not speaking of a mere nominal piety; nor of a faith which, however genuine, is enervated by error and sin; but of that cordial and thorough reception of the Saviour which the word of God enjoins and so many of its illustrious personages exemplify. It is impossible that such a faith in Christ should be other than a

dominant principle in the heart. That Divine Spirit who implanted it has interwoven all its sister graces with it. The admission of the Gospel doctrine respecting the Redeemer necessarily draws the whole body of revealed truth with it—history and prophecy, dogma and precept, threatening and promise. You cannot, *i.e.*, you cannot consistently, receive Christ as a Saviour without receiving Him as a King: you cannot give Him your heart without dedicating to Him your property, your talents, your children, and whatever you may esteem as of peculiar value: you cannot honor Him in His person without honoring His word and ordinances: you can have no union with Him which will not identify you with Him in sympathy and in interest, and make His glory your aim, and the prosperity of His kingdom your chief joy.

This will exhibit the importance of the question, “What think ye of Christ?” as supplying a key-note to the whole character and life. Where a man thinks of Christ as the apostles thought of Him, he will be like the apostles in his principles, aims, and conduct. Where one has no sympathy with them in their estimate of the Saviour, there will be a corresponding difference in the motives by which he is impelled to action and in the sources from which he draws his happiness. He may, in this latter case, be an upright and benevolent man, in an important sense, a

good man ; but it is not the style of goodness which flows from faith in Christ. It is not the goodness which puts a man in communion with the spirit that pervades the apostolic writings. Those writings, on the contrary, will be likely to strike him as mystical and repulsive. He will not appreciate the allusions with which they abound to the Saviour and the cross. And the authors will appear to him to indulge in a vein approaching the fanciful or the extravagant in the language they use respecting the love of Christ.

This discrepance is significant and monitory. It not only shows that the character formed on the basis of that system usually denominated "evangelical" is radically unlike the character formed on any other basis, but it suggests the inquiry, how far the virtue which is dissevered from faith in Christ, "the goodness which is without godliness," will bear to be tried by the law and the testimony. The mere hint of any distrust on this point is apt to evoke a protest against "uncharitableness." But there is no uncharitableness in the case. It is a simple question of fact, whether the morality, like the theology, of the New Testament, derives its life and power from the cross ; and whether the goodness which rejects a suffering and reigning Saviour, or acknowledges Him only in some casual or secondary manner, can be that "holiness without which no man shall see

the Lord." The more this point is looked into, the more manifest will it become that we have not exaggerated the gravity of the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

4. I observe once more, that upon the answers given to this question *will depend* (in so far as the nominally Christian world is concerned) *the awards of the last day.*

This announcement may at first seem to you to be in conflict with the only detailed account of the judgment contained in the New Testament (Matt. xxv. 31-46). But if you examine that account, you will perceive that the various offices of humanity and benevolence of which the Saviour speaks, are offices rendered or refused to His disciples, and of which He Himself therefore was the real object. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done it unto *me.*" "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to *me.*" Kindnesses bestowed upon His afflicted disciples—the sick, the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned—are proofs and tokens of love to their Master; and the withholding of these kindnesses is an evidence of want of love to Him. So that the real question at the Great Assize will still be, "What think ye of Christ?" "Are your faith and love fastened upon Christ; and has this *appeared* in your treatment of His disciples?"

By this test are we to stand or fall. The inquest will not be as to our social position, our wealth, learning, rank, or occupation. It will not be, "Were you upright in your dealings, and charitable to the poor?" It will not be, "Were you baptized, and had you a place at the Lord's table?" Nor, "Were you zealous in making proselytes, and bold in asserting the prerogatives of the Church?" But, "What think ye of Christ?" And according as we answer this question shall we rise and reign with Christ in glory, or be banished from His presence. If this be a Scriptural representation, it throws around the inquiry we are dealing with an aspect of solemnity which nothing could enhance. For whatever of happiness and of woe may be bound up in the interminable issues of the judgment, in the felicity of the ransomed and the misery of the lost, is involved in the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

Let *Christian professors*, then, bring home this question to their hearts with the force of a personal application. My brethren, "What think ye of Christ?" What think ye of His Person? Is He to you the second Person of the adorable Trinity, co-eternal and coequal with the Father and the Spirit; the Creator and Mediatorial Governor of the universe; and as such worthy the homage of all creatures? What think ye of His cross? Do you behold Him

there as the Surety and Substitute of lost sinners; assuming our law-place; enduring the penalty of our sins; "made a curse for us;" satisfying on our behalf the claims of Divine justice; and in the plenary fulness of His atonement magnifying the law and, if that were possible, investing the moral perfections of the Godhead with a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? What think ye of His righteousness? Have you renounced all reliance upon your own precarious and insufficient virtue, upon your honesty and your almsgiving, your prayers and your sacraments, and made it your one great concern to win Christ and be clothed with His righteousness as the only foundation of your hope of heaven? What think ye of His sovereignty? Do you rejoice in His universal dominion, commit your interests into His hands, serve Him with a generous and inflexible loyalty, and do all you can to bring others to submit to His benign sceptre? What think ye of His love? Does it inspire your praises, restrain your passions, inflame your zeal, and draw you heavenward with a constancy that suffers no abatement and an ardor that never droops? What think ye of His worship? Do you love the habitation of His house, the place where His honor dwelleth; and do you know what it is to come daily to His feet and say, with a grateful and confiding heart, "MY LORD! and MY GOD!"

Such were Paul's thoughts of Christ. So the mar-

tyrs of all ages have thought of Him. So multitudes in our own day think of Him. And if you are partakers of this grace with them, God has dealt most mercifully with you, and has a large claim upon your gratitude. This you will best manifest by keeping your thoughts fixed upon Christ, by striving after a clearer insight into the great mystery of Godliness, and a more comprehensive knowledge of the Redeemer's character and offices. There are wonders here the angels desire to look into, and which may well employ their exalted powers. It is a science of which even the devout student of fourscore has mastered only the rudiments. We stand where the wave breaks upon the shore, and look abroad upon an ocean which stretches off into the infinite and loses itself in the depths of eternity. We can never know the incarnate Deity so completely that the fulness of His nature and the effects of His mediation will not offer to our contemplation the same affluent and boundless expanse which they do to-day. And if at some distant period, after you shall have spent millions of ages in the study of these sublime and animating themes amidst the radiant splendors of the throne itself, the question should be again propounded, "What think ye of Christ?" you will be as ready as you are at this hour to confess that you have only begun to explore the glories of redemption, and are as far as ever from comprehending the

height and depth and breadth and length of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Passing by other classes, I may be allowed a closing word to those who are addicted to liberal studies, to the men of culture and of science, who may, peradventure, be quite out of sympathy with a discussion like that we have been engaged in, and who are more likely to be repelled than attracted by a specific application to themselves of the question, "What think ye of Christ?" It is a supposable case that this question might awaken in some of your breasts emotions bordering upon disdain, so uncongenial is it with those sedate philosophical views on religion which you are fond of indulging. Or if this be not the precise ground you stand upon, you may candidly acknowledge that the subject is one on which you have bestowed but little careful reflection, so that you are scarcely prepared to say *what* you "think of Christ."

Now without venturing far into a field which, under other circumstances, it might be very profitable to traverse, will you indulge me in the suggestion that indifference to this subject—still more, contempt for it—seems wholly incongruous to the reputation to which you aspire? As educated men, you claim to be lovers of truth, and eager for the acquisition of knowledge. You delight in exploring the *arcana* of nature. You range through the vegetable world

from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar of Lebanon. Your cabinets are filled with the spoils of the mines and the sea. You soar aloft and follow the stars in their courses with a rapture which belongs rather to the joyousness of childhood than to the gravity of age. You exult over the acquisition of an unchronicled worm or butterfly. Or, employing your powers in other fields, you are rifling of their treasures the rich depositories of history and archæology. You are pushing your researches with an honorable professional pride into the labyrinths of jurisprudence or the more subtle mysteries of medicine. You are absorbed with theories of social reform; with discussions on government and politics; or with schemes of education. And when we break in upon you in your eager search after truth with the question, "What think ye of Christ?" you well-nigh regard it as an intrusion. You at least feel for the time that it is an ungracious interruption; an attempt to divert you from studies of real interest and importance, to an investigation which may better than not be postponed to some undefined future. Genuine philosophy, let me assure you, without offence, has as little to do with this feeling as piety. For WHO WAS IT that created and replenished our globe, and impressed upon its inanimate furniture the laws you are so fond of tracing and recording? Whose pencil embellished the lily of the field, and painted

the iris upon the insect's wing, and tinted with such wondrous beauty the shell which tempestuous waves have wafted you from the unfathomed caves of the ocean? Whose hand hung Arcturus and Orion, Canopus and Sirius, in their orbits, and wheels them onward in their viewless air-paths from one majestic cycle to another, "without variableness or shadow of turning"? Whose mechanism is this human frame, "so fearfully and wonderfully made"? Whose agency has from the beginning shaped the destinies of nations and empires? Who is the source of all law and of all government, the true Power Plenipotentiary, to whom all creatures in all worlds owe allegiance; whose smile would make a heaven of hell, whose frown would make a hell of heaven? It is He who is this day preached unto you; He whose name falls upon your ears with an unwelcome and repulsive sound when I ask you, "What think ye of Christ?" "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: *all* things were created by Him and for Him." And it is for you who challenge to yourselves the dignity and the candor of cultivated and philosophic men to say, whether this flagrant disparagement of the Creator is in keeping with your devotion to His creatures. Is it philosophical, is it rational, is it less than an indignity to

science itself, to lavish such attentions upon the works of nature and withhold the homage of your hearts from nature's God? Are human laws everything to you, and the Divine law nothing? Are earthly governments worthy of your profoundest study, and is there nothing to invite your researches in that august government which has Jehovah for its Head, the universe for its domain, and eternity for its duration?

But there is a still more serious aspect to this inquiry. If you can waive the question of a Creator, you will certainly concede the infinite importance of the question of a Saviour. "What think ye of Christ?" Is He the Son of God incarnate? Has He made an atonement for sin? Has He opened heaven to the guilty and the lost? Does He offer to save *us*? May we come to Him for salvation now and just as we are? Is His name the only name by which we can be saved? If we reject Him must we go down to a deeper hell than if He had never died? And may any offer of pardon to which we listen be the last we shall ever receive? These questions, at least, are important,—as important to you as they can be to the most illiterate and servile of the race; so important, indeed, and so urgent, that no language can set forth their deep solemnity. Will you ponder them? Will you turn your thoughts to Christ? Will you invoke the Spirit of God to

guide your inquiries, to take of the things of Christ and show them unto you, to lead you to His cross and cleanse you with His blood? This do, and when you stand before His bar you will be able to hear without dismay, nay, you will even hear with ecstasy, that question of questions, "WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

THE MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE.

JOB xxvi. 14.

“Lo, these are parts of His ways.”

THIS language occurs in one of the many very eloquent passages of this remarkable book. The patriarch, extolling the majesty and might of Jehovah, adduces various exhibitions of His power in the natural world. “He stretcheth out the North over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud. By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent.* *Lo, these are parts of*

* The constellation called the “Serpent” or “Dragon.”

His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?"

The meaning of the last verse appears to be this: "These manifestations of the Deity, grand and imposing as they are, present but a very inadequate display of His character and works. They are, as it were, but a breathing of His power. Should He reveal it in all its grandeur, what we now see would be but as a whisper to the crashing thunder; and who could comprehend or bear to look upon it?"

It is the feeling of every devout philosopher engaged in the researches of natural science, "These are parts of His ways." He well knows that what he sees of the works of the Creator can bear no comparison with what he does not see. When he meets with difficulties, therefore, which baffle his sagacity, he modestly refers them to his own ignorance, satisfied that there must be principles or facts as yet undiscovered which will explain them. It is the sciolist who draws sweeping conclusions from scant premises. And since the world just now abounds with sciolists, it should excite neither surprise nor apprehension that such constant efforts are made to array science against Christianity. It seems to belong to the childhood of every new science to assume a threatening air towards the Bible. But it never lasts beyond its period of leading-strings. Astronomy set the example; but it soon got ashamed of its

temerity, and has made what amends it could, by lending its aid to exalt the God of the Bible. Geology came next, and picked up the broken lance Astronomy had thrown away. But its eyes have been opened, and it finds most of its objections annulled by a more careful collation of its own facts and a true interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. Another juvenile champion has since taken the field and proclaimed, with sound of trumpet, that the Bible is mistaken in asserting that "God hath made of *one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth." Up to this period, however, its chief expositors have neither settled their definitions, nor come to any satisfactory agreement as to the facts with which they have to deal. It is safe to predict that Ethnology, like its sister-sciences, will exchange a youth of skepticism for a manhood of vigorous and trustful faith. It will discover, as they have, that its early conclusions were premature and unauthorized, founded upon a very partial induction, and animated by an arrogance equally offensive to sound philosophy and to genuine piety.

It will do much to save science from repeating these mistakes indefinitely to keep in mind that, in its profoundest researches into the *arcana* of nature, it sees but "*parts* of His ways" who made and governs all.

And what is here affirmed of creation is no less true of His Providence. In this view the text affirms a proposition which well deserves our serious consideration. The scientific students of nature are comparatively few in number. Providence comes home to us all. It has to do with every one's affairs at every moment of life. Not to feel interested in ascertaining the principles upon which it is administered would argue a discreditable insensibility to our highest welfare. To overlook the facts which have their proper expression in the statement, "These are parts of His ways," is impossible. They crowd upon us in every direction. There is not a page of history, sacred or profane, to which they do not lend a coloring. They give every thoughtful man food for anxious reflection.

For who does not feel that this whole dispensation under which we live is a mystery? We come into being the heirs of a depraved nature. The world, of which we are made the unconscious tenants, discloses itself to our opening faculties as a scene replete with temptation and filled with suffering. We see that the frown of God is upon it. Sin, sorrow, and death range over every part of it. More than half its population are idolaters. Three-fourths of the remainder are toiling to support the other fourth. Man is doomed to a life of labor. The reluctant earth refuses to sustain him except at the

cost of incessant and exhausting service. Ever and anon war breaks forth, and desolates cities and empires. Pestilence and famine sweep off their millions. The bad are exalted. The righteous are oppressed. Good men are cut off in the midst of their usefulness, and the idle, the miserly, and the vicious are spared. The Gospel of Christ, God's own cure for the world's maladies, makes its way slowly and feebly through the earth. When we look at a group of Missionaries pursuing their tedious work in China or Hindostan, we are ready to ask, "Why was not the baptism of Pentecost made transmissive and perpetual in the Church, that so the miracle of three thousand conversions in a day might have been repeated till all were saved?" And if these distant scenes affect us, much more are we impressed by what passes around and within us. Nowhere can virtue maintain itself without a struggle. We are conscious of a propensity to forsake God. Our purest affections become snares to us. Multitudes are overborne by the great current of evil, and swept away to appear no more. No one advances a step heavenward without having to contest every inch of the way. Travelling the narrow path is like stemming the current of a rapid river: if you stop your oars even for an instant you begin to drift with the tide. The very holiest men form no exception. Indwelling sin is their scourge and burden to the end.

It was an eminent apostle who exclaimed, "When I would do good evil is present with me, so that the good which I would I do not, and the evil which I would not that I do." And every one who tries it finds that it is by no mere figure of speech that the Christian life is styled a warfare and a crucifixion.

The mystery which enfolds this whole condition of things deepens when we consider the character of the Supreme Being. It seems, at first view, to be incompatible with His moral perfections. The Scriptures ascribe to Him infinite wisdom, boundless goodness, and immaculate holiness, as well as omnipotence. How can it consort with these attributes that a state of things like that just described should be tolerated? His omnipotence precludes the supposition that He has not power to rectify it. And reasoning from what we know of the other qualities as they exist among men, the presumption would be, that they must all unite in demanding an entire change. But this state of apparent disorder and turmoil continues. Good and evil are strangely intermixed. Sin and sorrow reign. And virtue makes its way to heaven through the fires.

We are all pressed with these difficulties. It is a tangled web which we cannot unravel. Sometimes, in meditating upon it, our faith almost gives way. Though we may not murmur, we are tempted to repine that our condition here should be so unlike

what we feel it might have been. And we detect ourselves secretly asking, "Why has God made me thus? Why has He appointed to me this or that allotment? Why must I encounter this temptation? Why drink of this cup of sorrow?" These are the moanings of our inner nature. They come up like mournful echoes from the deep caverns of the sea. And though no other ear may hear them, we hear them, and they make us sad.

If there be any method of removing or mitigating these trials, we ought to know it. To resolve the enigma of our present state, and clear up every shadow that rests upon it, is of course impossible. But it should be an acceptable service, if we can throw upon the scene a single ray of light which may, by God's blessing, help to reconcile us for the time to what we cannot fully comprehend. Such a clew, if I mistake not, is furnished us by our text,—at least, in that aspect in which we are taking the words, by way of accommodation to our subject. It is a thoroughly scriptural sentiment, everywhere expressed or implied throughout the Bible: "Lo, these are *parts* of His ways." And we may be allowed to use this language as equivalent to that declaration of the apostle, "We know in part." To take this world by itself, dis severed from its relations to the great scheme of Providence, and from its own past and future, is to consign ourselves to atheism

and despair. To contemplate it as only a part, an infinitesimal part, of a "stupendous whole," will relieve even its darkest features, and assist us in believing that, although "clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."

"These are parts of *His ways*." There is a prime truth presented in these last two words. We are not to escape from the perplexities of our position by denying that the Divine government extends to this moral chaos around us. All that we read of our past history, all that we see and feel, the events which most confound, and the facts which most appall us, are "parts of *His ways*." Whatever is, is by His direction or permission. It might serve a present purpose to ascribe some of the calamities of our condition, or certain of the prominent evils which so inscrutably mix themselves up in our lot, to chance. But no evil could be so fearful, no calamity so overwhelming, as that of owing allegiance to a God who could allow anything to happen in any part of the universe except with His own consent or by His own command. The very suggestion would impeach the perfection and sovereignty of Jehovah, and degrade Him to a level with "the gods of the heathen, which are no gods." Were it possible for some apparently trivial incident to occur in the life of a child which was not comprised in the Divine purpose, it might

ultimately disturb the entire course of His administration, precisely as an unexpected perturbation in the motion of one of the minor planetary orbs might affect the equipoise and harmony of the whole stellar system.

Not only are all these inequalities of our condition—the disappointments and hardships, the suffering and misery—of life “parts of His ways,” but they proceed according to a *purpose*; they belong to a plan which embraces as well the minutest as the most august events; as well the fall of a tear as the fall of an empire. The state of things in our world was alluded to a moment since as a “moral chaos.” But it is a “chaos” only to our limited and imperfect vision. “The events of Providence appear to us very much like the letters thrown into a post-bag. When we look into that repository, it may seem as if its contents were in inextricable confusion. But then every letter has its special address inscribed upon it; it has the name and residence of the party, and so it shall in due time fall into his hands, and bring its proper intelligence. And this intelligence it conveys to the persons intended, regardless of the emotions that are excited. It is a kind of picture of the movements of Providence. What a crowd of events huddled together, and apparently confused, does it carry along with it! Very diverse are the objects bound up in that bundle, and very varied are the

emotions which they are to excite when opened; and yet how coolly and systematically does the vehicle proceed on its way! Neither the joy nor the sorrow which it produces causes it to linger an instant in its course. But meanwhile, every occurrence, or bundle of occurrences, is let out at its proper place. Each has a name inscribed upon it, and a place to which it is addressed. Each, too, has a message to carry and a purpose to fulfil. Some of these inspire hope or joy, and others raise fear and sorrow. The events which are unfolded by the same course of things, and which fall out the same day, bring gladness to one, and land another in deepest distress. On the occurrence of the same event you perceive one weeping and another rejoicing. Some of the dispensations are observed to propagate prosperity through a whole community. And these others, so black and dismal, and of which so many arrive at the same time, carry, as they are scattered, gloom into the abodes of thousands. But amid all this seeming confusion every separate event has its separate destination. It has a commission, and it will execute it; but it cannot go beyond its commission."*

It is something to be assured of this: to know that while our world has broken away from its allegiance

* McCosh: *Div. Gov.*, p. 206.

to God, His pervading and controlling agency is as really concerned in everything which occurs here as it is in directing the affairs of those orbs whose atmosphere no breath of sin has ever tainted. But we must not pause here.

If it be so, that these events are "*parts* of His ways," both reason and religion forbid us to judge of them as though they were the *whole* of His ways. On all other subjects, in all other relations, we recognize the validity of the principle upon which this observation rests. No man is willing to have his work judged until it is completed. You cannot gauge the wisdom of the husbandman from his ploughing and seeding; nor the taste of the architect from his foundations. The advocate bids you wait till his entire case is unfolded; and the physician, till you have seen the effects of his treatment. The statesman insists that you shall test his policy by its fruits; and the warrior protests against an arraignment of his plans before the campaign is finished. We are bound to apply the same principle in judging of the ways of God to man. It may very well be that there are features in His providential government which we cannot now explain; mysteries which foil our penetration, and leave the wisest of the race, equally with the simplest, at a loss as to the true solution of them. Knowing, as we do, that these are but "*parts of His ways,*" and

conscious that "here we see through a glass darkly," we have no right to assume that every arrangement will not be satisfactorily vindicated hereafter. The presumption is the other way: that the phenomena which yield us this perennial harvest of doubts and misgivings will be cleared up; that the manifold evils of the present economy will be redressed, and all its inequalities adjusted on principles which shall command the assent of the intelligent universe. No one can read the Scriptures without observing how constantly they appeal from the present to the future, from the sufferings incident to this life, to the rewards of the next. For example, one of the anomalies which embarrass our faith is, that God should allow the wicked to persecute the righteous. But the Bible does not treat this as a marvel. It even turns the curse into a blessing. "*Blessed* are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." What will the righteous think of their wrongs and trials here when they inherit the kingdom of heaven and share in the glory of the Saviour? This is a familiar illustration of the prevalent tone of the

sacred writers in treating of this subject. There is always a reference, expressed or implied, to a coming judgment and a final dispensation. This whole scheme of things, though impressed with infinite importance to us in its relations to what is invisible and future, is practically regarded as a preliminary and transient institution,—a mere scaffolding, which is to be taken down when its purposes are accomplished. Is a building to be judged by the scaffold used in erecting it?

But we proceed a step further. While the existing state of things comprises “parts” only “of God’s ways,” we can so far understand it as to perceive that it is what it is because *we are what we are*. It is the character of man which has determined the character of the dispensation under which he lives. The facts and arrangements about which we are arguing could have no place in a sphere consecrated to holiness, nor in one resigned to unrestrained depravity. They define a state of rebellion and anarchy; but anarchy and rebellion held in check,—a state of moral ruin, but ruin not yet irretrievable.

We may not attempt to penetrate the Divine counsels and inquire why this order of things was established in preference to some other. But since it is established, we cannot fail to see that it expresses in a most emphatic manner God’s hatred of sin. Not to go into any elucidation of this point

beyond the exigencies of the present argument, there are two things which illustrate it, too conspicuous in the phenomena with which we are dealing to be overlooked. One is the intimate connection between sin and suffering. Not only may all the suffering in the world be traced back to the one transgression of the first man; but, in the settled course of events, moral evil produces natural evil; the violation of the Divine law produces unhappiness, pain, and death. In every graveyard we may read what God thinks of sin. The other fact is, that the righteous experience such difficulties in the culture and practice of piety. These difficulties are from within and from without. They might have been exonerated from them. They might have been made perfectly holy in their regeneration, and the arm of Omnipotence might have kept both wicked men and devils from either assailing or tempting them. The Christian life, in that case, would have been no "warfare;" and our eyes would not have been pained, as they are now, by seeing the grievous wrongs so often inflicted upon the people of God because they are His people. Had it seemed good to Him, indeed, God might have exempted them from the various trials which they now share with the unbelieving world. But He has done none of these things. As if to mark His sense of the evil of sin in a manner not to be misunderstood, He

leaves His own children to taste its bitterness, even after they are freed from its penalty. Earth must still be to them a vale of tears. They must endure the common lot of change and disappointment, of sickness and decay. Like all others, they must encounter ingratitude and unkindness, calumny and injustice. They must see their fondest hopes blighted. They must follow their loved ones to the tomb. Nay, they must learn by painful experience that heaven is to be attained only as the result of an incessant conflict with their own vagrant passions and the enticements of a corrupt world.

Do we mistake in this interpretation? Is not this very condition of things, which wears such an aspect of mystery to our eyes, eminently adapted to exhibit God's displeasure against sin? And while nothing can illustrate this like the cross, is it not an affecting confirmation of it that He should require even His redeemed ones, who wear His image, and bear His name, and would willingly die to honor Him, to make their way into the kingdom of heaven "through much tribulation"? If these "parts of His ways" upon which we are dilating seem to be shrouded in mystery, let it be considered whether any other course of events could exhibit so forcibly His estimate of moral evil. And of what ineffable importance He deems it, that due expression should be given to this sentiment, may be seen alike in

man's ruin and his recovery ; in the awful consequences which were linked with the first offence, and in the priceless blood which was shed to atone for sin. The lesson written so vividly upon the primeval garden, and upon the cross, may be traced no less in all the confusion and misery, the sicknesses and sorrows, the sufferings and wrongs, which spread their deadly savor over the whole habitable globe.

Again, it must be apparent to a candid observer that the existing state of things, while it displays God's estimate of sin, *is adapted to supply the very training which we need.*

It was just now remarked that things are as they are because we are what we are. The great contest of which our globe is the theatre is, whether God or man shall reign. The pride which, in the unrenewed heart, boldly defies the power of its Maker, still cleaves to the believer. He is too much disposed to lean upon his own strength, and to walk by the light of his own wisdom. The radical principle of the new nature is faith. The end which the Gospel contemplates is that of making man cease from himself and from all creatures, and trust in Jehovah alone. It requires him to do what the angels do,—find his happiness in God, and confide in Him, whether he can understand His dispensations or not. In this view, the mysteries of the present economy meet an urgent want of our nature. The lesson they incul-

cate is that lesson of humility and faith which we are so slow to receive. They demand of us an implicit confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of God, in the presence of arrangements which, to the mere eye of sense, look as though the world had escaped from His control. They bid us accept as just and needful, allotments which have their ground and reason hidden from our view. They impose silence where unbelief would make us murmur, and submission where pride would stir us up to rebellion. To our unchastened speculations they oppose a barrier which has its height and depth in the infinite, and which is inscribed all over with the imperial edict, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further." When we ask, "How could a just and good Being permit sin to invade the world? Why did He not arrest the consequences of their disobedience with the first pair? Why are the righteous oppressed and the wicked exalted?" we receive a two-fold answer. The first response is, "Be still, and know that I am God." The second is, "Lo, these are *parts* of His ways." The first addresses itself to our faith; the second to our reason. Both are suited to our moral training.

But there is a discipline here, no less needful, which touches us more keenly: it is the discipline of *temptation*. Virtue is like the Alpine fir, which thrives amidst the storms. Not only in the inspired word, but upon every feature of this scene of conflict and

trouble, is it written, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." The believer finds himself set upon by fierce adversaries, clothed it may be as angels of light; and his own half-subdued passions, unleashed, raise a turmoil in his breast. But it does not happen without a purpose. "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." God is training His people here for a glorious immortality. The salvation already begun in their hearts, and to be consummated hereafter, is a salvation from sin. The more they learn of the evil of sin, the more will they appreciate their deliverance from it, and the better will they be fitted for a sinless world. But there is no teacher like experience. And they are left, therefore, to drink for awhile of these bitter waters, that they may drink with a higher zest of the water of the river of life.

It would be easy to pursue this train of thought, and point out numerous ways in which the present state of things is precisely adapted to that spiritual discipline of which we stand in need. But I must not exhaust your patience.

We have taken a cursory survey of the anomalies and discordancies which mark the established order of things in the world. In reference to the doubts and difficulties of which these are so prolific, it has

been shown that all these inequalities are really parts of God's ways; that they pertain to a fixed plan which He is carrying forward, and to which they are, every one of them, essential; that being only "parts" of His ways, no inferences should be drawn from them as if they were the whole of His ways,—the reasonable presumption being that everything will be explained hereafter; that, notwithstanding the veil of mystery which enwraps this dispensation, it is quite apparent that it owes its peculiarities to our moral character; and that, as among the ends to be accomplished by it, God designs, by these inscrutable arrangements, to manifest His own estimate of the enormity of sin, and also to provide for us a course of moral discipline which shall gradually fit us for heaven.

Considerations like these may, possibly, do something to relieve the obscurity which rests upon our condition, and even to make us patient and cheerful in treading the chequered path which leads from a fallen to an unfallen world. Assuredly if it was required of the Son of God that *He* should wear a crown of thorns before wearing a crown of glory, it is not for us to complain that the road which conducts us to our crown has its thorns also: especially when we must add, with the penitent malefactor,—“And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss.”

Besides, our trials come in mercy. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." The painful mysteries of our lot, our losses, our changes, our conflicts,—what are they but the assayer's fire, to consume the dross and refine the gold? He afflicts, not willingly, but because He is a Father; and, as a Father, whom He chastens, He will gloriously reward.

"For God has marked each sorrowing day,
And number'd every secret tear;
And heaven's long age of bliss shall pay
For all His children suffer here."

A single thought more and I have done. There *are* mysteries here. Life, I repeat, is a riddle which no wit of man can solve. It must needs be so where we see but "parts of His ways." But all is not dark. There are some things so plain that a child can see and understand them. And, happily for us, these are the matters which most deeply concern us. Whatever else may be dark, there is one path traversing the earth which shines with an unquenchable brightness. The sun which illumines it never sets; and they who do not see it must shut their eyes. It is the "narrow way" to the celestial city. And the great lesson of our subject for us all, and especially for the unconverted, is, not to allow the study of what is obscure in our lot to make us unmindful of what is plain. What surpassing folly is it for men to waste

their lives in cavilling at the Divine dispensations, or in fruitless efforts to unravel the web of Providence, while their *salvation* is uncared for! These mysteries may be studied hereafter. It will no doubt be one of the employments and privileges of the ransomed, to see this whole probationary system relieved of the difficulties which are now, to our feeble minds, so intractable, and every enigma of the present economy, even the most intricate, satisfactorily cleared up. But while those questions may be postponed, the other cannot be. The salvation or perdition of the soul is a question of time, not of eternity. And yet eternity hangs upon it! Cease, then, from useless, if I must not say irreverent, complaints against the appointments of Him whose "way is in the sea." Leave the things so hard to be understood, where He has left them. Enough to know that we are lost in the first Adam, and may be saved in the second: that where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound: and that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Come in penitence and faith to Him, and He will not cast you out.

THE CHURCH: UNITY IN DIVERSITY; DIVERSITY IN UNITY.

I. CORINTHIANS xii. 12.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”

THE apostle's discourse is of spiritual gifts. These were largely distributed among the Christians of Corinth,—too largely, it would seem, for the grace that went along with them. For they all desired certain gifts in preference to others; coveting those of a conspicuous or imposing character, and disparaging such as came in a more modest guise. It is humiliating to think that a church founded by apostolic hands should, even in its infancy, become involved in a controversy of this sort. It only shows that the human nature which the apostles had to deal with, was the same nature that so constantly tried the Divine patience under the ancient Economy, and which works for evil in our own hearts and in all around us. This root of bitterness wrought great

mischiefs there. St. Paul feels himself obliged to treat of it in a very grave and formal way. His argument is this. There are diversities of gifts,—as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, discovering of spirits, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and the like. But these all proceed from the same sovereign and gracious Spirit. He confers them, and they are conferred for a common end; not for the honor of the several recipients, but for the edification of believers and the welfare of the whole Church. The variety they embrace is essential to the work to be done,—essential to the completeness of the Church,—precisely as various members are necessary to constitute the body. This comparison he carries out into details, showing how absurd it would be for the foot to complain that it is not the hand, or the ear that it is not the eye; and applying this principle to the organization of the Church: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ (*i.e.*, the Church, the body of Christ). For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

The *diversity in unity* here affirmed by the apostle of the gifts communicated to the early Church, per-

tains to the Church in its entire structure. It is, in fact, the law of its composition,—an identity of character and experience, combined with an endless diversity in the details. Analogy would predispose us to expect this, for the same principle pervades the kingdom of nature. Everywhere, in looking abroad, we behold variety. One star differs from another star in glory. Each zone not only, but each country, has its own Flora. A single forest may contain twenty different species of trees, and a single garden a hundred species of shrubs and flowers. No two trees even of the same species are alike. No two flowers are so identical in shape, color, and structure that a powerful magnifier would not reveal some points of difference. The woods have their distinctive qualities of hardness, hue, weight, strength, and elasticity. The grasses with which nature has carpeted the earth differ as much as the artificial fabrics with which we cover our floors. So, also, in the animal world, every beast and bird, every reptile, and fish, and insect, has, with its proper nature, attributes which distinguish it from the rest of its own tribe. Yet with all this diversity, there is a principle of unity running through the several departments of nature, which not only separates each department from the others, but combines the individuals of each genus, and again of each species, into a uniform and consistent whole. We need not pursue this topic.

It will be enough to have hinted at the fundamental law which underlies the Creator's work throughout the world of nature, as preparing the mind for the prevalence of the same law in the kingdom of grace.

The most palpable exemplification of this law is that which is offered by the *diverse outward forms* in which the Church exists.

This is not suggested as the idea, or as any part of the idea, set forth in the text and context. It is not the visible Church which the apostle affirms to be one; but the true Church,—the Church made up of the regenerated and saved, who are confined to no one communion, and are known to God alone. But it is not without its significance that He has permitted the visible Church to be cast in many separate moulds. He might have prescribed a polity with such distinctness, and enjoined it in such terms of authority, that all churches would have conformed to it. But He saw fit so to frame His instructions on this subject as to leave room for a diversity of interpretation. We do not doubt that our own government and worship are in harmony with the forms which prevailed in the apostolic age. Our brethren who differ from us, on the one hand in the direction of Independency, and on the other in the direction of Prelacy, have a similar conviction in respect to their forms. May we not reasonably infer that it was the will of God to allow a certain variety in the

outward things of religion, as being suited to that variety of taste and disposition with which He has endowed men? The fact is indisputable, that to one class of minds this form of worship is the more edifying; to another, that. And while we cannot believe that all forms are equally scriptural, it will lay no great strain upon our charity to concede that God may have His own children in each of these communions so widely separated by their denominational lines. In this view we may refer to the visible Church as illustrating the principle of diversity in unity.

The principle, however, finds its legitimate sphere within the brotherhood of real believers. This phrase, in fact, defines the sense in which they are affirmed to be one; they are "real believers:" this *makes* them one. So the apostle teaches in the passage before us: The body of Christ (the Church) is one: "*for* (v. 13) *by one Spirit* are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." It is through the anointing of the Spirit men are born again, and so engrafted into Christ as to become members of His body. This is the communicating of a new nature which makes them one, as really as the natural birth, the possession of a common humanity, makes them one. External diversities are of no consequence in either case. The child of the hovel, the

wigwam, the palace, it matters not where or when he is born, he inherits the common nature and belongs to the race. So with the new birth. It merges all outward distinctions. "Whether we be Jews or Gentiles:" which is equivalent to saying, "Whether we have been worshippers of the true God or benighted idolaters:" here are the two extremes of the religious scale. "Whether we be bond or free," masters or servants: here, especially under the rigors of Roman bondage, are the two social extremes. He means, then, that in the presence of the cross, no earthly distinctions are recognized: that the baptism of the Spirit so far levels separating barriers of every kind, as to combine all who receive it in a sacred and indissoluble unity.

This unity includes a *common Head*. "Christ is the Head of the Church." Union with Christ is indispensable. Being "in Christ" is the familiar New Testament phrase for designating a true Christian.

It denotes, further, a *oneness of faith*. Diversities of belief there certainly are among real believers. Aside from minor and local peculiarities, two great systems divide the Christian world. But Calvinism and Arminianism are not as light and darkness to each other. The points where they coalesce are numerous and important. As philosophies, they are thoroughly discordant. But they meet and bow together in lowly reverence before the cross. They

alike recognize the work of the Divine Spirit. They ascribe salvation to the mercy and grace of God. All Christians concur in the necessity of "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," in disclaiming all merit of their own, and in acknowledging the authority of the moral law as a rule of life. We claim for them, therefore, that they are of "one faith."

They are also of *one purpose*. The various members of the body, controlled by a single will, work together for the same ends. The members of Christ's mystical body have a common aim. They regard the care of the soul as the one thing needful. They make it their concern to follow Christ; to obey His precepts; to seek His honor and glory; to aid in building up His kingdom. That the service they render Him is precarious and inconstant, and that their best duties are defiled with sin, must be freely admitted. But we may, nevertheless, insist that they are one in purpose and endeavor; one in striving to live unto Him who loved them.

They are united, too, by the bonds of a *mutual sympathy*. In the human body, if one member suffers, all suffer; if one rejoices, all rejoice. We concede the comparative feebleness of this principle in the Church of our day: it is not what it should be. But it exists. The solicitude of every real Christian (and of such alone are we speaking) is for the cause

of Christ. He rejoices in every triumph of the Gospel. He mourns over every disaster to the cause of true religion. He recognizes those who love his Master as brethren. He hails them as co-workers. He delights in their well-being. He would gladly alleviate their sorrows. The tie which unites him to them is stronger than any earthly bond. We may justly affirm, then, that they are one in sympathy.

Not to specify other points of identity, the unity of Christians comprehends, with a common Head, a oneness of faith, of purpose, and of sympathy.

But this unity is not monotony. The Church is one. But it is one as the body is one; as the animal kingdom is one; the vegetable; the mineral; the whole realm of nature. The formula of definition in all these cases is, **UNITY IN DIVERSITY, AND DIVERSITY IN UNITY.**

The Christian Church began in this way, and began gloriously. The Day of Pentecost supplied the mould in which it was to be cast. "Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." What an assemblage was this! A Congress of all nations, convened as it were on purpose to supply a perfect type of that universal Church which was now

to supersede the narrow courts of the Levitical temple. Henceforth there could be no question as to the import of that Divine commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;" no misgiving as to the races that were to find a place in the Church. And as it set out, so it has continued. Contemning all distinctions of climate, empire, language, and religion, the Church has gone on, gathering into its ample fold people of all lands and tongues and faiths; cementing them into one harmonious whole; and that, without disturbing the elements which mark their several nationalities. We can imagine a scene which would surpass even the Day of Pentecost in presenting this truth as a sublime and beneficent reality. For we can picture to ourselves a communion-season at one of the great centres of the world, which should bring together around the table of their common Lord, representatives of all the evangelical denominations of the globe; where there should sit down together disciples of the various European and American Churches, with converts of all lands, Jews, Chinese, Hindoos, Burmese, Siamese, Turks, Greeks, Nestorians, Armenians, Africans of a score or two of tribes, Indians of our forests, Greenlanders, Esquimaux, Tahitians, Feejees, and the like. Nothing could exceed the disparities and contrasts which such an assemblage would present in form and feature and complexion,

in dress and manners, in language and culture. Yet would the sacred symbols convey to their minds the same meaning, and awaken kindred emotions in every breast. And were the service administered by one capable of speaking their different tongues, he might utter precisely the same sentiments in addressing them, and all hearts would respond with the same feelings of penitence, trust, and grateful praise to God, and of mutual love to one another. The world may yet witness this august and beautiful demonstration of the multiform-unity of the Church: and if earth does not see it, heaven will.

But we may see this diversity in unity without convening the Church Ecumenical. It is the law of the kingdom everywhere. In the apostolic age, the household of faith comprised persons of every rank and occupation. Not many mighty and noble were called, but some were: and the poor were there in abundance. The wayside beggars, the despised lepers, the fishermen of Tiberias, the "honorable women," and "Cæsar's household," were all represented. There were gifts and graces of every sort and degree. The knowledge we have of the apostolic college, though very imperfect as to the major part of them, warrants the conclusion that no two of these twelve men were alike; each one having his strongly-marked individual traits. And this variety has been perpetuated. The ministry has never been

without its Johns and Pauls, its Thomases and Peters, its sons of thunder and its sons of consolation. You have but to reflect for a moment, and you will be able to call up a whole gallery of portraits from the annals of the modern Church as diverse as were the original preachers. Let me name Baxter, Owen, Bunyan, Jeremy Taylor, Bishop Hall, the Wesleys, the Erskines, Romaine, President Edwards, Whitefield, Dwight, Robert Hall, Chalmers, Davies, Mason, the Alexanders. What a galaxy is this! Every star is brilliant; but no two shine with the same lustre; the same indeed in one sense, for the light they reflect is from the same Sun:—herein is the unity. But it varies in hue and measure and velocity: herein is the diversity.

And as with the ministry so with the people. To delineate the variety which pertains to the many members of the one spiritual body would be to describe the numerous sorts of people aggregated in a community. For the Church recruits itself indifferently from the vast outlying masses of humanity. It appropriates to itself all ages, sexes, and conditions. Its merciful conscription lays hold upon the rich and the poor, the humble and the proud, the sedate and the ardent, the resolute and the gentle, the learned and the illiterate, the dissolute and the moral. Baptizing them into Christ, it makes them all one body; and yet without destroying or even

impairing their individuality. Of course the training to which it subjects them demands the lopping off of excrescences and the healing of disorders which, neglected, would consume the life. But within the wise and wide limitations prescribed by the Divine Husbandman, it allows all the trees and shrubs transplanted into its enclosure to follow out each the law of its own growth. The pine is not expected to become an oak; nor the orange a vine; nor the violet a rose. All the requisition is that the pine shall be a thrifty pine and the oak a thrifty oak; and that the orange and the vine, the violet and the rose, and every other tree, and herb, and flower, shall grow up towards perfection, and thus fulfil the end of its own being.

This rule is observed even in respect to the methods by which the dead branches are engrafted into the True Vine and made alive. It is the prerogative of the one Almighty Spirit to effect this; here is the unity. But He does it in a great variety of modes; here is the diversity. To be born of the Spirit is indispensable. To be renewed in precisely this or that way is not essential. Conversion varies indefinitely in its times, means, antecedents, and consequents. God is a Sovereign here, as in all His other works. And He displays the same diversity of operations here as throughout the wide range of creative nature. As if to rebuke the attempt—which has, nevertheless, been so often made—to shut Him up to a

single inflexible method of bringing sinners out of darkness into His marvellous light, the variety which marks the cases of conversion recorded in Scripture is scarcely less signal than the conversions themselves. Without stopping to comment on so familiar a theme, let it suffice to refer to the examples of Levi the publican, Zacchæus, the thief on the cross, Saul of Tarsus, Lydia, and the jailer of Philippi. And from that day to this, He has continued to exert His renewing grace with the same sovereign right of choice in respect to occasions and instruments, the measure and duration of conviction, and all the incidents pertaining to this mightiest of changes in the character and condition of men.

Nor in conversion only. He carries the same variety of modes and means into the culture and development of the immortal germ deposited in regeneration. The efficiency in all instances is His own. And the one agency He has Himself prescribed, is His word. But who can describe the paths along which He leads His people, and the endless combinations of providential and gracious influences by which He conducts them step by step up the acclivities of the higher life, and fashions them to the "likeness of the heavenly"? Who can portray the opulent diversity of gifts, intellectual and spiritual, with which He endows them; to one, five talents; to another, two; to another, one,—dividing to

every man severally as He will? The fact is patent to every one. Let us advert to a few of the more important aspects in which it offers itself to our contemplation. It will not be difficult to show that this Divine law of diversity in unity is as essential to the proper perfection of the Church as it is morally beautiful.

1. Let me begin with this latter thought, *the moral beauty* of this arrangement. This is not a thing to be argued. Beauty is a matter not of logic, but of feeling. Its appeal is to a constitutional susceptibility. And it is a part of our constitution to crave variety. We do not want a painting to be all of one color, nor a tune of one strain. The ocean would pall upon us if it were always still or always boisterous. Who would ever lift his eyes to the heavens if the sky shone with a perpetual serenity? As children, we want new toys. And as grown children (for we are nothing more), we tire if we have to look continually upon the same objects. It is a relief even to re-arrange the books on your shelves and the furniture of your room; to put the old articles into new positions. We grow weary of looking day by day at the same people in the same situation, unless they are our intimate friends. And as to our friends, we would not have them all alike if we could. It is one of the charms of the domestic state, the variety there is in families. We cannot only bear, but en-

joy, what is termed a "family resemblance" in a household. But who could endure a family that looked exactly alike? Much more, a family that were exactly alike in voice and manner, in tone and temper, in sentiment and character?

He who made man made the Church; and of course adapted it to this as well as to every other part of his nature. No one can complain of the New Testament as a monotonous book; nor feel that when he has seen one of its personages he has seen all. They pass and repass before us with that variety of character and experience which pertains to the actors in other histories. The same diversity attaches to the several religious denominations, and, generally speaking, to every Church. There is no Christian here who has not something peculiar to himself; something by which he is distinguished from his brethren. And if you would learn how copious is this variety, you must take the records of the Church and call over the names which make up the entire enrolment. There is certainly a "family resemblance," for they are children of one Father; and unless they bear some of the lineaments of His image, they are not really of the household. But beyond this, how unlike they are in their worldly circumstances and occupations, in disposition, in intellectual endowments, in their social qualities, in their graces, in their modes and measures of re-

ligious activity! We may lament the errors and infirmities which cleave to them. We may wish that some were different from what they are. But every one would sooner take such a society as it is than have all its members recast in the same metallic mould. We love the Church all the more because its unity, like that of a garden, effloresces in a grateful variety of fruits and flowers.

2. The principle of diversity in unity upon which the Church is constructed *illustrates the power and efficacy of Divine grace.*

The palpable fact which meets the eye is, that while grace is more than a match for depravity in its worst forms, it renews and elevates all the nobler traits of humanity; and in either case, without disturbing identity of character. The Church, as already observed, is recruited from every quarter. God selects the objects of His mercy where He will. For the most part they are among the children of believers, the true line of succession, but by no means confined to these. If He sees fit to summon to His service a rich man like Barnabas, a voracious publican like Zacchæus, a timid Pharisee like Nicodemus, a malignant zealot like Saul, a pagan captain like the Centurion, He has but to speak and they *must* hear. He will not be shut out from any spot of the globe He has created, nor from any human heart that He chooses to enter. He will follow

men into the fastnesses of error and impiety, into dens of iniquity and idol-temples, and bring them forth willing converts to the faith they once destroyed. He will take by the hand the thoughtful, the refined, the affectionate, the teachable, yea, the little prattlers who brighten our homes with their mirth, and lead them into His house and adopt them as His children. Classes constituting the opposite extremes of society, and all the intermediate classes, He clothes with a common nature, imbues with the same spirit, enriches with kindred gifts, and makes them "one in Christ Jesus," while they severally retain their marked characteristics. There is certainly a resemblance among them which there was not before. But there is no such resemblance as to expose a single one to the hazard of being taken for any one but himself.

May we not refer to these facts as illustrating the power and efficacy of Divine grace? The problems here so successfully resolved would turn to nought all human skill and energy. In man's hands these various types of character might be bent or broken; they could never be renewed. Changed they might be, but not changed without sad contortion or mutilation. Too often has the experiment been tried. Christendom abounds with individuals and fraternities, male and female, who show what comes of man's arrogating his Maker's work; of attempting

to make his fellows new creatures by a complex, protracted, cruel regimen of his own, in place of the simple teaching of the word and the transforming energy of the Holy Ghost. A wonderful achievement it is, as wonderful in power as in love, that of imbuing a whole community with a new life, from its very nature pervading, elevating, and controlling, and yet so incorporating it with all the natural faculties and functions as to aid their proper working and their true development. We cite it as one of the fruits of that diversity in unity which enters radically into the constitution of the Church.

3. It is still more to our purpose to refer to the wisdom, perhaps we may say the necessity, of this principle, in view of the mission assigned to the Church.

It is not for man to say that anything is absolutely necessary to God in effecting His purposes which He has not declared to be so. But we may speak of the perfect adaptation of the principle we are considering, to the ends for which the Church was established. Not to name other topics, the Church is appointed to be, under God, the Teacher and Guide of the world. Its business is to disciple all nations. It has to do with people of every type and condition; with all the sins and all the sorrows, all the avocations, all the duties, and all the hopes, of humanity. Its field is the world.

It needs, therefore, laborers of every sort and every variety of talent. With fewer gifts in kind, some portions of its work would be neglected. If it is to carry Christianity through the globe, it must have men whose constitutions and training fit them for the various climates of the earth. It must have men of iron nerve who can face dangers. It must have men of the requisite scholarship to grapple with strange languages and preach to strange peoples. In its home-field there is room for the exercise of every kind of gift. Witness the diversity in congregations; the mission-fields in the cities and in the country; the benevolent institutions to be sustained and governed; schools; hospitals; prisons; armies. Witness the multitudes of the poor, the sick, the sorrowing. Everywhere there are perishing sinners to be sought out and instructed in religion. Everywhere the kingdom of Christ is to be aided in its warfare with earth and hell.

A scheme so vast demands a corresponding variety and affluence of talents. And this want is provided for in that diversity which, as we have seen, enters into the constituency of the Church. There are ministers of every grade of culture and with every kind of gifts. How, otherwise, could the ministry fulfil its design? For the people vary indefinitely. No one style of preaching would suit them; no two styles, nor three, nor six. One may say that a

preacher like President Edwards ought to be acceptable to everybody. Another may put in the same claim for a Whitefield, and a third for a Mason. But it would not be so. Some would prefer one of these great preachers to the others; and some would prefer a fourth preacher to any of them. It is well that every taste can be gratified.

And who can survey the broad acres which the Church is cultivating, without rejoicing in the combination of gifts employed in carrying forward the work? A radical part of this agency lies in the silent power of example; the simple routine of a quiet and upright life. He is not a cipher in the Church who is conscientiously discharging the duties of his station, however moderate his gifts, and however obscure his lot. Perhaps there is no one element so important as this in estimating the entire impression of the Church upon the world. Then there are Christians whose influence is mainly felt in their generous pecuniary contributions to the cause of Christ. Others have a gift for teaching. Not a few are ready to go forth and minister to the sick and the poor in their homes and in hospitals. A glance around the field will detect many faithful workers who belong to no recognized classes, but are unobtrusively doing their Lord's will. We need not dwell upon details. The thought which concerns us now is, that this whole army of workers,

clerical and lay, male and female, is one in faith and purpose, in sympathy and hope ; while they are many in gifts and graces, in spheres of labor, in means and methods of exertion, and in their relative measures of success. Some are breaking up the fallow ground. Some are sowing. Some are nurturing the precious grain. And others reaping and gathering the crop. But all are servants of the Great Task-Master ; all look to Him for direction ; and all are hoping to celebrate the glorious Harvest-Home in His presence. Thus needful is the principle of diversity in unity to the full efficiency of the Church. We have already pointed out the moral beauty of this arrangement, and shown how it illustrates the power and efficacy of Divine grace.

The unfolding of such a subject suggests the practical lessons which grow out of it. I will detain you to give expression to only two or three of these.

One is a lesson of instruction and encouragement in respect to *religious experience*. We have seen that this is of no uniform type. Certain elements are essential, but beyond these it partakes of a very great variety. We are not, then, to set up this or that instance of conversion, nor this or that form of the Christian life, as the standard by which all others are to be tested. God has His own methods for bringing men into His kingdom, and for keeping

them when there. An absolute identity in all examples of supposed conversion, as to means, occasions, and exercises, would not merely justify distrust, but afford presumptive proof that many cases were counterfeit. For this would contravene the principle of diversity in unity, which is fundamental, as to His kingdom of nature, so also to His kingdom of grace. The only safe or authorized mode of trying our state is to come to the law and the testimony.

2. As unity in diversity is the law of the Church, it is the duty of all its members to *cherish and promote the spirit* of unity. The apostle points out the effect of a schism among the members of the body, as illustrative of a divisive spirit among the members of the Church. The divisions among Christians have always been the opprobrium of religion. They spring from false doctrine, and from evil tempers,—such as pride, jealousy, envy, uncharitableness, and the like. To indulge these passions is to breed discord, and thus impair the unity, mar the beauty, and lessen the usefulness of the Church.

3. As diversity in unity is the law of the Church, let us try to learn *what are our own gifts*, and *to fill each his own place*.

If we are in the Church at all (I do not mean in the visible Church merely) we must have some gift, and there is a place for us. Your place is not your neighbor's, nor his yours. The Corinthians were

too ambitious to heed this. The apostle had to argue the point with them, which he did at length. He closes by asking, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?" The very nature of the Church forbids this. There must be "many members," with their several gifts and functions, or there could be no spiritual body. And it is not a mere matter of personal choice with us—our endowments and position. There is a higher agency here. "GOD hath set the members, every one of them, in the body (both the spiritual and the natural body), as it hath pleased HIM." His aim in this arrangement is service; and that should be ours. He brings us into the Church that we may serve Him, not by doing another's work, but our own.

To learn what this is, we must ask His teaching in prayer. We must consider our situation and circumstances. We must endeavor to find out what gifts we have, and how they can be used to the best purpose. The more important spheres of religious activity (for the laity), such as charitable associations, teaching, visiting the poor and the sick, and contributing of one's substance, are too familiar to require comment. But every gift involves an obligation to use it for your Master. It may be a facile needle. It may be music. It may be a capacity for writing useful books. It may be the Divine art of

composing hymns of devotion. It may be letter-writing,—a beautiful gift, which beguiles the suffering of many a weary hour; and soothes the sorrowing; and animates the sweet

“ . . . fellowship of kindred minds;”

and fortifies the tempted and wavering; and quickens the lukewarm; and revives the desponding; and cheers the hearts that are perpetually sighing,

“ Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!”

Yes, you all have your gifts, and you should feel that it is a high privilege to employ them in the service of God. Should all do this,—all within a single fold even,—with what energy would it clothe the Gospel, and how nobly would it illustrate the wisdom, power, and grace displayed in the structure of Christ's mystical body! Then only, when we have attained this standard, shall we be able to appreciate the value of that principle of diversity in unity which is so vital to the symmetry, the harmony, and the efficiency of the Church.

4. There is one other lesson which I would gladly enforce if the time would permit, viz., *a lesson of charity in judging of the Christianity of others.*

It will not do for us to forget that while the Church is one, it is also many. The gracious principle develops itself in an endless variety of forms, and dwells

with dispositions and gifts of every type. We are not called to exercise the same liking towards all Christians, but let us watch against capricious antipathies. Your brother may have some untoward traits and ways, but is he not a brother still? Of the ministers you happen to hear, you dismiss one as unsuited to his work because he is "too metaphysical"; and a second, because he is "too flowery"; a third, because he is "too quiet"; and a fourth, because he is "too vehement"; and so on to the end. But you greatly err if you think it would have been better to fashion all these preachers after your model. This diversity of gifts is indispensable to the ministry, in regard both to the work to be done and the varieties of human character to be dealt with. Each one has his vocation. And to brand them as unfit for their office may be not only to violate the charity of the gospel, but, by implication, to reproach Him who saw fit to organize the Church upon this plan. If they all cast out devils, why require that they shall every one do it in your way?

The same caution may be needed in passing judgment upon private Christians who differ widely from ourselves.—But I must not trespass further. Let us only look well to our own hearts, and try to do our own work faithfully. So shall we best help on the Church in its sublime mission and honor our gracious Lord.

REDEMPTION, A STUDY TO THE ANGELS.

I. PETER i. 12.

“ Which things the angels desire to look into.”

“ Which things ;”—we must read the context to understand this allusion. “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into.” The meaning is obvious. The things into which the angels desire to look, are the things which formed the burden of prophetic and apostolic teaching, to wit : the “salvation” of men ; the atoning “sufferings of Christ,” and “the glory” (Gr., *glories*), His glory and

that of His people, "which should follow." In simpler phrase, the theme which awakens this interest among the angels is, Redemption.

No commentator fails to notice the peculiar force and beauty of the verb in this sentence. Our version has it, "desire to look into." It denotes a bending attitude with a gaze of fixed intensity. The allusion is supposed to be to the figures of the Cherubim above the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, who were represented as bending downwards with their eyes fastened upon the blood-sprinkled ark, as if trying to penetrate the great mystery it symbolized, the blending of the law and the Gospel, the justice and the mercy of God. Let us dwell for a little upon this interesting theme, REDEMPTION, A STUDY TO THE ANGELS.

It cannot but be deemed remarkable that we should be so isolated from the rest of the universe. Here are millions of orbs brought within the range of our vision by the telescope. We cannot doubt that they are the abodes of rational creatures. The ingenious theory defended with so much learning and logic by one of the most accomplished philosophers* of our day, which would make our globe the only inhabited world, has probably not won a single convert in either hemisphere. So natural, so universal, is the conviction that these other spheres and

* Professor Whewell.

systems are inhabited, that it may almost be classed with the intuitions of the human mind: we accept it without argument, and we cling to it in the face of argument. Yet of the races that tenant these countless worlds we know absolutely nothing. One race only besides our own is introduced to us: and of that, the notices are quite too meagre to satisfy us. We see just enough of the angels to wish to see a great deal more. We "desire to look" into their affairs, as they into ours. In the absence of full information concerning them, we give scope to our imaginations, and explore, as we best may, the wide realm in which they dwell, and their various powers and employments,—not always with a very accurate regard to the hints the Scriptures give us of their position and functions.

We are on safe ground in ascribing to them superior intelligence and ample knowledge. But the knowledge of a creature, whatever his rank, must necessarily be progressive. Infinite knowledge (including prescience) pertains only to the Creator. The angels, like ourselves, must learn things by the event,—excepting when God may have been pleased to reveal His purposes to them. We are not to take it for granted that they knew, before this world was made, what was to happen here. They were already in existence. They saw our globe and the visible heavens created: and, at the sublime spectacle, "the

morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But, except through some special revelation, of which we have no hint, it was impossible they should foresee the extraordinary transactions which were to distinguish this orb from all the others scattered through the wide fields of space. From the very first, however, the Divine procedure on this planet would arrest their attention. The Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil, the mysterious prohibition, and the penalty annexed,—what could all this mean? Still more, how would it astonish them to witness the temptation. They had seen Satan and his fellow-apostates cast down to hell: and yet he is now permitted to come to this new-born world, fresh from its Maker's hand, to enter this blooming garden, and to appropriate one of the lower animals to the atrocious purpose of seducing the happy pair from their allegiance. Nay, he not only assails but actually overthrows their virtue. Is it fanciful to imagine that this event would fill the angels with amazement? that they would say one to another, "How can these things be? Is not sin that abominable thing which our holy and righteous Lord hates with a perfect hatred? Has He not testified His reprobation of it by the awful but just doom visited upon our compeers who fell? How, then, should He allow this pair to fall a prey to the

wiles of Satan? Why should He create another world if it was so soon to be handed over to the sway of His arch-adversary,—even though He may presently consign Adam and Eve to the same dismal fate with the tempter and his hosts?”

Filled with surmisings like these, the angels would “desire to look into” the strange opening chapter of our history. But something no less inexplicable would now inflame their curiosity. They had heard the threatening, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” It came from lips which could not lie. It was but the inevitable penalty of His law. Once before it had been broken, and instantly the penalty took effect. And yet Adam and Eve do not “die,”—*i.e.*, they do not, on their transgression, “return to the dust,” nor are they banished into outer darkness. Cast off they are from the favor of God; driven from Eden; made to feel that they are ruined; but they still live on. And, wonderful to relate, instead of a sentence of absolute and interminable destruction, there gleams upon them from out the commingled horrors of that memorable day, a trembling ray of hope. To the serpent God said: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The angels hear this. Can words express how much they would desire to look into it? It speaks, as other communications

had done, of the woman's "seed." Whether this was intelligible to them we do not know. The fall occurred before the birth of Cain. We are not certain that the angels had ever seen an infant. Among their own race we may with confidence affirm they had not. Whether the same or similar laws prevail in other spheres which they had visited, as mark the family institute here, we are not informed. But the difference between our race and their own, in this particular, could not fail to interest them, not only at that juncture, but ever afterward. They were all created in the full maturity of their powers. Here is a globe of vast extent which is to be peopled by the descendants of a single pair, increasing and spreading through successive generations until they reach a thousand, possibly several thousand, millions. Whether the angels, then, had seen infants elsewhere or not, they could never have gazed upon any with the profound interest with which they would ponder the aspect and possible destiny of the children of Adam and Eve. In some way the seed of this woman is to bruise the serpent's head. Such is the inscrutable utterance which stays the uplifted arm of justice, while it assures them that sooner or later justice will take its course, and Satan's head be crushed by the race he had made partners in his sin.

Obscure as this intimation must have been, as well to the angels as to the guilty pair, it would unveil to

them a *new attribute of the Godhead*. Up to this period, it would seem, they had known nothing of the Divine Mercy. Its absence could be no defect in their eyes, for the idea of Mercy was not yet born into the universe of creatures. The character of God, as they beheld it, was absolutely perfect: there was nothing wanting; no excess, and no defect. What a discovery was this which now broke upon them! Listening to the fearful words of the Eternal as He pronounced sentence upon the tempter and the tempted, this vague promise of a Deliverer must have been as though He had lifted a veil and disclosed to them one of the brightest glories of His character, of the existence of which they had, up to that moment, formed no conception. Truth, Justice, Goodness, Holiness,—with these attributes they were familiar. But of Mercy they had never heard. They had bowed in grateful worship at His feet. They had gathered in shining bands around His throne. They had received His mandates, and hastened with them on joyful wing to distant orbs and systems. But neither in His august presence-chamber, nor in their intercourse with other tribes of holy and happy beings, had they heard of Mercy. Throughout this vast concourse of worlds and firmaments no tongue had ever lisped her name. Among the rapt hosts who stand within the very splendors of the throne, no created eye had ever gazed upon her radiant form.

Enfolded in the depths of His own infinitude, she had been from eternity awaiting the appointed day of her epiphany,—her glorious manifestation to heaven and earth. Yet even now that the period has come, she does not rise full-orbed upon the world, but mild and gently, like the dawn, as befits the quality of Mercy. But this shall suffice for angelic eyes. Enough for them, this vision of surpassing loveliness which ravishes their sight, as a single fold of those glittering vestments is drawn aside and there falls upon their ears this vague promise about the seed of the woman. Though Mercy never spake before, she needs no interpreter. They know it is her voice; and while they cannot fully comprehend her meaning, they do as the shepherds did when she came to them in her sweetest guise four thousand years afterward,—they “return glorifying and praising God for all the things that they have heard and seen.”

These occurrences could not fail to stimulate the curiosity of the angels. They would watch with deep solicitude the course of the Divine administration towards our world. They would treasure every fresh intimation of the future deliverance to be effected by the seed of the woman. Their superior intelligence and sagacity, and their advantageous position, would enable them to understand better than our race could, the types and prophecies pointing to the Messiah. But we have no warrant for assuming that

they comprehended the plan, except as it was carried into effect. The presumption is, that during those forty centuries it was a perpetual study to them; and that as the beneficent scheme was gradually developed, it only increased their desire to look into its unfathomable mysteries.

Not to attempt the historical illustration of so broad a theme, let us note a very few of those leading facts of redemption which were clearly in the contemplation of the apostle when he penned the text.

The first and chief of these is, to quote St. Peter's own words, "*the sufferings of Christ:*" by which we may understand His entire work of humiliation from Bethlehem to Calvary. We must believe that the angels knew, long before the advent, that the primeval promise upon which we have been commenting referred to the Second Person of the Trinity; that He was to be the Redeemer of the world; and that in some way it was to be brought about through suffering. But it is not certain that they had any distinct conception of the incarnation. Another apostle exclaims: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." How could they have penetrated this mystery beforehand? There was neither precedent nor analogy to aid them in resolving it. It is not probable that they had ever heard of the union of two natures in one person. And if such a marvel had occurred, not Gabriel him-

self could have soared to the conception of a union between the Creator and a creature. Accustomed as they were to render co-equal honors to the Trinity, and especially to adore the Son in "the possession of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," how could they think of Him as stooping to be "born of a woman," as coming into this revolted world as an infant, blending His Divinity and our humanity in an indissoluble unity? When the event actually took place, they are sent to announce it to the shepherds. And the wonder which filled the breasts of the shepherds, as they stood by that manger, must have been tame as compared with their own. Hovering, unseen and unthought-of spectators, over that little group, what tongue may essay to describe their emotions as they beheld in this babe, the Son of the Highest, the Creator of all things, Him who "thought it no robbery to be equal with God," and whom they had never seen before except on His throne? Here at length it dawns upon them, how the seed of the woman is to bruise the serpent's head. But it only dawns. They cannot yet divine what is to follow. Most earnestly do they "desire to look" into the mystery of this scene at Bethlehem, to comprehend this infant, to forecast its predicted career of suffering and triumph. But they must wait. And their waiting only brings them into the presence of fresh marvels.

Imagine what a season of suspense those thirty years must have been to them which Jesus passed at Nazareth. How often would they visit the favored village. In what vast encampments would they spread around it. With what intense longings would they observe His every act and word, and ponder its possible bearings upon the great object of His incarnation. As He emerged from His seclusion to enter upon His public ministry, their interest would become deeper and deeper still, until it found its culmination in the cross. Many of the incidents in His life they would understand better than His disciples. But there must have been very much both in His actions and in His doctrine which they would desire to look into more thoroughly. Indeed, His official life as a whole would be just of this character. It was the life of a sufferer. They had always associated suffering with sin. Here was a "man of sorrows" who was "holy, harmless, and undefiled." They had associated suffering with weakness and dependence. Here was the Being who laid the foundations of the earth, and stretched out the heavens as a curtain, bending under a load of grief and wrong enough to crush a whole race even of creatures like themselves. They had regarded death as the portion of finite and depraved natures. And here the Lord of glory cries, "It is finished!" and "gives up the ghost."

What a study was this for the angels! If they flocked to Bethlehem, what myriads of them would hasten to Calvary! If the nativity perplexed and amazed them, how would they stand appalled before the crucifixion! With what energy would they strive to sound its awful depths and compass its vast significance! But we must not enlarge.

Not only would the angels desire to look into the "sufferings of Christ," but into the *application* of redemption also.

They were familiar with two types of character, perfect holiness and unmitigated depravity; and with two conditions of being, unalloyed happiness and absolute misery. Neither their own history nor, so far as we are informed, the annals of any other sphere supplied them with any example of a character in which these elements were commingled, or afforded any hint of a possible transition from one state to the other. They knew nothing of forgiveness, nothing of renewal. Once a transgressor, there remained, for any creature, nothing but an endless penalty and an eternal subjection to his evil passions. The sacrifice on Calvary now opens to them a new world, on earth as well as in heaven. They had, indeed, seen something of this before, for the efficacy of the great expiation reached backward to the fall. But its triumph was reserved for the new dispensation. They have opened the everlasting gates and

let the King of glory in, laden with the spoils of earth and hell, and now they behold the Third Person of the Sacred Trinity passing out of those gates and going down, not on a transient errand, but to make His permanent abode in this apostate world. And here they see *His* miracles of mercy,—not less marvellous in their effects upon the souls of men than had been those of the Messiah upon their bodies. This whole process of a sinner's conversion and sanctification, so varied in its times, and methods, and subjects; so illustrative of God's sovereignty, and power, and mercy; cannot but be a perpetual study to them, affluent in instruction and replete with motives to gratitude and praise.

There must be much in the history of individual believers to awaken their sympathies, but still more in the general welfare of the Church. In both these departments they feel the interest which pertains to immediate actors: for they have always been employed as "ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation," and as the servants of God in directing the affairs of the world. They cannot know in advance who are to be converted, nor what is to be the course of Divine Providence, except as they may infer it from the prophecies. We may be sure that things have not always gone as they expected: that events have constantly occurred which were well-nigh as inexplicable to them as to us. Must it not be a

marvel to them that the Church, the purchase of Christ's blood, should have made its way so slowly and so painfully in the world? that at one time it should be poisoned with error; at another, frozen with formalism; at a third, debauched with secularity; at a fourth, fissured and rent with internal strife? Could they decipher the ten early persecutions, the Dark Ages, the Papacy, and Islamism? Can they understand the wars which deluge Christian nations with blood; which enervate and demoralize them, arrest all healthful progress, and make a jubilee in hell? No such phenomena can meet their eyes in any other part of creation. In heaven there is nothing to affect the stability of things; nor in hell. Important changes must take place in those realms and in other orbs. But the presumption is, that ours is the only globe which is given up to perpetual change; where good and evil are in constant and violent collision; where the two great hostile powers of the universe, the good and bad angels, wage their Titanic war; and where the Lord of both stoops to engage in the mighty fray, and, stranger still, sometimes permits His malignant foes to gain at least seeming victories. Can the angels understand all this? Can they thread this huge labyrinth? Can they follow the multiform mutations of a scene which knows no rest, which recognizes no law but incessant fluctuation, and which ever and anon plunges,

as it were, into a chaos so intractable as to suggest the fear that the Almighty may, in His wrath, have abandoned the world to final anarchy and ruin? Assuredly there must be problems here which would baffle even a seraph's skill. But the darkness which surrounds them would only increase the desire of the angels to look into them. They know that this world is yet to be reclaimed: that the kingdom of the Nazarene is to absorb all other kingdoms: that His glory is to cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. And with all the more earnestness do they study the career of God's providence, because they cannot divine how this tangled net-work of adverse events and hostile agencies, is to lead on to the millennial glories of the Church.

Here, in fact, is another of the themes which stimulate the curiosity of the angels, "the *glories* which should follow."

They have seen the "sufferings of Christ:" they would fain see His glory. They have seen—they see now—the sufferings of His Church: they would see its glory. They are assured that these glories are coming; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. They can, no doubt, frame a better conception of them than we can. And this very circumstance must increase their solicitude to witness the final result. They saw the first faint lineament of the august plan in Eden. They have not only watched,

but assisted in, its gradual unfolding to this hour, as they will to its close. They see also the preparation for it which is going on in heaven. No wonder that they long for its sublime consummation; that they desire to look into those coming glories which are to crown the perfect and indissoluble union between Christ and His Bride, the ransomed Church.

Such are a very few of the things which, according to our apostle, "the angels desire to look into." If we inquire whence this curiosity on their part, we may easily conjecture some of the motives which prompt it.

Without dwelling upon that simple craving after knowledge which pertains to every created intelligence, and which must find so luxuriant a field in the themes of Christianity, we may refer to the aid which the angels derive from Redemption *in their study of the character and government of God.*

To any creature the knowledge of the Creator is the most important of all knowledge. To holy beings, no study can be so attractive. The angels, as already observed, have signal advantages for this study. But there is no volume open to them which yields so much information concerning God as Redemption. We have illustrated this in respect to one of His perfections. It holds true no less of His wisdom and justice than of His mercy. St. Paul glances at this point: "to the intent that now unto

principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Heaven cannot lack for evidences of the Divine wisdom; but if it would see this attribute in its glory, it must come down to earth. Its grand achievement is redemption. Justice vindicated, and mercy triumphant: sin punished, and the sinner saved: heaven bestowed upon the guilty and the vile, and the recipient not elated, but humbled: Satan vanquished by the seed of the woman: death turned into a fountain of life: the cross not merely transfigured into the brightest crown of the Son of God, but multiplied into as many such crowns as there will be ransomed sinners in heaven;—this is the wisdom which streams forth from redemption, and bathes Cherubim and Seraphim, no less than man, with its splendors.

And what we affirm of His wisdom we claim also for His other moral attributes. Here "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Nowhere else has the Deity made so full, so august, so grateful, a revelation of Himself. From none of His works is He to receive such a revenue of praise. None will so fill the universe with His glory. This is one reason why the angels desire to look into it.

A second reason is to be found in their *personal concern* in the results of redemption.

It is an opinion sanctioned by many eminent names in theology, that the good angels owe their confirmation in holiness in some way to the mediation of Christ. This is not asserted in Scripture, but there are passages which seem to favor the idea. We read, *e.g.*, of "the elect angels." We are told that God "gathers together in one all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him." And that "all power is given Him in heaven and in earth." There is room, then, for the conjecture that to Him these unfallen spirits may be indebted for their permanent preservation from apostasy. One thing is beyond question: redemption has supplied them with new motives to fidelity, of the most tender and persuasive character.

There is another respect in which they are interested in this work. In the revolt of their associates, they became no less *their* enemies than the enemies of God. That mighty war of which we have so many glimpses, is a conflict between the fallen and the unfallen spirits :

" . . . tho' strange to us it seem
At first, that angel should with angel war
And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet
So oft in festivals of joy and love
Unanimous, as sons of one Great Sire,
Hymning the Eternal Father."

It could not be otherwise. When Lucifer lifted his parricidal arm against God, the blow was aimed at every faithful subject of God throughout the universe. Our great Epic Poet has not transcended the bounds of sober verity in representing the hosts of heaven as following their and our Divine Leader to our globe, here to contest with Satan the mastery of the human soul. In all the plots and counterplots, the assaults and repulses, the victories and defeats, of this war of centuries, they have taken a conspicuous part. Their immediate personal concern in it, then, is a cogent reason why they should desire to look into the mystery which infolds it.

And this imports that *their own happiness* is involved in the issue.

Merely to glance at this point, the benevolence of the angels must attract them to the study of redemption. They know what the happiness of heaven is. They have vividly before their eyes the misery of hell. Here is a race whose destiny is undecided, the only race which is in this anomalous condition. They are sinners, and doomed to death. But a Saviour is offered them, and they may escape the doom. Whatever the issue, it must be irreversible. The fate of millions of souls hangs upon the trembling balance. Is it for an angel to look upon such a scene with indifference? This were to belie their nature; almost to betray their Lord. So far from

indifference, they are vigilant in defending men from the perils that surround them. They omit nothing which may promote the progress of true religion. They watch with solicitude the effects produced by the preaching of the Gospel, and other means of grace. When even one sinner is converted, they hasten to announce it in heaven, and there is joy throughout all their shining ranks. They count it as a privilege to minister to the people of God. They encamp around them in danger, and deliver them. They succor them in sorrow and suffering. And at death, they receive the departing spirit, and convoy it to the Saviour's presence. To beings of such pure benevolence, offices of this kind must yield great happiness, especially when exercised towards those for whom the Lord of both saints and angels laid down His life. It can occasion no surprise, then, that they should never weary in studying the plan of salvation.

But it is time to conclude this discourse. And I shall do it with two reflections, as obvious as they are important.

1. Let us borrow from this Scripture a single ray of light to set forth *the quality of that skepticism* which men of cultivated minds sometimes cherish respecting Christianity.

Now, as of old, the Gospel is "to the Jew a stum-

bling-block and to the Greek foolishness." You stigmatize it as not only oppressive in its demands, but even irrational in its principles. The doctrine of pardon through an atonement; of a gratuitous salvation through the obedience of a substitute, without any personal merit of your own; of a transformation of character wrought in the soul by the direct power of God;—may suffice for children and peasants: it cannot command the suffrages of educated men. This is your feeling,—your feeling as you look down in pity, if not in derision, upon the unlettered around you. It so happens, however, that there is another race who look down upon *you*; a race whose intellectual elevation separates them even from our Lockes and Newtons and Laplaces by an immeasurably wider space than that which divides you from the people you hold in such contempt. In your foolish and criminal pride, you carry yourselves haughtily towards your fellow-creatures at your side. But let an angel come to you, as one came to the Saviour's tomb, "whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow," and, like the sentinels who kept guard there, you would "shake and become as dead men." Like Manoah, you would be ready to cry out, "Surely we shall die, because we have seen God." Well, heaven is full of such angels. Nor heaven only.

“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth.”

Earth is their favorite sojourn. We have reason to believe that there is not one of these countless orbs that spangle the firmament, which they love so well to visit and where they spend so much time. And wherefore? That they may cultivate the arts, and master the sciences, and amass the various knowledge on which you pride yourselves? No. But to look into the deeper mysteries, and explore the richer treasures, and pursue the sublimer discoveries of that faith which you disdain to accept, or even candidly and thoroughly to examine. Away with this pretentious sciolism! Go to the angels for a lesson of humility, and learn from them that if you would ever comprehend “these things” which so engross and ravish them,—if you would not die, and die eternally, without the sight of spiritual, saving truth,—you must search for it in a very different temper from that which has hitherto inspired your studies.

2. There is a keen rebuke in this Scripture for those who are *living in the neglect of the Gospel*.

I am not speaking now of avowed opposers of religion. The admonition, my unconverted hearers, is for you. What a reproach to any of us that we should be less interested in the work of redemption than the angels! They need no Saviour. It was not for their companions He died. Had He taken

on Him the nature of angels, this solicitude might have been anticipated. But it was our nature He assumed; our race He ransomed; our globe He made the theatre of those stupendous events to which the text alludes. These transactions are a study to the heavenly hosts. From every quarter they come here to learn lessons in theology, which no other sphere, not even heaven itself, could teach them. Employed in various ways in the affairs of our world,—in its harvests, its politics, its social progress, its wars, its storms and pestilences,—this is their chosen theme, their constant and delightful study. Nothing so invites, so entrances them as redemption. And among the marvels which attract and confound them, the indifference of men to this subject cannot be the least signal. Does it not strike you so? Are you not sometimes amazed at your own torpor,—your ungrateful, criminal insensibility to the Gospel? Are the angels to be more concerned about redemption than we are, for whom Christ died? Is all heaven to be moved for our deliverance, and are we to slumber on? Is all the generous sympathy and all the watchful care of these exalted beings for our salvation to be turned to nought by our wilful blindness and perversity? Assuredly, my dear hearers, this conduct must yield its fruit. You must yet confront these angels. If you persevere in this course they will meet you at the

bar of Christ to overwhelm you with their testimony to your unbelief and impenitency. How much better to emulate their example now; humbly and prayerfully to look into the things of redemption, and own the Lord of angels as *your* Redeemer.

CHRIST, THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

HAGGAI ii. 7.

“And the Desire of all nations shall come.”

THE last three Prophets, in the order of the Old Testament canon, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, lived after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. The two brief chapters which bear the name of Haggai are mainly taken up with exhortations concerning the rebuilding of the temple. Referring in the context to the splendor of Solomon's temple, he utters the remarkable prediction, that “the glory of the latter house should be greater than of the former.” “Remarkable,” I call it, because his countrymen, whom he was urging to arise and build, could not have expected, with their scant means, to erect a structure which should rival the gorgeous temple of their fathers; and, as a matter of fact, the edifice they reared came far short of it in architectural magnificence. This is a cogent reason for adhering to the traditionary interpretation of the text

as pointing to the *Messiah*. Eminent critics insist upon the rendering, "The beauty of the heathen, or of all nations, shall come;" *i.e.*, their beautiful things: their silver and gold and treasures of every kind shall come (in other phrase, shall be brought) into the promised kingdom foretold in the context. Even in this view the spirit of the passage is not in conflict with the other explanation; for the reference is confessedly to the reign of the Messiah. But in writing to the Hebrews, St. Paul quotes the preceding verses as applying (so he is commonly understood) the shaking of the earth and the heavens there mentioned, to the great civil and military convulsions, which heralded the advent of Christ and the opening of the new dispensation. It is in this connection the prophet affirms that "the Desire of all nations shall come;" and that the new temple shall be more glorious than the old. As this was not verified in a material sense, Christian commentators of all schools have generally agreed that it must refer to the actual presence of the Redeemer in the second temple. The former temple contained a visible emblem of the Deity, the cloud of glory shadowing the mercy-seat. But the Lord himself came to the later temple. That had the shadow; this the substance. The type was there; the ante-type here. The resplendent prophecy there; the more resplendent fulfilment here. On these grounds we seem warranted in adhering to the

ancient view, that the text is a prediction of the coming of the Messiah: "*The Desire of all nations, the promised Deliverer, shall come.*"

Let us, then, contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ as "*the Desire of all nations.*" The title, it must be admitted, requires some explanation, since He is, to so large a portion even of the nominally Christian world, "as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness."

It is reasonable to suppose that this title has some respect to *the design of the Father in sending Him into the world.* The Jews could not believe that salvation was intended for any but themselves. But this fond conceit was at variance with their own Scriptures. In the covenant of redemption, the language of the Father to the Son was, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isa. xlix. 6.) Accordingly, in that beautiful prophecy of the patriarch (Gen. xlix. 10), one of the earliest on record, it is declared, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Many times is this repeated along the line of prophecy. And when at length the infant Immanuel appears, the venerable Simeon, taking the beloved child in his arms, utters over Him that touching, prophetic

aspiration, "Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

We may not pry too curiously into the reasons of that economy which virtually restricted salvation for several centuries to the seed of Abraham. Enough that it was the declared purpose of God to remove those walls of separation, and provide a Redeemer for the "world." "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He did ask; and the purpose and promise which began to pass into fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, are still achieving their victories before our eyes.

This, indeed, may be cited as a separate confirmation of the title, *the Desire of all nations*.

While He has not, up to this time, been the actual Desire of all of every nation, nor even of all of any one nation, yet very many of different nations have owned and adored Him as their Lord. A spectator of that scene at Pentecost could scarcely have repressed the feeling, "Surely, the Desire of all nations has come." For nearly twenty distinct nations and tribes came forward, by their representatives, on that memorable day, to do homage to the Son of God. More than thrice twenty have followed in their

steps. Indeed, wherever His word has gone He has found friends and worshippers. In every land there have been some to desire Him. No nation so refined, none so debased, but there have been individuals among them to do Him honor.

He is the only Being that has appeared in the world of whom this could be affirmed. Every nation, pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian, has its heroes and sages. Within their respective countries they have received general homage. In some instances, they have acquired a world-wide celebrity. But for none of them could it be claimed that he was the Desire of all nations, in the sense in which this title is challenged for Jesus of Nazareth. Take the name of Confucius, of Aristotle, of Plato, of Mohammed even, and carry it round the world. Explain the ethical or religious system devised by any one of these distinguished men. Employ all the arts of learning and logic to enforce its *dicta* upon the human mind and conscience. And what have you accomplished? Here and there, among the more cultivated peoples, you will have interested a few persons in the study of the themes presented. In the case of Mohammedanism, you will have made converts among the ruder tribes. But whoever may have been your hero, you will not return from your mission with the feeling, "Here is the Desire of all nations." Nowhere—not in a single

bosom, or in respect to a single philosopher—will you have enkindled the emotions of love and gratitude, of trust and joy, which ravish so many hearts throughout those very lands when the name of Jesus Christ, the Anointed of God, is pronounced. It is not that they admire Him as they may admire a great captain like Cæsar or Wellington; nor that they revere Him as they may an illustrious sage, like Zoroaster or Socrates; nor that they honor Him as they may a generous philanthropist, like John Howard or William Wilberforce. It is something deeper, loftier, holier, and more lasting than this. And it is a common sentiment. It is a plant that will grow in every soil and climate,—on the rock, in the clay, in the sand; by the rivers and in the desert; at the equator and at the poles. Men of all kindreds and languages regard Jesus Christ with the same feelings. As between the cultivated scholars of Christendom and the African Caffir there is a chasm, intellectual, social, and moral, which no art of man can bridge over. And yet it needs only that two strangers, of whatever variant climes and tongues, standing on opposite sides of this abyss, shall be brought to Jesus Christ, to create a concord and a sympathy between them more complete and durable than any which springs out of the most endearing ties of natural affection. There may still be a wide difference in the breadth and comprehension

of their spiritual views; and nearly as great an inequality as before in their relative grades of mental culture. But when they think of the Redeemer, it will be with a common feeling of want and unworthiness, with a common affiance upon His sacrifice, and common sentiments of love and thankfulness. And this, in turn, will inspire a mutual esteem and make them feel that they are "one in Christ Jesus."

The case is stronger still. Christ is the one paramount Desire of those who have scarcely anything else in common. Men who are the poles apart on other topics,—on questions of literature, of politics, of trade, of metaphysics, of church-government,—use the same language when they bow before the mercy-seat, sing the same psalms of praise to the Redeemer, and labor with the same zeal to make Him known to others. Where He is concerned, all their hopes and aspirations coalesce, like needles pointing to the same pole. In this identity of experience there is ample reason why He should be styled the "Desire of all nations."

It may be alleged, however, that this view comprehends only those persons of whatever country who have been brought to a personal knowledge of Christ as their own Redeemer. Is there any sense in which the title in the text can be applied to Him in its literal import? Is He, in the obvious signification of the words, the "Desire of all nations"?

Of course he cannot be the *conscious* Desire of nations who have never heard of Him: this would be a self-contradiction. But He may be, nay, He actually is, the *unconscious* Desire even of these nations, and so the "Desire of all nations." That is to say, there are desires common to the nations who know Him not, and to the nations that know Him, which can be satisfied only in Jesus Christ. We may suppose a city to be scourged with a pestilence which baffles the skill of its physicians. There is a medicine which would cure the disease. The afflicted people do not yet know of it. But every one of them is *craving* such an antidote. Would it not be proper to say of this medicine, "It is the desire of all their hearts"? This is what we affirm of Christ in respect to the nations that have not heard of him.

He is their Desire, inasmuch as *they long for a competent and infallible* TEACHER. Enfeebled and depraved as human nature is, it craves truth as its proper aliment. The love of truth is natural to man. It may be blunted and borné down by vice and error and passion; but it is not annihilated. There is still a latent yearning that is not to be pacified until it finds the truth which God has appointed as its nutriment. If proof of this be needed, look around. What is the mainspring of that activity which pervades the intellectual world? The pursuit of truth (I do not say of spiritual and saving truth) is the

grand aim which engrosses all minds. In every branch of letters, in every science, in every department of society, in all professions and occupations, men are seeking after truth. And it is no less the anxious aspiration of many burdened hearts amidst the gloom of paganism, and in the darkness of skepticism, "*What is truth?*" Beyond the sphere of the Christian Scriptures, mankind have always been the sport of ignorance and error. One teacher follows another, and one system supplants another, each leading the multitude captive for the time, but all deceptive and tantalizing. These systems vary indefinitely among themselves. Some are more rational and of better moral tendency than others; are more consistent, more practical, and more useful. But they labor under the same fatal defects: they are none of them clear enough to answer the purposes of a chart; and none of them are clothed with authority. The voice with which they speak is the voice of feeble, short-sighted man; and the course of events is constantly branding their utterances with ignorance and folly.

Left to these blind guides, the nations have lived and died, wandering sadly through the mazes of error. Here and there they have rested for a while in some system which wore a better semblance than the one it superseded. But after a while this also has proved an *ignis-fatuus*, and they have found them-

selves without support or asylum. These changes, however, have rather fostered than impaired the inward craving for some wise, unerring, and authoritative teacher. Worn and wearied with perpetual disappointments, humanity has longed for the advent of One who could resolve its doubts, allay its fears, and re-inspire its hopes, by unfolding to it immortal TRUTH,—TRUTH in its purity, its fulness, its benevolence, and its Divine sanctions. Such a Teacher appeared in the Son of God incarnate. He came to reveal the truth on all those subjects which are of vital importance to man; to dispel his ignorance, rectify his mistakes, and conduct him where he could plant his feet on solid ground, and feel that he had exchanged light for darkness, certainty for conjecture, and peace for hopeless perplexity and apprehension. So much was this the character of Christ as a Teacher, that He could even, without extravagance or presumption, lay His hand upon His breast and say, "I AM THE TRUTH." For all essential and saving truth emanates from, and centres in, Him. And in this view we vindicate the title applied to Him by the prophet, as the "Desire of all nations."

Another mute prophecy of His advent, virtually included in the one just considered, is to be found in *the general longing of mankind for a clearer manifestation of the Deity.*

Man has been sufficiently degraded by sin ; but he must have been completely brutalized not to retain some sense of a Higher Power to whom he owed allegiance. There is an ineradicable law written upon his heart, which points to a sovereignty without himself, and makes him yearn for its revelation. He must have a god. If he cannot have the true God, he will fashion gods to himself. This he has been doing from the period of the primal apostasy. And if anything could abase the pride of human reason, it would be to look over the globe and see the objects which man has deified. Not to go into details, which the present argument does not call for, there is no visible thing, from the sun in the heavens to the worm we tread upon, that has not by some tribe or nation been exalted into a god. The mythologies alike of the most polished and the most ignorant peoples, have abounded with gods created by men's fears and hopes out of their own passions and vices. The vague but deep-seated craving after a blending of the seen and the unseen, the Divine and the human, the Creator and the creature, has found expression, on the one hand, in the apotheosis of heroes ; and on the other, in the incarnations of the Deity : the former, as in the deified warriors of Greece and Rome, lifting up man to God ; the latter, as in the avatars of the Hindoos, bringing God down to man. Everywhere, and in all

ages, the deathless principle in man has been pressing against the impenetrable curtain which shuts us in, essaying to find or make some rent through which it might gain a transient glimpse of that mysterious Being who sits there enthroned in awful majesty, if, peradventure, there might be some subtle bond of sympathy to link His nature with our own.

In other words, man has sought a clearer manifestation of the Deity, and he has hoped to behold Him as, in some way, a sharer of our humanity. This universal yearning—for so we are warranted in regarding it—is met in the mission of Jesus Christ. The desire of all nations is satisfied in Him. As a revelation of God, His presence throws into shadow the brightest glories of the Divinity impressed upon the works of creation and providence. No nation need now ask in despondency, "What is God?" For in the Person of the Redeemer He offers Himself to the contemplation and homage of the world, with His perfections unimpaired, and yet so veiled that mortal eyes can look upon them. And here, too, is the human with the Divine. Here is the strange commingling of the might and majesty, the immensity and holiness of the Godhead, with the innocent infirmities, the love and the pity and the tenderness of a fellow-man and fellow-sufferer. *Ecce Homo! Ecce Deus!* Behold the Man! Behold the God! What craving of the soul is not provided

for here? Summon the nations from afar,—“from earth’s remotest bound,”—Jew and Gentile, Christian and pagan, polytheist and pantheist: let them look upon our glorious Immanuel and say whether all they have longed to know concerning God is not revealed in Jesus Christ; whether He does not meet all the demands of their reason and all the yearnings of their hearts! Do we err, then, when we affirm that “the Desire of all nations” has come?

With still greater emphasis may we point to Christ as “the Desire of all nations” in respect to *His redeeming work*.

The grand necessity of the race is a Saviour. From the hour Adam hid himself from his Maker in the garden until now this has been man’s admitted, paramount, universal want. Every religion is founded upon it,—even the most revolting forms of polytheism, and the devil-worship of the poor Africans. Wherever man is there is a sense of sin and danger; a feeling of exposure to penalty; the dread of an offended Deity. This sentiment has ever expressed itself in one and the same form, that of sacrifice. Inheriting the conviction from the first pair, which they must have received by direct revelation, mankind have everywhere acted upon the belief that the offering up of life was essential to placate the God, too often the unknown God, they had displeased. It is no mere *dictum* of the Bible,

“Without shedding of blood there can be no remission.” It is part of the “law written upon the heart.” Witness the animals daily offered upon a million of altars. Witness the human victims immolated sometimes by hecatombs. They all mean the same thing. They attest the universal conscience of guilt, and the necessity of appeasing the Deity by the sacrifice of life. The feeling is, that the more costly the sacrifice the more effectual is the expiation. Men have, therefore, brought to the altar their choicest animals. Nations have exulted in human sacrifices. And in great emergencies they have sought to avert public danger by selecting the noblest and most beautiful of their young men and maidens, and devoting them to slaughter with imposing religious rites.

This is one aspect of the question before us. It has another of kindred significance. The literature of all nations abounds with allusions to the bondage in which man is held by sin, and the necessity of deliverance from it. The burden which you and I feel is not peculiar to us, nor to the people of Christian lands. Earnest and thoughtful men, who never saw the first glimmer of light from the Sun of righteousness, have felt and deplored it. They have described, as we describe, the fierce contest between the good and the evil principles in the breast. They have mourned their subjection to their inferior appe-

tites. They have sighed for deliverance from this cruel thralldom; for freedom from the tyranny of sin. This is the other aspect of the question.

Now, in neither of these relations has man been able to annul the curse or to escape from it. In rare instances a patient adherence to the maxims of some philosophic school has relaxed the fetters of sin. In still more, the blood of a victim has brought transient peace of conscience. But there has been no general and permanent relief. Sin has still ruled the soul with a rod of iron. Conscience has still clamored. And the race has struggled on under its crushing sorrows, longing for a true expiation and an actual deliverance.

The expiation has been made. The deliverance has come. In *the Cross of Christ* there is that which will satisfy even these yearnings,—the deepest, the saddest, the most abiding, the most universal, known to fallen humanity. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.” Here is the sublime and precious truth that man has been groping after all adown the ages; the truth which so many breaking hearts have waited for through the weary vigils of a long night of pagan darkness. Stay the uplifted axe. God needs not your victims. “All the beasts of the forest are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of

rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Alas, these sacrifices have too often been offered, and He "would not away with them." *There is His sacrifice,—on the cross.* That blood has an infinite value. It cries to heaven for mercy. It takes away sin. It takes away all sin. It makes the scarlet soul like snow, and the crimson like wool. It avails for the Jew and for the Gentile. It brings pardon and it brings peace. It breaks the dominion of sin in the breast. It insures deliverance as well from the inward reign of depravity as from its outward curse. And in the end, it insures to the once enslaved and loathsome sinner a heaven of perfect purity and everlasting joy.

Thus fully are the essential wants of the soul met by the sacrifice of the Son of God; and we claim for Him, therefore, this honored title of the "Desire of all nations."

It has now been shown that among the deep-seated and universal sentiments of the human race are these, to wit:—They desire a competent and infallible Teacher. They desire a clearer manifestation of the Deity. And they desire a true atonement for sin, and complete deliverance from its servitude and corruption. These longings of humanity (and if the time would permit others might be specified) are thoroughly met and satis-

fied in Jesus Christ, and prove Him to be "THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS."

Our prophet, writing five hundred years before the advent, says, "The Desire of all nations *shall come.*" You would naturally expect me to speak of His actual coming. But we have been so long beguiled by the august and touching title under which He is here presented to us, that a few words only can be devoted to His advent.

As regards the time of His coming, reference has already been made to the statement in the context, that it was to be while the temple, then about to be built, was standing. This is one of the texts upon which we rely in our controversy with the Jews. They are looking for a Messiah yet to come. Haggai tells them that their Messiah was to come during the period of the second temple; and that His presence would make "the glory of this latter house greater than of the former." It is an established historical fact that the Jews themselves expected the Messiah to appear in this temple, down to the time when Vespasian destroyed it. Their posterity, to evade the force of the testimony from this prediction, allege that the temple in which Jesus appeared was not this but a third temple, erected by Herod. The answer is, that this temple was never wholly destroyed; that Herod repaired it, and no doubt rebuilt portions of the edifice; that this is evident from

the fact that, during the entire "forty-six years" in which he was engaged in this work, there was a temple at Jerusalem in which the worship of God was conducted; and that, in point of fact, the Jews of those days made no distinction between the temple of Zerubbabel and that of Herod, but referred to them as one and the same temple.

There are various other prophecies which bear upon the question of the *period* appointed for the advent; but it will not be necessary to cite them here. It will be more to our purpose to advert briefly to the manner of the Messiah's coming.

This, too, was distinctly pointed out by the pen of prophecy, especially in those remarkable predictions, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. vii. 14); and "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given," etc. (Isa. ix. 6). Yet no one of Haggai's time, interpreting his language of the Messiah, could well have supposed that He would *so* come. Nay, it seems very wonderful to *us* before whom the whole history has been enrolled. The inspired portraiture presents Him to us as the "Desire of all nations;" as a Teacher, Leader, Deliverer, Saviour, and Comforter, who was the yearning of all hearts; whose coming, therefore, would be the great event of the ages; the transaction which, as might be presumed, would gather upon itself the profound attention and the deepest

sympathies of the whole world. Men of that day would ask,—they *did* ask,—with an absorbing interest, “Where and how will the ‘Desire of all nations’ make His appearance?” And *we* marvel afresh as often as we turn to Bethlehem and behold “the Desire of all nations” lying a helpless infant in that manger.

Step into that crowded caravansary, and you will exclaim with the apostle, “Great is the mystery of godliness!” What wonders meet and mingle in this child! Holding in your hand, not the full blaze of prophecy, but the single taper before us, how incomprehensible does it seem that the most intense longings of all nations should be pointing unconsciously to this sleeping babe; that the sun in his radiant circuit should shine upon no palace and no hovel from which the winds of heaven, as they sweep by, do not waft a pensive sigh towards this gentle infant; that in this tiny frame there should be garnered up treasures of wisdom and love and sympathy enough to fill to overflowing all human bosoms; and that we should be told of a day in the distant future when myriads of ransomed sinners shall go up in shining robes, and proclaim to an assembled universe that this child was the Desire of their hearts, and in Him their every craving had been satisfied: nay, that after they were all satisfied, the fulness of grace and love that dwelt in Him was no

more impaired than is the splendor of the sun by the beams with which he floods the globe in a single diurnal revolution.

And yet, while we wonder, we perceive and admire the mingled wisdom and benevolence of this provision. It was the gracious design of our Heavenly Father, not simply to save His people from their sins, but to save them in a way which should invest their deliverance with its highest possible interest and value. This end has been effectually secured by the arrangement we have been contemplating. To the attributes of the Godhead our Redeemer adds not only the human nature, but a personal experience of life through its several stages and its countless vicissitudes. And thus He has become a "merciful and faithful High-Priest," "like unto His brethren," a sharer of their temptations and trials. This makes salvation doubly precious to us. Is there any Christian mother who, as she looks upon her infant, is not cheered by the reflection that Jesus was once cradled in a mother's arms? Is it not a sweet encouragement to the young to go with freedom to the Saviour, that they know He was once a child? Does it not hallow our household ties and pleasures to remember that He spent the greater part of His days within the sacred precincts of a family circle? And do not the tempted and troubled of every name find comfort in the

thought, that He has made the entire pilgrimage of life, from childhood to maturity, and tasted of all its sorrows? Let us bless God, then, that the "Desire of all nations" did stoop to be "made of a woman," and to enter the world as the Babe of Bethlehem.

But we must not pursue this theme. It is time to suggest one or two lessons, by way of turning the subject to some practical account.

It is quite apparent that if Christ be the "Desire (even the unconscious desire) of all nations," then *no nation can enjoy true and permanent prosperity except by receiving and honoring Him*. The real doctrine of this Scripture is, that nothing can take the place of Christ. A nation may have wealth and intelligence, power and splendor, but if it reject *His* reign, "Ichabod" is written upon its glory. The nation or kingdom that will not serve Him shall perish. The Jews in their blindness cried, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" and for eighteen centuries they have been without a country or an organized government. Other nations have refused Him their homage, and He has given them over to the tyranny of their own passions, to internal strife and foreign aggression. Can any Christian doubt that *we* have suffered because of our unfaithfulness to Christ, the Head of all principality and power? Because we have not sought and cherished Him as our great "Desire;" have not been careful to guard His rights;

have contemned His authority; have offered to our own wisdom and might the sacrifices which were due to Him alone? Never until we return to Him can we look for true peace and lasting prosperity.

Again, if Christ be the "Desire of all nations," then *the cause of Missions deserves our support as the great interest of earth.*

Two-thirds or three-fourths of the race are still sitting in darkness. They are longing and sighing for a Deliverer, and there is no Deliverer for them but Jesus of Nazareth. His name never fell upon their ears. But it is for Him they are yearning. Nor they only. All peoples, Christian as well as pagan, stand in equal need of Him: all *desire* Him. He alone can cure the world's maladies. He alone can bring salvation to the nations. It is our privilege to make Him known to them. This is our prime duty to them and to Him. A godlike service it is to minister such relief to our perishing fellow-creatures; to point them to One who can satisfy their restless cravings after happiness, and lift them up out of the depths of misery and crime to the dignity and felicity of sons of God. Can you deny the Missionary cause your sympathy, or be content with a meagre and reluctant support of it? This cause must and will prosper. In the end it will achieve a glorious triumph. "The Desire of all nations" will one day be hailed by all nations as their Lord. "He shall

be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." "The Gentiles shall come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising." "Men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." And in that day it will not much comfort you to reflect that you took no part in helping on this glorious millennium.

But our subject comes still nearer home. If Christ be "the Desire of all nations," *what is He to us individually?* Is He the Desire of *our* hearts? This question is vital. Heaven and hell hang upon it. In God's esteem, the test of character is not what we may be in race or color, in social position, in mental culture, in religious profession, but what we are *Christ-ward*. That we all have earnest and permanent desires which can be satisfied only in Him, has already been shown. But with us, unlike the heathen who have the mere light of nature to guide them, these desires must point consciously to Christ. We must desire Him in all His offices, not only as our Prophet to instruct, and our High-Priest to atone for us, but as our King, to set up His throne in our hearts, and put His gentle yoke upon our necks, and control our every act and word and thought. We must desire Him with a vehement and operative desire,—a desire which shall pervade the whole character, and reveal itself in a faithful obedience to His

commands, and the culture of all the graces He enjoins. We must desire Him with the feeling that He is the "one thing needful; that He *must* be ours, and that to miss of Him would be a calamity for which the acquisition of "the whole world" would be no equivalent.

If Christ be our "Desire" in some such way as this, we may prepare to rejoice with Him in the day when "all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations serve Him."

But if you are utter strangers to this feeling; if after having heard of Christ from your cradles up you still "see no beauty in Him that you should desire Him," what blindness must have settled upon your minds! what ingratitude and obduracy have taken possession of your hearts! Sad enough will it be if when you stand at His bar He shall have no desire for *you*,—sad enough if the rejoicings with which you now hail the return of the Christmas Festival should terminate in endless, hopeless sorrow that you ever heard of a Saviour's birth!

GOD THE ONLY ADEQUATE PORTION
OF THE SOUL.

PSALM lxxiii. 25.

“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”

THE writer of this Psalm had been painfully perplexed, as many persons are still, with the apparent incongruity between certain providential arrangements and the perfections of the Deity. He could not reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the righteous sovereignty of God. But when he “came to the Sanctuary” and learned what was to be their “end;” when he found that all the inequalities of the present life would be adjusted hereafter; he was more than satisfied; he was ashamed and humbled at his misgivings. He accounts it as a mercy that he had not been cast off for his unbelief and stupidity. And with a heart overflowing with gratitude, he protests anew his confidence in the faithfulness of God, and his entire devotion to His service.

“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.”

The theme presented in the text is, GOD THE ONLY PROPER AND ADEQUATE PORTION OF THE SOUL; a theme which it will require eternity to unfold, but which may well be a frequent, as it must be a profitable, subject of our meditations here.

Ever since the apostasy the cry of mankind has been, “Who will show us any good?” In all ages, in all lands, with all tribes and all professions of men, the eager, restless, unsatisfied demand has been, “Who will show us any good?” Our text supplies the only answer to this universal craving of humanity.

1. God is the proper portion of the soul, because *He is the only underived and absolute good.*

“Why callest thou me good?” said our Saviour to the young ruler: “None is good save One, that is God.” His meaning was that God alone is good essentially and in Himself; and that none other is good in comparison with Him. In a subordinate sense, many of His rational creatures are good; all of them, indeed, of whom we have any knowledge, except man and the lost angels; and man, as re-

newed, has a spark of goodness in him which will burn and shine forever. But all this is derived goodness. As the planets glow with borrowed light, so men and angels are arrayed in reflected or transmitted holiness. Their purity is but the streams; God is the Fountain. Whatever of virtue and truth, of moral worth and spiritual beauty, there may be in any part of the universe, among our race or other races, all must be referred to Him as its source. Even those elevated traits, occasionally detected among the untutored heathen, the benevolent and manly qualities which elicit general admiration, are but scattered and diluted emanations from His goodness, broken and feeble rays of the Sun of righteousness gleaming here and there amidst the depths of human depravity and misery.

Nor are the highest forms of earthly goodness free from defect. None are wholly good. The loveliest characters have their frailties. Those who walk with God sometimes falter. The utmost that can be claimed for any of our race is, that they excel in certain graces; or that in the main they are assimilated to God and breathe the spirit of heaven.

But His goodness is without a stain. It has no imperfection, and knows no abatement. Theirs may change. Even the angels are not in themselves indefectible. A part of them, once holy, have lost their holiness; and the same catastrophe might over-

take the rest, were not the everlasting arms underneath them. His excellence, however, is of the very essence of His being :

“ He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be ;”

and His goodness partakes of the immutability of His nature : it can no more fail than He Himself can cease to exist. God is, therefore, the only undefived and absolute good ; and as such, the proper portion of the soul.

2. He is a good *adapted to the nature and necessities of the soul.*

This needs no other proof than the fact that man was made originally in the Divine image ; and whatever changes may have occurred in his character and condition, his nature is unchanged. A sick man is still a man ; and a soul, dislocated and enervated by sin, is still a soul. As such it can find its supreme happiness only in God. Like seeks its like. A spiritual being must have a spiritual portion. While allied to a sentient, physical frame-work, and the tenant of a material world, its tastes and pursuits will be in keeping with its circumstances. But its inherent, constitutional desires, those which pertain to it equally in the body and out of the body, can never find their full gratification in objects of sense. These desires demand a spiritual good. With the renewed

soul they demand a portion that is holy as well as spiritual. Such a soul can no more be satisfied with any of the common objects of pursuit among men than the body can be nourished upon sentiment and fancy. Its craving for something radically different in kind, as well as higher and better, springs neither from caprice nor education, but from the organic law of its being. The Creator has so constituted us that we can find true peace and content only in Himself. In the ever-increasing knowledge of God, and an ever-growing conformity to God, the soul is satisfied. This is the nourishment for which it yearns; and here it possesses the only portion which can cure it of its restlessness.

Were it needful, we might cite on this point the involuntary testimony of men of the world. The coveted wealth is secured; the hard-earned chaplet is won; but there is a void within still, a conscious void which these can neither appease nor beguile. There is no solid peace for the soul until it is able to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

3. This will be further evident from considering that *God is an infinite good.*

It may seem strong language, but humble as is the place assigned to man in the scale of intelligent beings, nothing short of an infinite good can fully

meet the exigencies of his nature. Of this we have a clear intimation in the familiar fact just adverted to, the sense of insufficiency which attaches to all human pursuits. "All things are full of labor: man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Undoubtedly there is enough in the objects and interests of this life to stimulate our passions and stir us up to a pleasurable activity; and he must be lacking either in penetration or in candor who can deny that there is a great deal of enjoyment and, if you will, of happiness derived from mere earthly avocations and possessions. But this is quite compatible with the statement that worldly prosperity is very often attended with a secret satiety and disgust; and certainly with the doctrine that there is nothing in the aims and occupations of this life which could afford the soul durable and complete satisfaction. If under the most propitious circumstances the confession is often extorted from the pampered children of fortune which fell from the lips of the most accomplished and powerful potentate of his age, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" how apparent must it be that the soul will demand for its eternal dowry some portion transcending in extent and value all that this world has to offer! Its rational and moral powers,

even when matured with the highest culture and carried up to the standard of a Newton or a Bacon, are still in their infancy in this life. The process of development and expansion, commenced here, must go on with their being. The loftiest attainments made on earth will one day seem as the scanty rudiments of the nursery appeared to them at death. And it is reasonable to presume that they will advance in the acquisition of knowledge until they soar beyond the successive gradations which now mark the sublime endowments of the loftiest angels. It will not do to fix limits to the possible acquisitions of an intelligence like the human soul. The authoritative announcement that a period might come, though millions of ages distant, when it would reach the extreme boundary of knowledge and know all that ever could be known, would excite emotions of surprise and mortification even now in every breast which has awoke to the consciousness of its powers. While there is nothing with which we are more profoundly impressed than our inability to compass the great ocean of truth that is spread out before us, and especially to sound the depths of the Divine Nature, we would not, for worlds upon worlds, have it otherwise. We require an illimitable, incomprehensible God.

“Could we conceive Him, God He could not be;
Or He not God, or we could not be men.”

The mind loves to lose itself in the infinitude of His being. And in this very attribute devotion finds one of its chief supports. Who that has emerged from the foul degeneracy of paganism could worship a god capable of being described or conceived? The moment a pretended deity is brought within the sweep of our measuring lines, he ceases to be a deity to us. The sentiment of reverence palsies before a finite god. And if such a god were on the throne, there would be no anthems in heaven.

But no such Being fills the throne. "Behold God is great and we know Him not, neither can the number of His years be searched out." "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods." "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is His name, great in counsel and mighty in work." "Great is our God, and of great power : His understanding is infinite." "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven ; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell ; what canst thou know?"

"Alone, Invisible, Immortal One !

What know we more

Of Thee, what need to know, than thou hast taught,

And bid'st us still repeat at morn and even?

God! Everlasting Father! Holy One!

Our God, our Father, our Eternal All!

Source whence we came, and whither we return ;

Who made our spirits, who our bodies made,

Who made the heaven, who made the flowery land,
Who made all made, who orders, governs all;
Who walks upon the wind, who holds the wave
In hollow of Thy hand; whom thunders wait,
Whom tempests serve, whom flaming fires obey;
Who guides the circuit of the endless years,
And sit'st on high and mak'st creation's top
Thy footstool, and behold'st below Thee, all—
All nought, all less than nought, and vanity.”*

Here is a God we can adore. Here the intense longings of the soul are satisfied. In this august, ever-present, all-seeing, all-controlling Divinity, our minds repose with the assurance that His nature is not only suited to our nature, but absolutely boundless and unsearchable. As we meditate upon His perfections, our contemplations are disturbed by no intrusive fear that a period may arrive when we shall have explored every part of His being, and “found out the Almighty unto perfection.” Our confidence is as firm as it is joyful, that the infinite disparity there is between His being and our own will never be lessened; and that whatever attainments we may make in knowledge, in holiness, or in happiness, we shall not have advanced a single step towards exhausting the fulness of the God-head.

4. This of course implies that God *is an eternal*

* Polloc's, B. vi.

good,—which may be mentioned as another proof that He is the only adequate portion for the soul.

However suitable a possession might be to our capacities, or however measureless in its extent, it would be no fit heritage for us unless it were immortal. We need a portion as indestructible as we are ourselves. So reason and revelation unite in teaching. And the fatal mistake which men make, lies in overlooking this. What are riches and honors as an endowment for the soul? “As he came forth from his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor which he may carry away in his hand.” Is Dives the better off now for his purple and fine linen? Is Belshazzar the better off for his throne and diadem? There is a writing upon the wall over against all this world’s pageantry; but men’s eyes are holden, and they do not see it. The instant the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken, they have to see it. Then the appalling discovery is forced upon them that they are portionless forever! But the stroke which severs them from their portion consummates the investiture of the Christian with his. As the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (or change of mind), so when He says to a creature, “I will be thy God,” it is an irreversible and inalienable grant. He will not annul it, and no other can. It is written in the bond, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

And the humblest believer may use those majestic words, in comparison with which all the titles and demesnes of royalty are but gilded nothings, "This God is our God for ever and ever."

5. As the crowning argument to show that God is the proper portion of the soul, it may be added that *He is a most comprehensive good.*

Where He gives Himself, He gives every other good. The very first line of the Christian's charter, "I will be thy God," comprises all that follows. It is not necessary to prove that a wise and affectionate father will feed and clothe and educate his children. Can our Father in heaven do less? Having the ability, He must also have the disposition, to do everything for them which their welfare may demand. An earthly parent may err in judgment, or he may lack the means to accomplish his purposes; but neither of these contingencies can occur with God. Guided by infinite wisdom and goodness, and with the resources of the universe at His command, He can never fail to do for His people just what their happiness may require. In this sense we are to understand that saying of the apostle, "All things are yours." Tested by a mere earthly standard, this might be thought a very random affirmation; the more so as he has said in the same Epistle, "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God has chosen" for His people the

“foolish,” the “base,” and the “weak” of this world. But the same apostle has again described these poor disciples, himself among them, as “having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” To those who know anything of the Scriptures the paradox is sufficiently intelligible. God is the only Source and Giver alike of temporal and spiritual blessings. These He bestows upon His people in the manner and measure best adapted to their circumstances. Whether riches or poverty or a competence be best for them; whether health or sickness; whether a tranquil or a troubled life; whether obscurity or renown; where they are to live and what they are to do; their successes and reverses; their joys and sorrows; all these are matters for Him to dispose. Enough that He has engaged never to leave nor forsake them; to make all things work together for their good; to bring them off more than conquerors over sin and death; and to receive them at length into His everlasting glory. This munificent dowry belongs to every child of God. And we claim for the believer’s portion, therefore, the pre-eminent distinction, that it comprises whatever of real good there may be in the various objects other men covet, and, superadded to this, a glorious inheritance in reversion, which is “incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

I have thus endeavored to illustrate the truth that

GOD is the only proper and adequate portion of the soul, by showing that He is *the only underived and absolute good*; a good adapted to the necessities of our spiritual nature; an infinite good; an eternal good; and a most comprehensive good.

The Psalmist, it will be observed, does more than affirm that God is his portion. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." He gives intensity to the averment by throwing it into this comparative form, and protesting his love to God above his affection for any creature in heaven or on earth. This could not be designed as any disparagement either of the pious dead or of the living. Of the personal history of the writer of the Psalm (Asaph) we know very little. But we cannot err in supposing that he had his earthly attachments and friendships; and that there were many among the ransomed in glory whose names were sacred to him, and with whom he was hoping to be one day united. But with him every other passion was subordinated to that highest and best of all affections, love to God. Heaven was heaven to him because it was the abode of God. And earth was tolerable or, as might be, joyful to him because it was part of God's domain, and he was kept here to do or to suffer God's holy will. It was the consideration of GOD in one or another aspect which determined his principles,

swayed his affections, and gave tone to his whole character.

That it becomes every one to cultivate this spirit must be too apparent to require argument. As God is the only adequate portion of the soul, so His right to our supreme veneration and homage is plenary and irrefragable. This right is inseparable from the relations He sustains to us. As our Creator, Preserver, Governor, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, He has a paramount title to our love and obedience; a title so strong that no conceivable combination of circumstances could make it stronger. There may be other sovereigns or magistrates to whom we owe fealty; but no earthly power may divide the allegiance we owe to God. We may have other benefactors; but none to compare with God. And other friends; but none so worthy of our affection as God. Accordingly, it is our sentiments God-ward which determine our moral character and condition. If we are radically wrong here we are wrong everywhere. No benevolence towards our fellow-creatures can atone for the want of supreme love to the Creator. No brilliant example of integrity and philanthropy can compensate for the absence of piety towards God. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Without this element the mainspring of all godli-

ness, the very foundation of personal religion, is wanting. There may be a character adorned with many attractive qualities; but it is still of the "earth, earthy," and must follow the law which controls the destiny of all things earthly. Until God is enthroned in the heart to the exclusion of every rival, a fatal defect must attach to its best virtues and performances. The great lesson to be learned, the decisive victory to be won, is this: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Until this principle is lodged in the soul, whatever we may be in the eyes of men, we are to Him who looks upon the heart only as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Nor are other arguments wanting to show the importance of cultivating this spirit. Nothing short of this can, in an equal degree, impart stability of character and peace of mind. We are for the most part the sport of vagrant passions or of capricious circumstances. We find ourselves among currents we cannot control. If we lay up our treasure here, we are vexed with the loss or harassed with the care of it. If we place our affections here, they may at any moment be blighted. The wisest plans may miscarry. The surest props may fail us. Life is with most persons a succession of undesirable changes. God alone is sufficient to fill our capacities. He only, amidst all fluctuations, is immutable. He is both

able and willing to keep that which is committed to Him. "Who is God save the Lord? And who is a Rock save our God?" "He will ever be mindful of His covenant." "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" "Not one thing hath failed [nor ever shall fail] of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken concerning Israel."

This supplies the Refuge we all need. Helpless, wayward, self-confident, corruption within and temptation without, exposed to disease and hastening to the tomb, how obvious is the duty, how unspeakable the privilege, of committing our concerns into His hands, and taking Him as our portion! How manifest is it that we should hold all earthly bonds as secondary to the ties which bind us to God, and even anticipate heaven chiefly as His dwelling-place! And yet how remiss we are in a duty so palpable and so urgent! Three great hinderances retard us.

(1) *There is the strength of sin.* The lesson we have to master is one at which the carnal mind revolts. "Whom have I in earth or heaven but Thee?" This is altogether alien from flesh and blood; and it comes in conflict with the depravity which lingers in every renewed heart. The question still is, "Who shall reign?" And although the ultimate issue is not doubtful, an incessant and painful struggle must

be kept up in order to maintain the authority of God's law in the soul.

(2) *There is the power of sense.* We are required to love an unseen God, a Being whose spiritual nature baffles our conceptions. We are required to love Him supremely and constantly; to account His favor as our greatest blessing; and to choose His glory above every other aim and interest. As in rivalry with these lofty and apparently impracticable demands, numerous objects solicit our hearts, and make their appeal where we are most accessible,—to our senses. Tenants of a material world, immersed in material pursuits and enjoyments, and so constituted that these objects must exert a powerful influence upon us, no feeble or transient effort can disengage us from their fascinations and bind us with a grateful and confiding loyalty to the throne of the invisible Jehovah. Not until the Omnipotent Spirit has new-created us, and implanted in our breasts a divine faith in Jesus Christ, can we thus replace the things which are seen with the things that are unseen. And even then, after this mighty transformation has been wrought, and the soul has been indissolubly united to the Saviour, there is a perpetual tendency to fall back under the dominion of sense which no human energy is able to withstand. He who begins the work must consummate it. Under His guidance, and in His strength, the feeblest

believer may, in the end, be able to enter with a true sympathy into the feelings of the Psalmist, and exclaim, "Whom have I in earth or heaven but Thee?"

(3) There is *the force of earthly affection*. "It is an awful and an arduous thing to root out every affection for earthly things, so as to live for another world." So wrote that man of God, Henry Martyn, in India, more than a half-century ago; and they know little of Christianity in its experimental power who cannot verify the remark. With Martyn it was a sentiment drawn from the profoundest and most sacred depths of his experience. Few persons have passed through so fearful a trial as he did, in having "every affection for earthly things" brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. I speak not now of the passions to which most men are more or less enslaved, and which are justly reckoned as among the chief barriers to salvation. Avarice, ambition, sensual pleasure, literature,—these slay their thousands and their tens of thousands. But it is not these only that intercept the soul's communion with God, and make it so hard to say, "Whom have I but Thee?" The affections become snares to us. They go out, not perhaps after forbidden objects, but with a forbidden vehemence. There is a practical forgetfulness of that monition, "Whoso loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and

whoso loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." The group that sit around our tables, the friends who have grown upon our esteem through a long and cherished intercourse, and by a mutual fellowship in the trials of life, insensibly beguile our affections, and usurp a place to which they have no claim.

"Our dearest joys and nearest friends,
The partners of our blood,
How they divide our wavering minds,
And leave but half for God!"

This is true no less of the dead than of the living. The Psalmist could say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" And this must be the feeling of every Christian in his better moments. His purest and strongest aspirations will soar to God. Heaven will present itself to his mind as the habitation of God. And to be with God and like God will fill up his conceptions of the perfect felicity he is anticipating. But there are others in heaven, too,—those whom we loved in life and still love in death,—nay, who still live in our heart of hearts, and will live there forever. It *must* add to the attractions of heaven that some of our costliest jewels are garnered there. But is this sentiment always subordinate—as it should be? Even the sainted dead must not be permitted to come in between our souls and God.

It is their feeling, now that they stand and adore before the throne, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" and it should be our feeling too.

"And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." It is their conscious inability to say *this*; the ascendancy they have allowed their earthly attachments to acquire, and the inroads which earthly idols (if I may so speak) have made upon their spiritual affections, which chain very many Christians to the world, and deprive them of the true enjoyment of religion.

The strength of sin; the power of sense; the force of natural affection;—these are the hinderances which clog our upward flight, and forbid our exclaiming in rapture, "Whom have I in earth or heaven but Thee?"

It is a supposable case, that the prevalent feeling with no small portion of those present, while listening to this discourse, may have been, "How little does that text express my state of mind! When I think of heaven at all, my mind dwells far more upon its society, its employments, and its happiness, than upon God. And as to earth, instead of saying, 'There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee,' there are numerous objects on which my affections are fastened, in some cases, I fear, with an intensity which almost precludes the love of God."

If it be thus with you, does it never occur to you that the indisposition to think of God, the unwillingness to take Him as one's portion, must betoken a sad derangement of the moral condition of the soul? And is there no cause for alarm where one is conscious of setting the creature above the Creator, and of using the gifts of God every hour without any suitable acknowledgment of the Giver?

We all hope to get to heaven. But the best preparation for heaven, and the only proper pledge of it, lies in the culture of the spirit which reigns there; and this is the spirit we have been delineating. To the august inhabitants of that world, from the loftiest seraph down to the redeemed infant which is lisping its praises before the throne, God is ALL IN ALL. How can we ever join them unless He is "all in all" to us? Nay, without this how can we make the most of the present life? We need—we must have—something substantial and lasting; and this the world has not to give. "The depth saith, 'It is not in me;' and the sea saith, 'It is not with me.' It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." Even this is but a feeble statement of the case. To deny to gold and silver, the splendor

and honors of earth, any capacity to satisfy the cravings of the soul, may reach the case of the multitude; but there are those whom it will not reach. These are persons of a finer mould, of a noble culture, of generous susceptibilities, and of warm affections. They are in no danger of becoming idolaters of mammon. They have no ambition to shine before the world. But they must have something to love. Their home is in the empire of the heart. Love is the element they breathe, and they cannot be happy without it. And what is the common allotment of these persons? I will not say a heritage of sorrow, because that might be going too far. But I will say that, while they have more true enjoyment of life than the masses around them, while the happiness they experience is immeasurably superior to that derived from the mere acquisition of riches or renown, they are certain to encounter frequent and painful trials. Those pure affections which infold them as in robes of light and loveliness, *will* go out in quest of congenial objects. It may be a wife or husband. It may be a group of children. It may be one or two chosen friends;—or all of these combined. But whatever the objects, they are loved, and doted on, and clung to with a fondness and a tenacity which makes them, as it were, a part of their being. If this could last, there were less room for our moral. But it cannot last:

“ There is no union here of hearts
That finds not here an end.”

By and by the blow falls ; and it falls with a crushing weight. It is as when a storm sweeps through a vineyard and prostrates the trellises. Every prop that is snapt asunder carries down its load of luxuriant, lacerated vines. And so, after one of these strokes, you not only miss a familiar form, but you find the affections which clustered around and decorated it, overthrown with their support, and scattered, wounded and bleeding, over the ground.

I speak, doubtless, to many a mourner whose sad experience has illustrated this. And it belongs so essentially to the very nature and design of the dispensation under which we live, that we cannot expect to elude it. It must be so, that if we ourselves survive we shall lose the objects of our earthly love. We must follow them to the grave, or they us ; and they or we must know what this blight of the heart's best affections is. What, then, is our resource ? What the voice of wisdom and of duty ? Most obviously to choose a portion that will not fail us ; to set our affections where no blight can reach them ; to fasten our hopes upon the only Being who will never disappoint us.

Ye children of sorrow, who mourn over the graves of your loved ones ; whose hearts and homes are desolate ; listen to the language of the Psalmist, and

pray for strength to make it your own: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Here is One whom you may love without any danger of idolatry. Here is One in whom you may confide with an assurance that your trust will never deceive you. Your streams are dried up: come to the Fountain. Creature-comforts have failed you: come to the Creator. Earth is a cheerless void; but Heaven is full. With an humble trust in the Redeemer as your only Hope, commit yourselves to God. Take Him as your "all in all." And then your peace will flow as a river; the inevitable sorrows of life will bring their consolations with them; and death, at length, in bringing you to your God, will restore to you those who are

"Not lost, but gone before!"

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF REWARDS.

MATTHEW x. 41.

“ He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward.”

THIS passage occurs in the charge our Saviour addressed to the twelve, on sending them forth upon their first mission. He had apprised them of the hardships and perils of their work. But He would also hold out its encouragements. These, it will be seen, were enough to counterpoise any possible dangers to which they might be exposed. For He winds up a series of remarkable promises with these words of lofty and generous cheer, even for those who might show any kindness to His servants,—implying what was in reserve for his servants themselves: “ He that receiveth you,” etc., as if He had said: “ He

that entertains you does in effect entertain me, whose ministers you are; and he that entertains me does also entertain Him that sent me; and my Heavenly Father will regard it as done to Himself. He that hospitably entertains a prophet (intending, probably by this title, the apostles) in the name of a prophet, *i.e.*, with a pious regard to the office he bears, shall receive the reward of a prophet himself, or a reward proportionable to the worth of the person he shelters and accommodates in a time of danger and difficulty; and he that entertains (any) righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, or with a cordial regard to the virtues of his character, shall himself receive the reward of a righteous man."

There are various aspects in which this promise might be viewed. I propose to make it the foundation of some remarks upon the *Scripture doctrine of Rewards*. Here and elsewhere the future happiness of the saints is styled a "reward." "Love ye your enemies and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be called the children of the Highest." "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." "If any man's work abide, he shall receive a reward." "Let no man beguile you of your reward." "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

In any other book, the habitual use of language of

this sort would be taken to imply the idea of personal merit on the part of the persons spoken of. The honors conferred upon them would be simply their due desert,—what they had earned by their services. We need not go beyond the instincts of the renewed heart to learn that the language can have no such meaning here. No real Christian feels that he has any merit in the sight of his Maker. So far from it, the further he advances in the Divine life, the more deeply does he realize his own depravity and helplessness.

In general it may be observed, that no creature can claim a reward at the hands of God for obeying His commands. Obedience is the prime law of his being. Whether man or seraph, the question of rank is of no moment, his first obligation is to love and serve the Creator with all his powers. So long as he does this, the justice and goodness of God would insure him the continuance of the Divine favor, and of the happiness it carries with it. But it would not entitle him to any further remuneration. He has simply performed his duty. How should this entitle him to a reward?

We are here assuming a case of perfect obedience. If it be asked whether Adam would have received no reward in the event of his remaining steadfast, we may answer affirmatively without contravening the principle. For Adam was not merely placed

under the Divine law. God was pleased to enter into a "covenant" with him, in which He graciously offered and promised to crown his obedience with a reward, even the eternal life of himself and his posterity. In the absence of any compact, no creature could claim a future reward for present obedience, even though that obedience were complete. How much stronger the case when the obedience is altogether defective; when, instead of being conformed to the law in thought, word, and deed, it is fissured and defiled with sin in every direction? Who can talk of merit, when he cannot point to an hour of his life which could bear the test of the law and the testimony? when the impurity which cleaves to his best services, even to his prayers and praises, makes them unfit to present to a holy God? With reason, therefore, do the Scriptures exclude all sentiment of personal merit from the entire scheme of salvation.

Whence, then, comes the idea of "reward" which meets us so often in the New Testament, and what is its purport? I answer, it comes from the *Mediation of Christ*, and has respect to His merit, not ours. Our Heavenly Father saw fit in His infinite mercy to rescue man from the effects of the great apostasy. Of His own love and pity He entered into another covenant, the covenant of grace, in which He provided for the redemption of sinners through

the substitution of His only-begotten Son. The Saviour came into our world and fulfilled the stipulations of this covenant. He bore our sins. He died the just for the unjust. He obeyed and suffered in the room and stead of His people. It was a voluntary obedience and humiliation. It was complete. It was appointed and accepted of the Father. Here is merit—infinite merit. For upon every part of His work, whether of action or of passion, there is impressed the dignity and worth of the Godhead. And this resolves the problem respecting the rewards of Scripture. For on the ground of Christ's obedience, the Father not only pardons those who trust in Him, but also accepts and recompenses their imperfect services. From no merit in themselves, but purely from the boundless merit of their Redeemer, everything they do or attempt to do for the cause of Christ receives a gracious remuneration. "It does not consist with the honor of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth to accept of anything from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of His own holy law, till that condemnation be removed." "But being 'accepted in the Beloved,' our services become impregnated, as it were, with His worthiness; our petitions are offered with the 'much incense' of His intercession; and both are treated in a sort as though they were His. In approving the services of believers, God approves

of the obedience and sacrifice of His Son, of which they are the fruits; and in rewarding them, continues to reward Him, or to express his well-pleaseness in His mediation."*

This view harmonizes all the utterances of the Bible on this interesting subject. It vindicates the fundamental truth that salvation is, from first to last, of free and sovereign grace. It "hides pride" from man by affirming the imperfection and sin of his very best performances, even at his highest stage of Christian culture. At the same time, by making obedience the test of faith and love, it guards the doctrine from profane license, while it holds out the noblest encouragement to fidelity. It illustrates the ineffable value which attaches to the suretyship of our Saviour. And it presents the ever-blessed God to us in the character of a most indulgent and munificent Father, who stoops to notice and to reward the humblest offices of His children, even down to the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple. Such a doctrine carries with it its divine credentials. We need not scruple to receive it as the true scriptural idea of rewards.

But there is a further question suggested by the text, and glanced at in numerous other passages of Scripture, viz., *whether there be any diversity in the*

* Andrew Fuller.

rewards of the righteous. A familiar mode of stating the point is this: Are there different degrees in glory, or will the ransomed all inherit the same measure of honor and blessedness? And if their allotments vary, by what rule are they apportioned? These are topics which must have engaged the attention of every thoughtful reader of the Bible. They come home to every one's heart. Let us reflect upon them for a little.

The text appears to make a distinction between the reward of a "prophet" and that of a "righteous man;" or between a faithful teacher of religion and any simply devout believer. Other testimonies, as we shall see, point in the same direction. But the doctrine of a gradation in the degrees of glory awarded to the ransomed, has not commanded the *universal* assent of the Church. It is proper that the arguments on the negative side should be put briefly before you.

The people of God (it has been alleged) are loved by Him with the same love: they are not loved one sooner than another, for they are all loved with an everlasting love; nor one more than another, for there are no degrees in the love of God. They are all chosen together in Christ before the foundation of the world, and are equally interested in the same covenant of grace, which is an everlasting one. They are equally redeemed by the same precious

blood, and justified by the same righteousness. They are equally the sons of God, being predestinated to the same adoption of children; and, being children, are alike heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. They are also exalted to the same rank and dignity, being made kings and priests unto God. Added to this, their future glory is frequently expressed by words of the singular number, implying that all have an equal share in it, as an inheritance, a city, a kingdom, a crown of righteousness, and the like.* On these and similar grounds, it is contended, there can be no degrees in the future glory of the redeemed. The argument, it must be admitted, is not without its force. I shall not examine it in detail, but content myself with suggesting a few of the considerations which go to establish the opposite view.

And first, the doctrine of a diversity of degrees in the heavenly glory, *approves itself to the consciousness of the renewed heart.* This is not urged as decisive of the question; but it is not to be contemned. God's people are taught of the Spirit. There is a strong presumption in favor of the truth of any sentiment which commands their general assent. And it cannot be doubted that they concur in the proposition we are dealing with,—unless they have become

* Gill's Divinity.

perplexed by adverse arguments which they have not, for the time, been able to answer. The intuitions of the Christian heart would decide that there should and must be a difference between the reward bestowed upon men like Abraham and Moses and Paul and John, and the unknown disciples of their respective eras; between the self-denying missionary who devotes his life to the conversion of the heathen, and the poor pagan whom he is instrumental in leading to the Saviour. While conceding, as every believer from "pious Abel" down would have done, that no one has ever had the least claim to a reward as a matter of personal desert, our sense of equity demands that the rewards which abounding *grace* has purposed to confer, shall embrace some recognition of the immense disparity, both of labor and sacrifice, which distinguishes believers here. It gratifies the best susceptibilities of our nature to reflect that the Christians whose shining characters and illustrious lives have done so much for the well-being of our race, are one day to receive a corresponding award from the hands of their and our Master. Who would have it otherwise? Who that is sure of heaven himself would not be conscious of a feeling of disappointment if he were told that men like Luther and Ridley and Latimer and Edwards and Martyn were to have nothing in their reward to distinguish it from the acknowledgment conceded to

the meagre service *he* is rendering to his Lord? Who does not feel that there should be something there to mark the disparity which prevails among the Christians we meet every day here; which separates, in the same congregation, those who maintain a close walk with God, from those who keep so near the border-line between the Church and the world that it requires a large charity to believe they have ever crossed that line? It is certainly an intuitive conviction with us that some regard will be had to this principle in the distribution of the heavenly rewards. This conviction derives confirmation from various passages of Scripture, as when our Saviour promises the twelve that they shall "sit with Him on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" and when He speaks of the privilege of sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in His kingdom; and also in that beautiful description of Daniel, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." It is not, however, quite certain whether the second clause in this verse be anything more than an iteration of the idea expressed in the first clause, as demanded by the law of parallelism upon which the Hebrew poetry is usually constructed. If the meaning be carried further in the second part (and so most readers understand the words), then the verse yields

a very explicit testimony to the doctrine of a diversity of degrees in glory.

But there is a different line of argument which must be deemed decisive of this question. We have thus far been speaking of heaven simply as a place,—a city,—a country,—an empire,—with God for its Sovereign. Like other sovereigns, He recognizes the services of His people, and confers on them suitable rewards, by assigning one to this post of honor, another to that; and distributing testimonials after the manner of earthly princes in awarding medals, badges, and titles, to meritorious subjects. We need not exclude this idea as absolutely unscriptural. Rather must we believe that the “Judge of all” will mark His approval of superior fidelity on the part of His servants by bestowing upon them outward and visible tokens of His favor. But this is not the essential idea of the heavenly glory. It is only necessary to consider *what heaven is* to perceive that there *must* be degrees in that glory.

For heaven, though unquestionably a place, is no less a state. Simply to be in that place is not to be in heaven,—*i.e.*, is not to enjoy the happiness of heaven. The moment the angels sinned, heaven ceased to be heaven to them. Could an unconverted sinner be taken there, it would be no heaven to him.

“The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.”

The happiness of the ransomed will depend less upon the particular situation they may fill, or any outward decorations, than upon their own *characters* and *employments*, and the reciprocal adaptation between the two. And the character of the saved is a character formed here. The principle is one and the same, in grace and in glory. There is no change in identity; no suspension of the mental functions; no oblivion of the earthly life. It is the same disciple that believed and loved and prayed and toiled and suffered for his Master here, who goes up to worship and praise Him there. And unless there be an absolute oneness in the experience, the labors, and the attainments of believers in this world, there must be an inequality in their measures of happiness in that world.

We may take the first act in that new and sublime career upon which they are to enter. To the myriads assembled at His right hand in the judgment the Saviour will say, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Is it not apparent

that this announcement will awaken very different emotions in the breasts of that white-robed company? All will hail it with adoring gratitude. All will rejoice in it. All will be happy in it. But some will feel it much more deeply and joyfully than others. For this occurs now, and no reason can be given why it should not be so then. The language must make diverse impressions upon your minds as you listen to it here in the sanctuary. It cannot be repeated in any assembly of Christians, who would all listen to it with precisely the same feelings. And when caught up in that day from the Saviour's own lips, the emotions it enkindles must unavoidably take their hue, more or less, from each one's personal experience.

There will, *e.g.*, be individuals present at His bar, who, from having been converted at the last hour of life, or by reason of a very lukewarm piety, will have done little or nothing to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and succor the afflicted, of Christ's flock. And while the most faithful of His people will disclaim all merit for anything they were led to do in this way, yet they will derive from His gracious words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," an ineffable satisfaction which the others cannot share. They who have done the most for His cause will be the most forward to confess their unprofitable-

ness. But to have their feeble endeavors to serve Him, the humble efforts they have put forth, and the self-denial they have practised, in behalf of His church and people, thus recognized and lauded in the presence of the universe, this surely will fill them with a blessedness which they cannot know who have no such offices to recall. These last will be perfectly happy also ; but they will not have the same capacity of happiness as their brethren. A child's happiness may be complete ; but his bosom would not hold the happiness that pervades without filling his mother's heart. And a like inequality must attach to the relative capacities of the righteous as they go up to receive their rewards.

This inequality, as it is affected by other causes, so also will it depend much upon the progress they have made in personal holiness here. Of course all will be immaculate when they enter heaven. But there will be among them, as we believe, that great company who, having died in infancy, will never have had any consciousness of sin. There will be others who, like the thief on the cross, will have passed by an instant transition, from a condition of hardened iniquity to a state of spotless purity ; while others still will have been waging a weary warfare with sin for thirty, fifty, seventy years. Now, allowing that all are alike holy as they bow before the throne and traverse the streets of the New Jerusalem,

can it be supposed that they will all have the same emotions and the same joy? Is this endless variety which pertains to the experience of believers here, to have no bearing upon their future lot? Does its significance begin and end with this transitory life? Is one child of God endowed with a full assurance of hope from the moment of his conversion; and another left to walk in darkness all his days; and a third assigned to a perpetual conflict with his own fierce passions, with alternate defeat and victory; and a fourth appointed to a life-long struggle with the hostility of the world and the assaults of Satan: and is this diverse training to have no influence upon them in heaven? We arrogate nothing when we say this cannot be: the laws of the human mind forbid it. It would imply an annihilation of memory. And it would go farther than anything else has ever gone in the Divine administration to warrant the inquiry, "To what purpose is this waste?" Perfectly happy all these glorified spirits are. But it is the law of our being to reap what we have sown, and according as we have sown, sparingly or bountifully. They have all sown to the Spirit, and they will reap life everlasting. But their sowing was in widely-different modes and measures; and so must their harvest be. The poor, desponding, tempted soul that has gone through life mourning that it had no love to Christ, though ready every day to wash His feet with its

tears and wipe them with the hairs of its head, cannot possibly experience in that world the same type and measure of joy with the triumphant soldier of the cross who has fought the good fight of faith and gone up to lay his trophies at the Master's feet without ever having known a doubt or fear of his final victory. It is not for us to say whether this or that is to wear the brighter crown. All we know, or care to know, is, that their crowns will differ as "one star differs from another star in glory."

Again, the reigning sentiment in heaven is *love to God*. In the exercise of this love its bliss largely consists. Every one will cherish it to the full extent of his powers; but how many circumstances will modify the sentiment in different cases! We see this in the present life,—with men who have been great sinners; with men whose conversion has been attended with peculiar providences; with those who have been blessed in their efforts for spreading Christianity; with many whose families have shared largely in the grace and mercy of the Gospel; and with a multitude of others. Everywhere may be found those who feel that they have signal cause for gratitude to God. And if they feel this here, how much more in heaven. Those who have loved but a little here, will love much there. And they who have loved much in this world, will love still more in that. And since the exercise of holy love is

necessarily a source of happiness, their felicity will correspond with the measure of love which throbs in every heart.

Again, the happiness of heaven flows in a large degree *from its worship*. The ransomed are before the throne of God. They serve Him day and night in His temple. They sing the perpetual song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" "And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." We need not ask whether their bliss is perfect. But is it co-equal? Do sinners like Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, like Augustine and Rochester, experience no higher joy as they look upon that Saviour and join in that anthem, than those who were never left to deny the faith nor to wander from the paths of virtue? And with what ecstasy will His faithful followers who have toiled and suffered long in His service unite in that worship! In every part of the Church there are those who, like their Master, find it their meat to do the will of their Father in heaven. They hold their property as his stewards. They are instant in prayer. They are using their gifts and opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to reclaim the wandering, to win souls to Christ. Not a few are engaged in the work of the ministry, preaching Christ crucified to the perishing, without fear or favor. Many take their lives in their hands, and go to carry salvation

to pagan tribes. To some it is given not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake. Thousands of martyrs have sealed their faith with their blood.

These various classes, and many others whom He has greatly honored in the way of doing or of suffering His will, whose labors or whose trials He has employed in glorifying His name and saving the souls of men, cannot fail to experience a rapture all their own as they gaze upon the "Lamb in the midst of the throne," and join in the Hosannas of the skies. To have been made the objects of His special love; to have been permitted to do or to endure anything on His behalf; to have been made instrumental in leading their fellow-sinners to the fountain of His blood; to have been allowed the slightest agency in helping onward the glorious work of redemption; the consciousness of this will fill them with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. While all others of that blood-washed throng will be filled with blessing, their blessedness will *exceed*. There *must* be degrees in glory.

This is still further confirmed by the reflection, that the ransomed *will be permitted to see something of the fruit of their labors for the good of the race.*

In this life we can trace the effects of our influence but very imperfectly. Even here we may have the grateful assurance that we have not "labored in vain;" that we have helped to minister a little com-

fort or a little counsel or a little strength to the needy; possibly that God has crowned with success our unworthy efforts to bring some fellow-sinner—one or more—to the saving knowledge of Christ. And you must know what happiness such a conviction brings with it. But this is only the seed-time. The harvest is to come. And what a harvest will that be! It is of the nature of both good and bad influences that they propagate themselves. You put forth your hand to relieve a suffering family. You assist a deserving youth in obtaining an education. You instil God's truth into the minds of your Sunday or day-scholars. You take part in founding a Charity, or in sending forth a devoted missionary. Your kind and faithful counsels are made effectual to the converting of a sinner from the error of his way. By any one of these offices you may have originated trains of wholesome influence, which shall go on increasing in energy and power until the last day; and when the beneficent *results* meet you, your emotions of joy and gratitude to God will be too big for utterance. And who will venture to describe the feelings of those servants of God in that day, who shall have been instrumental in giving the Gospel to a benighted nation; or in converting a multitude of sinners; or in sending young men into the ministry; or in establishing evangelical churches; or in writing books which, like Bunyan's *Pilgrim*, or Doddridge's *Rise*

and Progress, have proved "immortal"? all these mighty agencies having gone on perpetuating and multiplying themselves down to the final judgment, and will then come forth in their accumulated magnificence to greet the eyes of the feeble men who first set them in motion! Is it for mortal tongue or pen to depict the wonder, love, and joy which will swell the bosoms of these humble workers as they survey the *fruits* of their labor? Will there not be something unique—exalted—overpowering—in the blessedness they experience, as they cast their radiant crowns at the Redeemer's feet and cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake!" Surely it does not admit of a question that the everlasting rewards of the righteous will shine with very unequal degrees of glory; while each will be glorious, and all will conspire to reflect the glory of our IMMANUEL.

We have thus seen that the scriptural doctrine of rewards is one which excludes the idea of personal merit on the part of the recipients, and leaves no ground for boasting. The works rewarded are performed entirely through the strength imparted by the Divine Spirit; and the generous recognition they receive is wholly due to the Saviour's merits, not our own. It has also been shown that believers, though not rewarded *for* their works, are rewarded *according* to their works; and, further, that not sim-

ply by the sovereign appointment of God, but from the constitution He has given us and the relations we sustain to Him, these rewards will vary indefinitely.

This announcement will cast a shadow upon some minds. "If this be so, will it not preclude us from all intercourse with many whom we have known and loved here, since they will be exalted to a sphere so far above our own? And will not this mar the perfection of our happiness?" It becomes us to speak with modesty on a theme which the Scriptures treat with so much reserve. That heaven must be a realm of almost illimitable extent, is apparent from the countless myriads of saints and angels who are to inhabit it. Of its divisions, territorial, social, or civil, we can form no satisfactory conjecture. We read of its "many mansions," of the "new heavens," of the "third heaven," of the "heaven of heavens," and other similar expressions. We cannot interpret them. We can neither affirm nor deny that grateful speculation that the redeemed may, in the flight of ages, be allowed to visit the various orbs and systems diffused throughout the universe. But we can suggest a consideration which meets the difficulty just stated. The disparities of Christian character here present no bar to congenial fellowship: why should their unequal measures of honor and blessedness forbid it there? There may be different

“degrees in glory,” without separation. We may be sure there will be. Is there any Christian who does not expect, if he reaches heaven at all, to talk with Abel, and Noah, and Joseph, and Peter, and Mary and Martha, and the Blessed Virgin? Why, then, question that you will meet and mingle with those whose piety you revere here, and to whom you are bound by the ties of strong affection?

But, better still, make it your care to *emulate their graces*, and then you will be certain to keep side by side with them.

This, indeed, is the sum of the whole matter, the conclusion to which the entire argument points us, that *we be more faithful to our Lord and Master*. Without adverting to other considerations, the bare thought of securing this glorious reward should be enough to inflame our zeal to the highest pitch. There is wondrous mercy in His offering to pardon and save us at all. But behold the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” Not only does He forgive and save, but He notices with an approving eye everything that His people do for Him. He records their every word and act put forth on His behalf, and even the most trivial service rendered to the obscurest of His followers. These He will recall and crown with imperishable rewards at the last day.

And, for your comfort, remember that the reward will be proportioned, not to your talents and oppor-

tunities, but to the use you make of them; not to what you accomplish, but to what you try to accomplish; not to the harvest you may reap here, but to the seed you sow. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor." Not according to his gifts; not according to his successes; not according to the worldly applause he may have won: but "according to his labor." This meets the case of every disciple, as well the poorest as the richest, as well the obscurest as the greatest, as well the servant with one talent as the servant with five. Only be faithful to your trust. Work from no sordid motive. Let the love of Christ constrain you to devote all your powers to His service, and when the labor of the day is over, and you go up to the great harvest-home, you will be "satisfied." Heaven and earth may pass away, but "you shall in no wise lose your reward."

THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST.

MATTHEW viii. 23-27.

“And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!” (See, also, Mark iv. 35-41; Luke viii. 22-25.)

THERE is no sheet of water on the globe around which such memories cluster, or which will be so often thought of in heaven, as the Sea of Gennesareth. We meet with it so constantly in the Gospels that every reader of the inspired annals must be familiar with its name and character. By way of refreshing

your minds, let me state that in the Old Testament it is called the Sea of Cinneroth ; in the New, the Lake or Sea of Tiberias, of Galilee, of Gennesareth. It is of an oval shape, about thirteen miles long and six broad. It lies in a basin of volcanic origin, the most remarkable feature of which is, that it is depressed about seven hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. The lofty sides of this basin come shelving down from the neighboring plateaus, masses of black and sterile rock, on the eastern side not less than two thousand feet in height, and on either side furrowed by deep ravines. On the west, the ridges are of lower altitude and more broken, affording numerous sites for hamlets and towns. At the period of the Advent, there were no less than nine cities on the shores of this lake, and the hills in every direction were dotted with villages. In this region our Lord spent the greater part of His public life. "His own city," Capernaum, was here. Many of His miracles were performed here. Here He called His first disciples. Often did He sail on the bosom of this sea. Often were its shores pressed by His sacred feet. So much, indeed, of His ministry was spent here, that to expunge from the New Testament all that pertains to His life and labors in the environs of Gennesareth would be to obliterate no inconsiderable portion of the four Gospels.

To this most interesting spot our narrative con-

ducts us. In considering it, I shall keep in view the accounts given by the three Evangelists who mention it, each of whom relates some incidents not given by the others. (Matt. viii. 23-7; Mark iv. 35-41; Luke viii. 22-25.)

“Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.” St. Mark says, “the same day when the even was come.” The harmonists are generally agreed that Mark in this instance follows the order of time. The “day” was that on which he had delivered the long series of parables recorded in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew. A most laborious day it must have been to the Saviour. The people had flocked to Him from the neighboring country. He needed rest. And He proposes to His disciples that they shall go on board their boat and cross over to the eastern side of the lake. But He must delay a moment longer. For at this juncture an eager scribe approaches Him with a warm protestation of love, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” We may thank him for his “confession;” for it has secured to us that most touching response of Jesus: “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” Two others succeed him, to each of whom He replies in terms which have ministered admonition and instruction to thousands who were

persuading themselves that they were ready "to follow Christ." We cannot dwell upon these events.

It was His own proposal to cross the lake. Did He not foresee the storm? Did He not know that that tranquil evening (for such it no doubt was) would prove the harbinger of a tempestuous night? Why not, then, wait on shore, or at some quiet anchorage, until the morning? Certainly He knew it all. But was that a reason why He should postpone His voyage? Rather the reverse. To Himself personally sunshine and storm were alike. And as to His disciples, all His intercourse with them was made subservient to their needful training for their high mission. He had gathered lessons for them from the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air. He will have nature speak to them also in louder and grander tones. The tornado shall become their teacher. They must learn that if they mean to follow Him their path will not always lie along the peaceful strand and the grain-fringed roads; but among thorns as well, and thickets of suffering and danger. He would teach His disciples in every age not to be surprised nor depressed if they should find their sky suddenly clouded over and their way beset with perils. Nor must they infer from such an experience that they had mistaken the path of duty and forgotten their Guide. It is He Himself who leads His disciples right into the face of the coming

hurricane : and so He has been dealing with them from that hour to this. How, otherwise, should they ever attain that true development which flows only from the discipline of sorrow? Or how be fitted to enjoy the heavenly rest? But this is to anticipate our subject.

They launch forth upon the lake. The Saviour retires to the stern of their little bark, and, lying down, falls asleep. Mark alone mentions that this was in the hinder part of the ship, and that His head was "on a pillow,"—probably the leather cushion of the pilot. I refer to it only as an illustration of the style of this Evangelist. It is one of his peculiarities to mention details. Thus he alone, of the three historians that describe this miracle, speaks of the pillow. Nor does either Matthew or Luke mention that there were other vessels, "other little ships," in company with the one that bore the Master.* Presently a storm arises. No unusual thing upon this lake : nor upon any lake shut in by mountains which are pierced by deep gorges stretching up from the water. A "great tempest" it was. The tranquil sea was churned into a furious turmoil. The waves dashed into the boat. "It was covered

* So, also, in describing the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Mark alone says they sat down on "the *green* grass" (ch. vi. 39).

with the waves" (says Matthew). "They were filled with water" (Luke). "The waves beat into the ship" (says Mark, characteristically) "so that it was now full." His companions were not men to be easily frightened. They were seafaring men. That lake was their familiar fishing-ground. They had encountered many a storm there. But never, we may presume, a storm like this. What with the violence of the gale, the turbulent sea, the billows threatening every moment to submerge their frail vessel already filling with water, all aggravated by the thick darkness of the night, it was natural they should think themselves "in jeopardy."

Meanwhile the Master sleeps on. How beautiful and striking the contrast,—the composure of that peaceful sleeper amidst the raging of the elements, the quivering of the little fishing-craft, and the consternation of the disciples! Exhausted by the work of that eventful day, the slumber into which He falls is so profound that nothing of all this clamor disturbs it. It is the only instance in which we read of His sleeping. Doubtless He did sleep as other men do; but it might have seemed peculiar to mention it except in some incidental way as here. The Divine Spirit will omit no circumstance which may be requisite to establish the humanity of our Lord. Elsewhere we see Him subject to hunger and thirst and fatigue; to joy and sorrow and tears. Now we

behold the proof that His frame, like our own, required to be recruited by sleep.

The spectacle is one to be pondered. It is very suggestive. One is ready to ask, "How could He sleep who was clothed with absolute Divinity? The Divine nature cannot sleep. And if the two natures are so intimately and indissolubly united in His person, how could the humanity slumber while the Deity wakes?" Questions like these come unbidden to the lips. They would come even if, with all our present knowledge of His constitution, we could stand by the Saviour, once more a pilgrim on the earth, and see Him asleep. The instinctive feeling would be, "How can these things be?" We do not know. We are neither required nor permitted to know. The union of the two natures in Christ must be a mystery to the angels. All that we are concerned with is the fact. We accept the fact on God's own testimony. It is of the essence of a genuine faith to believe, on such testimony, where it cannot fully comprehend. Nor is the task imposed upon faith by this spectacle really any greater than that by which it is exercised throughout the entire history of the Saviour. The faith that can stand by the manger of Bethlehem and adore, is ready for all that follows. And, duly considered, there is nothing more remarkable in Christ's sleeping than in His eating and drinking and weeping and suffering. All

this was indispensable. He must be "very man" no less than "very God." The humanity entire, sin alone excepted, must be blended with the Divinity entire. Redemption demanded this. And our comfort demanded it. Not to speak of the strength with which it has inspired thousands of Christian travellers when overtaken by storms at sea, how many faithful disciples have betaken themselves, in their hours of bodily and mental exhaustion, to this bark upon Gennesareth, and gathered rest and peace from looking upon that placid sleeper! How it brings home to the bosom, even more than the other functions of His humanity, the sense of His oneness with us; the complete identity of His nature with our own! And how instructive and consolatory the moral aspects of the whole scene, as bearing upon the troubles of life! But of this hereafter.

The effect produced upon the disciples was what might have been anticipated,—*i.e.*, it was in keeping with what we have seen of them before. They cannot survey this appalling scene unmoved. Their boat is filling with water. Their skill avails nothing against the tempest. Death, as they imagine, stares them in the face. These are crises in which men do not stop to reason. There is a tumult within which matches the tumult without, and precludes sober reflection. Had they known as much of their Lord

as they knew after the day of Pentecost, His rest had not been disturbed. They would have felt that the waves could no more swallow up the vessel in which He was a passenger, than they could engulf the mountains that shut them in. But as yet they were not certain as to His dominion. They saw Him as through a glass darkly. They loved Him. They revered Him. They believed in Him. But it was not with the imperial faith with which they afterward went forth to make Him known to a ruined world, and to proclaim in the ears of princes and potentates that they must "kiss the Son" or perish. Their slender faith trembled like the beams of their little bark in the gale. Its weakness and its truthfulness were both revealed. Its weakness, in their awaking the Master at all: its truthfulness, in their confidence that He could help them. Without faith, or with a strong faith, they might have left Him to sleep on: in the one case, surrendering themselves to downright despair; in the other, assured that, sleeping or waking, His presence must shield them from death. But now, with a wavering faith, they arouse Him by their outcries, whom all the turbulence of the storm had failed to disturb.

They deferred it, we must believe, to the last moment. They hoped the wind might abate. They hoped to bring their boat under control. Failing in this, they would say among themselves, "Surely He

must awake soon. He cannot slumber through such a tornado." But He wakes not. The danger thickens, and with one accord they hasten to Him,—a group of anxious men, with terror depicted in every countenance, and deep dejection in every tone, kneeling around that serene sleeper,—“Lord, save us: we perish: carest Thou not that we perish?” The broken outcries of distress, uttered, in the language they used, in fewer words than we employ in translating them. According to Luke there is a quick iteration of the title, “Master, Master, we perish!” This again is nature. Doubtless they all joined in the vehement appeal. But what must be thought of the [*οὐ μὲλεις σοι,*] “carest Thou not?” He had never heard such language before from the lips of a disciple. Once afterward He did hear it, the identical phrase; for it was with this unseemly expression Martha came to Him complaining of Mary: “Dost Thou not care—*is it nothing to Thee*—that my sister hath left me to serve alone?” (Luke x. 40.) In Martha’s case, there was very little to extenuate the rudeness. The disciples might plead the alarm and agitation of the moment. And yet this could not justify the language. They had no right to reproach their Lord in this way with neglecting their safety. If there was danger, it was danger He shared with them. If there was death, He must die with them. They quite forgot the reverence which was

due Him. But for the overpowering influence of fear this incident could not have occurred.

And, unhappily, the offence has been often repeated since. If you have been much conversant with scenes of bereavement, you will have heard similar reproaches cast upon God, and, perhaps, far worse, because uttered after the crisis of the affliction has gone by. I do not allude to the despondency which may follow a great and sudden loss: nor to the sad and conscious inability of a stricken heart to penetrate the "clouds and darkness" of God's dispensations. But to the presumptuous sentiment not unfrequently uttered, that God has imposed an "unnecessary" trial; that He has acted harshly; that He "does not care" for the sufferer His rod has visited. I have sometimes heard language of this sort which made me shudder. "Who art thou that repliest against God?" Much may be conceded to the anguish of spirit caused by a sore affliction. But it is not for a worm of the dust to challenge the righteousness and wisdom of any of the Divine dispensations. To lose our confidence in God, in His unchangeable wisdom, rectitude, and faithfulness, is to lose everything. The moment we cast off that fastening, we are abroad upon a shoreless and tempestuous ocean, without chart or compass. And to go still further and reproach Him for what He does, or for what He omits to do, what is this but to in-

voke fresh judgments upon our heads? To say that He does not merit these censures, is to say very little. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He cannot do otherwise: His holy and "immutable" nature forbids it. The sufferers who call in question His equity or His kindness, often see both these qualities illustrated in the issue of the very allotments which have so embittered them. And they might learn from His word that all such providences will be fully cleared up hereafter.

"Dost Thou not care that we perish?" Of course He cares. He has no thought of letting you be lost.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,"

ye timid fishermen. Though He sleep, He is not unmindful of you. He loves you too well to let you perish here; and you shall have an instant proof of His love in the gentle reproof with which He requites your unseemly remonstrance. Mark and Luke make His mandate to the storm precede His address to the disciples. Matthew reverses the order, and with connecting particles which show that this is the true sequence. It harmonizes the accounts to suppose that after a single word to the sea, He spoke to the disciples, and then again addressed the sea. Still retaining His recumbent posture, He opens His eyes upon the excited group around Him, and says—What would you have expected Him to say?

What would you have done but rebuke them for their ungracious, "Dost Thou not care?" But "His ways are not as our ways." He bears their reproach in silence. Without even noticing it, He mildly reproves their want of confidence in Him: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" "What is there in this storm to fill you with such alarm? What has become of your trust in my power and faithfulness? Whom do you take me to be, that you can imagine we are in peril of shipwreck?" And then rising,—not till then,—for thus it is written: "Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Or, as Mark gives it more minutely, "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

This brings us into the presence of a stupendous miracle. Beginning to exercise His miraculous powers almost with the opening of His ministry, He had on numerous occasions displayed His control over different forms of disease, and in one instance over death itself. He had cured paralysis, fever, and leprosy. He had in two instances healed the sick when at a distance from them; in one case, several miles away. At Nain, He had restored the widow's son to life. He had cast out demons. But there was one sphere which, up to this time, He had not entered. It was settled that He had the mastery

over the most malignant types of disease ; that death paid Him homage ; and devils trembled before Him. But would nature own Him as her Lord? Would the elements confess His supremacy? This had been claimed of old as a Divine prerogative. It is one of our intuitive convictions that God alone has absolute control over the powers of nature. We scarcely require an inspired pen to inform us that "the sea is His, and He made it ; that He sitteth upon the flood, and stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." What, then, are we to think of the scene here presented? Rising out of His tranquil sleep, Jesus looks abroad from the deck of that tempest-tossed boat, and utters two words only, *Σιωπα ! Ηεφίρωσο !* "Peace ! Be still !" The first referring to the noise, the second to the violence, of the waves : or, as some prefer, the first addressed to the wind, the second to the sea. And instantly "they ceased, and there was a calm."

All three of the Evangelists use the word "rebuked": "He rebuked the winds and the sea." The peculiar significance of this term has given countenance to a conjecture sanctioned by many eminent critics, that our Saviour had in view not merely the storm, but the evil spirits by whose agency it had been stirred up. Our information on this subject is very meagre. But Satan is styled the "Prince of the

power of the air." It is certain he can do nothing in that region except as he receives permission. But in one memorable instance the curtain is lifted, and we *know* he was concerned in getting up the hurricane that whelmed the children of Job in the ruins of the house where they were feasting. If this occurred with one storm, why not with others? And if in any other, why not in this one on Tiberias? For it is not to be overlooked that this voyage across the lake was not a mere pleasure-excursion. Its incidental design was to afford the Saviour an opportunity for needful rest. But there was another end to be accomplished. On the eastern shore of the lake, just where the prow of their vessel was pointing, there were two of the most wretched creatures to be found, I will not say in Palestine, but on the globe. A whole legion of devils had entered into them, and reduced them to a condition which is but imperfectly illustrated by the most extreme and violent types of insanity known to the world. Beyond the reach of all human help, their pitiable condition invited the sympathy of the Great Physician. Neither His fatigue, nor the impending storm, shall impede Him on His mission of mercy. He is resolved to release these prisoners of Satan from their horrid bondage; and to visit His displeasure upon the demons that possessed them. With much less sagacity than they may lay claim to, the Arch-adver-

sary and his hosts might surmise the object of the trip. And surmising it, there is nothing romantic in the idea that they would set themselves to counterwork it. This midnight voyage in a fragile boat offered a tempting opportunity to try their skill in getting up a gale. And He who for wise purposes indulged them in the kindred assault upon the family of the patriarch, allowed them to make this demonstration also, in order that Jesus might achieve a double victory over them, first on the sea, and then on the land.

It was, then, if we may accept this view, a literal "rebuke" which fell from His lips. He spoke as well to the malignant spirits who were fanning this storm as to the storm itself. In any event, the effect that followed was marvellous. That voice would scarcely be heard beyond the bulwarks of the small bark. And yet it *was* heard far and near. The fury of the wind could not arrest it. The surging of the billows could not drown it. It penetrated the cloud-laden atmosphere of that dismal night. It spread over the wide bosom of Gennesareth. Where a cannon's roar would have been lost in the turmoil, it resounded along the rock-bound shore. The gale heard it, and hushed to silence. The waves heard it, and sank to rest. While their Master sleeps, the restless elements burst from their repose into frantic disorder. The Master wakes, and instantly, not as

storms usually subside, by a gradual ebb, they lie down at His feet in a slumber as tranquil as His own. Two brief words have done it all. The eminent Greek philosopher and critic, Longinus, quotes, as a signal example of the sublime, that Divine command, "Let there be light! And there was light." There is perhaps no second instance on record which so nearly approximates to it as the one we are considering. "Peace! Be still! And there was a great calm." "A *great* calm,"—instant, perfect, universal; the whole air still; the whole lake still. Nature hears the majestic voice,

"And crowns Him Lord of all!"

We are prepared for what followed. His simple-minded, loving companions, "being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Any other effect would have excited *our* wonder. Their appeal to Him implied a certain measure of faith. It was made with a vague feeling that He might possibly do something to relieve them. In any event, it would comfort them to have Him awake; to feel that He was really with them and cognizant of their danger,—precisely as a child on board a ship which is overtaken by a storm, feels calmer and safer to have his father awake than asleep. They did not know what He would do. They

certainly had no thought of the scene that followed. They had seen many a storm wax and wane; but never one which terminated as this did, in the twinkling of an eye, and at the bidding of a human voice. How could they help saying, "What manner of man is this?"

It must be our feeling too. Every thoughtful reader of this narrative must be ready to exclaim, "What manner of man is this?" You have sometimes placed yourselves by the proto-martyr Stephen. And as you have heard him say, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God;" and then, presently, with his last breath, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" you would hardly be able to repress the feeling, "What manner of man is this, 'the Son of man,' who stands beside the eternal throne and receives the spirits of departed saints into the highest heavens?" Now you place yourselves on board that slender transport on Gennesareth, and see "this same Jesus" hush its turbulent waves to rest by a word; and again you ask, in reverent awe, "*What manner of man is this?*" If you hesitate for an answer, the Psalmist will relieve you. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them." "The waters stood above the

mountains: at Thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of Thy thunder they hasted away." (Ps. xciii. 4; lxxxix. 9; civ. 6, 7.) Have you occasion to ask, "Of whom speaketh the Psalmist this?" You know well that there is but One Being in the universe of whom these things could be affirmed: that to ascribe them to any mere creature would be blasphemy. Yet this very sovereignty over the sea is exercised here, as it were, before your eyes, by Jesus of Nazareth. Can you doubt, then, *who it is* that stands upon the deck of that little vessel and commands the sea? Can that sublime, "Peace! Be still!" be any other than the echo of the voice which said to the primeval chaos, "Let there be light!" and there was light? In this way do the Scriptures bear constant and emphatic testimony to the supreme Deity of our Redeemer.

The symbolical reference of this narrative to the history of the Church and the experience of individual believers, is too obvious not to have been often dwelt upon.

The Church, "in crossing over to the other side," has fared very much as did this boat upon Tiberias. It had scarcely cast off its moorings before the storms began to beat upon it. And they have not ceased to this hour. Intervals of calm there have been, bright days of sunshine. But these are merely

lulls in the gale. A rough voyage it has been, as it promises to be to the end. Sometimes, indeed, the tempest has been very violent. The ark, freighted with these priceless treasures, has been swept by the waves of deadly hate and passion, and threatened with destruction. Voyagers of stronger nerve than those who sailed that night on the unquiet lake, have been alarmed for the result. And, what has heightened their fears, the Master has seemed to be "asleep." They knew that He could extricate them. But He did not come. They called to Him. They importuned Him. Still, He came not. He came not—until their faith and constancy were fully tried, and the moment had arrived most fit for His intervention. Then He did come. And He said to the surging billows, "*Peace! Be still!*" And they ceased their raging; and He brought His wearied Church out into a tranquil sea.

Thus also it happens with His disciples in their personal history. This voyage is a type of the Christian life. The object to be accomplished is to "cross the narrow sea." The proposal comes in every instance—as it came in the case before us—from the Master Himself: "Let us pass over unto the other side." Who among you, my brethren, would ever have set out on this voyage for the "better country" if you had not heard His voice saying to you, "*Follow me—to the other side*"? That

you should encounter storms, was a thing of course. He warned you of this before starting, and bade you "count the cost." It should occasion neither surprise nor discouragement, then, if you find that you are traversing a tempestuous sea. Our resource is precisely that of the disciples. The believer hastens, in the cloudy and dark day, to his Refuge. He flies to Christ as instinctively as that little company did in the gale. A token of His Divinity it is that He can listen to so many appeals at once. For they are going up to Him from every part of the globe. Wherever there is a disciple in want, in danger, in sorrow, in suffering, he is crying, "Lord, save!" What an ear must that be which is never confused by these myriad-voices! What a bosom that can entertain these myriad-complaints! What an intelligence that can provide for these myriad-wants!

For it is not only our own troubles that we spread before Him. We go to Him—it is our privilege to do so—with the cares and sorrows of our friends, of the Church, of our country, of the world. This is our resource when true religion is declining, when the love of many is waxing cold, and formalism is supplanting real devotion, and the unconverted are growing more obdurate, and a mighty freshet of worldliness is breaking over the Church; at such a juncture (and *this* is one of them) faithful disciples will be found kneeling at His feet and crying, "Lord,

save, or we perish!" And in a time of public calamity, as during those long years of war which deluged our land with the blood of brothers, and seemed to be sweeping us on towards an abyss which no man could fathom, from ten thousand burdened hearts the cry went up continually, "*Lord, save, or we perish!*"

That He does not always answer at once, we know too well. And alike with our public and our private sorrows, when He delays we are prone to fear that He is "asleep"; that He "does not care." But it is not so. He hears all—sees all—knows all—and in His own good time, which is always the best time, He will either rise and rebuke the storm, or so assure His people of His presence with them, that the fury of the tempest shall not disturb their "perfect peace." In the end He will rebuke it. To every true disciple this voyage will have an auspicious end. The haven to which it is conducting them will be the more welcome for the perils of the way. A blessed haven it is. No night ever comes down upon it. No vapors obscure it. No storms ruffle it. Fed by the river of the water of life, it stretches up to the very foot of the throne, and its crystal depths reflect for evermore the glories of the heaven of heavens. What do you not owe to One who is conducting you to such a haven? And what are you doing to help others on through the perils of the voyage, to this tranquil harbor?

It is our humble hope that we are travelling in that

bark which bears Jesus of Nazareth. Certain it is, that of the thousands of barks which are traversing the sea of life, this one alone can survive its storms. Do you never think of this,—*you* who have not yet owned Him as your Lord and Saviour? What defence have you for the hour of danger? It is swiftly approaching. It may be upon you at any moment. It will inevitably be upon you when you draw near to death. How can you bear to face *that* storm unfriended and alone? What would you not give, amidst the gloom and horror of a death-bed, to hear the majestic voice that spoke to Gennesareth say to the turmoil without and the fiercer conflict within, "*Peace! Be still!*" Repent and believe, and you shall find it so.

THE ARROGANCE AND CAPRICIOUSNESS
OF THE WORLD, IN DEALING WITH
TRUE RELIGION.

MATTHEW xi. 16-19.

“But whercunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.”

OUR Saviour has just been speaking of John the Baptist. Detecting in the minds of those around Him a certain disparaging estimate of this great Prophet, He vindicates his reputation and assigns him that lofty place in the Divine economy of redemption, accorded him by the Old Testament writers. By a natural transition, He passes from

this topic to the treatment experienced both by the Baptist and Himself, as exhibiting the capricious temper of their countrymen. In His usual manner, He brings out the point He wishes to present by means of a striking illustration. "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." The word "market" is of broader significance in the East than with us. It is the general place of concourse for the transaction of all kinds of business: and, as a matter of course, children resort to it for recreation. The Saviour, observing their sports, made use of them, as He was wont to do of familiar objects and incidents, to set forth an important moral lesson. A group of these children being collected, some of them bent upon play, and indifferent whether it shall be a mock-festival or a mock-funeral, complain of their companions that they will join them in neither. "We pipe" (we play you a merry air), "and you will not dance. We try you then in another vein, and imitate the dirge performed over the dead: but you refuse to simulate mourners and beat your breasts."

The critics are widely divided on this passage. One set insist that by the children who make the complaint, our Saviour designs to represent Himself

and the Baptist. Others would see Him and His Forerunner in the silent children, who are complained of. While a third class contend, and in my view rightly, that they are not represented by either the complaining or the passive children; the whole group being intended to illustrate the diverse tempers of that perverse, fault-finding generation. As if He had said: "This people resemble a host of ill-humored children, whom it is impossible to please in any way; one part desires this, and another that, so that they cannot agree upon any rational pursuit or behavior."

In this way had they treated both John and Himself. What they censured John for lacking, they condemned Jesus for having, and *vice versa*. "For John came neither eating nor drinking;" or, as Luke gives it, "neither eating bread nor drinking wine." Which means simply that he denied himself the common articles of diet. For thirty years he lived in a secluded region of the country, subsisting chiefly on locusts and wild honey, and wearing a dress made of camel-skins. We have no explanation of this. But thus far conjecture may aid us. It was a period of general declension in religion. The nation had sunk into the grossest impiety and corruption. Their priests were formalists and hypocrites. The people were hardened and dissolute. To John was assigned the high and responsible mission of

arousing them from their guilty slumber by proclaiming the advent of their long-expected Messiah. The emergency was not to be met by the mild notes of dulcimers and soft recorders. It demanded the clarion blast of the trumpet. The herald must be a stern man, one who could thunder the terrors of the law into the ears of that callous generation, and summon them to prepare for their coming Lord. And in this view, the training of the Baptist was in perfect keeping with the work he had to do; as it was amply vindicated by the startling effects which attended his preaching.

Had he been the harbinger of a political Messiah his austerities would have been readily tolerated,—as in fact they were for a considerable period. It was not until they saw the character of Christ that they assailed His Forerunner. Then, their hostility assumed the most malignant form. It was a part of the popular theology of the day, that wicked and unclean spirits were wandering up and down in desert places. And they did not hesitate to say that the Baptist's ascetic life was to be ascribed to one of these gloomy demons who had taken possession of him and driven him into the wilderness. "They say, he hath a devil." When his Master came it was in a different guise. "The Son of man [His common title in speaking of Himself] came eating and drinking." His home was not in the

desert, but in the town. It would seem that He passed the first thirty years of His life at Nazareth. From the day of His manifestation to Israel till His death, He lived as a man among men. He was much in Capernaum, often at Jerusalem, rather seeking than shunning the cities and villages. He mingled freely with the people, attended their marriages and their funerals, accepted invitations to their tables, talked with them as occasion served on any topics they proposed, went up with them to the temple, and in every way identified Himself with them as one of themselves. And herein He exposed Himself as much to reproach as the Baptist had by his opposite mode of life. John had a "demon." Christ was a "glutton and wine-bibber." It was the offence of the one, that he dwelt in the desert: of the other, that He consorted with the people. One was denounced as an anchorite; the other as an epicure. Who could stand before such a tribunal? Principles were nothing. Character was nothing. Actions were nothing. The court had made up its judgment before hearing the argument. It sought no light, because it wanted none. The case was already settled. It was simply anticipating the issue, and the mode of it, which afterward found expression at Pilate's bar, "Crucify Him!" "Crucify Him!"

The inconsistency, however, exhibited in pronouncing condemnation alike upon the Master and

His servant is rather apparent than real. The principle was the same in both cases, and the *animus* the same. The motive which inspired the blow was one, and the object aimed at was one. For Jesus and John were prophets, not of different faiths, but of the same faith. They came on a common errand. They published the same Divine truths. They taught, and suffered, and ultimately died in the same cause. And the opposition they encountered was marked with the same unity. It sprang from a common root, the universal enmity of the human heart to God and His truth. They maligned John because he was "a man sent from God;" and they maligned Jesus because He came forth from God. John they persecuted because he preached the truth; and they persecuted Jesus because He "told them the truth." Each might have said to them, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. iv. 16.) This was their real offence. And this appeal which fell from the lips of St. Paul in addressing a distant church, a quarter of a century later, shows that this bitter antipathy to God's truth was no local nor even national peculiarity. It was, in fact, the great conflict of the ages. It was the spirit that nerved the arm of Cain when he assassinated his brother; which beheaded John and nailed Jesus to the cross; and which has breathed in all the hostility of the world to the Church from the

fall to the crucifixion and from the crucifixion to this hour. If you imagine it has bowed to the growing might and majesty of Christianity, and suspended its attacks upon the Gospel, you are mistaken. The essential spirit of the world resembles, in one important particular, the spirit of true religion: it is immutable,—I mean, of course, until it is subdued by Omnipotent grace, and so transmuted into the spirit of religion. Darkness and light are not more at variance. Nor will it be difficult to show that the very conflict between these powerful elements commemorated in the text, and which revealed itself in the apparently incompatible aspersions heaped upon Christ and His Forerunner, has been perpetuated to the present time and is waging before our eyes. Herein lies the practical significance of this Scripture as a lesson for us,—a Scripture too little pondered, and rarely, if ever, quoted as having the slightest bearing upon the Church of our day, or upon questions of personal duty.

For what have we in this narrative but a usurpation by the world of a right to control the Church? The Pharisees, dissatisfied alike with the Baptist and his Master, denounce their teaching and example as of evil tendency. After the day of Pentecost, the Sanhedrim cite Peter and John before them, and “command them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.” Must we go back eighteen

centuries for facts of this sort? Go into your libraries and take down almost at random the favorite novels and magazines of the day, and see whether you do not encounter, if religion be introduced at all, the same self-complacent spirit in dealing with the vital doctrines of Christianity. Your sphere must be a favored one if you are not, now and then, edified in social life with oracular expositions of Christianity from people who know nothing of atonement, of repentance, of faith, of holiness; and to whom the current terms of theology are like words of an unknown dialect. These are people who would not have scrupled to dictate to John, or even to Jesus, how He ought to order His teaching and His life. They are not backward in proscribing this or that tenet or practice as having no sanction from the Scriptures. They are jealous of attempts to draw any dividing line between the Church and the world,—as they are also prompt at impugning the motives of Christians who addict themselves to a watchful and holy life.

The Church still has its John the Baptists, its stern preachers of repentance, who boldly reprove the sins and follies of society. And it has preachers who utter the same warnings, but more in the tone of Him who wept while predicting the doom of that guilty city that “knew not the time of its visitation.” Both are obnoxious to the world’s censures. “We

do not believe in a sort of religion which clothes people in sackcloth; which makes mirth a sin; which puts all amusements under ban; which would infold society in an atmosphere of perpetual gloom. Give us, rather, a religion which will take its fill of this world while preparing for the next. We see no law of asceticism in the New Testament. And the preachers who enjoin it have mistaken their text-book."

This is one of the world's voices, which must be familiar to every ear. A calm inquirer will note the tone of extravagance which marks its utterances. There is no fastidiousness about terms: no solicitude to find out what it is the pulpit condemns, nor upon what grounds: no judicial appeal to "the law and the testimony" by way of disproving its actual teachings. The whole indictment is drawn with a slashing pen; and the anathema pronounced without knowledge, without authority, without misgiving, in the face of Scripture, of reason, and of decency.

The inspiration of such attacks as these comes from the same source with the cavils recited in the text, the native enmity of the heart to God. But there is a secondary agency conspiring to the same end which deserves notice.

Christianity has come to be a great power in the world. It counts not merely its churches, but its nations: not simply its provinces, but its continents.

It can no longer be treated with contempt, as it was in the apostolic age. It sits on thrones. It gives empires their laws, and administers them. It has its presses. When it speaks—and it is speaking all the while—it makes its voice heard. Millions worship at its altars, and pay it homage in their homes. It is no discredit now to follow in its train and shout “Hosanna.” There is more honor gained by lauding than by reviling it. The world, therefore, has fallen in love with Christianity. It affects religion. It rejoices in sermons and sacraments. It goes to church punctiliously—of a Sunday morning. It discourses skilfully of the sermon and the music,—how good they are, or how tame. It takes a sort of pride in hearing of large benefactions which have been made to religious objects. But, after all, it is the shadow, not the substance, which attracts it. It is not real religion it is smitten with, but a painted idol,—a religion of its own fashioning, not the religion of Christ and His apostles. The world has no more sympathy with a spiritual faith than it had when it shouted, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!” It would “be religious.” By all means: it is scarcely reputable not “to be religious.” And as long as you will sum up religion in a routine of formal observances it will not quarrel with you. But beware how you hint at cross-bearing. Beware of pressing texts like these: “If any man will come

after me, let him deny himself." "Ye must be born again." "Be not conformed to this world." "Who-soever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

If you go into the pulpit Sunday after Sunday with language like this upon your tongue, or if, as a private Christian, you carry it into your intercourse with your friends and neighbors, you may lay your account to share the reproach of the Baptist. The world will tell you: "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears, thou miserable ascetic! This is not Christianity. Go, put on thy camel-skin and hasten to the desert. That is the only proper sphere for a Puritanic prophet like thee!" This it will be in the world's heart to say to you, whether it find utterance or not. For it no more understands the truths you pour into its ears, than the Pharisees understood the Baptist. And in so far as it does comprehend, it loathes the requisitions you lay upon it. No one pretends that the sentences just quoted from the New Testament comprise the whole of Christianity. But they are a part of it, an essential part, and in perfect keeping with every other line and feature. When the world alleges that to press these demands is to turn the Gospel of Christ into a system of monkery, it betrays the same ignorance and

the same superciliousness which the Pharisees exhibited towards John. Speaking by the lips of that proud party, it told him in effect that his doctrine was not of God but of Satan, and therefore unfit to be listened to. And it tells you that to talk of bearing the cross and of declining any of the amusements involved in a life of fashionable pleasure, is to show that you have mistaken the whole genius of the Christian religion.

Not to advert to the extreme modesty of these self-constituted expositors of the Gospel, let it suffice to point out the ground of the fallacious judgments they are fond of pronouncing upon the evangelical system and its adherents. They see but one side of Christianity; and they do not half see that. The side of which they get some glimpses is that which pertains to its boundless compassion, its love and mercy, its pardon, its privileges, its salvation. All they know or care to know is, that it brings us a Saviour. "Therefore" (so the latent logic runs) "we shall be saved. Therefore let us eat, drink, and be merry. And therefore hush with your ascetic notions about renouncing the world." Of the holiness of God; of the intrinsic turpitude of sin; of the nature of the atonement, the new birth, the ground of forgiveness, the duty of self-consecration to God, the life-long conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and the necessity of "striving" if we would enter in at

the strait gate, they have little more conception than a blind man has of colors, or a deaf man of music. They have never sought to learn. Their hearts are elsewhere, filled with earthly passions and earthly idols. They are compelled to recognize the existence of Christianity; not, it is true, from any affinity for it, but as a fact they cannot get rid of. It lies across their path. It meets them everywhere. It is all around them. And so, forced to acknowledge it, they look at it through the colored lenses of their own passions, and, very naturally, see nothing which may not blend with their own selfish principles and predilections. Privilege they can see, but not duty: promise, but not service: reward, but not sacrifice. He who comes to them enforcing these unthought-of requirements preaches an unknown Gospel; sets up a soiled and grim-visaged Christianity, which might do for a convent-cell, but never for the cheerful haunts of men and women who live to enjoy life.

Precisely so that generation thought and talked of the Baptist. The people flock to him in the wilderness, and in trumpet-tones he bids them, "Repent." When the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he says even to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." These burning words would never be forgiven by that self-righteous generation. And they

avenge themselves by stigmatizing him as a demoniac: "He hath a devil." Yet you and I see how grievously they misunderstood him; how grossly they wronged him. Blinded by sin and passion, they resented the allegation that they stood in need of "repentance." And mutilating his messages, as such hearers commonly do, they upbraided him for his righteous severity, without heeding the ineffable mercy to which it pointed. For what was his message? "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Here was the glad tidings that Israel had been expecting for centuries: their Messiah was at hand. And presently He came, and was Himself baptized of John in the Jordan. The repentance the Baptist preached, was in order to their preparation for the Redeemer and all the blessings of His reign. It was no "demoniacal" doctrine; no arbitrary, harsh, oppressive exaction. They must repent, or they would be in no condition to welcome their Deliverer, in no state to enjoy the privileges of His kingdom. Not heeding this, they revile John for bringing them the only medicine which could heal their souls.

And their successors tread closely in their steps. For what else does this clamor mean about an "as-

cetic Christianity;" about clothing religion in sack-cloth; and frowning upon recreation; and making the way to heaven so narrow that nobody can walk in it? If anybody does this, let them bear the blame. But if all you mean be that the pulpit preaches repentance as John did, and insists upon a separation of the Church from the world, then it were well to consider whose doctrine it is you are reprobating. Peradventure your controversy may be not with man, but with God. Nay, there is no peradventure in the case. This system which you so injuriously brand as austere, unsocial, and disheartening, bears His image and superscription. But then it is not what you think it to be. There is nothing sullen or forbidding about it. Putting asunder what God has joined together, you sever the command to repent and the exhortations to a spiritual life, from the scheme to which they belong; and, treating them as isolated precepts, complain that the door you are invited to enter looks more like the mouth of a sepulchral cavern than the gateway to a blooming paradise. It may look so—to your eye. Does that prove that it is so? Is your impression borne out by the testimony of any who have passed through this portal? Did those who actually received and obeyed the teachings of the Baptist ratify the verdict of the Pharisees concerning him?

When will men learn that the order of the Gospel

is the order of nature, while false religions and the world reverse it? With the world, it is like the children in the markets, first piping, then mourning; the dance first, afterward the funeral. Christianity rectifies this mistaken and pernicious arrangement. Its ordinance runs, the Baptist first, then Jesus: sorrow first, joy afterward: the sorrow in order to the joy: no joy without the sorrow: but the sorrow for a day, the joy for an eternity. This is Christianity. This is what the Bible and the pulpit mean when they preach repentance and self-denial. It is not that the Gospel of Christ is the hand-maid of asceticism: nor that it interdicts mirth: nor that it proscribes recreation: nor that it includes a single precept or prohibition which tends to impair the true enjoyment of this life. All allegations of this sort are as groundless as were the accusations of the Jews against the Baptist and his Master. Proceeding upon the basis of undeniable facts, it recognizes the inherent alienation of man from his Maker, and the essential hostility of the world to God. For the first, it provides a remedy by liberating man from the bondage of sin and bringing him back in penitence and faith to his rightful allegiance: for the second, by inspiring him with a distaste for such pleasures as have upon them the taint of sin, and enlisting him on the Lord's side in His warfare with it. And in effecting these results, it is so far from sending

him forth to wander up and down the earth as through the dismal galleries of a mine or among the graves of a vast cemetery, that it clothes the world with a brighter radiance to his eyes, and quickens his sensibility to all things good and beautiful, and opens to him fresh sources of happiness, and makes him feel that there is equal mercy in what his Father denies him as in what He grants, and so trains him for his final victory over sin and death and for his crown of immortal glory. Here is the issue and end of those "gloomy" doctrines which exasperated the Jews against the Baptist, and which, possibly, may sometimes have stirred your displeasure against the sponsors of the evangelical faith. Let the review put you upon your guard against taking your views of Christianity from those who have not yet learned its alphabet, and whose creed will coalesce with any type of religion, provided only it demand no sacrifice of self-will and no renunciation of the world.

I have pointed out the radical identity of the hostility to John and his Master, as answering to the essential oneness of their aims and teachings. The world is not scrupulous as to the point of its attack or its weapons. It only wants an occasion. The alleged moroseness of John, or the amenity of Christ, —it is all one. Herod and Pilate will strike hands here, though bitter foes on every other theatre. "John decried as a fanatic: Christ as a man of

the world: see how the world reads characters!" Such is the terse comment of an able German writer upon this passage. He is correct in attributing both judgments to the "world"; and in his satire upon the world's sagacity. Imbecility surely reached its climax when it denounced *Him* as a "man of the world," who came to die for the sins of the world, and whom the world never ceased persecuting until it compassed His death! His crime was, that He lived among the people: that He conformed to their social customs: that He even consorted with publicans and sinners.

Now let us guard this example from perversion. It has been proved that Christianity is not open to the charge of asceticism. Had the time permitted, it might have been shown that the unique and exceptional mission of the Baptist furnishes no warrant for that gigantic system of monasticism which has done so much to debase our holy religion. Neither, on the other hand, is there anything in the more social habits of the Saviour to justify a life of fashionable frivolity. If there be Christian professors who would fain vindicate their devotion to the world by the language He uses here, let them note precisely what He does say, and then study His life for a faithful exposition of His meaning. "The Son of man came eating and drinking." That is all. The rest is their comment. And what a comment! We need offer no denial of the

gross aspersion they cast upon Him, of gluttony and intemperance. But consider the other charge: "the Friend of publicans and sinners." Ah, ye worldly-minded professors, is this your character? When you plead the Master's example as an apology for your pleasures, are you careful to go into the world as He went into it? Are the scenes in which you delight such scenes as He would relish? If He were on earth again, would you expect Him to frequent your favorite *places of amusement*? Do you never hear His voice in the interludes, asking in a tone of gentle reproach that goes through and through you, "What dost *thou* here?" And has it ever been conjectured, either by yourselves or by any one else, that you went into the world as the "friends of publicans and sinners," to seek them out in their guilt and misery, and lead them to virtue and to God?

This is one perversion of the Saviour's language and example. Another, the antithesis of this, is quoted by Himself, and has been often reproduced since. The formalism of His day could not tolerate His familiar association with the people: it made Him "a glutton and a wine-bibber." This is only another stream from the same fountain. It is the same world which speaks by the self-righteous formalist, and the pleasure-loving enthusiast who is bent upon serving God and mammon. Now, as of old, there are those who make religion to consist in

a punctilious observance of forms and rites: who withdraw from society; disdain even to hold fellowship with disciples who have not learned their shibboleth; and frown upon cheerfulness as almost a sin. Legalists they are, who distrust the doctrines of grace as of hurtful tendency. They are afraid of a free salvation; a salvation tendered alike to all classes of men, the worst no less than the best, solely on the ground of the Redeemer's blood and righteousness. They cling to the idea of human merit; and are (as they complacently imagine) weaving out of their own performances a comely web of goodness, which, with some help from Christ, will hide all their deformities at the last day.

A sad thing it is that these people should not have their eyes opened to discover that their Christianity is a body without a soul. The moment you take away from a religious system an atoning Saviour as the sole ground of justification, and a renewing Spirit as the only source of holiness, strength, and comfort, you reduce it to the level of a mere uninspired philosophy. It loses all capacity to satisfy the cravings of the human heart. It is stripped of all power over the conscience. Mistaking form for substance, and blind to all the spiritual glories of the Gospel, it sees nothing good beyond its own narrow pale, and has neither heart nor hand to succor a perishing world. Engrossed with its mint, anise, and

cummin, its selfishness grows apace. Pluming itself on its supposed favor with God, it cries, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are!" And shunning the touch of the poor publican by its side as pollution, it leaves him, and all like him, to get to heaven as they may,—*its* crown is sure. Of this type were the proud sectaries who could see only a low sensuality in the gentle, loving intercourse of Jesus with His fellow-men. And their lineal successors are with us to this day. Let them understand that Christianity is not the feeble, sickly thing they would make it. It does not spurn the nourishment of the cloister in its time and measure. Nor does it condemn the trivialities of the law. Nor yet will it disparage the devout observance of appropriate forms of worship. But it is of too robust a nature to be *kept* in a cell and fed on herbs. It was formed for society. It came to live among men; to go where they go and stay where they stay; to sit down with them in their houses, their schools, their shops, their warerooms, their mills, their ships, their courts, and their cabinets; to surround them with its presence, to fill them with its purity and love, to cheer them with its consolations, to train them for its everlasting rewards. This is the mission of Christianity. And those who gather their robes around them as it passes by on its God-like errand, and cry, "Gluttony and wine-bibbing!" would do well to ponder that

fearful malediction, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in!" (Matt. xxiii. 13.)

It has been the principal aim of this discourse to exhibit the injustice, the bigotry, and the capriciousness of the world, in its relations with genuine religion. The subject is replete with practical lessons. Some of these have been incidentally glanced at. Of the many which remain, the time forbids me to present more than a very few.

The first is, the utter incapacity of the world to sit in judgment upon spiritual things.

Never could it have a more eligible opportunity for testing its skill. The Baptist and his Master appeared openly before men. The world saw them, heard them, observed their manner of life, and had the Scriptures to guide them in framing an estimate of them. And what was its verdict? Of John it said, "He hath a devil;" of Jesus, "He is a glutton." Wondrous penetration! Surpassing wisdom! And after all, this deeply mortifying, humbling lesson was lost upon it. The world is still arrogating the same jurisdiction over questions of theology and worship, of faith and practice; and repeating the same error. Nay, the less it knows of a religious topic, the more

pragmatical it is. Its dogmatism is inversely as its knowledge. Christianity will probably survive the assaults of men whose assurance in dictating to the pulpit where it should stop in discriminating between the Church and the world, is quite in keeping with the fact that, if they had been living at the time, they would have branded John as a fanatic and Christ as a voluptuary.

2. We have here a warning against prejudice and passion in judging of Christian ministers.

The goodness and wisdom of God are strikingly manifested in the diversity of gifts and graces with which His ambassadors are endowed. It was thus with the ancient Prophets. It was thus with the apostles. It has always been so with the ministry. With the endless variety of people they have to deal with, no other arrangement would answer. One must be argumentative, another imaginative. One must be stern, another gentle: one vehement, another temperate: one pungent, another persuasive: one a son of thunder, another a son of consolation. Do you always remember this? Possibly you may. But there are persons who do not; persons who dispose very summarily of ministers and their reputation, when they happen not to preach to *their* taste. But with how little reason! Would you have rejected the Baptist because his strain was so unlike his Lord's? Would you have spurned the massive

logic of Paul because he lacked the eloquent tongue of Apollos? Would you have silenced the tender, affectionate John because he had not the impetuosity of Peter? These preachers that you depreciate have their gifts and their mission from the same source with your own favorite ministers. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." And this is reason enough why they should have your benediction, not your censure.

3. It should neither surprise nor deject the disciples of Christ if they encounter misapprehension and obloquy.

How can you expect to escape reproach from a world that traduced your Master as a glutton and wine-bibber? The spirit of the world, as we have seen, is unchanged. If at any time it should malign your motives and misrepresent your words and actions, remember His benison, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you . . . for my sake."

Something still harder to bear may fall to your lot. You may be misunderstood, and defamed, and cast off without cause, not by your enemies, but by your friends. But even then "no strange thing will have happened to you." Your Master drank of this cup also. And as long as you keep a good conscience, He will enable you to drink of it, and that, too, with prayer for those who have put it to your lips.

4. "Wisdom is justified of her children."

This is our Saviour's reflection on presenting this picture of the perverseness and impiety of that generation. The truly wise, those who are "taught of God," will vindicate the ways of God to man, both in His providence and in His grace. And "let those who are justified by Christ before God, justify Him by their lives before the world."

PLOUGHING IN HOPE.

I. CORINTHIANS ix. 10.

“That he that plougheth should plough in hope.”

THE apostle's argument in this chapter is of the right of the ministry to an adequate support. This right he establishes by the principle which lies at the foundation of society, that the laborer is worthy of his hire: from the recognition of the principle in the Old Testament even in its application to beasts of burden: from its essential equity: from the command of Christ: and by various other arguments. As I have no intention of taking up the subject with which he is dealing, it will be unnecessary to notice these topics. The text is introduced thus: “It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith He it altogether [*assuredly*] for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that plougheth should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth

in hope should be partaker of his hope." That is to say, this command about oxen was chiefly given for our sakes,—for man's sake; to recognize the principle that "the laborer is worthy of his hire;" that so men may go about their work with the expectation of being benefited by it; that he that plougheth may plough in hope, and he that thresheth in hope may be partaker of his hope,—*i.e.*, of what he hoped for.

This needs no expositor. It comes home to every one's experience. When you go into the country and see the farmers driving their ploughs, you have no occasion to ask them why they are turning up the soil. You understand as well as they that it is the crop they have in view. If it were not for the hope of the harvest they would forego this toil. And what is true of the farmer is true of the mechanic, of the manufacturer, of the tradesman, of people of all occupations and conditions. Men are swayed by an endless variety of motives, good and bad; but the one element which blends with all other springs of action is hope,—the desire and expectation of future good. To descant on its universal prevalence, and its potential efficacy in human affairs, would be quite superfluous. St. Paul takes the plougher as a representative character. He would teach us that even in worldly matters God has so linked labor with its reward, that every man who wisely and diligently pursues his work may reasonably hope for an auspi-

cious result. It may be useful to us to consider the same principle in its application to the religious life and the service of God generally. The spiritual, no less than the natural husbandman, has ample reason to go on with his work in hope. That is to say, in doing the Divine will, whether in a public or private station, whether on a broad or a humble scale, whether in the way of action, of suffering, or of silent waiting, we have ground to hope for a beneficial result. It may not be just the result at which we have been aiming. It may even be something very different—in time, and mode, and measure. Herein the case differs from that of the ploughman, who can always forecast the nature of his crop from the seed. And yet the difference is rather apparent than real. For the spiritual husbandman does after all reap what he sows. He reaps a spiritual harvest, though it may not be precisely the harvest he had counted upon.

If we inquire into the grounds of that hope which should animate all true workers in this field, it may be observed that they are doing what their Heavenly Father has directed them to do. Our Saviour said, on a certain occasion, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." We are every one of us sent into the world on a similar errand,—*i.e.*, to do the will of Him who placed us here. Had our first parents preserved their integ-

rity, the whole race would have recognized this as the only rule of duty, and would have conformed to it. The few who do try to conform to it are fulfilling the end of their being. They are living not for themselves, but for God. With very much of imperfection, with many errors and many falls and daily sins which call for daily humiliation, they are nevertheless essaying to take His will for their guide, and His glory for their end and aim; and they must be hopeful as to the issue. This is not a matter of choice. It springs from a law of our nature. An approving conscience is always and necessarily associated with the Christian hope; and the life we are considering, is a life which conscience does approve. Nor this alone. The very existence of a sentiment like hope implies that it must come into play on occasions of this sort. Why are we made susceptible of hope, unless it is to be called into exercise when we are doing what God requires us to do? Would the Author of our nature thwart His own work, by forbidding hope to seek its supreme reward and bliss in Himself? Would He so deny Himself as to make this sweet, sustaining, transforming affection the exclusive dowry of the careless and the ungodly?

This language is not too strong. We affirm the right of the believer, and of all who have their faces Zionward, to labor or suffer for God in hope, because

He "cannot deny Himself." In His infinite condescension He has been pleased to link His own glory with the toils and trials, the prayers and praises, of His people. To an eye capable of taking in its vast proportions, our globe must present a busy scene. The teeming millions who crowd its surface are pervaded with an intense and restless activity. But amidst all this mighty play of human passions; amidst the literature and the science, the agriculture and the commerce, the politics and the wars, of mankind, there is one interest which in God's view overshadows all others, a single movement going forward upon which He lavishes a care and a sympathy denied to everything else. We may not assert that the overthrow of an empire or the founding of a dynasty is a matter of no moment in His esteem : but we are warranted in saying that events of this kind are of small moment with Him as compared with changes in the condition of the Church ; and, indeed, that He orders or permits those very events, with a continual reference to His Church. Not to enlarge upon this inviting theme, enough that our Saviour has shown His estimate of the most trivial services rendered the Church, by proclaiming that the mere giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple shall not fail of its reward. We are sure, then, that He looks with approbation upon the efforts of His people to follow and to serve Him ; and that in doing this, they

have more reason to be hopeful than in attempting any other service whatever.

But you will regard me as arguing a self-evident proposition. Let us rather consider the lesson of the text in its bearing upon various parts of the Christian life.

To begin at the beginning,—our first plougher shall be one who is just awaking from the sleep of sin, and pondering the question, “Shall I now attend to the matter of my personal salvation? Can I hope to secure this greatest of blessings?” Many an one, brought to this point, has been discouraged by the apparent obstacles in the way, and declined the effort. Had it been an earthly scheme, they would not have abandoned it. Men do not so lightly forego the prospect of wealth and honor. In those conflicts, they gather resolution from difficulties; and failures only prompt to fresh exertions. But where the soul is concerned, the quest is too often relinquished on the vague report that “there is a lion in the way.” I do not mean to intimate that there are no actual impediments between the unconverted soul and salvation. There certainly are very serious ones. Without striving, there is no entering in at the strait gate. But is this peculiar to religion? Do you win any earthly prize without striving? Do the ordinary avocations of life cost you no effort? And those who have written their names high up

among the great captains, the great statesmen, the great philosophers, of the race, have they reached that eminence without toil and sacrifice ?

Why, then, complain that Christianity denies its treasures to the torpid and the indifferent? The blessings it proposes to us are as much superior to the noblest distinctions of the world, as the heavens are higher than the earth. And it would be reason enough why all should strive after them, if it were absolutely certain that only one in a thousand could succeed. But so far is this from being the case, that there is no line of research, no path of effort, no form of labor, in which we have so much ground to anticipate a favorable result. There is nothing a man may go about more hopefully than an honest and faithful endeavor to obtain forgiveness and reconciliation to God. How can you help seeing this? You need not send your thoughts beyond the walls of this sanctuary to find a demonstration of it which clothes it as with a sort of mathematical certainty. For what means this day of rest, this house of worship, these Christian ordinances, this precious Bible revealing a crucified Saviour, a throne of grace, and an ever-present, compassionate Spirit? And what means this company of renewed sinners, your friends and neighbors, once enslaved to sin, and now, as they humbly hope, pardoned and saved? Here, surely, is proof enough that God taketh no pleasure in the

death of the sinner; that He delighteth in mercy; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that him that cometh to Christ He will in no wise cast out. What would you more? If, with these testimonies around you, you cannot "plough in hope," if you do not feel that there is enough here to encourage you in an earnest and persevering effort to seek peace and pardon at the cross, you will be likely to wait until all that now invites you to hope gives place to remediless despair.

But coming to Christ is only the first step: it is simply securing the charter and the gracious equipment which prepare us to begin the work of life. The ploughing must go on. The field is large, and much of the soil intractable. But the allotted task can be accomplished, provided only we keep up a good heart as we tread the weary furrows, and "abound in hope." You will know what is meant by this "intractable soil." Look at the human heart, even the renewed heart, and see what a work is to be done there before it can "bear the image of the heavenly!" The very holiest men have deplored with bitter tears the strength of their indwelling corruptions. The confessions of David and of Paul are renewed every day in ten thousand solitudes, where the only ear is that one which "heareth in secret." In whatever just esteem a Christian may be held by his brethren for the general excellence of his character

and life, he feels that there is an immense distance between himself and his Divine Pattern, and that there can be no respite from his warfare until this mortal shall have put on immortality. This whole work of self-discipline must needs be arduous and painful, because it is in the face of nature. Its aim is the subjugation of nature. The old nature and the new struggle together. Both are strong. Sometimes one gets the mastery, and sometimes the other. But on the whole, the old nature loses ground; and it is important we should feel that it must in the end yield to the powerful agencies which are enlisted on our behalf against it.

We need this conviction as a stimulus to effort. You have to deal, *e.g.*, with some wayward passion, some obliquity of temper, some inexorable habit. It has led you captive during your years of vanity: and now in entering upon the service of a new Master, with aspirations after a new life, it still hampers and vexes you. You are well aware that it is more than a match for your own strength. But you must also understand that you henceforth bring into the contest auxiliaries which insure your ultimate victory. It was not forgiveness merely which your Heavenly Father had in view in bringing you to the cross, but deliverance from sin. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is part of His plan that "you should be holy and without blame before Him in

love." And what He purposes, He can and will accomplish. Made one with Him, united to Christ as the members to the head, they have a covenant-right to look to Him for constant succors. He bids them look to Him, that they may "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." They are equally certain of His aid, whether in their general warfare with sin, or in resisting some specific sin. It may be an irascible, a vindictive, or a sullen temper. It may be some carnal or mercenary passion. It may be pride or vanity or levity. It may be a prevailing worldliness of mind and forgetfulness of God. 'Tis all one. There is nothing in the case which need discourage them. Let them "plough in hope." The annual harvest is not more certain than their success, provided they imitate the husbandman in using the prescribed means of success. They and he stand upon the same ground, alike dependent upon the same beneficent Power, and equally sure of His intervention if they invoke it.

This point, like the other, is demonstrated before our eyes, as it is also interwoven with the entire life of the Church. For God is carrying all His children along this pathway. They every one have their evil dispositions to contend with, and by slow degrees, with many lets and reverses, they gain the better of them. In numerous instances the triumph is so marked as to attract deserved notice.

We have all seen the proudest men clothed with humility; the profane become patterns of godliness; the passionate put on the gentleness of the lamb; even the parsimonious turned into generous givers. If questioned on the subject, they would with one voice say, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." They assailed their several sins with vigor, trusting in the Divine promise for succor; and they were not disappointed. They "ploughed in hope," and were made "partakers of their hope." And thus will it be with all who tread in their steps.

We may extend the application of this principle. It deeply concerns *parents and teachers* to understand it, and all who have to do with the training of the young. How disheartening this work is, may be seen in the ill success which so often attends it. With many children, it is true, it is simply an office of pleasure, involving just enough of care and solicitude to keep one's faculties in a state of healthful activity. But you are happy if you have known only examples of this sort. It often falls to the lot of parents and teachers to have to do with children of a very ungracious type. Whether from an hereditary virus, misgovernment, corrupt associations, or other cause, they exhibit qualities which sorely tax your skill and patience. They are petulant, perhaps; they are envious; they are revengeful; they are untruth-

ful; they are irreverent and profane. Or, possibly, they are just listless, lazy, without ambition, without self-respect, without affection, and indifferent to all the ordinary motives of human action. What shall be done with these untoward creatures? What is done, frequently, is to leave them to themselves. Society is infested with men and women who had their place as children among some of these ungainly classes; and who, given over as intractable by their natural guardians, grew up, as it were, at random. The fruit answers to the culture. Their early infirmities have ripened into vices; and the habits which were barely endurable in their youth, are intolerable in their manhood.

The Scriptures teach "a more excellent way": "That he that plougheth, should plough in hope." It will be conceded that the field here indicated is not very attractive. One would not choose for his ploughing a common that was overrun with brambles, or a hill imbedded with stones and matted roots. But if that happens to be your only inheritance, you have no alternative. And many a farmer has transformed just such a plantation into a scene of surpassing fertility. These uninteresting children, so dull and torpid; these malicious children; these deceitful children; these coarse, unkempt children; it matters not what they are, they belong to your patrimony: at least they are, for the time, committed

to your guardianship. It is idle to look abroad and say, with a sigh, "Oh, that this or that child had been confided to me instead!" God has given you this field to plough; and however ungenial the task, He has bid you "plough in hope." For consider that He who has made nothing in vain, could not have designed that these children should remain in perpetual bondage to their wayward tempers and repulsive habits. The very dullest of them has an intellect susceptible of an indefinite culture and expansion. The most perverse may be tamed into obedience. The most insensible is not absolutely destitute of generous susceptibilities. It does not lie on the surface, but there is gold in every one of these placers; and there is a way in which it may be got at and refined. Not a fixed, uniform process, equally suited to all cases. But some way adapted to each, which, if faithfully pursued, will lead to the desired end. To believe this, heartily and steadfastly to cling to it, is the great necessity of the case. For effort without hope is sure to be languid and abortive. While the labor which is nourished by hope is energetic and, ordinarily, successful.

And is there anything in the sort of problems here presented which should prevent your "ploughing in hope"? The question may be answered by another: "Is there any thing too hard for the Almighty?"

For no one expects these children to be roused into action, to be toned down into submission, to be cured of their vicious propensities, to be moulded into shapes of symmetry and beauty, except by the help of a superhuman arm. But God can do it. And He can do it through your agency. For He can impart the needful wisdom, the patience, the gentleness, the firmness, the affection, the faith: whatever the task may demand, He can bestow it all. With His word for your guide, His promises for your encouragement, and His Spirit for your Strengtheners and Comforters, you have no right to abandon your task as hopeless. It is not hopeless. There are families here, I doubt not, in which just such children have, by God's blessing, been recovered from their waywardness, or their lethargy, and trained to honor and usefulness. There must be teachers here both of Sunday- and day-schools who have, by wise, patient, and prayerful effort, reclaimed the most trying pupils, and sent them back a blessing to their homes and to society. And they will tell you that they have their *reward*: that they have sometimes rejoiced more over one of these reformed and renovated scholars, than over ninety and nine that have cost them no anxiety. The essential thing (as they have found it) is, not to be discouraged. Never give up the very worst child. Plough in hope. And go on ploughing in hope. Only plough as the Great

Husbandman has bid you, and sooner or later you may look for your harvest.

“The precious grain can ne'er be lost,
For grace insures the crop.”

And if it be thus with teachers and parents, so also with *ministers of the Gospel*. No one can understand, except from experience, the greatness of their work, or the trials and discouragements which are incident to it. The writings of St. Paul abound with allusions to this subject, many of them personal to himself, but others pertaining essentially to the pastoral office. Not to enlarge upon the topic, let it suffice to advert to the native antipathy of the human heart to that truth which it is the prime function of the Christian minister to dispense; the indifference with which many receive it at his lips, amounting at times to undisguised aversion; the worldliness and negligence so often manifested even by those upon whom he has a right to rely for sympathy and aid; and his own conscious unfaithfulness and unfitness for his high duties. Is it surprising that pastors should be found shrinking from their work, and crying with Moses, “O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send”?

But what can they do? What ought they to do? They bear a Divine commission. They preach a Divine Gospel. The truth they proclaim is precisely

suited to its end. It is the only cure for the world's maladies, the only means for bringing men back to God. They *must* publish it. And they may well publish it in hope. Appearances may be adverse; the soil hard and arid; the skies without rain or dew; weeds and thorns where they looked for grain. But there is no alternative. And precisely such conditions as these have often been followed by a generous harvest. It has proved thus even amidst the appalling wastes of paganism. The servants of God have plied their work among crowds of ignorant and brutalized heathen, within the very shadow of idol temples. And however the blessing may have been delayed, by and by there has been "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees," and the Spirit has come down in power upon the slain, and the dead have lived again. If there be any class of men in the world who ought to "plough in hope," it is the ministers of the Gospel. And so, by parity of reasoning, all who are engaged in the same work of leading sinners to Christ and building up His Church. This field is full of laborers; not so full that there is not room for more; but there is a great army of them essaying in various ways to help forward the cause of true human progress. There are the Christian teachers already mentioned; colporteurs; tract and Bible distributors; philanthropic men and women who labor in hospitals and asylums,

in the lanes and alleys of the cities, along the highways and hedges. There are the faithful disciples who are seeking by private conversation, by correspondence, and other means, to lead their friends to the Saviour. For all these workers, whether on the broad theatre of the world or in seclusion, there is ample encouragement. Let them "plough in hope." The cause they have at heart is God's cause. His eye is upon them. His ear hearkens to their intercessions. Even though they may not in every instance accomplish their immediate object, He will not let them labor in vain. In the end they will have their reward.

Especially will this be the case with those who make it a part of the real business of life to *seek the conversion* of their fellow-sinners. There are such Christians. They are always on the alert for opportunities of this kind. They always have some one in view for whom they are offering earnest prayer, and whose attention they are striving to draw to the "one thing needful." This will not necessarily be by direct approach. Before it comes to this, there may be a long and needful preparation in the way of friendly intercourse and mutual esteem. With a wise discretion, they will turn to account their common studies and occupations, their disappointments, their recreations, the incidents of every-day life, copying herein the example of the blessed Master, who

“ Would do all things, would try all ways ;
By words, and signs, and actions, thus
Still seeking not Himself, but us.”

And they who do this, who make the conversion of sinners one of the cherished ends of life, not only have full warrant to “ plough in hope,” but uniformly avail themselves of it. Hopefulness is of their very nature. They need no assurance from the pulpit or elsewhere that the work they are doing is approved of God, for they have the witness in themselves. And knowing this, they count with a modest confidence upon its successful issue.

There is another field for the application of this maxim, covering too many broad acres to be traversed now ; but we may just glance at it. I refer to the multitudes of *sufferers*,—those who are struggling with inward conflicts, with poverty, with misfortune, with trials which may imperil their daily bread, or which may seem to hedge up their path so that they are at a loss whither to turn. Such an one may sometimes be heard bemoaning his condition in tones like these : “ He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is He turned ; He turneth His hand against me all the day. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out : He hath made my chain heavy.” (Lam. iii. 2.) There is a lesson in our text even for these sufferers. It is not in mockery of their troubles, but

with a full appreciation of them, we say, in the face of these trials, you must "plough in hope." Despair will ruin you. Despondency will paralyze you. Hope will bring peace and strength. These troubles have not come by chance. They are from the hand of an infinitely wise and merciful God. Painful as they are, they cannot be more so than the calamities with which He has been pleased to prove the faith and constancy of eminent believers, from the time of the patriarchs until now. They trusted in Him and He delivered them. He will deliver you. This night must have its morning. This wall of hewn stone across your path has its wicket-gate. When His ends are answered all will be well. "It is good that a man should both *hope* and quietly *wait* for the salvation of the Lord." (Lam. iii. 26.) Satan will if possible prevent this. He knows his hour, and sets upon the Christian as he did upon his Master, in his season of conflict and danger. Let the tempted disciple say to him, "Get thee behind me!" Let him "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isa. l. 10.) Let him remember the Man of Sorrows. Let him think of Gethsemane and Calvary, and grace will be given him to cry,

" My Saviour, as Thou wilt !
All shall be well for me :
Each changing future scene
I gladly trust with Thee :

Straight to my home above
I calmly travel on,
And sing, in life or death,
My Lord, Thy will be done!"

Still another wide sphere invites our notice in connection with the text, merely glanced at in the opening of this sermon,—viz., the importance of this principle to the young in prosecuting even their secular plans. It is, under God, one of the great secrets of success, this "ploughing in hope." No one quality has been more uniformly characteristic of the world's heroes, both its benefactors and its scourges, than hopefulness. You will be able to name scarcely a single exception in the long list of its eminent philosophers, orators, inventors, navigators, philanthropists, and captains. If you come nearer home, you will find that the most successful toilers in the common husbandry of society,—its mechanics, its merchants, its scholars, its professional men,—are men who have "ploughed in hope." Let their example instruct you. The main thing is to assure yourselves that you are in the right path; that your ends and aims have been sought in the fear of God, and your powers dedicated to Him. With this condition precedent, you may and should be hopeful. You will encounter difficulties. There is no path through this world which is without rocks and thorns; and they may be very thick along the

road you are to travel. But never despond. Look to God for succor, and "plough in hope." Regard obstacles as a thing of course. Bend all your faculties and summon all the auxiliaries you can command to the contest. Take heart from the triumphs of others, from the promises of Scripture, and from the rewards of eternity. And thus, honestly endeavoring to make the most of life, "hope on, hope ever," and you will live to some purpose.

I feel that I have done injustice to this text by restricting it so much to the present life, to immediate, or at least palpable, success, whether in temporal or spiritual things. But you will all contemplate it in its higher and nobler aspect. It is the blood-bought privilege of the Christian always and everywhere to "plough in hope," because he may be certain of his harvest hereafter, even if it fail here. Nothing he does for Christ can miss its fruitage there. The cup of cold water to a disciple, the kindly visit of condolence to the house of mourning, the writing of a faithful letter to a thoughtless friend, the toil and prayer you bestow upon the young, the patience and filial trust you display in struggling with the ills of life,—will all receive a glorious recognition and recompense at the last day. These transient labors, these momentary sufferings,—such are "the unsearchable riches of Christ,"—lead on to a sure eternity of bliss. Well may you plough in hope.

A word more and I have done. There is one hope, and only one, that never misleads and never disappoints. Its foundation is laid in the blood and righteousness of Christ. Its object is the friendship of God and the glories of the heavenly state. Its muniments are the word and oath of Jehovah. Its supports are the promises of the Gospel and the ministry of the Divine Spirit. This immortal hope blooms only by the cross. *Have you been there? Have you found it? Have you made it your own? If not, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids until you secure it. If you have, bless God for the priceless endowment, and consecrate to Him the happiness it confers.*

And now, Christian brethren, "may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work!"

THE BALM OF GILEAD.

JEREMIAH viii. 22.

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?”

GILEAD was the name of a large district on the east side of the Jordan. It was a pastoral region, distinguished, among other products, for certain aromatic simples, from which various sorts of balsam were prepared. The efficacy of these agents in removing disease was so great as to confer a kind of medical reputation upon the province. Of this we have an example in the 46th chapter of Jeremiah's prophecies: “Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.” Our text supplies another illustration. The Prophet has been depicting in most sombre colors the wretchedness and ruin which Israel had brought upon themselves. Employing a familiar image, he compares the nation to a body covered with ghastly wounds,

and, apparently, ready to die. The spectacle fills him with horror. "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me." And then he exclaims, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

The allusion evidently is to the power and clemency of Jehovah. "Is there not healing and deliverance with God? Can He not—if you return to Him, will He not—stay these judgments and restore you to peace and prosperity? Why, then, are you not relieved? Why are the chosen people thus given over to reckless impiety and cruel suffering?"

Such appears to be the purport of the passage, and the explanation vindicates the common adaptation of it to the spiritual blessings of the Gospel and the *Great Physician* who applies them. Shall we spend a little while in considering the text in this aspect?

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?"

How much necessity there is for some provision of this kind, there needs but a glance at the condition of the world to show. A sin-stricken world must be the abode of suffering and sorrow. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Everywhere the race is toiling and groaning under the pressure of the primeval curse. Even within the

broad region which feels the ameliorating influence of Christianity, sin and woe assert their baleful prerogative. Every family has, in its turn, to drink of the bitter cup; nor can any individual hope, except for a season, to elude the common allotment.

The need, therefore, of some antidote to this universal infliction is equally universal. Appalling as our condition may now be, the spectacle of a world abandoned to the reign of sin, without any corrective or mitigation, would be far more awful. It is an instance of the Divine mercy for which we can never be sufficiently grateful, that "where sin abounded grace doth much more abound;" and that we may go through the world and address every suffering child of humanity, whatever the nature of his trials, with the consolatory words, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?"

The interrogative form of this statement seems to contemplate, not so much cases of want or woe indiscriminately as examples of peculiar and signal distress. Such examples every community might supply. There are families here and there whose afflictions have given them a sad pre-eminence among their neighbors. Stroke after stroke has fallen upon them, until their cup of bitterness seems filled to the very brim. They are like the group of lofty pines, sometimes to be seen on the crest of a hill, upon which every passing thunder-cloud discharges its

bolts, until at length, shattered and blackened by this merciless warfare, they fall and are consumed. Every one feels how futile it must be to send these smitten households to the world for consolation. They themselves not only realize the insufficiency of any earthly solace, but they may, not improbably, surrender themselves to despondency, with the feeling that their trials are too overwhelming to admit of any alleviation.

A blessed thing it is to be allowed to go to a family in these circumstances, and say, "We will not mock you with the tender of such consolations as the world may have to bestow. We will not proffer you mere human sympathy. But rest assured there is balm in Gilead which can soothe your wounds, and a Physician there who knows how to apply it." This is true even of those trials which, as they are marked by no visible ensigns, attract no notice and awaken no sympathy. It was long ago said, "the heart knoweth his own bitterness." And the older we grow, the deeper must become the conviction of every thoughtful person, that the hearts are not few in number which have some secret sorrow.

Very many of these examples belong to the realm of the affections. Misplaced love, morbid sensibility, disappointed hopes, abused or unrequited confidence,—who can compute the measure of unhappiness in the world which flows from these sources?

The most sacred and responsible of earthly ties not unfrequently binds together the most uncongenial tempers. The precipitancy with which it is formed produces its natural result. When the parties come to be really acquainted with each other, they awake to the fatal discovery that they have made a *mistake*. And this, unless neutralized by an earnest piety, may embitter the remnant of their days. Without enlarging on a theme which it were profitable to discuss only as a warning to those who may be in peril of the same false step (a case where, it is to be feared, neither warnings nor remonstrances would be of much avail), it cannot be doubted that there is, in every community, a large amount of conjugal unhappiness. Disguised, it may be, from curious eyes, and veiled beneath a serene or even a cheerful exterior, but the sorrow is none the less real.

Nor is that less real which springs from disappointed attachments or blighted hopes. The world may sneer at the "sentimentalism" of such experiences. The essential spirit of the world is as coarse and cynical where human affections are concerned, as it is arrogant and impious in dealing with the prerogatives of the Deity. It may very well be that, in many of the instances we refer to, there is an ill-balanced constitution, or that a passion has been cherished in opposition to all reason, or that, in

some way, the calamity has been self-imposed. But the consciousness of this only increases the bitterness of the cup; as it may also prompt to a more careful seclusion of it from every eye. In particular instances, a sensitive, shrinking nature, which will scarcely expose its finer emotions to the gaze of a bosom friend, may be the victim of harsh treatment or of blasted hopes. Such a nature will turn inwardly upon itself, and nurse the sorrow which is consuming it. As it looks abroad over society, there is nothing to arouse its ambition or enkindle its enthusiasm. Occupation it may find in the customary routine of things; but life is rather endured than enjoyed. There is a worm at the core; and its work, though gradual, is as sure as it is insidious, unless a merciful Providence arrest it.

It *may* be arrested. In all these cases, and others affiliated with them, there is one source of relief, the efficacy of which is not to be disputed. Remote it may be from the established habits and associations of those who require it; alien from the sphere in which their minds are accustomed to revolve. Yet is it not the less adapted to their condition, nor, once embraced, would it be the less grateful to them. It were a mission of Godlike philanthropy could one seek out all these afflicted ones, bowed down with their crushed hearts, and languishing under the weight of griefs too sacred to be shared by any earthly bosom,

and say to them, *Is there no balm in Gilcad; is there no Physician there?*

Do not repel the suggestion as either unsuited to your state of mind or as unseasonable. What you need is a Friend whose sympathy can avail to relieve you, and whose arm can keep you from sinking; a Friend upon whom you can fix your lacerated affections with a confidence that He will never betray you; and whom you can love with the conviction that your attachment to Him can never become so absorbing as to be an occasion of self-reproach or of sin. Earthly friendships you have tried and found them wanting. The void in your hearts is greater than ever. And whatever may be your experience in other respects, you are satisfied that the world is but a broken reed to rest upon. Jesus of Nazareth will not disappoint you. Such is the essential perfection of His nature,—such its boundless amplitude,—that in Him all your griefs may be assuaged and all your cravings after happiness satisfied. Combining in a mysterious union the Divine and the human natures, He offers Himself to your confidence as at once “the Mighty God” and “the Man of sorrows.” The one character prepares Him to enter into your troubles with all the tenderness of a fellow-sufferer; while the other makes Him able to remove them, or to sustain you under them. His claim upon your supreme love and ven-

eration has the sanctity which pertains to the relation between the Creator and the creature, the Redeemer and the lost sinner. Peradventure, had you recognized this claim and given Him that place in your affections to which He was entitled, it might have averted the trials that now oppress you. You refused Him the love which was His due, and He left you to bestow it either upon an unworthy object, or upon an object which turned to ashes in your arms. Painful as the lesson has been, you may yet see that it was appointed in mercy to your soul. It required a severe discipline to teach you that this was not your rest; and that in endowing you with those warm and generous affections, God did not intend that you should use them as implements of idolatry. Nor would He now pursue you with a vindictive displeasure. If presumption defeats the true ends of life, so does despondency. Your Heavenly Father forbids you to despond. Knowing perfectly the whole measurement of your distress, with its origin, its relations, its aggravations, He says to you, in tones of parental authority and gentleness which ought to penetrate to the depths of your being, *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?*

Go, then, to Gilead. Seek the aid of its Great Physician. He will do for you what He did for the palsied, and the leprous, and the demoniac, who flocked around Him in Palestine,—heal your

wounds, and pour in the oil of consolation, and make you feel that you have something to live for, and send you on your way rejoicing.

The moment we pass from the sphere of the affections into *the realm of spiritual things*, new forms of suffering meet the eye, as diversified in character as they are various in intensity. And here, no less than among the tribes of sickness, and sorrow, and disappointment, we have but too much occasion to ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead, and no Physician there?"

With one of these sorrows you must be familiar. You have seen individuals under the terrors of an awakened conscience. God has come near to them and set their sins in order before their eyes. In His holy law they, for the first time, see their characters reflected in their true colors; and the discovery overwhelms them. The celebrated Professor Halyburton, of Scotland, has left a very affecting picture of his experience in these circumstances:

"My sins were set in order in the dreadful-ness of their nature and aggravations; and all shifts, extenuations, pleas, and defences were rejected, and my mouth was 'stopped before God.' All the vain ways I had taken for my relief baffled my expectation and increased my pain: they were 'the staff of a broken reed;' they pierced my arm when I essayed to lean on them, and I was ashamed, and even con-

founded that I had hoped. The wrath of God was dropped into my soul, and 'the poison of His arrows drank up my spirits.' All the ways I took to bear down my corruptions proved of no avail, for 'sin revived, and I died;' yea, 'taking occasion by the commandment, it slew me.' I was weary of my life. Often did I use Job's words, 'I loathe it, and would not live alway.' And yet I was afraid to die. I had no rest; 'my sore ran in the night,' and it ceased not in the day. At night I wished for day, and in the day I wished for night. I said, 'My couch shall comfort me;' but there darkness was as the 'shadow of death.' I was made to think it a wonder that I was not consumed; and though I dreaded destruction from the Almighty, yet I could not but justify Him if He had destroyed me. . . . Thus I walked about, dejected, weary, and heavy-laden,—weary of my disease, and weary of the vain courses I had taken for relief, and uncertain what to do, what course to take: 'I took counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily.'"

It is more than possible that these fearful sorrows may have been renewed in the experience of some who are now present. And how hopeless is it to attempt to minister relief to a soul in this condition with any mere earthly specifics! They may come to you and tell you that you are not the flagrant sinner you suppose yourself to be; that your life has

been honorable and useful; that you have never rejected the Bible, nor turned your back upon the Sanctuary; that you have committed no more sin than is chargeable upon all persons indifferently; and that, in the worst event, God is a merciful Being, and He will surely forgive and save you. All this, and much more to the same effect, may be poured into your ear, and with the kindest motives; but you feel its penury. It does not reach your case. It does not silence the clamors of conscience. It does not stay the descending sword of justice. It does not arrest the avenger of blood, whose feet you hear behind you, approaching nearer and nearer every moment.

Something widely different from this you must have before that agitated breast can be tranquillized. And the boundless mercy of God proffers you all that you need. "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?" Yes, thou heavy-laden sinner. Great as thy sins are, there is a greater SAVIOUR. Ponderous as is thy burden, what will it be to Him whose hand holds up the firmament and guides the spheres in their orbits? Deep as may be the crimson-dye of thy soul, the blood which cleansed Manasseh, and the dying thief, and Saul of Tarsus, can cleanse thee. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." The infant

of a day, and the transgressor of an hundred years old, alike need to be washed in His atoning blood; and it is equally efficacious for the one as for the other. He is not a Physician who confines Himself to recent and superficial disorders. He cured the most chronic and virulent bodily maladies with equal ease as the most trivial. And He does no less as the Physician of the soul. That wondrous balm of Gilead,—He has tried it with every type of malignant disease to which poor humanity is subject, and it has never failed in a single instance. Why should it fail in yours? Only put your case in His hands. Go to Him as you are. The worse your condition the greater your need of such a Physician. And it will be time enough for you to plead the hopelessness of your case, as a reason for not repairing to Him, when, from all the millions of the race since the apostasy, you can produce a solitary example of a sinner who went to Him to be cured and was refused the blessing he sought.

A second glance around the realm we are now traversing reveals another class of sufferers. These are the doubting, the tempted, the desponding,—the bruised reeds and the smoking flax,—who “*desire* to follow Christ,” and would “give worlds” to know that He owned them as His disciples, but who walk in darkness. Long accustomed to dwell on their conscious sins and infirmities, their sense of personal

unworthiness forbids them to appropriate the promises, and even restrains them from looking, with any confidence, to the Saviour. Circumspect in conduct, watchful against sin, humble, patient, and forgiving in temper, diligent in the study of God's word, earnest in prayer, constant in their attendance upon the Sanctuary, they, nevertheless, fear to eat the children's bread; and if they ever venture to approach the Lord's Table, it is with the apprehension that the Master may come in and say, "What dost *thou* here without a wedding-garment?" To suggest to them that persons so exemplary in character and life need not scruple to regard themselves as Christians, will no more satisfy them than would the kindred counsel already quoted relieve the anxieties of the awakened sinner. They know more of their own hearts than any other being except God can know, and they feel that their sins are great enough to exclude them from the high privileges of the redeemed. "How can they encourage themselves to hope in the Divine mercy when they *know* that they are so 'full of sin' and that their sins are of a peculiar turpitude?"

This is their feeling; and a very becoming feeling it would be if the system of redemption were what they assumed it to be. But the whole current of their reflections on this subject is as injurious to the Saviour as it is destructive to their own peace of mind. Recalling His compassion to the timid and

doubting during His earthly ministry, one cannot repress the conviction that if He were here again, He would be likely to go to these desponding believers, one after another, and say to them, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?" And what could you answer Him? I know what would be in your hearts, although your lips might not utter it to *Him*. "Yes, Lord; there *is* balm in Gilead, and a Physician there; but they are not for us." "And why," He might rejoin, "are they not for you?" "Because we are too vile. We have treated Thee too basely. Thou hast loaded us with blessings and surrounded us with motives and helps to a religious life, and sent Thy Spirit often to stir up our consciences and bring us back to God; and we have repaid Thee only with unbelief and ingratitude, and devotion to the world." "And is the balm in Gilead," He might respond, "adapted only to those who have but contracted the first infection of sin? Is the 'Physician there' able to cope only with maladies which lie upon the surface? Is the blood of Christ powerless to wash away your sins? Has He cancelled His own gracious proclamation, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out'? Or, has He become less condescending and pitiful than He was of old?"

These doubts and misgivings have their rooting in *unbelief*, and in unworthy conceptions of the char-

acter of the Redeemer. Conscious ill-desert keeps you from going to Christ. But is there anything either in His character or in the events of His life to justify this feeling? Do you find any apology for it in the more than parental gentleness with which He bore with the errors and faults of His apostles? Have you imbibed it from the record of His dealings with the ten lepers; with the father of the demoniac child; with Lazarus and his sisters; with the poor woman who stole a blessing from the hem of His garment; with Peter, after his denial of Him; with Thomas, after his incredulity? What incident of His life, what utterance of His lips, can you lay your finger upon as affording the slightest countenance to the sentiment of distrust which makes you stand questioning whether Christ will not reject you if you go to Him? Let the "bruised reeds" be ashamed of this unbelief. The character of the Saviour, as you contemplate it, is inexpressibly lovely and glorious. How, then, can you cherish a feeling so derogatory to Him? How can you say, as you do practically say, "There is *no* balm in Gilead, and no Physician there"?

We are going through a hospital which has many wards. Let us stop at one more only. If the antidote we bear shall serve for that also, we may be sure it will answer for the rest.

It is a dark portraiture which the Spirit has drawn

of man's moral character, when, with a single graphic touch of the pencil, he is depicted as having "a heart of stone." The skeptic resents the great indignity. "*A heart of stone?* Look at the virtues which cluster around humanity! See the integrity and the truthfulness, the high-toned honor and the magnanimity, which embellish society! Witness the graceful amenities of life; the inviolate friendships; the munificent charities! And let these testify how gross a libel that is upon the race, which ascribes to man a 'heart of stone'!"

Granted, *all*. Make the flattering inventory still more flattering, and its every item shall be acknowledged. The brighter the vestments in which you unfold your idol, the clearer do you bring out the demonstration that his heart is "a heart of stone." It is of his relations *God-ward* that the Scriptures affirm this quality of him. And if anything could add confirmation to their simple and emphatic arraignment of the great criminal, it would be found in the very facts invoked to disprove it. For how fathomless must be that depravity which can clothe itself in all this array of humility and complaisance and generosity and gratitude, where man is concerned, and carry itself, the while, with a bold, thankless, intolerant front towards the Deity! which is all affability and sympathy towards the creature, and all disloyalty and hardihood towards the Creator! which is in-

stinct with pity where any—the slightest—indication of human suffering is presented, and turns away without one emotion of tenderness or of compunction from Gethsemane and from Calvary!

Yes, challenge for man whatever prodigality you may of this earth-born virtue, we point triumphantly to it as vindicating that humbling and offensive announcement of the inspired oracles, that, beneath all this specious and winning exterior, he bears in his bosom a “heart of stone.”

But we are not now dealing with skeptics. There are those who, so far from cavilling at this representation, freely concede its truth. They have the testimony of their own consciousness to its accuracy. They know but too well that *their* hearts are hearts of stone; for they have long found them, in everything pertaining to the Deity, of adamantine obduracy. They know that every word of the Bible is true, and that it is the only lamp which can guide their feet into the way of life; but they feel an invincible repugnance to adopting it as their chart. They know that all conceivable perfections meet in the character of the ever-blessed God; but they find no satisfaction in meditating upon Him. They are familiar with the whole scheme of redemption; but it yields them no comfort. They are too well instructed in the Scriptures, and have too much conscientiousness, to be at ease while leading a worldly

life; and, at times, they recoil with horror from the prospect eternity holds out to them; but they do not attempt to cheat themselves into the belief that they really love that religion which alone can prepare them for their last change. It is the burden of their hearts that they do not love it. They have reasoned with themselves on the surpassing folly and impiety of living for this world only. They are convinced that Jesus Christ ought to be in their eyes the chief among ten thousand; that they ought to enthrone Him in their hearts with a grateful and confiding devotion; that they ought to delight in prayer, and to find their happiness in doing God's will. They long for this. They would make any earthly sacrifice to accomplish it. They have labored and struggled to bring themselves into this state of mind. But all in vain. Their wayward affections will not relax their hold of earth at the bidding of reason and conscience. That heart of stone yields as little to the sublime and touching motives drawn from the perfections of Jehovah, from the cross, from the judgment and eternity, as the granite rock yields to the waves which break over it with the ceaseless ebb and flow of the tide. They have read the most pungent books. They have listened to the most faithful sermons. They have experienced sad and monitory providences. But their pathetic complaint still is,

“ Alas ! my aching heart !
 Here the keen torment lies ;
It racks my waking hours with smart,
 And frights my slumb’ring eyes.

“ He offers all His grace
 And all His heaven to me ;
Offers ! but ’tis to senseless brass,
 That cannot feel nor see.

“ O shall I *never* feel
 The meltings of Thy love ?
Am I of such hell-hardened steel
 That mercy *cannot* move ?”

Here, at least, is a class of sufferers whom no earth-born philosophy can reach. There are heights and depths in their misery which mock your poor measuring-lines, and show how little human wisdom and human sympathy can cope with sin and sorrow. But are they, therefore, to be abandoned to despair? Far from it. There is a voice from heaven,—let all the earth keep silence before it,—which breaks upon them in tones of blended reproach and tenderness, and says, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there?”

Yes, ye fettered, weary, unblest souls, there *is* balm in Gilead and a Physician there. Your case is not hopeless. That heart of stone can be broken in pieces. That proud will can be subdued. Those intractable affections can be detached from earth

and lifted to the skies. The love of Christ may yet burn with seraphic ardor in that breast which has hitherto refused Him its homage. And in place of the ingratitude and distrust with which you have requited Him, your joyful protestation may yet be heard, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee."

These are strange sounds to you. You listen with incredulity. If it were any other hinderance or trial, you could believe this auspicious result possible: because you understand that in *any* case, all must be well with the soul if it do but come to Christ. But in your case here lies the very difficulty. This heart of stone will not consent to come to Christ. You are not *willing* to come to Christ. You are convinced that you ought to come. Your inward yearning is, "Would to God I *might* come!" But you are not drawn to Him. You stand as if chained to the world by some fatal fascination, scorning yourself for your folly, and yet unable to burst your fetters and cry with the prodigal, "I *will* arise and go unto my Father!"

And is it so that the Gospel of Christ, in its opulent provision for the wants and woes of humanity, leaves all uncared for, a calamity, or, if you will, a crime, so appalling as this? Has it no arm of mercy to stretch forth to those who would fain break away from the thralldom of sin and enter

upon a holy life? Assuredly it has. Listen to its words: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.*" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.)

What astonishing words of truth and grace are these! How they seem to have been put on record just to meet the very case with which we are dealing! The trouble which oppresses you, is an insensible, callous heart,—a heart which is keenly alive to every manifestation of human sympathy, but dead to all the munificence of God's bounty; and which neither mercy nor wrath can win to the love and practice of holiness. Of this very heart the Great Physician says, "I will take it away, and I will give you an heart of flesh." He never boasts. He never deceives. He is able to do all that He offers to do. He invites, He solicits, you to entrust that heart to His hands. Nay, the very faith which this act implies is His gift, and He offers to bestow it upon you. His Spirit can enable you to believe. He can remove your repugnance to the Gospel, and present it to you in its true light, as the wisdom and the power of God; and make the Saviour appear so glorious in your eyes that you will wonder you could

ever have suffered any earthly love to exceed or rival your love to Him.

Be it so, that your sins are of colossal magnitude, and as the stars of heaven for multitude. That is a cogent reason for repentance and contrition; it is no reason for declining to accept "the balm in Gilead and the Physician there." When the Son of God expired on the cross, it was to make an atonement for sin. Just in proportion as your thoughts rise to any proper conceptions of the infinite value and efficacy of that sacrifice, will you understand that it provides an antidote even for the pride, and the unbelief, and the earthliness, and the obduracy which have made you feel that while there was hope for others there could be no hope for you.

You "have no real sorrow for your sins." Christ is "exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." One glimpse of Him whom you have pierced, such as the Spirit can afford you, will make streams of penitential sorrow burst from that heart of stone as the waters gushed from the smitten rock. You "have no faith." But can you not cry, "Lord, I *would* believe. Help thou mine unbelief"? You "have no love." Who ever loved Him, except as He was loved by Him? "We love Him, because He first loved us." Let Him but reveal His love to *you*, and that will "kindle yours" as nothing else can. And how can you open that

precious Bible upon your table, and question His willingness to own and save you? "But it *cannot* be" (so you still insist) "that He will receive a wretch like me,—so obdurate a sinner,—one who has sinned as I have, knowingly and wilfully, and whose heart even *now* is like the nether millstone. "O, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted!" Go to Him and *see* if He will not receive thee. See whether thy sins or His compassion be the greater. See whether that heart of adamant which mocks your puny powers can outmatch Omnipotence. See whether that marvel has at length been found, at which all the universe would wonder with a great astonishment,—a sinner so hopelessly diseased that even the Great Physician and the Balm in Gilead cannot cure him. No, no; not such will be your experience. Go to the Saviour; and earth and heaven will one day hear you say,

"Love I much? I'm much forgiven:
I'm a miracle of grace."

THE SAVIOUR, A STRANGER TO HIS FRIENDS.

JOHN xiv. 9.

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?”

OUR Saviour had just announced to the twelve His approaching departure from them. Thomas, interrupting Him, inquires whither He is going, and the way thither. Jesus replies, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He adds: “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.” Hereupon Philip exclaims, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”

These are very remarkable words. “God is a

Spirit :” and (as we read) “no man hath seen God at any time.” What could Philip mean by the demand, “Show us the Father”? And still more, what could his Master mean by saying, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”?

We have reason to believe that when the apostle describes the Deity as “the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*,” he means to be understood literally: that God is actually “invisible” to all creatures; that neither man nor seraph has ever beheld that spiritual essence which constitutes His nature. But during the period which elapsed between the fall and the advent, He had from time to time honored our globe with some palpable *manifestations* of His presence. Every reader of the Scriptures will recall the burning bush; the pillar of cloud and of fire; the awful splendors of Sinai; the sublime vision of Isaiah when he “saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, His train filling the temple.” The Jews interpreted the prophecies as signifying that, under the reign of the Messiah, these manifestations would become more frequent and decisive. In this view, Philip’s language is quite intelligible. On hearing Jesus say, “Ye have seen Him (the Father);” his mind reverted to the imposing symbols through which the Deity had revealed Himself to their fathers. And recalling nothing of this kind in the experience of himself and his fellow-apostles, he re-

plies with the utmost simplicity, "Lord, *show* us the Father: this is all we desire."

The answer of Jesus carries with it a gentle reproof, made the more effective because addressed to him by name. "Have I been so long time with you (*ὕμῳ*, plural),"—literally, "Am I so long time with you, my apostles, and yet hast *thou* not known me, Philip?" As if He had said: "I did not expect this from you, Philip. At the very opening of my ministry I took you into the number of my disciples. You and your brethren have now been with me for three years. And can it be that you do not know me? that you are still ignorant of that union which subsists between the Father and myself, in virtue of which 'I and my Father are one;' so that he that hath seen me hath seen the Father?"

How much the twelve knew of His nature and mission we cannot decide. The complete unfolding of the doctrine of His Supreme Deity was reserved for the period after His ascension. But He had not left Himself without witness during His previous ministry. He had given even the nation at large such proofs of His Messiahship, that they were left without excuse in their rejection of Him. And these credentials were largely amplified in the case of the few men who were admitted to His personal confidence, listened to His teachings, saw His miracles, and were in daily fellowship with Him. How could

they fail to discern the beams of His Divinity? to see in His words and works and life, a far more wonderful "manifestation" of the Deity, than in any of those glorious symbols which had ravished the eyes and awed the hearts of patriarchs and prophets? In a word, to acknowledge and adore Him as the "Brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His Person"? Can we marvel at the mild reproach conveyed by His reply to Philip: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

But was Philip alone open to this censure? Is it quite certain that there have been no disciples since, that there may not be some in our own day, and even here among ourselves, whom the Saviour, if present, might have occasion to chide for their very imperfect knowledge of Him? Let us consider this matter.

In respect to *His true nature and exalted rank* (the very point at which Philip stumbled), there may be those around, if not within, the Church, to whom He would have but too much reason to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

With us all, He has been from our infancy; with us by His works, His word, and His Spirit. And yet there are some who seem not to have learned who and what He is. They have all the testimonies

on this point which had been given to the twelve up to the period of this conversation, and very many besides, of a still more unequivocal character. Yet they do not know Him. They are still crying, "*Show us the Deity, and it sufficeth us.*" "*Show us the Deity!*" Will you explain, before you press this demand further, who it is that has been with you all this while? Turn to His history. Note how He speaks of the great Jehovah. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." "Whatever thing the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." "All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." "I and my Father are one." Is it possible you should not know who the Being is that thus associates Himself with the universal Father, and challenges an equality with Him?

Place yourselves by His side, and what do you see and hear? He talks about the unseen world as He does about this world, without effort or parade, freely and familiarly, as One who is equally at home there and here. He deals with the powers of nature, with diseases of every type, and with death itself, as an absolute Master with His servants. At His command "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are

raised up;" devils are exorcised; and the boisterous sea is hushed to rest. He dies, and nature robes itself in mourning, the rocks rend, and the graves open. He breaks the bars of the grave asunder, ascends to heaven, and pours out the Spirit upon His Church, the irrefragable and crowning proof that the Father has set His seal to all that He taught and all He claimed to be, and yet you do not know Him!

Anointed of His Spirit, the apostles go forth to publish His name and grace to the perishing nations. They repeat His own miracles. They have but to pronounce His name, and not only does disease surrender its victims, but the grave opens its gloomy portals, and its prisoners come forth into the blessed light of day. They hold Him up to a ruined world as the only Saviour. And that no sinner may distrust His ability to "save to the uttermost," they proclaim that He is "the true God"; that He is "over all God blessed forever"; that "all the angels of God worship Him"; and that even God the Father addresses Him in words like these: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (1 John v. 20; Rom. ix. 5; Heb. i. 6, 8.) And yet you do not know Him!

For eighteen centuries the religion He came to establish has been the ruling agency in our world; the most powerful of all elements in moulding the characters of individuals and shaping the destiny of

nations. With Philip and his companions, when this reproof was uttered, it was an untried system. Nay, the grand event in which all its efficacy was bound up had not taken place. Not so with us. The blood of atonement has been shed. God's cure for the world's maladies has been tested. And there is no one here who can gainsay its virtue,—or if he should, millions of witnesses might be summoned from the living and the dead to confront him. Just in proportion as the world has received and obeyed Jesus of Nazareth, it has been blessed with peace and happiness: wherever it has rejected Him, it has reaped a harvest of sin and sorrow and suffering. All this has been passing and repassing before men's eyes from the day of Pentecost until now; and yet there are those to whom the Son of God might say to-day, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me?" Consider, I entreat you, whether you are ever likely to know Him. If such credentials as those which have been glanced at do not satisfy you, what would satisfy you? If these do not prove Him to be "one with the Father," what form or measure of evidence could establish this point? Sad enough would it be if you should continue to resist all this light until you are summoned to His bar, to discover too late, amidst the overpowering splendors of the Judgment, that to see Jesus of Nazareth is to see the *Father*; and that

to be rejected by Him is to be banished from the presence of the Lord of Glory.

But He might find room for this question even within the sphere of His own household.

(1) *In respect to the efficacy of His sacrifice.* It is not meant that any real believer would impugn the truth and reality of the atonement. But it is quite compatible with a genuine piety, for a child of God to entertain at times unworthy views of this great transaction. Whether in regard to his own sins, or to the sins of some fellow-creature, such an one may yield to a culpable distrust concerning Christ's ability to "save to the uttermost." The recorded experience of many believers is chequered with painful doubts upon this very subject. Their sense of sin is too much for their faith. On the abstract question of the atonement they are firm as a rock. But whether it can avail for them; whether their offences do not outmatch its efficacy; whether their crimson guilt will not retain its fatal dye even beneath the droppings of the cross,—just here is the point at which the Master might look them in the face and say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" For with what proofs has He not illustrated the sufficiency of His sacrifice? For four thousand years that the world was kept in waiting for it, the offerings that smoked on patriarchal and Jewish altars derived from it all their

value. The Bible is filled with testimonies, prophetic and historical, typical and experimental, to its Divine efficacy. In every form of language we are told that the Father sent His beloved Son into the world to bear our sins; and that Jesus died even for the chief of sinners. In the Fountain thus opened for sin and for uncleanness, multitudes of the vilest transgressors had been washed from their sins before the advent; and others yet more depraved have been cleansed since. In numerous instances we have seen the mighty transformation with our own eyes; nay, we may ourselves have experienced it. Every day new witnesses come forward to attest the healing virtue of this precious blood. And it is not meet that we should, any of us, scruple whether it be a sufficient expiation for the sins of the world. To do this is not simply to decline the comfort which the Gospel tenders us: it is to reproach the Saviour with having failed in the work He set out to accomplish. For He came to bear the iniquities of His people; to deliver them from their bondage; and to fit them for heaven. He is able to do this for every one of them. He is able to cleanse the very foulest sinners, and to make them Kings and Priests unto God. And not to believe this, is to expose one's self to the reproof from His lips, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

(2) His people may incur the same reproach in respect to the *benevolence and tenderness* of His nature.

The trials of life are a crucible as well to the gracious as to the natural affections of the heart. The Christian is allowed no exemption from them. Sickness and suffering, misfortune and bereavement, come alike to the just and to the unjust. And super-added to these troubles, the child of God is exposed to others peculiar to his own sphere and most difficult to bear. I refer, of course, to the Christian warfare; the conflict with sin and temptation; with the world and Satan. This it is, even more than his varied and threatening earthly trials, which inspires the pensive sadness of so many of David's Psalms; and which we find repeated in the experience of many eminent saints in later times. In both these forms of trouble, the natural and the spiritual, the soul is apt to faint. Faith is overpowered by sense. The oppressed believer cries in anguish, "Why hast Thou forgotten me?" "My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me." "Make haste, O God, to deliver me: make haste to help me, O Lord."

It is the cry of the affrighted disciples over again, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Yes, He does care. Do you think that while He lay calmly sleeping in that boat upon the stormy Gennesareth

He was ignorant of the tempest that was breaking over their frail shallop; or that He was for one moment unmindful of those faithful but timid mariners? Not less certain is it that He takes note of every storm that beats upon the heads of His disciples, and that, in His own time and way, He will succor them. It may happen—it often does happen—that He comes near to His people when they are amidst the billows, and seems as though He would pass by without heeding their signals of distress. But this is only a seeming purpose. He would prove their faith and patience, and then He will come to them. How can they question it? He “came to bind up the broken-hearted,” and to “comfort all that mourn.” This was essentially the character of His personal ministry. You might have traced Him throughout Palestine by the crowds of sufferers and mourners who followed Him. His was no triumphal procession such as princes and conquerors delight in; no bannered array of soldiers and citizens exulting in victories achieved or anticipated. The train that waited upon His steps was made up of the sick and the palsied restored or to *be* restored to health; of lepers pleading to be cleansed and demoniacs cured; of mothers comforted and children shouting their grateful hosannas. It mattered not how degraded in condition, or how foul in character the suppliant who appealed to Him, the coveted relief

was never denied. With unwearied labor He sought out the needy and succored them. The errors and falls of His apostles could not exhaust His patience. He entered into the bereavements of His friends as though they were His own. He displayed even towards the sinful and vile a tenderness which showed how sincere and profound was His sympathy with frail humanity. Everything in His teachings, everything in His life, exhibits Him to us as the wisest and best of Counsellors, the most faithful and compassionate of Friends.

No one amongst us can be a stranger to these things. They were not done in a corner. The beautiful narrative which records them is our earliest and our latest reading, our hand-book through life. And many are the opportunities we enjoy of seeing these miracles of mercy repeated as we go along on our pilgrimage. "The same yesterday, to-day, and forever," the offices of love and sympathy which He exercised in Judea, He renews here in our country and wherever His name is known. And yet there are those who permit themselves to distrust His faithfulness or His patience; His power or His pity. In the blasting of their earthly plans; in the greatness of their bereavements; in the turpitude of their backslidings,—they secretly, if not avowedly, question whether He has not cast them off, or whether they may venture to look to Him again for pardon

and deliverance. It is common with the afflicted to feel that no sorrow was ever like their sorrow. Tempted and desponding believers can conceive of nothing short of the second death which exceeds their troubles. The awakened backslider sees only the frown of an angry God. And unbelief will thrust its suggestions upon these sufferers in their moments of weakness, and raise the doubt in their minds whether the Saviour has not forgotten them. Sometimes, if they dared, they would cry, "Lord, dost Thou not care that I perish?"

With how much reason might He say—and how surely would He say—to these doubting souls, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me?" Not one word would He utter in disparagement of the severity of their trials; still less a word which might lead lukewarm or fallen disciples to think lightly of their sins. He cannot but feel these most keenly. No bosom is so sensitive to ingratitude as His. No one can be so much alive to the failings and faults of His friends. The oneness which subsists between Him and His disciples brings home their delinquencies to His heart, as a parent feels the misconduct of a child. The wounds they inflict must be more painful to Him than the rudest assaults of His open foes. Still, He would not have them mistake His nature by taking Him to be such an one as themselves. While He

condemns the sin, He can love the sinner. He knows what they ought to know, that His blood can avail to cleanse them anew, and to heal their backslidings. He remembers a disciple who defiled His throne with the blackest crimes; and another who denied Him in His very hearing with cursing and oaths: both of whom, on their repentance, He received into His favor. And, as if marvelling that you should forget occurrences like these, so often repeated in later days, it is not strange He should say to you, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

And so with the afflicted and the tempted. Why should you distrust Him when He has given you no real cause for it? Is not His hand in this trial? Did He not admonish His people that "in the world they should have tribulation"? Does He put any cup of sorrow to their lips which has not first been pressed to His own? Is it not in infinite love and faithfulness He has sent these trials? Does He not sit by, like a refiner and purifier of silver, to see that the fire only purifies without destroying the precious ore? Is not the whole history of His Church a record of kindred experiences, wherein He has appointed His people to "suffer, that they might also reign with Him"? And can you not even now hear His mild, reproving voice through your sighs and sobs, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst

thou doubt?" Do not, then, give Him occasion to come again to you with the chiding, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

(3) Another subject in respect to which His people often lay themselves open to this reproach, is *prayer*.

They pray, and their prayers seem not to be answered. What can it mean? There is the promise: "Ask, and ye shall receive." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." They have asked, but have not received. They have asked, and He has not "done it." And now they are depressed and anxious. Repining thoughts begin to stir their bosoms. "He hath forgotten to be gracious." "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." But does He deserve this at your hands? He is the hearer of prayer. But has He anywhere engaged to answer prayer at once; and in the very mode and measure that our wishes would prescribe? This would be to make us the arbiters of our own destiny. It would be taking the sceptre out of His hands, and dictating the course of His providence towards us. Is there any Christian who would assume the responsibility of deciding just how and when his prayers should be answered? The very nature of prayer implies that this is the sole prerogative of Him to whom

our supplications are addressed. His promise to answer prayer, involves no abandonment of His right to decide upon the mode and measure of His answer. This He must do not only in virtue of His Sovereignty, but in justice to His people. It were no kindness to them to consult only their wisdom and their wishes in granting their requests. The prayer of Philip was, "Lord, show us the Father." The Saviour answered it; but it was in His own way, not in Philip's way. Do you side with the disciple or the Master here? And if with the Master, why should it surprise you that He treats your petitions in the same manner? He has done this from the day He promised a Deliverer to our first parents in the garden until now. Not to know it, is to be ignorant of the history of prayer and promise. And not to heed it, is to give Him occasion to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

(4) *The fear of death* is another of the experiences in respect to which His people often expose themselves to this reproach.

It is natural to fear death. The Bible aside, it is reasonable. Why should we not fear a change which sunders all earthly ties, and ushers the disembodied spirit into an unseen and unknown world? a change which summons the soul into the presence of its Maker to have its eternal state irrevocably decided?

So long as they have only their own fragile goodness to rely upon, men ought to fear death. But our discourse now is of Christians who are in bondage to this fear. Very many of them there are. Conscientious, it may be, and upright believers; not ciphers in the Church, but in full sympathy with all that concerns the welfare of religion; the thought of death, nevertheless, keeps a perpetual shadow upon their path. Life puts on a pensive cast with them. Their pleasures are only half enjoyed, and their trials are doubled, by the apprehension that in the end the last enemy may despoil them of their hope, and bear them away into a remediless captivity.

I am not speaking, let me repeat, of mere formal professors who may be haunted with this fear: but of those whose humility and love and delight in God's worship and service attest their discipleship. When such disciples bow their necks to this yoke of bondage, they do a great, though undesigned, wrong to their Master. For has He not conquered death? Did He not die to destroy him that had the power of death? Is death anything more to the believer than the Saviour's own coming to conduct him home, as He Himself has represented it: "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Not only so: but there are constant examples of these doubting, heavy-laden souls dying in peace. Their fears are not

realized. As the time of their departure approaches, their faith waxes stronger. The nearer death comes, the less formidable he looks. And when the encounter actually occurs, they are sure to win a peaceful and, it may be, an exulting victory,—enough, it might seem, to shame all similar doubters out of their distrust of the Redeemer's faithfulness.

It was meet that Bunyan should sketch this scene for us. You will recall, as among his pilgrims, "Mr. Despondency," and his daughter, "Much-Afraid." How did the journey end with *them*? "Then Mr. Despondency said to his friends, 'Myself and my daughter, you know what we have been, and how troublesomely we have behaved ourselves in every company. My will and my daughter's is, that our desponds and slavish fears be by no man ever received, from the day of our departure forever: for I know that after my death they will offer themselves to others. For, to be plain with you, they are ghosts which we entertained when we first began to be pilgrims, and could never shake them off after; and they will walk about and seek entertainment of the pilgrims: but for our sakes, shut the doors upon them.' When the time was come for them to depart, they went up to the brink of the river. The last words of Mr. Despondency were, 'Farewell, night; welcome, day!' His daughter went through the river singing; but none could understand what she said."

And this is the way in which these desponding believers usually die. Why, then, should they go through life with an habitual distrust of their Lord? Why should they question either His ability or His willingness to bring them safely to His kingdom? Why give Him so much cause for the complaint; "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

(5) He may utter this reproach when His people *are disconcerted or alarmed at the course of His providence.*

I refer especially to events of a public nature, such as the prevalence of gross heresies; defections from the Church; disasters to the cause of missions; persecutions; wars among Christian nations, and the like. We need not shrink from the confession: events sometimes occur which confound all our wisdom and fill us with anxious forebodings. On a superficial glance one might be ready to ask, whether God has not for the time surrendered the helm of the universe to other hands, so adverse is the current of things to what we have believed to be His plans, and so menacing to the best interests of mankind. Of course no Christian can really question whether He still reigns; but faith is sorely tried by these inscrutable dispensations. We stand in mute wonder, afraid to picture to ourselves the frightful calamities which seem about to fall upon the world, and upon the

Church. It is while His people are oppressed with fears like these the Saviour may be supposed to come to them with the admonition, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" "So long time!" He may well say this. For when was it ever otherwise with His providence? It began in clouds and darkness, and they have not to this hour been dispersed. Scarcely a period can be named when His government of the world has not presented phenomena which have perplexed His people, and turned their wisdom to foolishness. We are oppressed by the mysteries of our own day. Very profound they are; too intricate to be resolved by our philosophy. But the generations before us were subjected to the same discipline. There were enigmas in His providence which baffled their penetration. And they had their fears, as we have ours, concerning the probable consequences to the cause of human liberty, and the still higher interests of Christianity. We cannot easily repress such fears. But there are two considerations which should never be lost sight of; which, as Christians, it were a sin for us to lose sight of. One is, that whatever the aspect of His dispensations, Christ is on the throne. The government is upon His shoulder. All power has been given Him in heaven and in earth; and nothing can happen except as a part of His plan for carrying forward the affairs of our

world. He has not undertaken to do this in a way which we might suggest or commend. On the contrary, He has governed the world from the outset in a manner altogether alien from any scheme we could have devised. This admitted fact should abate our astonishment at the methods of His providence now. They may not be what we would have desired. They may fill our bosoms with sorrowful anticipations. But they must be infinitely wise and just, because He orders or permits them. For the present they may be charged with evil; and the chief agents in them may incur a flagrant criminality. But they must coalesce with His immutable purposes, and will ultimately be overruled to His glory.

And this connects itself with the second consideration just adverted to, viz., that Jesus Christ loves the Church with a boundless love, and will never abandon it to its foes. Of His purposes concerning particular nations, the Jews only excepted, He has told us nothing, and therefore we know nothing. For aught we can tell, Africa may yet become, for the second time, the chief seat of civilization; or missionaries of the cross may go from Canton and Ava to preach the Gospel in Spain and Italy. We are equally ignorant of the future of our own country. Not so, however, with the Church. This is Christ's purchased heritage, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. It is graven upon the palms of His hands, and can no

more perish than He can. It is His chosen habitation: "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell." It may suffer from the wars and tumults of earth. It often has suffered. It has sometimes been brought very low. But it will survive. It is immortal, like its Lord. And these very commotions which excite our solicitude for its welfare, will in the end contribute to its purity and triumph. For He Himself has said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." (Isa. liv. 17.)

On these two grounds we may dismiss our anxiety—we may at least try to moderate it—concerning the mysteries of Providence. The Church and the world are in the hands of the Redeemer. And to indulge the suspicion that He has resigned the sceptre or become remiss in His rule, because His ways are not as our ways, is to give Him but too much occasion to say to us: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

I pause here with the single remark, that we certainly ought to guard against the error of Philip. Jesus Christ has given *us* no reason to distrust Him, either in His being or in His attributes. We have proved His grace and His power, His patience and His pity, His love and His sympathy. Let us not wrong Him by questioning for an instant His uni-

versal supremacy, His faithfulness to His Church, or His ability and readiness to save all who will come to Him. Let us leave ourselves and our children, our Church and our country, in His hands; assured that there and there alone true peace and safety are to be found; and feeling that thus, and only thus, we can elude the reproof from those gentle lips, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN xvii. 10.

“ I am glorified in them.”

IN the ordinary Scripture sense of the term, to be “ glorified ” is to have one’s character, works, or ways so set forth as to elicit adoration or praise. The expression frequently occurs in the memorable prayer from which the text is taken. The Saviour, addressing the Father, says, “ I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me.” This seems natural, that the Son should glorify the Father, and the Father the Son. Recognizing, as we do, their co-equal rank, the sentiment awakens in our breasts no emotion of surprise ; it is just what we should expect.

But the case before us is very different. “ I am glorified in them.” The “ I ” is the Only-begotten of the Father, and the Brightness of His glory : the Creator of the heavens and the earth : the King of

kings and Lord of lords: before whom devils tremble, and in whose presence seraphs veil their faces. That so exalted a Being may be glorified by the angels, principalities, and powers of the celestial world, might seem to us a possible thing. But this is very far from being what He says. "I am glorified in *them*,"—"in those whom Thou hast given me,"—"the *men* which Thou gavest me out of the world." "Men," like ourselves: sinners of Adam's race: by nature depraved and vile: apostates and rebels: children of wrath: His ungrateful subjects, His enemies, His crucifiers. These are they who "glorify" the "Lord of glory." The two extremes meet. The Highest of all is magnified by the lowest of all. Mere worms of the dust invest with still nobler splendors Him whose throne fills all heaven with its effulgence. Are you ready to ask, "How can these things be?" Peradventure He may have given us a key to the mystery.

We come at once to the core of this subject when we inquire, whether more is to be learned concerning the Lord Jesus Christ from the history of the angels or from the history of man. Our instincts would point heavenward. The natural feeling would be: to know what Christ is, we must "ascend up into heaven" and survey His eternal dwelling-place. We must view all its arrangements and explore its appliances of happiness. Above all, we must confer with those

bright spirits who have always dwelt in His presence. They can tell us what He is. Certainly they could tell us many things about the Son of God which we could not learn elsewhere. But it is earth, not heaven, which has witnessed the complete revelation of His perfections. The angels have learned more respecting Him by coming to us, than we could have learned by going to them. The source and centre, as He is, of the light which illumines the universe, that light shines with its brightest radiance upon the other worlds, not as it reaches them with its direct rays, but with its rays as reflected from our obscure planet.

It is the highest glory of a sinful creature that he should be so changed as to bear the image of God. Is it an irreverent suggestion, that the Mediatorial glory of the Redeemer can be seen in its fulness only as His image is thrown back from the perfected humanity of a ransomed sinner? The proto-martyr Abel was probably the first sinner that ever entered heaven. Was there any creature there, from Gabriel to the lowliest seraph, whose presence revealed so much of Christ's nature? any one around whom they would gather with so absorbing an interest? any one who could tell them so much that was new and strange to them? May we not presume that Christ was "glorified" on the entrance of the martyr into heaven, as He had scarcely ever been before? that

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cherubim and seraphim saw farther down into the unfathomable depths of His nature that day, than they had ever done, or ever dreamed of doing? And was not that the first leaf of a volume, a mighty volume, of which they have been turning the leaves to this day, every leaf reflecting His glory?

To refer to man's moral deformity, is only to exalt our theme. It is because man is what he is, that he becomes capable of so glorifying the Redeemer. Had his character been less depraved, and his ruin less absolute, less honor would have accrued to his Deliverer. Nothing so much exalts the fame of a philanthropist as to have succeeded in rescuing men and women from utter degradation, and transforming them into reputable members of society. The depth of their wretchedness is the measure of his renown. In our condition as a race there are several elements combined, to neutralize any one of which must needs demand a superhuman arm. The problem was, to subdue them all not only, but to replace them with other elements as alien from them as life from death. It was not only to liberate the helpless, guilty captive, but to bring him into the fellowship of the blessed, and crown him with imperishable beauty and glory. See what obstacles barred the way. A prisoner,—and Satan, as the god of this world, held the key. No one could draw the bolt of that door, who was not stronger than the mightiest angel that rebelled.

And if opened, a greater obstacle remained: the prisoner loved his thralldom too well to come forth. He would hug his chains and spurn the offer of deliverance. What could be done for a prisoner who preferred servitude to freedom, who regarded his jailer as his friend, and his real friend as his enemy? Even this was not all. Another keeper guarded the door, and a very different one: inexorable Justice, clad in robes of light, and bearing the "flaming sword" with which the cherubim "kept the way of the tree of life." How to liberate a prisoner thus guarded, must have been a problem too hard for any created intelligence to solve. Not only so; but no such intelligence could have imagined that it admitted of a solution even by the infinitely wise Father of all. What impression, then, must have been produced upon the universe when they saw the doors thrown wide open and the prisoner released,—Justice consenting, Satan vanquished, and the poor, blind, perverse slave exulting in his new-born freedom! The "prisoner" did I say? Nay, not one prisoner, but thousands,—millions,—a throng which no man can number, of all lands and all ages. Nations commemorate the great leaders who have delivered them from oppression, and the statesmen who have enfranchised a subject-race. Such benefactors are "glorified" in the people they have ransomed. But what deliverance may be named in comparison with that proclaimed in the

Gospel, the impediments so vast, the enfranchisement so complete, the cost so immeasurable? Yes, the cost; this is an essential part of the "glory" that accrues to our Deliverer. When other races see our race marching forth in long succession from their hated bondage, they do not overlook the price paid for their rescue. There is nothing in the spectacle which so moves their wonder, or so inspires their psalms of praise, as that the Son of God should sacrifice His own life to save theirs. In every one of these redeemed sinners they behold a trophy of *His* love, *His* wisdom, *His* power. And as the revolving ages swell the mighty concourse, all heaven continues to "glorify" Him who broke the chains from such a race and set them free.

But more than this is included in the text. When the Saviour says, "I am glorified in them," He must refer as well to their moral as their legal deliverance. How a sinner can be pardoned: this was one difficulty. We have been speaking of it. How a sinner can be *cleansed from sin*: this was another. To estimate it, consider the depth, the malignity, the universality, of human depravity. You need not go to the Bible. Take history, ancient and modern, general and particular. Find the chapter which does not prove or illustrate the fact of man's moral ruin. Survey the neighborhood in which you dwell. Review your own life. Everywhere you meet the en-

signs of our apostasy. And if you would comprehend the Saviour's work in overcoming it, consider how successfully it has withstood all other agencies. The world has not lacked philanthropists and reformers. But what have they accomplished? The sages of Greece and Rome were enriched with gifts which have ever commanded the admiration of mankind. Could their philosophies cope with human depravity? From their day to our own, and eminently in our own, sagacious and benevolent men (ignorant of Christianity) have essayed the same task, and with the same result. Not a single instance can be adduced of a community or nation permanently rescued by these teachers from the control of vicious principles, and imbued with the higher type of virtues; not one, certainly, in which a people have been brought back into their true relations God-ward. A kindred inefficiency has attached to the most elaborate systems of secular education. Cabinets and legislatures, armed with all the power of the State, have essayed the same task, and to no better purpose. Much they have achieved in the way of intelligence,—restraint,—amelioration. But renovation, never! The world has seen but one society in which the depravity of the heart has been thoroughly mastered, and its lawless appetites and passions replaced with holy affections. The Christian society, it is true, exhibits this result only in an im-

perfect degree. But with all real believers the foundation is laid for an entire and irreversible transformation. The first fruits are already apparent. They differ in *kind* from anything that ever grew in that soil before under whatever culture. In place of pride, there is humility: in place of callousness, contrition: in place of selfishness, benevolence: in place of enmity to God, there is supreme love to God: in place of self-righteousness, a devout and grateful trusting to the blood and righteousness of Christ as a sinner's only hope. These are not stemless flowers, but vital germs, implanted by God's own hand, guarded by His arm, nourished by His love, and destined to bear their full fruitage in His paradise above. To see such trees growing in profusion in a soil from which the accumulated science and skill of centuries had never been able to educe a solitary living plant, must reflect high honor upon the Great Husbandman. Or, to lay aside the figure, to see this deformed and revolting race putting on raiment of celestial purity, and giving back, however feebly, the lineaments of God's own image,—what sight more wonderful can fix the gaze of the nobler races above us? And as they are gathered home,—a glorious company,—with that Divine likeness finished in its every line and feature, with what a fulness of meaning may their Redeemer say, "*I am glorified in them*"!

But there is yet more of precious truth hidden in this remarkable expression. On another occasion He said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that *ye bear much fruit.*" This must comprehend no less His own glory. How amazing the condescension on His part, how exalted the distinction conferred upon sinners of Adam's race, that He should thus link His glory, not simply with their ultimate triumph over death and hell, but with the humble offices they pay Him from day to day! "I *am* glorified in them." They are bearing fruit now which glorifies Him. How is this? The second chapter of Acts describes how the process began with His disciples; and it is going on to this day. When Peter, the very apostle who had so cruelly denied Him the night of His arrest, stood up in the presence of that astonished crowd, and preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified with such power that three thousand unbelievers cried out as with one voice, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" was not Christ "glorified" alike in His servants and in their converts? And when this multitude of renewed sinners put off their Jewish prejudices, and the innate pride and selfishness of the human heart, and, yielding to the gentle but irresistible sway of Christian love, came together, holding all things common, parting to all as every man had need, praising God and having favor with all the people,—was not this spectacle, so

new to the world's experience, so inexplicable to the world's philosophy, one which magnified the name of Jesus? And was not His saying verified daily in the history of this community, "I am glorified in them"?

The most obvious contemporaneous examples which offer themselves to our notice, are those supplied by the Foreign Missions of the day. In various countries may be found flourishing churches composed of converts from paganism. These converts are of course still beset with their natural infirmities, very many of them only "babes in Christ." Nevertheless, they are "new creatures." They are no longer idolaters; no longer the wretched slaves of all manner of vices. They have come out from their old associations. They are actuated by new motives. They are seen and known of all men to be as unlike their former selves as if they were different persons. They are better, wiser, happier, and more useful men and women than had ever been seen or thought of among heathen nations. With one accord they ascribe the transformation which has passed over them to the Gospel of Christ. Christ's love to them has so enkindled their love to Him, that this has now become the dominant passion of their souls. It is gradually permeating their whole characters and shaping their lives. And it is their constant prayer and endeavor that their deluded

countrymen may be led to Christ and share in the ineffable blessings they have received. Do we trifle when we say that the Saviour is glorified in them? that every tribe rescued from barbarism, every church that lifts its spire heavenward on pagan soil, every individual convert even, reflects the glory of the Son of God?

But we need not go abroad. There is a well-defined line which divides the populations of Christian lands into two classes. We do not claim that this line is precisely coincident with the boundaries of the Church: for there is more or less of wood, hay, and stubble mixed with the gold, silver, and precious stones of the Sanctuary. But in general terms we may affirm of the Christian society, that it is the nursery of virtues which bloom nowhere else, and which are vital to the well-being of mankind. In our search for purity, for humility, for truth and integrity, for benevolence, for sympathy with all philanthropic plans and efforts, we turn intuitively to those who bear the name of Christ. It is to them nations are indebted for the elements which conserve, harmonize, and elevate them. They are the founders and patrons of the noble charities which are the true glory of any people,—even of those peoples who are most distinguished in arts and arms. And this vast tide of goodness which flows in countless channels through every Christian land, springs from a single

source, *the cross of Christ*. Whereinsoever the Christian population of a country differ from those who are alien from Christianity, the contrast is to be referred entirely to the interposition of the Redeemer. By no inherited virtue, by no force of self-will, by no mere human training, but solely through the grace and mercy of Christ, have they attained the rare eminence which marks their lot. To Him do they ascribe the merit. All who witness the results know and feel that His hand has wrought them. And in this view, again, His saying has its confirmation, "I am glorified in them."

Christianity, however, is not content to deal with masses and aggregates. Even as in the case of the first martyr already adverted to, Christ will have His revenue of praise from every ransomed sinner. Alike from the prince and the peasant, from the child and the sage of gray hairs, from the servant to whom He has given five talents, and the servants to whom He has given one, He expects not only, but actually receives, His measure of glory. If He deems the giving of a cup of water to one of His disciples worthy of a reward, there can be no trivial act performed in the spirit of a loving disciple, which He may not make subservient to His own glory. Let this be for the encouragement of those who are endowed with but slender gifts; of those who are shut up to an obscure situation; of those whose life

is an incessant struggle for their daily bread. The one thing needful is not superior talents, nor station, nor the opportunity of achieving great objects, but love to Christ and fidelity to His service. Make sure of this, and He will insure the rest. Exemplify this, and He will so link His name with your unobtrusive virtues and your tranquil life, that He will say of you, no less than of those to whom He assigns the high places of His Church, "I am glorified in them."

And if by action, still more by *passion*. If the labors of His disciples glorify Him, how much more their sufferings! To labor in such a cause and with such surroundings, is counter to nature. It implies a new and very different nature, one which God alone can confer. But to suffer,—patiently—submissively—cheerfully,—this bespeaks yet *more* emphatically the presence and power of His grace. When the apostles had been rebuked by the Sanhedrim, they went forth "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." St. Paul gloried in his persecutions and afflictions, not because he loved pain and trouble, but that the power of Christ might rest upon him. One cannot contemplate a single example of patient suffering in the history of the apostolic Church, or among "the noble army of martyrs," without feeling how literally the Saviour's words were verified, "I am glorified in them."

Nor this alone. It is the allotment of the few to be apostles or martyrs. But it is the common lot to suffer, and the common privilege of believers to "glorify God in the fires." On every side there are disciples struggling with poverty,—bowed down under reverses—prostrated with disease—smitten with sore bereavements,—whose trials only bring into brighter relief the lineaments of their Master's image. We could not, if we would, dissociate the heavenly temper with which they bear these sufferings, from its Divine Source. To every beholder it speaks of His love and faithfulness. There needs no voice from heaven to say, "I am glorified in them." For everything pertaining to a spectacle of this sort reflects His glory.

And if this be so with other scenes of suffering, how much more with the last scene! The Gospel of Christ apart, there is that in the fearful inequality of the contestants which may well appall the stoutest heart; which, indeed, leaves no room even for hope. What can man do in a conflict with death? The strongest and the weakest—the warrior and the babe—sink to a common level here. From the beginning of the world it has had but one issue,—and can have no other. Out of Christ, the sinner—any sinner—is in the hands of death, like tow in the fire. But to the sinner in Christ, the issue is reversed. It is no longer Death that is invin-

cible, but the dying believer. Out of Christ, the soul is always vanquished. In Christ, it always triumphs.

It is perhaps the occasion which, beyond any other, brings home to our sensibilities the sentiment, "I am glorified in them." We have all seen it—the death-bed of the believer. We have watched the slow decay and the waning convulsions of nature. We have stood with trembling as the lamp of life flickered in the socket. And we have seen how the loved and cherished invalid was the only calm and peaceful and tearless one of the group; how sweetly resigned to the Father's will; how ready to let go the tenderest ties of earth; how serene in the approach of the destroyer; how willing to depart and be with Christ; how manifestly breathing the air already of the very suburbs of heaven. These are familiar experiences, and the one thought they suggest, is the thought that fills the whole mind and soul of the departing saint, the thought of CHRIST. His grace—His love—His faithfulness—His sympathy: no one thinks of aught else. The victory we are witnessing over death is His victory. And all the more marvellous does it appear that it should be achieved by a poor, helpless sinner, who, left to himself, could not have sustained the unequal strife for a single moment. With what a fulness of meaning may the Saviour say, in view of the millions who overcome

the last Enemy by the blood of the Lamb, "I am glorified in them"!

We close as we began, with a glance at the future of the ransomed. If Christ be glorified in His people here, how much more *when they shall all be gathered into His presence at the last day, and throughout eternity!*

It is not given us even to conceive of that scene when the Son of man shall come to present His Church to Himself, a glorious Church. Let it suffice that of that illimitable throng which no man can number, every one will have been washed in His blood and renewed in His image. From every sphere angelic hosts hasten to assist at the august nuptials of their Lord with His affianced Bride, the Church. Their glory pales before that which enfolds *her*,—the strange, surpassing glory of a holiness no less immaculate, and a righteousness *more* noble than their own. Whatever confirmation the sentiment may have received before, this spectacle must ravish all heaven with the feeling, "*I am glorified in them.*" Contemplated in its relations to HIM, it savors of "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," too vast and too sublime to be compassed by any except the Infinite Intelligence. Yes, "an eternal weight of glory;" for it will continue throughout eternity to reflect the glories of our Immanuel.

Not to pursue this theme, what honor has the

Redeemer put upon our race, in thus employing our poor services and sufferings to exalt His own glory! What dignity does this thought impart to the Christian character! With what sacredness does it invest the Christian life! How infinite His condescension! how deep and tender His love to our poor race! that He should put it in the power of miserable sinners like ourselves to augment, by however slight a degree, the effulgence of His "many crowns," and make Him appear yet more glorious before an adoring universe. Is not this a motive to Christian fidelity to which every heart must respond? Can we requite the boundless mercy of our great Benefactor with less than the willing, undivided homage of our hearts and lives? And shall we not accept with loving, joyful, gratitude, the privilege of once more commemorating the atoning death of Him who hath so loved us?

THE ANNUNCIATION.

LUKE i. 28.

“Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”

WE have been accustomed to confer together at this season of the year, about the advent of our Lord. I propose now to speak to you of His *Mother*, the blessed Virgin. Whatever pertains to her character and life will be sure of ready audience. By how much we revolt at the *Divine* homage which is paid her by millions of deluded worshippers, by so much are we disposed to render her that affectionate and grateful veneration which is due to her from all mankind. There can be no one here who does not instinctively take up and repeat the angelic benediction, “Blessed art thou among women!” It is one of our regrets, as we turn over the pages of the New Testament, that they supply us with such scant information concerning her. A reason for this may, perhaps, be suggested when we consider the tendency of the

world, now so fully developed, to deify her. Superstition, however, has, with characteristic perverseness, availed itself of the silence of Scripture, to frame a tolerably complete biography of Mary, purely its own invention. Not to go far into details, according to the apocryphal Gospels, her parents were named Joachim and Anna, and were both of the race of David. At nine months of age she walked nine steps. When three years old, her parents having brought her to the temple, "the high-priest placed her upon the third step of the altar, and she danced, and all the house of Israel loved her." She remained at the temple until she was fourteen years old, ministered to by the angels. In due time she was betrothed to Joseph. The birth of her infant was signalized by a sort of solemn pause in both animate and inanimate nature. As Joseph went out of the *cave* at Bethlehem into which he had led her, "he looked up and saw the clouds astonished and all creatures amazed. The fowls stopped in their flight; the working people sat at their food, but did not eat; the sheep stood still; the shepherds' lifted hands became fixed; the kids were touching the water with their mouths, but did not drink." "For her unbelief as to the birth of the child, Salome's hand withered; but, being instructed by an angel, she touched the infant and was cured."

Such is a specimen of the fables which make up

the spurious "Gospel of the Birth of Mary" and the "Protevangelion." Those which precede her introduction to us in the New Testament, are greatly exceeded in number and extravagance by those which pertain to her later history. It is refreshing to turn from these fictitious legends to the simple narrative of the Evangelists. What we really know of her may be summed up in a few words. But I do not purpose at present to go beyond the *Annunciation*.

Of her name,—the sweetest of all female names,—it is sufficient to say that it is the same as *Miriam*; and that in the original Greek, when applied to the Virgin, it is always written *Mariám* (*Μαριάμ*); while the form *Maria* (*Μαρία*) is observed in referring to the other Marys. It must be deemed remarkable that we know nothing of her parents,—not even the name of her mother, and, not with certainty, her father's name. This latter point depends upon the view which is taken of the two Genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Biblical scholars have always been divided on the questions growing out of these tables. Very eminent authorities may be cited in support of the idea that both the tables pertain exclusively to Joseph. On this view we have, in Matthew, Joseph's genealogy as legal successor to the throne of David,—the names of the successive heirs of the kingdom, ending with Christ, as Joseph's reputed Son. While the table in Luke is Joseph's private

genealogy, exhibiting his real birth as David's Son, and thus showing why He was heir to Solomon's crown. This theory does not preclude the idea of Mary's descent from David, although the Scriptures do not mention the fact. On the other hand, scholars of equal rank regard Matthew's genealogy as that of Joseph, and Luke's as that of Mary. She was the daughter of Heli. But, as these tables were usually confined to males, Joseph is mentioned as the "son of Heli," being really his son-in-law. There is strong ground for accepting this view of St. Luke's table. But, apart from his record, we have ample warrant for believing that Mary was of the royal line of David. "The Son of David" was a familiar appellation of her son. And if she had not been of that stock her adversaries might easily have shown it by pointing out her parentage. But all doubt is precluded by the fact that His descent from David was distinctly affirmed by the angel: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David." This proves that Mary must have been of "the seed royal."

Our narrative commences thus: "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art

highly favored, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women." Very apt is the comment of a modern writer: "The high rank of the ambassador evinced the grandeur and importance of the mission with which he was charged. The angels knew it: they knew that it affected deeply the most essential interests of the race of man, not only in time but in eternity. But to man himself, seeing only its outer aspect, the immediate result would have seemed inadequate and disappointing. He went not to any of the great nations of the earth. He visited not any of her mighty cities,—not Rome, not Athens, not Alexandria, not Antioch, nor even Jerusalem. His mission was to a small and dependent country,—to the most despised province of that country,—to the most ill-reputed town of that province. Aye, but surely some great king had his sojourn there, or some great prophet, or some holy priest, or some sage renowned for wisdom? Not so. His mission was to one of the humblest abodes of that humble place; and neither to prince, to prophet, to priest, nor to philosopher; but to a poor maiden of Nazareth, named Mary, betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph."*

Rarely has our globe been the theatre of an interview so remarkable as that which is described in

* Kitto.

this passage. Here is a Jewish maiden at her own secluded home. Of her appearance we can affirm nothing, since the Scriptures are silent on the point. But we all have an intuitive conviction that she was endowed with every personal grace and beauty. We need no revelation to assure us that she carried about with her the charms of an inexpressible loveliness. Still less are we in doubt as to her character. The noble blood which linked her with the house of David, was fitly blended with a piety which already united her with David's greater Son. She was of that chosen few who, like the venerable Simeon and Anna, were "waiting for the Consolation of Israel." Familiar with the prophecies, she would often ponder those predictions which heralded the coming Deliverer as "a rod out of the stem of Jesse," and as the son of a "Virgin" mother. But there is no evidence that her nation expected a *Divine* Messiah. And while Mary knew that He was to be of the same regal line with herself, it would be going very far to presume that she, or any of her countrymen, had an accurate idea of what was intended by His being born of a virgin. Still, as the period of His advent was known to be near, her sympathies and studies and prayers would cluster especially around *these* prophecies. Nor do we draw unduly upon the imagination if we suppose that she may have been, at this very moment, engaged in devout meditation

upon this subject. Withdrawn from all human eyes, alone in the little room of her father's humble mansion, which had become her sanctuary, as she waits upon God, there suddenly stands before her a human form. "Human," I say, for thus the angels usually appeared in their visits to individuals. In any country such an occurrence would be sufficiently embarrassing; but peculiarly so in the East, where the social intercourse of the sexes is fettered with many restrictions. While Gabriel's aspect was that of a man, there was doubtless something about him which either conveyed to her mind an intimation of his superior rank, or at least served to tranquillize her as he spoke. But his strange words deeply agitated her. "Hail, thou that art highly favored; the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women!"

This greeting forms the first part of the *Ave Maria* of the Romish Church: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." The second part is taken from the address of Elizabeth to Mary (v. 42): "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." In the beginning of the sixteenth century (1508) that Church added the remaining sentence, which is an idolatrous invocation of the Virgin: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

In the first clause, the expression "full of grace" has served as a foundation for their theory that "she had all the seven gifts of the Spirit, and all the theological and moral virtues, and such a fulness of the graces of the Holy Ghost, as none ever had the like." But the theory rests upon a mis-translation, and is without warrant. The term rendered "full of grace" is, in our version, "highly-favored," which is no doubt its meaning also in Eph. i. 6, the only other place in the New Testament where it is found: "*hath made us accepted in the beloved,*"—*i.e.*, "hath caused us to be highly favored, to receive Divine favor or grace in our Lord Jesus Christ." There are so very few words in the sacred narrative which can be tortured into the support of the sinful worship they pay the Virgin, that the attempt to wrest this term from its proper signification can excite no surprise.

We read without marvel, that when Mary "saw him she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salvation this should be." The address which followed—the like of which had never fallen, and will never fall, upon mortal ears—would not allay her amazement. "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His

father David: and He shall reign over the house of David forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Perplexed and astonished beyond measure, the maiden, as if rather musing than asking a question, exclaims, "*How shall this be?*" To which Gabriel: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." With inimitable grace, modesty, and sweetness does she reply, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Looking at this transaction still in its personal bearings, we are none of us, perhaps, in the habit of dwelling upon the ordeal to which Mary was subjected. The sanctity of the conjugal relation among the Hebrews was one of the points which distinguished them from all other nations. The provisions of their Divine code respecting *betrothed* females were extremely rigorous: the penalty they incurred by transgression was that of being "stoned to death." What, then, with Mary's gentleness and refinement, and her reputation for eminent piety on the one hand, and, on the other, the shock likely to be inflicted upon Joseph (and which actually followed), with the prospect of her public shame and an ignominious death, one may frame some conception of the tumult of feeling which would agitate

her breast on listening to the mysterious communication of the angel. A most convincing illustration it is of the strength of her faith that the conflict with her fears was so brief. Should we not rather admire herein the fulness and power of that grace which went along with the angelic message; which lifted her above the suggestions of flesh and blood, even up to the height of that sublime utterance, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word!"

Joseph, as we find, had his conflict too. The decision to which he came, to put Mary away "privily," is tacitly commended by the Evangelist. But the angel comes to him in turn and averts even this trial, by revealing to him the wondrous dealings of God with her.

And this suggests the inquiry why it was pre-determined that the Messiah should be born of a *betrothed* virgin. We do not know. But it would seem that this arrangement may have been designed to shield her own name from reproach, and to secure for herself and her child a competent protector (witness their early flight to Egypt); while it also provided for her Son "a foster-father, who, as heir to the throne of David, would give to his adopted son the legal rights to the same dignity." It is, indeed, apparent that her espousal to Joseph relieved the mysterious transaction of many embarrassing cir-

cumstances which must have attended the Saviour's nativity if born of an unaffianced mother.

The angel had apprised her that her Son was to bear such titles as "JESUS," and "The Son of the Highest," and that He was to sit on the throne of David. She could not fail to gather from these particulars that He was destined to very exalted honors, and would wield a sceptre of more than imperial power. But it is evident that she did not comprehend the full import of these expressions. Nor was it designed that she should. "It is worthy of remark that the proper Divinity of her Son was not revealed to Mary: otherwise, neither she nor Joseph could have been in a position to bring up the child: for the submission which was a necessary condition of His humanity would have been submission only in appearance. But this promise, while it by no means abolished the parental relationship, would yet direct the reverential attention of the parents toward the child. From the very beginning of our Lord's incarnation we see that the knowledge of His Divinity was not to be communicated in an external and awe-inspiring manner; but to be gradually manifested by His humanity and His work of redemption."*

We may go a step further. Not only did Mary

* Von Gerlach ap. Lange.

miss the full meaning of the angel's address at the time, but she lived with her Son for thirty years (so it would seem) without that plenary knowledge of His Divine nature and rank which belongs to the very elements of our faith. How far or in what ways His Deity may have disclosed itself during this long period we do not know. The last view we have of Him as a child of twelve years old, gives assurance that during the eighteen years for which He then vanishes from our sight there must have been very much in His daily life to excite the wonder of His family. These things His mother (of all persons) would keep and ponder them in her heart. But when at length the period came for His *manifestation* to Israel, He appears to have been even to her as incomprehensible a being as ever. This is apparent from several incidents, among which we can only mention here her address to Him at the marriage festival in Cana, and her attempt to speak with Him when He was one day addressing a crowd of people. Had she *known*, as she knew afterwards, and as we know, just who and what He was, these passages in her life had not occurred. Nor are they cited here in the way of censure. The latter incident adverted to, is the only occasion on which she tried to interfere with His arrangements: and it was prompted by a mother's tenderness, which only endears her to our hearts. Still, it shows that even

Mary had not yet soared to the full conception of the honor which God had put upon her.

In this connection one would like to ask, did the Holy child Himself have from the beginning, this absolute knowledge of His own Divinity? Was the fact from which His mother's eyes were holden, revealed to His own consciousness from the first moment of His life? No one but God can answer this question. But we may say, as bearing upon the point, that Jesus was "very man." He had a soul and body, like any other man. His human nature was complete in itself. It began with infancy. It was capable of growth. It did grow both physically and mentally. All the while, from the moment of conception, the Divine nature was united inseparably with it. Was His humanity *conscious* of being thus interpenetrated with the Divinity when He hung upon His mother's bosom,—when she gave Him His first lessons in talking and walking,—when she took Him by the hand and led Him forth to look upon the fields and the hills and the starry heavens? Did He then *know* that these were *His own handiwork*? Or did this consciousness come to Him gradually? Was it (as has been surmised) first awakened by observing the fact that He was *holy*, while all other men were sinful? And did this germ ripen into maturity about the period when He met the learned doctors in the temple? Or did it

require those thirty years to bring it to its consummation? No one expects these questions to be answered. They pertain to the "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." It may, perhaps, be as much a mystery to us hereafter as it is now. There seems slight ground to believe that we shall ever understand the union of the Divine and human in the Person of our Lord. But one may be allowed to meditate—so it be done reverently—upon points which our revelation has passed by in silence.

In reference to the miraculous conception, it may seem remarkable that so wonderful an event should not be dwelt upon in the New Testament. This circumstance has not escaped the animadversion of hostile critics. But in truth the silence of the parties chiefly interested is in keeping with the whole spirit of the transaction. Neither Mary nor Joseph, nor Jesus Himself, so far as we know, mentioned the facts. Why should they? What was to be gained by it among that perverse generation but fresh reproaches and insults? Mary, especially, would have drawn upon herself a torrent of merciless invective, which might have crushed her gentle nature. And the enemies of Christ would have found in it a further stimulus to their malevolent abuse of Him. Is it strange they should have locked up the secret in their own breasts? So care-

fully was it guarded, that they appear not to have confided it even to their own immediate relatives. Mary herself, on one occasion, spoke of Joseph as His father: "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." And His "brethren did not believe on Him." When St. Paul was taken up into heaven, he saw and heard what he was not allowed to utter on his return to earth. Whether a similar reticence was imposed upon Mary during the Saviour's life we are not informed. But delicacy and prudence would prompt to this course, irrespective of any prohibition. All arguments of this sort would be annulled by His resurrection. After that, she would be likely to speak of the facts to St. John and others. And when the Gospels were to be written, two of the Evangelists were inspired to put them on record for the faith and comfort of the Church in all coming time.

The fact of the Incarnation is the most wonderful event (the crucifixion itself scarcely excepted) in the history of our world. It "passeth knowledge," as was just hinted, viewed as a union of the Divine and human natures, and not less in respect to the manner of its occurrence. That there was a moral necessity for it we are entitled to believe from the fact itself. Its pre-eminent suitableness to the ends to be accomplished by it, must be apparent even to a superficial observer.

It was expedient that our Redeemer should be God, because the obstacles in the way of man's salvation could be removed only by an Almighty arm. Satan and his hosts were to be vanquished, and an atonement was to be made for sin which should be impressed with an infinite value. Further, it seemed congruous to the glorious excellency of the Supreme Being, that the Redemption of our race should be achieved in some method adapted to unveil His adorable perfections to the universe, as had never been done before.

That the Redeemer should also be man, was required by the fundamental principle of substitution, upon which the purpose of Divine mercy rested. The law could not be dishonored: not one jot or tittle must pass away till all had been fulfilled. Precept and penalty must be satisfied. This could not be by any other *nature* than that which had sinned. An angel could not become the vicar and surety of man. Had Christ's mission been to the lost angels, He would have taken upon Himself the nature of angels. But interposing for our ransom, He takes upon Him the seed of Abraham. In this way alone could He have that experience of human life, with its cares and conflicts, its temptations and sorrows, which would fit Him to enter with a ready sympathy into the trials and wants of His people.

The necessity for His twofold nature being pre-

mised, while the problem it presents must have baffled the wisdom of men and angels, we can but stand and adore the manner in which it was actually resolved. The very first intimation of a Deliverer to the fallen pair in Eden, contained a significant reference to the "seed of the *woman*;" which, centuries afterward, ripened into the explicit announcement, "A *Virgin* shall conceive and bear a Son." (Isa. vii. 14.)

It was absolutely indispensable that the Redeemer of sinners should Himself be without sin. This is one of our intuitive convictions. We all understand why the sacred writers dwell upon the perfect sinlessness of Jesus; why they tell us that He was "holy, harmless, and undefiled;" that He "knew no sin;" that He was a Lamb "without blemish and without spot;" and that "in Him was no sin." The least taint of sin must have vitiated His entire work. There is only one method by which it would have seemed to us possible to bring about this result, the production of a *sinless man*, viz., that pursued in the original creation of man. God had *made* one holy man. He could *make* another. But the insuperable difficulty here would have been, that such a man, though bearing our nature, would not have been of our race; would have been allied to us by no ties of consanguinity or affection; would have been no nearer to us than an angel clothed in a human form; and could not, therefore, have answered to any of

the conditions essential to the atoning work to be accomplished.

On the other hand, no one descending from Adam "by ordinary generation," could escape the taint of original sin. The infection was in the blood. The stream cannot rise above its fountain. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." Had Jesus been the son of Joseph and Mary, He Himself would have needed a Redeemer.

This problem which must so have confounded us, could not baffle Him with whom "all things are possible." Behold in CHRIST "the wisdom of God." *The Son of God—the Son of Mary.* Divine—human. Finite—infinite. We accept the marvel, because God hath affirmed it; not because we can explain it. We cannot. What we know for a certainty is, that God has come down to us in the likeness of man. The stream of humanity flowing on in the same deep, turbid channels for ages, had become immedicably poisoned. Nothing could heal or even ameliorate it but the infusion of a Divine element. And this was the inscrutable transaction described in the Scripture before us, which has forever made the Virgin Mary "blessed among women."

We might have asked a thousand questions concerning the Divine procedure in this matter; but there is a veil thrown over it which screens it from all human eyes. *How* "the word was made flesh,"

we do not know ; but we know the fact. We know that Jesus was as truly the Son of Mary as Mary was the child of her mother. The miraculous influence which overshadowed and pervaded her frame abated nothing from the strict humanity of her Son. The union of the Divine nature with the nature He derived from His mother, left the latter unimpaired in the fulness of its powers. There was no such transfusion of the one into the other, no such commixture of the two, as to disturb the identity of either. The Divine nature could not become human, for it is self-existent and immutable ; it cannot be to-day what it was not yesterday ; nor to-morrow what it is not to-day ; as it certainly cannot become susceptible of suffering. Nor, for corresponding reasons, can the human be made Divine. But the human nature being formed by the Holy Ghost, and taken into a most intimate and indissoluble union with the Divine, was not only complete in respect to the full circle of its faculties and capacities, but exempt from the hereditary defilement of the race. "That *Holy Thing* which shall be born of thee." We have seen that a Redeemer *must* be human and sinless,—and how wonderfully this was brought about. It was no less needful that He should be perfect. Indeed, it is self-evident that the humanity of such a being could not fail to be of the highest possible type. Our subject does not call for an elucidation

of this point; for it is not so much the Son as the mother we are now contemplating. Otherwise, it were easy to show not only that His character combined all the excellences possible to human nature in their just balance, but that He represented no one class or nation or age. A Jew by descent, He was in character as much Gentile as Jew. There was about Him nothing provincial, nothing temporary. Had He appeared among any other people, they would have found the same grounds of sympathy between themselves and Him, which attracted to Him the devout, the humble, and the suffering of the Hebrews. Should He reassume His earthly ministry to-day, and open it in China or Africa, the same classes would be drawn to Him. For He belongs to all climes, to all races, to all periods,—as much the *only* MAN as Adam was when he stood alone, a perfect man in a perfect world. But we must not pursue this theme.

A sinless man, was Jesus the offspring of a *sinless mother*? How marvellous that such a question should be raised! It was not raised for centuries after her death. The subject is too large to be discussed here. But the historical facts may be briefly stated. For the first five centuries of the Christian era, there is no hint to be found in the writings of the fathers, of the perfection or the worship of Mary. Several of them refer to incidents mentioned in the

Gospels as illustrating her unbelief, and even her "ambition." The apocryphal legends, invented by heretics, were condemned by the Church of those ages. But these legends contained the fatal germ which the Church itself by and by transplanted into its bosom, and there it grew, until it has now waxed to be "a great tree." It is quite intelligible how the virtues which clustered around the person of the Virgin, might be carried up by enthusiastic writers and aspiring prelates, from the human into the Divine. In the sixth century it was first suggested within the Church that, while inheriting the stain of original depravity, it was *possible* God *might* have preserved her from positive transgression. In the thirteenth century this modest conjecture had grown into the averment that, although conceived in original sin, her nature was renewed and sanctified before birth. Soon after, the modicum of truth lingering in this statement was contested; and then commenced that controversy among the Romish Doctors concerning the absolute freedom of the Virgin from all sin, original and actual, which has in our day culminated in the famous Decree (Dec. 8, 1854) of the "Immaculate Conception." It is now a part of the settled faith of the Romish Church, that *Mary was as sinless as her Divine Son*. And every member of that communion is required to believe this under penalty of anathema.

There is something frightfully impious in a transaction like this : that a Church calling itself Christian, should not simply invent a dogma which is without Scripture warrant and against all Scripture authority, but attempt to bind it upon men's consciences as of God's teaching, and to make the reception of it essential to their salvation! Let us be thankful to that benign Providence who has given us an open Bible and preserved us from these soul-destroying errors.

We see enough of the Virgin in the New Testament to know that if it were possible for sorrow and pain to force an entrance into heaven, the propagation of the fable we have been considering, with the worship which is paid her, would fill her with unutterable anguish. But, not to dwell upon this topic, let us close with a more grateful theme.

While we can neither concede the sinlessness of Mary nor join in offering her Divine honors, we pay her a truer reverence, and cherish her memory with a purer affection, than those who would exalt her to a seat on the very throne of the universe, beside God and the Lamb. She stands before us the impersonation of all that is true and refined and hallowed in female excellence. In all the records of female biography, ancient and modern, Biblical and profane, we know of nothing so exquisite, no incident in which unsullied purity, genuine modesty,

womanly dignity, maiden-like grace, holy courage, and lofty faith, are blended in such matchless harmony as in her reply to the seraphic messenger: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word." No wonder the great painters have selected this scene for their noblest efforts; and no wonder they have failed. There is too much of heaven in the scene for *them*. The pencil which depicts it, must bring its colors from the sphere which supplied its inspiration.

With one voice you respond to the benediction, "Blessed art thou among women!" What *woman* has ever read her history without this feeling? It is part of that sublime *Magnificat* in which her rapt soul poured forth its swelling emotions: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!" Not many days elapsed before her cousin, Elizabeth, took up the immortal beatitude, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" After He entered upon His ministry, an unknown woman standing among a crowd, the herald of her sex for the coming ages, took up the inspired benison and cried, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!" And the sweet symphony has been prolonged from that day to this; and *will* be till the last woman has gone up to see and to love Mary *as she is*.

And do you join in this benediction? Do you

really feel that the Virgin's lot was exalted far above that of all other women? And would you "give the world" to stand in some endearing and kindred relation to Jesus? Let us test your sincerity. Have you forgotten His reply to that nameless woman who blessed Him from the crowd? "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it." And His yet more remarkable reference to Mary herself, on another occasion: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For *whosoever shall do the will of God*, the same is *my brother*, and *my sister*, and MOTHER!" (Mark iii. 35.) Do thou "the will of God" in receiving Mary's Son into thine heart, and at the last day Mary herself will rise up and call *thee* "BLESSED!"

MARY AND ELIZABETH.

LUKE i. 42.

“Blessed art thou among women.”

IT was proposed, on the recurrence of this anniversary [Christmas] a year ago, to present in a connected form such information as the Scriptures give us concerning the opening chapter in the life of the Virgin Mary. The sermon to which you then listened was devoted to the “Annunciation.” Immediately on the departure of the angel, as we read, “Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth.”

The district allotted to the tribe of Judah was traversed by a range of hills running from south to north through its central part. This region was called the “hill-country.” What “city” of this neighborhood is intended by the sacred penman is not known. The conjecture countenanced by respectable writers that by “Judah” we are to understand *Juta* or *Jutta*, a town still standing, seems to

be without valid warrant. The preferable opinion is that the reference is to Hebron, which was a sacred city given by Joshua to the sons of Aaron. "There was given the promise of Isaac, and the covenant of circumcision. There Abraham had his first land, and David his first crown. There lay interred Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah." What could be more fitting than that such a city—one of the appointed "cities of refuge" withal—should be connected with the advent of the promised Deliverer? But the question remains, why should Mary undertake this journey? Nazareth was sixty-five miles north, Hebron eighteen miles south, of Jerusalem. With the imperfect modes of locomotion still proper to Oriental travel, a journey of eighty miles would have been something considerable even for the head of a family. The customs of her race, too, virtually prohibited a single or betrothed female from travelling alone. Yet, heedless of all obstacles, the Virgin loses no time after the disappearance of Gabriel, in setting out for Hebron; not, we must presume, absolutely alone, but probably attended by a single servant. Can we find a key to this procedure? Assuredly it was suggested to her by the angel. She had received the wonderful announcement from his lips with an humble, grateful, adoring faith, which attested her descent as a genuine daughter of Abraham. It is the beneficent law of the Dis-

penetration now opening upon the world, "to him that hath shall be given." Gabriel is therefore commissioned to fortify her faith by means of a "sign" pointing to the approaching birth of the Fore-runner of the Messiah. The communication he made respecting her "cousin Elizabeth," was only less remarkable than his immediate address to the Virgin herself. And while she already "believed" (see Elizabeth's benediction, ver. 45), yet will she not decline that confirmation of her faith which the heavenly messenger has invited her to seek in distant Hebron. We always love to be reassured again and again of the news we wish may be true, however implicitly we credit it.

But there is another aspect of this journey which will come home at least to the heart of every woman. Never since time began had our globe witnessed a transaction so mysterious as that in which Mary was to bear so exalted a part. We make no exception even in behalf of that familiar intercourse with our first parents to which the Creator stooped, before the Serpent had seduced them from their steadfastness. The hour was at hand to which all other hours had pointed; the event towards which all other events in the earth's annals had converged. The secret yearnings of humanity, which had burdened all hearts in all lands, were about to be satisfied. The cherished hope of the Hebrew race, which

had been their only solace through ages of captivity, of dispersion, of oppression, was now to be realized. The long sequence of prophecies was to receive a glorious fulfilment. The august vision which prophets and kings had waited for,

“ And died without the sight,”

was to bless the weary world, and from the countless millions of her sex who had trod the earth during the lapse of four thousand years, Mary of Nazareth had been selected of God as the woman through whom He would bestow this ineffable blessing upon a ruined world. And now the mighty secret had been confided to her,—to her alone. What a situation for a youthful maiden! What a charge to be laid upon that gentle spirit! What unutterable emotions would agitate her breast! It is too much to bear alone. There are crises with us, sometimes of sorrow, sometimes of bliss, sometimes of complex, conflicting feelings, when we *must* seek human sympathy as well as Divine support. At this moment there was no one at hand to whom Mary could confide what had happened. We feel an intuitive conviction that those commentators are far away from the truth, who imagine that she went *immediately* to Joseph and rehearsed the details of the angel's visit. This is simply incredible; we might almost say impossible. Before *he* could be apprised of this great

“mystery of godliness” she must take counsel both of God and man. Of all persons living, her venerable cousin, especially after the revelation just made to Mary concerning her, was the one to whom she would most naturally turn. Aside from the tie of consanguinity, it must have been apparent to her mind that their histories were in some way to be interwoven; that the marvellous dispensation of God towards Elizabeth was to find its interpretation in the yet greater marvel of her own experience. In any event, it was a womanly instinct which bade her hasten to unbosom herself to one whose age and piety and affection and kindred circumstances all gave presage of the sympathy she required.

Let us cast a glance now at that favored mansion in the “hill-country” which Mary is approaching. Six months before, the aged Zacharias had gone up to Jerusalem to take his turn in conducting the temple-worship, agreeably to the prescribed ritual which required each of the twenty-four classes of priests to officiate for a week at a time in regular succession. As he stood one day before the altar of incense, Gabriel appeared to him and announced the coming birth of a son who should be “filled with the Holy Ghost,” and go before the promised Messiah “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” This was more than the venerable priest could credit. In circumstances which assimilate the case very closely to that of

Abraham, he falls into Abraham's unbelief and demands a sign. "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man and my wife well-stricken in years." Of course we cannot justify, but can we explain his distrust? May it not be that the proper balance of his mind was, for the moment, disturbed by the unwonted vision? In the history of the patriarchs angels appear very often. They re-appear in the times of the Judges. Under the prophets and kings we see very little of them. They return during the captivity, especially as God's messengers to Daniel and Zechariah. But we have no record of the appearance of an angel for five hundred years, until now Gabriel stands by the side of the altar at which Zacharias is ministering. It was doubtless as unexpected a visit to the old priest as the appearance of an angel here at this moment would be to us. Such an epiphany, so abrupt in its advent, so overpowering in its splendor, might disconcert even the faith of a true Israelite like Zacharias,—the more so when the announcement which fell upon his ear seemed so incredible.

There is another explanation of his unbelief, founded in the truest philosophy and of the deepest interest. Full justice has been done to it by a very able pen. "But how could Zacharias mistrust and contradict the word of the angel, whose message thus met his heart's deepest aspirations? At such

moments, when the bestowal of a long-wished-for blessing, whose want he thought he had long ago got over, is announced to one who is resigned to God's dealings, and is declared to be now nigh at hand, all the sensibility of his soul is expressed in a sudden reaction. The peace of resignation has become so dear to him. He has felt himself so secure, so free, and so proud in that deprivation which he has accepted from the hand of God as his lot in life, and he is unwilling to be thrown back into his former conflicts. Hence it generally happens that there is a remnant of bitter reminiscence still unexterminated in the depths of the heart. He has once felt himself injured by Providence, but he was constrained by his submission to God to oppose, to condemn, to deaden such a feeling. But now, amidst the surprising announcement, the smothered flame of his displeasure bursts forth once more. His various emotions produce a strong passion, a convulsive effort of mind, which seems to repel the promise. Thus did Abraham make objections when Isaac was promised him; and Moses seemed no longer gladly willing when he was at length commissioned to realize his youth's highest ideal, and to redeem Israel. And Zacharias manifests a similar emotion: 'How shall I know this?''*

* Lange.

In one sense his petition was granted: and the angelic message was verified by a sign; but it was widely different from the sign he had wanted. "Thou shalt be dumb until the day that these things shall be performed; because thou believest not my words." Touched by the chastening finger of the Almighty, the aged priest retires, a mute, from the temple, to resume his functions there only after the birth of the promised child. "Departing to his own house," he no doubt avoided society, sharing with his wife the seclusion she sought; for we read that "she hid herself five months." This season she would devote to study, meditation, and prayer,—the needful preparation for the scenes that awaited her.

A few weeks later, a friendly step breaks in upon the privacy of the ancient couple. *Mary stands before Elizabeth!* As among the greetings which had passed between woman and woman, the sun had never shone upon an interview like this. Here, face to face, are the two women whom the King of kings Himself delights to honor; one, the mother of "the greatest that was born of women"; the other, the mother of his LORD. When has an earthly habitation been so honored? Under that humble roof were collected all the treasures of earth: that, certainly, which alone could give those treasures any real value; that, without which the earth itself must forever remain a moral wilderness. From that thatch

among the mountains, a new light was to stream forth upon the expectant nations; a fresh fountain was to be opened, whose living waters would one day reach all the tribes of men.

The scene itself was in keeping with these sublime results. The great Epic Poets of antiquity constantly introduce the gods and goddesses into their narratives, as part of the essential machinery of the drama. Here the true Jehovah came; not the gods of the heathen which are no gods. For "Elizabeth was filled with the *Holy Ghost*." And, taught of the Spirit in that same hour what she was to speak, she returns the salutation of the Virgin, exclaiming, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Mary had not yet avowed her errand, much less recited the visit of the angel. But Elizabeth knows all. Rising by a single step to the utmost sublimity of faith, she at once recognizes the future Son of Mary in His true character and rank, as her "Lord"; and pronounces her grateful benediction upon His mother. It is the Old Covenant, about to pass away, saluting the New. The first benison of the Christian dispensation; one which has been taken up and reiterated by millions of tongues all adown the ages, and which will still be repeated as long as time endures, "*Blessed art thou among women!*" How

strong the faith, and how beautiful the humility, of the venerable matron! In such a presence, disparity of years and all other distinctions become insignificant. The illustrious destiny accorded to herself, so far from nourishing her pride or enkindling her envy, only inspires a profounder reverence for her youthful relative. Elizabeth's cup is full, in that the child of her old age is appointed to be the Fore-runner of Mary's child. And it awakens her astonishment and gratitude, that the Mother of her Lord should take this long and arduous journey to come to her.

The Virgin's faith found its reward. The first accents from her cousin's lips gave confirmation, as by a voice from heaven, to all that Gabriel had promised. And as the beatitude of welcome ceased, her own ecstatic joy poured itself forth in that lofty Psalm of praise which the Church has embalmed as the "Magnificat of the Virgin Mary." The structure of this sublime effusion connects it with the Old Testament, while its glowing delineations of the Messiah identify it with the New. Not to attempt any analysis or exposition of its terms, there is something peculiarly impressive and animating, something picturesque, one might almost say, in this Messianic Hymn from the lips of the Messiah's Mother. When Gabriel appeared to her, he exclaimed, "Blessed art thou among women." When Elizabeth met her, it was with the same salutation, "Blessed art thou

among women." And now, filled with the Holy Ghost, she appropriates the august benediction: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." The Roman Catholics profess to find here a warrant for their "*Ave Marias.*" But without reason. What grosser wrong could be done to the memory of the Virgin, than to pretend that she here sets herself up as a goddess to be worshipped? How her whole soul would have revolted, had she been told that Christian Churches and nations would pray to her, as the "Queen of the world," the "Ladder of Heaven," the "Throne of God," the "Gate of Paradise," and the like! That they would even go to the blasphemous extreme of saying to her in offices of devotion, "Command thy Son;" "Command thy Son by the right of a mother;" "Compel God to be merciful unto sinners." Such phrases abound in their books. Is this to call Mary "blessed,"—to raise her to the throne of the universe; to give her a place, as the painters constantly do in their domes and altar-pieces, among the Trinity; and even to represent the Sacred Three as uniting to do her reverence? No one whose mind has not been thoroughly shackled and debased by a superstitious training, can require a word of argument to vindicate that humble, holy woman from all sympathy with this idolatry. Next to her "God and Saviour," there can be no being in the universe

to whom, if she is permitted to witness it, the spectacle can be so offensive, of countless churches dedicated to her worship and robbing Jehovah of His due to exalt her.

Yet they tell us that it is they alone through whom her prophetic aspiration is realized, "All generations shall call me Blessed." We deny it. And in confutation of the claim, we appeal to the universal sentiment of the Protestant world. We have *our* representative in that unknown woman who cried one day from the crowd assembled around the Saviour, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!" We joyfully accord to the Virgin the highest place among women. We can conceive of no loftier distinction than that which has enshrined her name in all human hearts. And yet we cannot, we dare not, controvert the prompt and emphatic response of the Saviour to that fervid panegyric, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." May not the conjecture be allowed, that He uttered this quasi-rebuke with a special aim? that there rose up before His mind, at the moment, a vision of that gross *Mariolatry* which was to mark the fatal apostasy of the Church in after-ages, and He felt constrained to brand it in advance with His displeasure, and to assure His people that in faithfully keeping God's commands they would attain a

blessing even beyond that which rested upon His mother's head? Does the Romish Church believe this? Is not the whole current of its teaching and practice directly in the face of it? We Protestants are free to confess that we are not ready to honor the Virgin at the expense of her Son. We tell that Church that, in our esteem, the true way to honor her is to abide by the rule she herself laid down on the first occasion when they appeared in public together, after His baptism: "*Whatsoever HE saith unto you, do it.*" This direction to the servants at the marriage-festival of Cana carries within it the germ of a universal principle. It is precisely what Mary would have said to any other group, of whatever rank or occupation, at any period of His ministry. We arrogate nothing in maintaining that, if she could now revisit the world, she would hasten to the deluded crowds who are kneeling at her altars, and indignantly shout in their ears, "See you do it not: I am your fellow-servant, and of those who have the testimony of Jesus. *Worship God.*" And in vain would they search among the recorded teachings of her exalted Son for a solitary utterance which might countenance the worship they offer her. But this theme is enticing us from our narrative.

Their psalms of welcome and thanksgiving ended, these two favored women retire from our view. The only additional fact related of Mary's visit is, that it

lasted "about three months." How the silences of Scripture try us! And what a proof they supply that the Bible is of God! What uninspired historian (or novelist, if you will) could have passed over a visit like this in silence? Here are the two most remarkable women of their time not only, but of all time, brought together under the same roof, and united in the most intimate fellowship for three months. Who would not exchange his whole library for a faithful diary of those fleeting weeks? Who would not prize the journal of a single day; the privilege of looking in upon this wondrous pair whom angels and the Lord of angels had visited, and gathering up the words that fell from their lips? What rehearsings of their own personal experiences! What grateful retrospection of the stupendous events of their national annals! What eager searchings into the meaning of those old types and prophecies which pointed to the coming Deliverer and His Fore-runner! What large discourse, day by day, of the new era about to dawn upon the world, and the endless possibilities involved in the advent of the Messiah and the setting up among men of the kingdom that was to know no end! What hallowed communings with God! What a mutual unbosoming of all the hopes and joys and anxieties which must have filled to repletion the hearts of these two blessed women, at this momentous crisis in their

history and, not less, in the history of the world! These things we may presume: but the curtain has not been lifted on them. All we know is that, at the end of three months, Mary left the hill-country and "returned to her own house."

"Her own house." This shows that Joseph had not yet taken her to *his* house. And, now, *can* he take her? This is the question of questions with this faithful Israelite. It is not for us to reproduce all the causes and implements of embarrassment which were accumulated around him. We are not equal to that task: no one could compass it. And if it were possible to comprehend his situation fully, this would be no place to depict it in its details. Enough that on her return from that long absence which, occurring soon after their betrothment, might seem inexplicable to him, he was on the point of "putting her away;" but "privately," as justice and humanity dictated. This could not be permitted. The angel of the Lord comes to him in a vision and sets his mind at rest. Shall we not add, and in quieting Joseph's fears, set her mind also at rest? For this passage in their lives must have been a crucible of fire to them both.

We have now had, first, the visit of the angel to Zacharias announcing the approaching birth of the Elijah of the New Economy, with the mistrust and penal dumbness of the aged priest. Secondly, the

scene of the Annunciation between Gabriel and the Virgin. Thirdly, the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth with their inspired hymns of praise, foreshadowing the glories of the coming Immanuel. But the great event is still delayed. One step more remains. The herald must precede his Prince. And in due time the son of Elizabeth is born. Another psalm rises to God: this time from lips that had for nine months been sealed. The tongue of the now believing priest is loosed, and his pæan of thanksgiving blends with those uttered long before by his exulting wife and the Virgin of Nazareth. We see in it both the priest and the father; a beautiful blending of the sublime mission of the coming Saviour, with the exalted honor assigned to the newborn infant as the "Prophet of the Highest," who was to "go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,"—the last and sweetest strain of the Old Testament prophecy melting away into the immortal song so soon to resound through all the aisles and arches of the New Testament Church.

No further delay is possible. The fulness of the time has come. Joseph and Mary repair to Bethlehem. And there "she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in a manger." The angels sing their Christmas carol, and ravish the midnight sky with their unimagined melody. The shepherds hasten to

pay their homage to the Divine Child, and return "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen." And later (probably after the forty days at the end of which the holy Child was presented in the temple), the *Magi* come on their mysterious errand, to lay the treasures of the Orient at the feet of the Infant Redeemer. Not to dilate upon these alluring themes, we follow the thread of the Virgin's history.

We meet them next, the whole group, Joseph and Mary and the Child, at the temple. And here, again, the long-cherished hopes and ecstatic joy of the great heart of humanity find utterance in majestic song. Again the psalmist is a venerable sage whose piety had been crowned with a distinction as priceless as it was unusual. For it had been revealed to him "that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Till the Messiah came Simeon was immortal. No sickness, no accident, no violence could reach him. Of all the millions of the human race at that period, he alone knew, when he laid his head upon his pillow at night, that he would see the morning; and when the sun arose that he would see it set,—*unless* the wished-for advent should intervene. Day by day the old man went up to the temple to "wait for the Consolation of Israel." And when at length the "Consolation of Israel" came, he took Him from His mother's

arms and sang his "swan-like song" of welcome to the great Deliverer. It is a Jew who sings, but it is not a Jewish greeting. The Child he clasps with such unutterable joy is not the Hope of his own race merely, the Emancipator of the oppressed Hebrews: but the Redeemer of the world. "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Already the "middle-wall of partition" is breaking down; and in the distance the Gentiles are seen coming to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. Yet even this festal scene must have its shadow. While the old Jew portrays the great salvation, he foresees that it is to be achieved by suffering. To reach His crown, this Child must travel by the cross. And into this mother's cup, to-day so full of bliss, must be infused that bitterness which is the bane of all human joys. Not only was her Child to be for a sign that should be spoken against, but "a sword should pierce through her own soul also." Mercifully for herself, she could not fathom the full import of this prediction now. But neither could it fail to alloy the transport of that hour.* Soon

* Who that has seen the *Madonna di San Sisto* of Raphael can ever forget the expression of the Virgin's face in this greatest of paintings?

enough was the prophecy interpreted to her. With the opening of His public ministry He began to be "spoken against"; and every word of reproach directed against Him, she would feel as if heaped upon herself. These sorrows, accumulating for three years, at length reached their crisis on that memorable day when she stood in mute anguish by the cross. Then was Simeon's touching prophecy fulfilled.

" At the cross her station keeping,
Stands the mournful mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last :
Through *her* heart His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword has pass'd !"

But our errand to-day is at the temple. It is not enough that one sex welcomes the Saviour. As if in grateful recognition of the exalted benefits woman was to reap from His incarnation, the aged Prophetess, Anna, who "dwelt in the house of the Lord," appears at the instant and pronounces her benediction upon the infant. What a group for a painter! What a group for any true disciple! Old Simeon standing by the altar with the holy Child in his arms; Mary in her virgin modesty, and Joseph, listening to his inspired words, and "marvelling" as he speaks; and then this dear old saint of fourscore and four, her face, we must believe, radiant with

celestial fervor, coming in and joining her blessing to that of the patriarch,—altogether it was a spectacle worthy to engage the attention of angelic hosts. Can we doubt that they folded their wings and encamped around it, enjoying as only angels could enjoy so rare a convocation? This service over, Anna, already breathing the spirit of the New Dispensation, “spake of the Lord to all them that were looking for redemption in Jerusalem,” and so became “the first preacher of Christ in the City of the Great King.”

Following what I believe to be the true harmony of the several narratives, the visit of the Magi took place, as already hinted, soon after the presentation in the temple. And then immediately occurred the flight into Egypt. Thus far the young Child had been heralded and greeted only by Hosannas. But this cannot last. He comes not to triumph only, but to suffer: not simply to be born, but to die. A few friendly hearts, unknown to fame, tender Him their grateful sympathy. But even in His helpless infancy He must be made to feel that the *powers* of this world are against Him. Its true spirit was incarnate in Herod the Great, a very monster of cruelty. Attempts have been made to discredit Matthew’s narrative of his plot for the destruction of Jesus, chiefly on the ground that Josephus does not mention it. But (1) this is merely negative evi-

dence. His silence proves nothing. (2) It is easily accounted for. Josephus wrote as a Jew. Incredible as it might seem, he devotes but a single brief paragraph to the entire history of Jesus Christ, although born only four years after the crucifixion, and necessarily conversant with the great events of His life. He could not well refer to the "murder of the innocents" without saying more of the birth and character of Jesus than he cared to say. (3) Supposing him to have known of this transaction, it would be too much eclipsed by other barbarities of Herod to make any deep impression upon his mind. For he takes rank with those demi-fiends who have found their recreation in deeds of blood. He slew his subjects by wholesale. He put to death his wife Mariamne and her three sons, the last of them a few days only before his own death. His thirst for blood was not slaked even at the end of seventy years, and when his last illness was consciously hastening to rid the world of him. For even then, knowing that the nation would rejoice over his removal, he issued a secret order (happily not carried out) directing that the principal men of Jerusalem should be shut up in the Hippodrome, and executed as soon as he ceased to breathe, that so there might be mourning in Jerusalem for them if the people would not mourn for him. What figure would the slaughter of a few infants make in the career of such

a demon? And then (4) it is not certain that Joseph had heard of this event. The murder of the children, possibly, was a very different affair from that depicted with such effect by the painters; different from the view conveyed to our own minds by a casual reading of the Evangelist. It has been computed that the children of two years old and under, in the vicinity of Bethlehem, did not number more than ten or twelve: we may be tolerably certain there were not above a score. Nor are we shut up to any specific theory as to the method of disposing of them. Whatever our traditional belief, it must seem highly improbable, on reflection, that Herod should have commissioned a band of soldiers to ransack the district and openly massacre the doomed children. He was not so penurious in his arts and implements of cruelty as this. For myself, at least, I incline to adopt the exposition suggested by a writer already quoted in this discourse as follows:

“It was Spring. The parents were for the most part occupied in the fields. Soon, however, first one, and then another, missed one of their children. One disappeared. Another was found suffocated, poisoned, or stabbed, and bathed in its own blood. In these mysterious and dreadful events, however, one strange feature of resemblance uniformly prevailed; viz., that only boys were slain, and none over two years old. The number of these unfortunates could

not be great ; but the suffering and fear were terribly increased by the mystery and inevitable nature of the danger. Whence these terrible assassinations arose, no political writer, and no Jew except the hired murderers could know. But Christian feeling, which had been warned against the attempts of the tyrant [*scil.* by the 'wise men?'], and knew the meaning of the circumstance that the slain children were two years old and under, could say with certainty : ' Herod is the originator of this deed.' " * However that may have been, the parties most deeply interested were far away from the seat of danger. For, apprised by an angel of the tyrant's designs, Joseph and Mary with the Child had already gone down to Egypt. According to the best chronologists, their sojourn there was brief, for Herod survived this last feat of brutal violence but a very short time. Again the angel visits Joseph and recalls them from their exile. They return to Palestine but not to Bethlehem. Under heavenly guidance, they go back to their own city, and Nazareth becomes for thirty years the home of the Incarnate Word, " God manifest in the flesh."

It is time to pause ; although we have advanced only a very few steps in the history of the Virgin. In its early chapters, her life is intertwined with the

* Lange.

life of her "First-born." Nothing pertaining to His infancy can be unimportant to us. Concise and fragmentary as the record is, it must impress every thoughtful mind with the wisdom and might of that benign Providence which controls all creatures and all events. In raising up a woman like Mary, of the "seed royal," to become the mother of our Lord; in providing for her at a season of the utmost need, a prudent, devout, and sympathizing friend like Elizabeth; in keeping her reputation spotless in the eyes of her husband, and enlisting him as the grateful protector of her life and character; in preparing competent witnesses to bear inspired testimony to the rank and mission of her Child; in sheltering her and her Infant from the fury of an insane tyrant who could make the resources of a kingdom subservient to his malevolent purposes,—how much is there in all this to illustrate the wonder-working Providence of God!

Again, what a prophetic picture have we in these scenes of the future of Christ and His Church! Look at the variety of characters grouped together here,—Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, the Shepherds, the Magi, Herod,—all permanent *types*, representing *classes* to be reproduced wherever the Gospel should be preached; all exemplifying more or less distinctly the influence of a Saviour's birth and doctrine upon the human heart.

Now as then, there are doubters like Zacharias among the believing. There are disciples like Mary and Elizabeth, whose lives are a perpetual psalm of praise to the Messiah. There are faithful sentinels who stand like Simeon and Anna upon their watch-towers, waiting and yearning for the *second* coming of the "Consolation of Israel." There are generous souls like the Eastern sages that never weary in bringing their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, and casting them at the Saviour's feet. And there are atheistic philosophers and savage rulers who, like Herod, anathematize Jesus of Nazareth, and would gladly extirpate His religion.

Let us see to it that we take our place among those who deem it their highest honor to do honor to the Son of Mary. In the unwavering faith, the humility, the courage, the gentleness, the sympathy, the holy love and constancy, which graced her character, we have an example worthy of our devout study, and eminently fitted to draw even our unbelieving hearts heavenward. And remember—that whatever of reverence or admiration you may now profess for her, in her esteem and, what is infinitely more, in the award of her God and yours at the last day, it will all go for naught—nay, it will turn to your everlasting undoing—if you refuse to receive and serve the Son of her love as your only SAVIOUR.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY NOT A PRIESTHOOD.

I. TIMOTHY iii. 1.

*“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of
a bishop, he desireth a good work.”*

WHOLE libraries have been written on the thesis propounded in this sentence: “the office of a Bishop.” The controversy respecting it involves the very nature, as well as the constitution, of the Christian Ministry. On both these points conflicting and incompatible theories have long divided the Church. A full discussion of these theories would be quite impracticable within the limits of an ordinary discourse; but the general subject may properly engage our attention on an occasion like the present.

There are two leading theories on the nature, and two on the constitution, of the Ministry. Waiving the consideration of the latter of these topics, except in a very cursory way, the doctrine held by our own Church, and by most of the Protestant churches,

concerning the former, is, that the Ministry has been constituted to feed, and, in conjunction with the representatives of the people, to govern the Church; that its chief functions are, to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, together with the exercise of discipline; and that "its power is wholly moral, or spiritual, and *that* only ministerial or declarative."*

According to the other view, the Christian Ministry is a *Priesthood*. The radical idea of Priesthood is that of mediation between God and man. A priest is "one who stands as a mediator between God and the people, and brings them to God by virtue of certain ceremonial acts which he performs for them, and which they could not perform for themselves without profanation, because they are at a distance from God, and cannot, in their own persons, venture to approach towards Him." The leading function of the Levitical priests was to offer sacrifices. "For every high-priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God," is set apart to transact with God on behalf of men, and for their good, "that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin." The whole structure of the Mosaic system was designed to impress the chosen people with a profound sense of the Divine majesty and

* Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church, Chap. VIII.

purity, and of the essential turpitude of sin. Every part of its complicated ritual admonished them that they could have no friendly intercourse with a holy God, except through a mediator. Aaron and his sons were the constituted media of communication between them and the Deity. The endless infractions of the theocratic code, of which they were perpetually guilty, could be expiated only through the intervention of the priest. Nor was it for the purposes of atonement and intercession simply that his agency must be invoked. It was no less indispensable in all their civil and martial transactions; in their battles and in their journeys; in their husbandry and in their trafficking; in their public assemblies, and in the familiar routine of domestic life. Everywhere, on opening the Old Testament, we see the priest standing before the altar,—at once the most urgent necessity, and the most expressive epitome, of the system.

Rome has transferred this element, the very heart and core of the Mosaic dispensation, into the new economy. *The priesthood is perpetuated* in the Christian Church. And since a priesthood implies the offering of sacrifice, she has transmuted the simplest of rites, the Lord's Supper, into the veritable and ever-recurring sacrifice of the Son of God; and challenges for her "priests" the prerogative of absolving transgressors from the penalty of the Divine law.

“If any one shall say (so she has ordained) that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood, or that there is no power in it of consecrating and offering the very body and blood of the Lord, and of remitting and retaining sins, but only an office of the bare ministry of preaching the Gospel; or, that those who do not preach the Gospel are not priests, let him be *anathema*.”* They stand where the Aaronic priests stood, between God and man. There can be no acceptable approach to God except through them; no pardon except through their impetration and the sacrifice of the mass. Whoever would be reconciled to God, whoever would be cleansed from sin, whoever would receive an answer to his prayers, whoever would triumph over death, must invoke the mediation of the priest. The sacrifice he presents, and the sacraments he administers, are clothed with an efficacy which meets every want and provides for every exigency of our moral nature. And no one need fear for the result who is willing to confide the whole business of his salvation to his priest.

The germs of this system are to be detected in the Church at a very early period. “Whilst the least probability remained that Jerusalem might, at one time or other, again rear its head from the dust, the Christian

* Council of Trent, Session XXIII.

teachers and elders assumed to themselves no titles or distinctions, at least none but the most modest and humble ones. But when the fate of that glorious city had been finally sealed by Hadrian, and not the most distant hope could any longer be entertained by the Jews of seeing their ancient government re-established, these same pastors and ministers, for the most part, conceived a wish to have it believed by their flocks that they themselves had succeeded to the rights of the Jewish priesthood. The bishops, therefore, made it their business thenceforward to inculcate the notion that they were invested with a character resembling that of the great high-priest of the Jews, and were consequently possessed of all those rights which had been recognized as belonging to the Jewish pontiff. The functions of the ordinary Jewish priests were, in like manner, stated to have devolved, though under a more perfect form, on the *presbyters* of the Christian Church; and, finally, the *deacons* were placed on a parallel with the *Levites*, or inferior ministers of the temple.”*

These distinctions, originating in the ambition of the ecclesiastics, and stimulated by the reproaches cast alike by Jews and pagans upon the *simplicity* of the Christian ritual, gradually assumed more and more of the sacerdotal type, until at length the

* Mosheim's Commentaries.

clergy set up the monstrous assumption of exclusive mediatorship between heaven and earth, and the Church was loaded with the brilliant but galling chains of a Levitical bondage.

The grossness of this system might seem sufficient to repel any intelligent and serious reader of the New Testament; and yet, the radical principle which pervades it has been adopted and elaborately vindicated by large numbers of so-called Protestant prelates and clergymen, on both sides of the Atlantic. Like Rome, they make the ministry a "priesthood"; and present to the world the anomaly of a sacerdotal Christianity. The house of God is a "temple," with its "altar" and its "sacrifice"; and they are the hierophants who celebrate its "mysteries." They constitute, with the priesthood of the other hierarchies, the only legitimate channel of spiritual communion between this world and heaven. If one would worship God, he must wait upon their ministrations; for they alone have free access to the mercy-seat. If he would be pardoned, forgiveness comes only through their intervention. If he would obtain renewing and sanctifying grace, he must receive the sacraments at their hands. For, they only have "the gift of the Holy Ghost"; they are the stewards of the Church,—the depository of Divine grace; and this grace it is their prerogative to dispense in baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Eucharist, of course, is a "sac-

rifice"; and they are empowered to pronounce an authoritative absolution upon all in whose behalf they "offer" it.

Without enlarging on the details of this system, it must be apparent that there are no powers exercised by any set of men, of whatever nation or country, paramount to those which are challenged for this pretended priesthood. They claim, in effect, to be the vicegerents of the Deity. They are, in a sense, the arbiters of our destiny. The keys have been placed in their custody, and our salvation or perdition is suspended upon their using one or the other of them as they may see fit!

We have a right to demand, that an order of men who arrogate to themselves prerogatives like these, shall produce the clearest possible credentials; that nothing shall be wanting to authenticate their commission in the most unequivocal manner; and that they shall be able to show us, in that volume to which they and we appeal as the charter of the Church, the statute which creates their order and defines its powers, its functions, and its ceremonial. The Levitical priests could do this. No inconsiderable portion of the last four books of the Pentateuch is devoted to them. For every jot and tittle of their system, from the august rites of the great day of atonement down to the very fringe of their robes and the pins of the tabernacle, they could produce a

“Thus saith the Lord.” And from men who claim to have been armed with loftier powers than were ever conferred upon the sons of Aaron, the world cannot be expected to put up with a less authoritative warrant.

What, then, must be thought of these soaring pretensions, when it is stated that not only is there no decree creating such an order to be found, but that the New Testament does not contain *one word* about an official human priesthood in the Christian Church? To estimate the force of this omission, it must be considered, that down to the period of the Saviour's ascension, a religion without a priesthood was a novelty unheard of among mankind,*—as, indeed, with the solitary exception of Christianity (I am speaking, it will be understood, of an earthly priesthood), it is unknown to this day. What would the gorgeous mythology of Greece, or that of Rome, have been without the priest and the sacrifice? Abstract the sacerdotal element, and what would remain of Buddhism, of Lamaism, or of any of the countless forms of idolatry with which the earth is cursed? In each and all of these cases, the principle is not so much an adjunct of the system as the system itself; not the mere anatomy, but nerves, arteries, muscles, everything. And this was as true of Judaism as it is of

* Dr. Whately has suggested this thought.

the false religions. It would scarcely savor of extravagance to say, that men trained as the apostles had been, could not, except through a special baptism of the Spirit, have conceived of a religion without a human priesthood. There was no sentiment more sacredly enshrined in their national *cultus*, no lesson set forth with greater solemnity in their daily worship, than that the intervention of the priest was indispensable to their coming acceptably into the presence of God. With such power had this conviction intrenched itself in the popular mind, so completely were all their mental habits and associations transfused with the ancient leaven, that the Jewish converts resisted to the utmost the doctrine that Christianity was to annul and supersede their own ritual.

In the view of facts like these, it is a most remarkable and significant circumstance that, in passing from the Old Testament to the New, we should leave behind the whole vocabulary of terms proper to a sacerdotal system. The writers seem no longer to be Jews. The faith of which they are the accredited historians and expositors knows no PRIEST except JESUS OF NAZARETH, no sacrifice except the "Lamb of God," no Mediator except Him "who ever liveth to make intercession for us." His *people* are styled "a holy priesthood"; and are said to offer up "spiritual sacrifices." But the terms "priest" and "sacrifice" are not once applied in the New Testa-

ment to Christian ministers, as such, and their official functions.

It has, indeed, been claimed that there is a single passage which constitutes an exception to this remark, to wit, Rom. xv. 16: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering (ἑξουρῶντα) the Gospel of God, that the offering up (προσφορὰ) of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Here, we are told, the apostle describes himself as "*ministering as a priest* the Gospel of God, that the *sacrificing* of the Gentiles might be acceptable." That he *compares* himself to the Jewish priests is certain; but that he makes himself a priest in the Christian Church, is an interpretation which requires the "offering up of the Gentiles" to be taken as a literal "sacrifice," for which no one has yet contended. The whole phraseology is figurative, and, in the circumstances of the writer of the Epistle, equally natural and expressive. Dr. Whitby's comment on the verse is as follows: "Here is a plain allusion to the Jewish sacrifices offered by the priest, and sanctified or made acceptable and savory by the *Libamen* offered with it: for he compares himself, in the preaching of the Gospel, to the priest, *sacris operanti*, conversant about his sacrifice, to prepare and fit it to be offered. The Gentiles dedicated by him to the service of God, are his sacrifice or oblation; the Holy Spirit is the

Libamen poured on this sacrifice, by which they are sanctified and rendered acceptable to God.”

It has been further argued that the New Testament recognizes the Christian ministry as a priesthood, since they are intrusted with “the power of the keys,” which is explained to mean “the power of forgiving sin.” To this it is a sufficient reply, that whatever the power of binding and loosing may denote, the efficacious remission of sin is not a sacerdotal but a judicial function. We need not, therefore, stop to inquire whether the right of absolution appertains to the Christian ministry; for even if they had that right (which they certainly have not, in the Romish sense of the term), it would not prove them to be priests.

Had it been the design of the Saviour to perpetuate the ancient priesthood, or to institute a new order of priests in His Church, He could not have failed to announce it in sending forth His apostles. But neither in the mission of the seventy, nor in the first or second mission of the twelve, have we the least intimation of such a purpose. Rarely has our globe been the theatre of a more imposing ceremonial than that with which Aaron and his successors were consecrated to the Jewish priesthood. God Himself was pleased to prescribe every part of the service, down to the fabric, the form, and the decorations of their vestments; and on the appointed day,

in the presence of the assembled millions of Israel they were inducted into office. The time would fail me to describe this august solemnity,—the investiture of the high-priest with his gorgeous *insignia*, the anointing with oil, the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, the ram of consecration, the sprinkling of blood, the seven days and nights of seclusion in the tabernacle, and the series of sacrifices which followed, for the priests and the people. On these details we cannot dwell. But contrast with this stately pageant the corresponding transaction under the new economy, the inauguration of the *Christian* ministry. No concourse of awe-struck and admiring spectators meets us here; no ephod nor mitre, no temple nor altar, no smoking holocaust nor fragrant incense. The sacerdotal paraphernalia all disappear; and in place thereof a spectacle presents itself, the sublime simplicity of which symbolizes the essential diversity between the preliminary and the final dispensation. The Saviour of the world, about to ascend to heaven, calls His eleven apostles around Him, and bids them “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And these men, anointed with the Spirit, went forth to their work.* Clad in their

* Stratten’s “Book of the Priesthood” has a fine passage on this topic.

ordinary vestments, and disencumbered of all Levitical implements, they addressed themselves to their mission as men who were "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." "Beginning at Jerusalem," with such energy did they wield the sword of the Spirit, that at the close of their first day's labors three thousand converts stood up to testify that Jesus of Nazareth, whom their rulers "had taken and with wicked hands had crucified and slain," was, indeed, their promised Messiah,—*"THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVER-LASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE."* This resplendent victory achieved, they scattered abroad through all the circumjacent regions, sowing broadcast the seed of the incorruptible word. They erected no altars. They consecrated no priests. They offered no sacrifices. They bade no Israelite go up to Jerusalem to worship. No utterance fell from their lips about the sanctity of the temple, or the efficacy of its rites. Spurning the swaddling-bands of the old economy, they neither confined their ministrations to "holy places," nor restricted them to the chosen people. They preached, indifferently, in the synagogues and in the streets, in prisons and in palaces, in the desert and on the strand, to the Macedonian women by the river-side at Philippi, and to the sages of Athens on the crest of the Areopagus. And so far from offering *themselves* as "mediators" with God, to replace the now

abrogated priesthood of the house of Aaron, there was nothing they repelled with such instinctive horror as any attempt to exalt them to this dignity or to pay them sacerdotal homage. (See Acts iii. 12; x. 25, 26; xiv. 11-18.) They constantly proclaimed that he who planted was *nothing*, and he who watered nothing; and that to trust in them or their ministrations was to dishonor their Master. Their one grand, absorbing, delightful theme, was "JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED." Their only aim was so to exalt the Saviour of the world that they and their gifts and miracles should be lost sight of. Jesus Christ as the only PRIEST, the only ALTAR, the only SACRIFICE, the only INTERCESSOR, of the new dispensation,—this was the burden of their teachings in all lands and with people of every faith and every school of philosophy. Addressing themselves to the universal necessity of the race, they hastened from city to city, and from province to province, crying, "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD." The slumbering nations were stirred by the unwonted sound to their lowest depths; and the victory of Pentecost, repeated in different and distant lands, authenticated the doctrine as divine, and confounded those who would have impeached the one exclusive, unchangeable, and efficacious Priesthood of Jesus Christ in the New Testament Church.

We appeal, then, to the entire structure of the New Testament, and especially to the absence of all sacerdotal terms and titles as applied to the office-bearers in the Church, as our first argument to prove that the CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS NOT A PRIESTHOOD.

Our second argument has just been hinted. The doctrine of an official human priesthood in the Church, *is in a high degree derogatory to the Lord Jesus Christ* as the only Priest of the new dispensation.

No one imbued with a becoming reverence for the Deity would permit himself to disparage the Levitical economy. That economy was impressed with the wisdom and goodness which mark all the Divine institutions. Not only was the sacerdotal element which pervaded it in harmony with its general theocratic character, but it was indispensable to the fulfilment of its ends, as a preliminary and typical dispensation. Its priesthood was a real priesthood, and, within the prescribed sphere, their rites had a genuine efficacy,—*because* they pointed to the great High-Priest and the true sacrifice.

But what place is there for an earthly priesthood now? The antitype has appeared. The victim has been slain. The High-Priest, heralded by the long succession of Aaronic priests, and by all the sacrifices which smoked on Patriarchal and Jewish altars,

during the lapse of forty centuries, has died for His people and risen again, and now intercedes for and reigns over them. What room is there for another priest? What remains for a priest to do? What powers can he exercise, what offices can he perform, without invading CHRIST'S prerogative and impugning the perfection of His Priesthood?

This is the unanswerable argument of the apostle in resisting the Levitical tendencies of the Hebrew converts, and the proud assumptions of the priests who still clung to the ancient ritual. In opposition to their conceits, he contrasts with the number and succession of the Jewish priests, and the frequency, variety, and mere ceremonial value of their offerings, the glorious High-Priest of the Gospel, His Divinity, His holiness, His immutability, His immortality, the efficacy of His sacrifice and the prevalency of His intercession. And he shows, with a massive logic impregnable to all cavillers, that the Priesthood of Christ had superseded the priesthood of Aaron, and that it was impossible to amalgamate the sacerdotal ritualism of the temple with the free worship of the Christian sanctuary.

His great argument on this subject must be too familiar to this venerable Assembly to make specific quotations necessary. If that argument was conclusive as against Levitical zealots, it is no less conclusive as against the innovators of later times, who

would turn our sanctuaries into "temples," reconstruct the decayed altars of Judaism, thrust the ministry of reconciliation into the place of the one Mediator between God and man, and bring back upon the Church the dimness and the uncertainty and the fearfulness of her childhood, in place of the effulgence which streams down upon her from the full-orbed glories of her meridian sun. For what less than this has been done by the Papal and Oriental hierarchies? And what less are those semi-papists aiming at who would unprotestantize the churches of the Reformation, by transmuting the ministry into a sacerdotal order, and clothing them with the attributes of an official mediatorship between their fellow-sinners and the Creator? "Brethren, we are *not* children of the bond-woman, but of the free. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

In the third place, the Scriptures exclude this theory, by teaching *that men may come to Christ and be accepted by Him, without the intervention of any human mediator.**

In the mouths of professed Protestants, who hold the sacerdotal theory of the ministry in its mildest form, it means "ministerial intervention that sins

* See *Bib. Repertory*, vol. xvii., 52.

may be forgiven."* This, it is alleged, is "the essence of priesthood"; and this is declared to be indispensable under the present economy. If it were simply designed to teach, by this language, that in the ordinary administration of His government over the Church, God is pleased to employ the agency of the ministry in bringing men into a state of salvation, there would be no room for controversy. But this is not the idea. It is intended that the Christian ministry occupy a position analogous to that of the Aaronic priests: that, like the latter, God has constituted them a sacred *caste* to stand between Himself and our race; that He has made it obligatory upon all men to approach Him *through them*; that He will accept the worship of a sinner only as *they* present it; and that however humble, penitent, and devout may be his spirit, he has no more ground to expect forgiveness and renewal, so long as he refuses to avail himself of their mediation, than a Jew would have had to expect his sin-offering to be accepted, who, instead of bringing his victim to the priest, sacrificed it with his own hand upon his own altar. This is the doctrine. And if it be not clearly "another gospel," it will at least be difficult to show how the fundamental truths of the Gospel can coalesce with it.

* See Bishop Whittingham's "Two Discourses on the Priesthood in the Church."

That man is unworthy in himself to come before God, is a truth which all religions recognize. He must approach Him through a Mediator. Christianity meets this necessity of his lapsed condition by providing a Mediator,—one whose mysterious constitution and wonderful experience invest him with all the qualifications requisite for this exalted office. But the scheme we are examining superinduces upon this principle another which is unknown to the Gospel, and, if carried out, subversive of it. It claims that we can approach the Mediator Himself only through *another* mediator; that this second mediator is as essential to present our worship to the first, as the first is to present it to the Father; and that as the Father will accept those only who come to Him in the name of Christ, so Christ will receive only those who come to *Him* through the intervention of a human priest. The bare statement of this flagrant heresy must revolt any intelligent auditory not already steeped in Romish errors. One is at a loss how to stigmatize it,—whether as more derogatory to the Saviour or more discouraging and tyrannical towards man. To exhibit in detail its contrariety to the whole scope and tenor of the New Testament would call for a recital of a large part of the volume. When we examine the four Evangelists, we constantly find the Saviour inviting sinners to come directly to Him. When we turn to the book of Acts

and the Epistles, we hear the apostles, with one voice, addressing people of all tongues and nations, repeating the same lesson: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Never do they say, "Come to *us* and we will obtain forgiveness for you." If the apostle had said (observes Augustine), "These things have I written unto you, that you should not sin; but if any man sin, you have me for a mediator, and I, by my prayer, obtain pardon for your sins, as, in a certain place, Parmenian placed the bishop to be a mediator between the people and God, what good and faithful Christian could abide him? Who would behold him as an apostle of Christ, and not as an anti-Christ?"

Intercessory prayer is undoubtedly one of the duties of the ministry. But it is no less a duty common to all Christians. The command is, "Pray one for another." And while the apostles are earnest in praying for their converts, they are importunate in desiring their converts to pray for them. It were as reasonable, therefore, to argue that the people must interpose to give effect to the prayers of the ministry, as to pretend that the ministry are the only authorized medium through which the people can approach God.

This so-called priesthood must come to God through the advocacy of Jesus Christ; their own application is to the Mediator. Why should not

the laity do the same? Why may they not as well make their suit directly to Christ as to a human priest? Is the latter more benevolent, more pitiful, more willing to hear them, better able to help them? The bare suggestion were impious. It is the glory of the Christian dispensation that it brings God *near* to us. The veil of the temple has been rent and the holy of holies laid open. In place of that awful shrine, to which the high-priest alone was admitted, and even he only once a year, and with rites adapted to strike terror through all hearts, the infinite One has stooped to our weakness and manifested Himself in the flesh. Assuming our nature into an indissoluble union with His own, He dwelt among us, shared in our toils, fought with our temptations, drank of the cup of our sorrows, associated with the humblest of the race, bore with their infirmities, healed their diseases, wept with them in their afflictions, and allowed no measure of degradation or depravity to exclude them from His sympathy. During the whole of His public ministry, "He went about doing good." The common people, long accustomed to the contempt of the Scribes and Pharisees, and to the tyranny of their Romish taskmasters, "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." They were not used to kindness. Still less were they used to a Teacher who could not only abate or remove their bodily

sufferings, but go down into the lowest depths of their experience and supply the restless cravings of their moral and sentient nature for some satisfying good. They gathered around Him, therefore, wherever He went. They followed Him to the mountain and the desert. They even intruded upon His hours of sacred retirement and needful repose. And He bore with it all. He requited their importunity with miracles of mercy, and ceased not to counsel and comfort them, until He sealed His love for them with His death.

This is the Saviour who, as we are now told, can be approached only through an earthly priesthood! Men who claim to be "successors of the apostles" in office and prerogative, arrogate a power which the apostles themselves would not have dared to assume. Think of the twelve interposing themselves between their Master and one of these groups of anxious and suffering Israelites, and saying to them, "What will you? If you have any request to prefer to Him, it must be done through us. Be it healing, pardon, instruction, whatever you desire, *we* must present the application, or He will not heed it." Were a passage like this found in any portion of the New Testament, the very instinct of every reader of the sacred volume would pronounce it a vulgar and profane interpolation. There was a single occasion on which some of the apostles did undertake, not to do

a thing so audacious as this, but to prevent a company of parents from bringing their children to Christ; and the manner in which He resented and reproved their officiousness, supplies one of the earliest and sweetest lessons we learn about the Saviour: "*Suffer* the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Can He feel it as a less indignity to Himself, that the men He has appointed to feed and govern His flock should thrust themselves in between Him and their fellow-sinners, and say to them, "You cannot come to Christ, nor will He forgive and accept you, unless *we* present your repentance and your prayers, and intercede for you"?

Let no one say that this is to disparage the functions of the ministry and the ordinances of the Church. Those ordinances are means of grace, and it is through the labors of the ministry that men are usually led to Christ. But what we protest against is the Levitical notion that the ministers of the Gospel are official mediators between God and man, through whom alone there can be any access to the Deity. We brand this dogma as contravening the express teachings of the New Testament, which invites and requires men to look directly to Christ for the pardon of sin and all other blessings.

The validity of this argument will further appear when it is considered that the sacerdotal theory of

the Christian ministry *is subversive of all true views of the nature and design of the Church.*

It has been repeatedly intimated that the doctrine of an official human priesthood in the Church, is interlaced with a corresponding hypothesis as to the nature and functions of the Church itself. The Church, according to this system, is a Hierarchy. It consists of a single society (now unhappily in a somewhat divided state), placed under the government of Diocesan Bishops, who derive their authority from Christ through an unbroken prelatical succession. These bishops, indeed, with the inferior clergy, properly *constitute* the Church, the *people* being a mere appendage to the ministry. For the doctrine that the clergy are a priesthood, carries with it the prerogative of exclusive mediation. But to assume to be the only mediators between God and the *Church*, would have been too glaring a usurpation of Christ's office to be ventured upon in the early stage of this heresy. The *Church*, however, might mediate between God and the *people*, and so the clergy gradually transformed their "order" into "the Church." To this Church are confided the gifts of salvation. It stands in the place and is clothed with the authority of Christ, as His Vicar. It is the storehouse of grace, and this grace it communicates through the sacraments, which must be duly administered by sacerdotal hands. In baptism

sinner's are regenerated, and by the Eucharist, in which the faithful partake of the real body and blood of Christ, they have their forgiveness sealed to them. Non-prelatical societies form no part of the Church, but are schismatical organizations; and no one who declines the jurisdiction of the hierarchy, can have any scriptural evidence that he is in the way of salvation.

The priesthood being the stewards of the grace deposited in this "storehouse," they dispense it exclusively through the sacraments. "We have almost embraced the doctrine," says a writer of this school, "that God conveys grace only through the instrumentality of the mental energies, *i.e.*, through faith, prayer, active spiritual contemplations, or *what is called* 'communion with God,' in contradiction to the primitive view, according to which the Church and her sacraments are the ordained and direct means of conveying to the soul what is in itself supernatural and unseen."* "These powers of the Church," another eminent apologist of the system has observed, "are very great,—they are even awful; if not conferred by God, they are blasphemously assumed by man. The power of communicating to man the divine nature itself, of bringing down the Deity from heaven, of infusing the Spirit

* Oxford Tracts, vol. ii., Preface.

into the souls of miserable mortals,—this, which is nothing more than the every-day promise of the Church every time that the priest stands at the font or ministers at the altar, is so awful and so tremendous, that we scarcely dare to read it, except in familiar words which scarcely touch the ear.”*

“Awful and tremendous” these powers are; and we agree with the writer, that “if not conferred by God, they are blasphemously assumed by man.” That the scheme is one which first converts the Church into a lordly and oppressive hierarchy, and then puts it in Christ’s place, must be too apparent to require argument. “It is to confound the means of grace with the Author of grace; to worship the thing made and dishonor the Maker. It is to array against Christ the instrumentality which He has established against Satan.”† And all this is the legitimate result of the dogma that the Christian ministry is a priesthood.

For if the ministry be a priesthood, having special access to God, the accredited intercessors of the laity, and the sole dispensers of salvation, the tree has but yielded its proper fruit. It was the gradual assumption of these prerogatives which issued in the establishment of that great anti-Christian corpora-

* Professor Sewell.

† The Bishop of Chester, now Archbishop of Canterbury.

tion, whose usurpations and crimes make up so large a portion of the history of the civilized world for the last twelve centuries. The same spirit in England forged the chains of the Puritans, and in Scotland shed the blood of the Covenanters like water. In this country it has displayed itself in the glorification of the "Church" at the expense of her Divine Head, in a growing sycophancy on the part of many of the subordinate clergy towards their Bishops, and in refusing to recognize as veritable members of Christ's mystical body, Churches imbued with Christ's Spirit, and laden with those fruits of holiness which are the only incontestable marks of His presence. These are the natural, not to say the unavoidable, fruits of a system which teaches that the few hundred prelatically ordained ministers in the United States, are the only channel through which the twenty-five millions of people who make up this nation, can have any "covenanted" access to God. Just in proportion as these extravagant pretensions come to be acquiesced in, will the experience of past ages be repeated; and petty Hildebrands and Lauds will appear, not, happily, in this country, to dethrone rulers and pillory heretics, but to hurl opprobrious epithets at Churches which give palpable demonstration that the Spirit of God dwells in them.

I repeat it: ambition and imperiousness on the part of the clergy, the multiplication of rites and cere-

monies, the substitution of a sacramental for a spiritual religion, and the progressive deterioration of the Church in all its attributes, are but the logical development of that noxious germ, that the ministry is a sacerdotal order: and they may suffice as so many illustrations of the sentiment, that this theory is subversive of all true views of the nature and design of the Church. "The whole system" (I quote the language of the able and eloquent Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio) "is one of Church instead of Christ, priest instead of Gospel, concealment of truth instead of manifestation of truth, ignorant superstition instead of enlightened faith, bondage where we are promised liberty,—all tending directly to load us with whatever is odious in the worst meaning of priestcraft, in place of the free, affectionate, enlarging, elevating, and cheerful liberty of a child of God."*

It follows from all that has been said, and is urged as another prime objection to this sacerdotal theory, that *it is fraught with ruin to the souls of men.*

The allegation that the tendency of this system is to make men depend upon the priest for salvation, will be met with a volley of caveats and disclaimers. "Nothing of this sort," we shall be told, "is inculcated or encouraged: all are admonished that the offices of the clergy cannot avail to their benefit

* Bishop McIlvaine's "Charge," 1843.

without their own faith and repentance." This may be said with perfect sincerity. But it is the actual tendency of the system with which we are now dealing: and in this view it presents, as we contend, this pregnant issue, to wit, the religion of the priest *or* the religion of the sinner.

It has been justly observed that "mankind have an innate propensity, as to other errors, so to that of endeavoring to serve God by proxy; to commit to some distinct order of men the care of their religious concerns, in the same manner as they confide the care of their bodily health to the physician, and of their legal transactions to the lawyer; deeming it sufficient to follow implicitly their directions without attempting themselves to become acquainted with the *mysteries* of medicine or of law. Even thus are they willing and desirous that others should study and should understand the mysterious doctrines of religion in their stead; should practise in their stead some more exalted kind of piety and virtue; and should offer prayers and sacrifices on their behalf, both in their lifetime and after their death. . . . Hence the gradual transformation of the Christian minister, the presbyter, into the sacrificing priest, the *ἱερεὺς* (in Latin, 'sacerdos,' as the Romans call theirs), of the Jewish and Pagan religions."*

* Archbishop Whately, "Errors of Romanism."

Human nature is the same in all countries and communions. Everywhere it is more or less infected with this craving after a vicarious religion: and the sacerdotal theory, however it may be mollified and disguised, meets its requisitions. For even in the mitigated form in which it is now propounded to the Protestant world, this scheme converts Christianity, as we have shown, into a sacramental system. In the New Testament, the *word* of God is made the chief instrument in the conversion and sanctification of men. The *great* function assigned to the apostles, and to the ministers appointed to succeed them, was "not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." And divine *truth* is uniformly recognized as the principal means through which the Almighty Spirit recovers men from their apostasy and prepares them for heaven.

The scheme we are examining reverses this order, and substitutes the *sacraments* for the word. The preaching of the Gospel is systematically disparaged. The pulpit is thrust into a corner to give place to the communion-table, now transformed into an "altar." The gifts of grace are deposited in baptism and the Lord's Supper; and it is only by receiving these ordinances at the hands of the duly authorized *priesthood* that sinners can be regenerated and made partakers of a true faith. What sound the pulpit utters, or whether any sound at all, is of little moment; the

whole interest of "priest" and people being concentrated where, if the theory be well founded, it certainly should be, upon the font and the "altar."

Let the clergy refine upon the terms they apply to these ordinances as they choose: the actual impression made upon the popular mind will be, that the sacraments are invested with a sort of intrinsic efficacy which insures the renewal and justification of those who partake of them.

When Charles II. was dying, his brother James surreptitiously brought into the room Father Huddleston, a Benedictine monk. "Sire," said he to the king, "this good man once saved your life [at the battle of Worcester]; he now comes *to save your soul.*" Charles faintly answered, "He is welcome." Huddleston went through his part better than had been expected. He knelt by the bed, listened to the confession, pronounced the absolution, and administered extreme unction. He asked if the king wished to receive the Lord's Supper. "Surely," said Charles, "if I am not unworthy." The host was brought in. Charles feebly strove to rise and kneel before it. The priest bade him lie still, and assured him that God would accept the humiliation of the body. The king found so much difficulty in swallowing the bread that it was necessary to open the door and to procure a glass of water. This rite ended, the monk held up a crucifix before the penitent, charged him

to fix his last thoughts on the sufferings of the Redeemer, and withdrew.*

This scene might well supply the theme for an extended discourse. But the one aspect of it with which we are now concerned is, that the monk was brought to the expiring voluptuary to "save his soul," and that he as readily gave himself up into his hands to be saved by him. Charles went through the form of a confession; but beyond this he had nothing to do. The whole work of his salvation was effected, *if effected at all*, by the priest. And thus one of the most shameless sensualists who ever sat on the British throne, surrounded at the very moment by his whole harem of concubines, was dismissed into the world of spirits, with the feeling that the manipulations and benisons of a friar had cleansed his leprous soul and made him meet to appear before a holy God!

If this be an extreme case, it is only because the rank and the vices of Charles make it so. Wherever a sacerdotal system is established, the sentiment will prevail that the priest can "save the soul." There will be a disposition to look to the priest instead of looking to Christ; a superstitious reliance upon the sacraments; a feeling that to receive baptism and the Eucharist from the hands of an ecclesiastic in the

* See Macaulay, and the "Pictorial History of England."

line of the "succession," is *somehow* to secure the remission of sin and the favor of heaven. Undoubtedly these ordinances are of very great value. They are channels through which God is accustomed to communicate grace to the hearts of His people. And every believer knows what comfort and strength may be derived from a penitent and devout attendance upon them. But the sacerdotal system, practically and as regards the masses of the people, puts the priest and the sacraments in the place of the true Mediator. Multitudes come to them, it is to be feared, like the royal libertine just mentioned, with a blind faith, expecting to be saved, as the Hindoos and all Pagans do, through the *opus operatum* of rites which the priest celebrates *for* them; and utterly uninstructed in the real grounds of a sinner's justification before God. We do not hesitate, therefore, to urge it as a capital objection to the system, that it is adapted to mislead men in the matter of their salvation, and destroy them eternally.

Such are some of the grounds on which we discard the heresy of an official human priesthood in the Christian Church. This dogma *is at variance with the whole structure of the New Testament, and is especially disproved by the absence of all sacerdotal terms and titles, as applied to the ministers of the Gospel.*

It is in a high degree derogatory to the one perfect and unchangeable Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It contravenes the emphatic teaching of the Scriptures, that every sinner is authorized to come directly to Christ for pardon, without the intervention of any earthly mediator.

It is subversive of all true views of the nature and design of the Church.

And it is fraught with ruin to the souls of men.

In denying that the Christian ministry is a priesthood, we surrender nothing of the honor which properly belongs to it, and make no compromise of its chartered rights and privileges. We do not for one moment give place to those persons who, going off to the opposite extreme, maintain that Christ has instituted no permanent *ministry* in the Church, and made no provision for the orderly induction of men into this office. For, not to advert to other elements of proof, we cannot understand how an apostle should have written three epistles for the express purpose of defining the office and functions of a "Bishop," if no such office was created.

What the office is, is a question on which the Christian world has been divided, from a period a little subsequent to the apostolic age until now. As already stated, the theories respecting the form or *constitution* of the ministry are as conflicting as those which pertain to its nature. There is, however, at the present time, a very general and very significant concurrence of sentiment in the different branches of the Church,

as to the import of the New Testament utterances, in all that it says on the subject of "Bishops." Even those who contend for a prelatical order in the Church concede that *their* bishops are not the bishops mentioned in the inspired writings. "The name bishop," says the late Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, in his tract on this subject, "which now designates the highest grade of the ministry, is not appropriated to that office in Scripture. That name is there given to the middle order, or presbyters: and ALL that we read in the New Testament concerning bishops (including, of course, the words 'overseers' and 'oversight,' which have the same derivation) is to be regarded as pertaining to that middle grade." The great mass of the Reformed churches—including, too, the best of the English Reformers—not only adopted this view as to the rank of the scriptural "bishop," but contended that this order, styled indifferently by the sacred penmen "bishops" and "presbyters," was the highest, and indeed the only, grade of ministers instituted by Christ as a *permanent* order in the Church. The leading arguments in support of this view must be familiar to every intelligent Presbyterian, and the time forbids me to go into the discussion of the topic here. Let it suffice to know, that when the apostle says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work," he refers to that office which *we* all recognize as the chief office in the

Church,—to the bishop of a single congregation, not to a diocesan bishop.

Why the office he mentions is a “good work” might be shown by numerous cogent arguments. Most of these, however, must be omitted; and all should be, were it not that some may suppose that the tendency of this discourse, so far, has been to depreciate the sacred office, and divest it of powers which really belong to it. But there is no occasion for any sensitiveness on this point. Nothing can damage the ministry so much as the usurpation of prerogatives and functions to which it has no valid claim. It is the lordly pretensions of an ambitious “priesthood” which brings the ministry into disrepute, and fills churches with formalists and hypocrites. By far other means than these must the ministry conciliate the respect and confidence of the world. Viewed in its scriptural nature, and as fulfilling its prescribed mission, “the office of a bishop” is one of pre-eminent honor,—in the highest and best sense of the terms, “a *good* work.”

In the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, we are presented with the brightest display of the Divine perfections which has been made to the intelligent universe. The CHURCH, which is the fruit of the Redeemer’s sufferings, has been, from the period of Adam’s apostasy, the great object of regard to the angelic hosts, and to Jehovah Himself. Not only is

there no earthly institution which rivals it in this view, but all human affairs, from the rise and overthrow of dynasties to the familiar incidents in every household history, are to be made tributary to its welfare, and subservient to its ultimate triumph. God has linked His own glory with its destiny, and ordained it as the means by which His manifold wisdom shall be made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places. To the MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION He has committed the chief earthly agency in working out for the Church this sublime mission. They are its principal officers, to whom He has delegated, in common with the Christian people, the actual oversight and government of its affairs. And to them is confided that ministration of His word and ordinances by which He has chosen mainly to enlarge and perpetuate it. Without granting them any peculiar and exclusive access to His throne; without constituting them mediators between Himself and their fellow-men; without investing them with the least efficiency in themselves, or tying the gifts of His grace indissolubly to their functions; without giving them power so much as to "make one hair white or black," much less to effect a sacerdotal expiation or absolution in behalf of a single sinner, He has nevertheless placed them in His Church as under-shepherds, and honored them as His prime instruments in conveying pardon and deliverance to a ruined race.

They are His *pastors* to "seek that which is lost, to strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bring back again that which was driven away." They are His *stewards*, "faithful and wise," to dispense the inexhaustible provisions of His house to His ransomed family. They are His *watchmen*, to warn the slumbering city of impending danger; His *laborers*, to tend the harvest and gather it into His garners; His *ambassadors*, to negotiate a peace with a revolted race; His *master-builders*, to carry forward, with living stones, the temple of the Lord, until at length the top-stone shall be laid with shoutings of "Grace, Grace, unto it." Is there any other office clothed with functions at once so beneficent and so exalted as these? which bring worms of the dust into a more sacred and intimate relation to the Deity? or which is more legibly inscribed with that most honorable and sublime of all legends, "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST; ON EARTH, PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN"?

For, consider, on the latter of these topics, whether there is any office more vitally connected with *the well-being of our race* than that of a "bishop" or *pastor*. His vocation is *to do good*. Doing good is not with him (I mean according to the spirit of his commission) an incidental and contingent thing; it is his business,—his "*work*,"—the very end for which he is made a "bishop." He is called to the

God-like service of scattering blessings all around his pathway through life,—not blessings of his own, but handfuls of priceless gifts which it would degrade to compare them with rubies and diamonds; and these he throws broad-cast, “without money and without price,” among the thoughtless, the abandoned, and the lost. The ministry of such a man in a community is like a fountain in a desert,—like the sun in the heavens. Heathful influences radiate from it in every direction. Whatever is evil it helps to eradicate or restrain; whatever is good it fosters and augments. It not only assists the wandering in finding the way to heaven, but it tells with a benign though silent power upon every social and secular interest. Its influence distils like the dew. Too subtle to be traced by any eye but that of Omniscience, it permeates the tangled thicket of human sympathies, passions, cares, and contests, and, with a wondrous vitality, nurtures all pure emotions, quickens the germs of virtuous feeling, and imperceptibly spreads over the crude and repulsive mass, a garniture of celestial flowers beautiful enough for angels to stop and look upon, and redolent of heaven. This is not fiction, but sober reality. For wherever there is a faithful ministry these salutary changes are going forward. And the annals of the last eighteen hundred years may be confidently appealed to in proof of the position, that such a ministry is not

merely the potent auxiliary, but the harbinger and instrument of all true social progress; and that just in proportion as a people enjoy and appreciate its labors, do they advance in the arts and appliances of a refined civilization. Nor this alone. Its chief benefits are not those which meet the eye, as we contrast the school-houses and churches, the ships and factories, the grain-clad fields and smiling hamlets, the happy homes and peaceful populations, of a free, Protestant land, with the ignorance, brutality, and wretchedness which overspread a pagan country. Its highest and richest blessings are invisible. They are the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. The prison doors opened to them that were bound, the blind restored to sight, the dead made alive, rebels pardoned, aliens brought back to God, apostates changed into sons, earth and heaven reconciled, hell vanquished, angels rejoicing, and all things hastening forward to that glorious consummation when the Saviour of the world, crowned with His many crowns, shall come to "present His Church to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish,"—*these* are the munificent results which it has pleased God to connect with the labors of a sound and evangelical ministry. And when we contemplate them, remembering especially that it will take eternity to disclose their real grandeur, and that we cannot, in

our present imperfect state, grasp the issues involved even in the salvation of a single soul, we feel that the office which is clothed with the chief instrumental agency in bringing about these results, well deserves to be signalized as "a good work"; and that meekly and worthily to bear it, were a greater honor than to wear a diadem.

I omit the remaining topics proper to this branch of the subject, and hasten to conclude this too protracted discourse, by stating two or three only of the various reflections suggested by the discussion with which we have been occupied.

I. We are admonished of *the danger of innovating upon Christ's institutions.*

Our Saviour appointed twelve men, to whom subsequently He added another, as His apostles. The apostolic office being temporary (as can be shown by ample evidence), they appointed, under the authority with which they were clothed, other officers as permanent rulers and teachers of the Church. The principal of these was the presbyter or *bishop*. The bishops were of equal rank; their power was simply ministerial and declarative; and they were sent forth, not to offer sacrifices, but to preach the Gospel.

Scarcely were the apostles laid in their graves before contests for the pre-eminence arose among these bishops. As those who held the metropolitan and other influential churches succeeded in subjecting

their obscurer brethren to their control, the theory was by degrees invented and propagated that the ministry had been established with "three orders," instead of one. Nor did the encroachment upon the primitive polity stop with this change in its external form. A "priesthood" could wield more *power* than a "ministry." The Levitical scheme was, therefore, re-enacted; and the ministry stood before the world a *sacerdotal* order, armed with plenary authority as the priests of the Most High God, and charged, provisionally, with the salvation or perdition of the race.

The introduction of this element into the Church could not fail to tell with disastrous effect upon its character. There is no peculiarity of the apostolic church more marked than its simplicity. Simple in its organization, simple in its sacraments, simple in its worship, simple in the whole cast and tone of its ministrations, its Doric plainness and dignity were in striking contrast with the gorgeous ceremonial of the temple. But this attribute could not cohere with a sacerdotal system. The embryo priests, therefore, addressed themselves to the work of *reform*. And with such vigor have their successors carried forward the work, that the Church they have made is as unlike the Church organized by the apostles as this latter was unlike the Church of the Theocracy. The simplest of institutes has been transformed into a gigantic hierarchy, the complexity and magnificence

of whose outward structure is in startling contrast with the spiritual penury of its interior,—a sphere of crystals enclosing a lump of clay.

Let not the lesson be lost upon the present generation. These disastrous results can all be traced back to apparently trivial deviations from the apostolic teaching and order in the primitive Church. Like two brooks which have contiguous sources, the false and the true imperceptibly diverged from each other, until their respective currents came to be established in precisely opposite directions. And it behoves all Churches to consider that their purity and safety lie, under God, in a scrupulous adherence, as well in government and worship as in doctrine, to the canons of the New Testament. Innovations conceded, in the first instance, to a fastidious or perverted popular taste, may come, after a while, like the obsolete rites revived in the second century, to be challenged as of Divine appointment. And a Church which forsook its Lord to make His religion more palatable to the world, may find itself, in the end, indissolubly wedded to the world and repudiated by its Lord. “The Lord is with you while ye be with Him: and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you: but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you.”

2. It is evident that *the ruling eldership and the laity in general have a vital interest in preserving the integrity and purity of the ministry.*

The ministry was instituted, not for the ease or aggrandizement of those who might be appointed to discharge its functions, but for the glory of God and the good of mankind. And as no other office may compare with it for usefulness, when kept within its legitimate sphere, so there is none which, debased and prostituted, is so fruitful of mischief. Spurning the petty tyranny of the dungeon and the stake, this agency is one which deals out damnation to men's souls. It may even be doubted whether, confining the remark to Christendom, any single instrumentality has consigned more victims to perdition than that of incompetent, faithless, and heretical ministers.

Your concern, therefore, in the character of the ministry is direct and profound. It is of the last moment to you that it be orthodox, pure, intelligent, faithful. And you have a deep stake in understanding what its nature and authority are; what it was ordained to do in the matter of your salvation, and what it *cannot* do. It behoves you to know that we have no sacerdotal powers; that the sacraments we administer have no inherent efficacy to wash away your sins and insure your justification; that there is no atonement for you but in the blood of the cross, and no absolution but that which God pronounces; that neither by ceremonial expurgation nor official intercession can we shield you from the curse of the law; that you are to rely upon the mes-

sages we deliver only in so far as you find them in harmony with the Scriptures ; that our whole office is to stand like John the Baptist and cry, "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD;" and that if you do not look in penitence and faith to the Lamb of God, you may spend a lifetime in attending upon the pompous rites of a Roman cathedral, or in listening to the most eloquent discourses from a Protestant pulpit, and go down at length to a deeper hell than Sodom and Gomorrah.

These things it is meet you should know, and ponder with all the seriousness which befits such momentous themes. And if a ministry should rise up and gainsay these truths and arrogate the powers here disclaimed, and invite you to trust for the remission of your sins and the cleansing of your hearts to rites they will perform for you, and, in a word, propose to take your salvation into their hands, then consider well whether you are to countenance these sacerdotal empirics and throw away your souls on the preposterous assumption that you can repent and believe, and be regenerated and saved, by proxy!

Surely, to be indifferent to the ministry, either as regards its alleged powers or its qualifications, is to betray your own highest interests. What the essential qualifications of the office are, the apostle has set forth in the Epistles to those young Evangelists,

Timothy and Titus; and his exposition may be supplemented from the other books of the New Testament. Bishop Ken has shown himself a skilful limner in bringing together these various features as constituting the portrait of a true bishop or pastor:

“ Give me the priest* these graces shall possess :
Of an ambassador, the first address ;
A father’s tenderness ; a shepherd’s care ;
A leader’s courage, which the cross can bear ;
A ruler’s awe ; a watchman’s wakeful eye ;
A pilot’s skill the helm in storms to ply ;
A fisher’s patience, and a laborer’s toil ;
A guide’s dexterity to disembroil ;
A prophet’s inspiration from above ;
A teacher’s knowledge, and a Saviour’s love.”

These are the gifts to be desired in a pastor. It would be going too far to say that no one should assume the office who comes short of this standard in any particular. But it is the right and duty of the laity, and of the eldership as their representatives, to insist that the ministry shall at least possess the general character here delineated. This reasonable requisition will best insure the fidelity of your pastors, and your own spiritual comfort and edification.

3. Finally, the subject with which we have been occupied, has its *lessons, both of instruction and of encouragement, for our beloved Church.*

* Used in the sense of presbyter.

It is our privilege, my fathers and brethren, to belong to a Church which has always guarded, with jealous care, both the regal and the sacerdotal prerogatives of her Divine Head. In her loyalty to the State, she has uniformly inculcated upon her members the duty of rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. But she has resisted all attempts of the civil magistracy to usurp the power of the keys, or to impugn, in whatever way, the supremacy of Christ in His own spiritual kingdom.

With no less energy has she asserted the one perfect, exclusive, and unchangeable PRIESTHOOD of her Redeemer. In all her confessions and symbols has she protested against the doctrine of an earthly mediatorship between God and man; and with no uncertain sound have her pulpits vindicated the honors of the Great High-Priest of our Profession, whether as usurped by Papal, by Oriental, or by so-called Protestant, ecclesiastics.

In the faithful maintenance of these two fundamental principles it has been given to some of our sister-churches in Europe, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. They have "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment," and of death itself; yet have they "not counted their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry

which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Inheriting their apostolic faith and order, and emulating their devotion to Him who sits, "a Priest upon His throne," on the holy hill of Zion, our Church has, like them, enjoyed, in an eminent degree, the gracious presence and protection of her Lord. He brought it here in its feebleness. He cast out the heathen and planted it. He prepared room before it, and caused it to take deep root; and it filled the land. The hills are covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof are like the goodly cedars. She has sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Upon no other Church of our age has God bestowed so rich a heritage; to none has He confided a loftier mission. The largest Presbyterian body in the world, covering an expanse of territory which assimilates our General Assembly to Congress itself, as a national convocation, supplied with a thoroughly educated and evangelical ministry, endowed with the amplest resources of every kind, and with a noble equipment of benevolent agencies for developing and applying these resources in the most effective manner,—where should our gratitude find a limit, or who shall define the measure of our responsibility?

Let us not forget, in the interchange of our grateful congratulations, that prosperity like this is fraught

with *danger* as well to Churches as to individuals. Through the abounding goodness of God we are a united body,—not only homogeneous in faith and polity, but substantially agreed in the principles and plans upon which our high trust shall be administered. Let it be the care of this venerable Court to foster the sentiments of conciliation and Christian affection, which now pervade and cement our great constituency. Let us discountenance whatever may tend to “cause divisions and offences” amongst us, as we would the introduction of false doctrine. Let us cherish a profound and abiding sense of our absolute dependence upon God for every blessing. And let us never forget that the true glory of the Church consists, not in her wealth and her numbers, in the pomp of her ministrations and the splendor of her outward triumphs, but in her bearing THE IMAGE OF HER LORD and reflecting the beauty of His HOLINESS.

Thus may our beloved Church be perpetuated as a sacred bond of union to our national confederacy; as an impregnable bulwark against the aggressions of philosophic skepticism and social demoralization; as an intrepid witness to the glorious sovereignty and sole Priesthood of Jesus Christ; and as an humble but faithful instrument in the hands of her risen Lord for preaching the Gospel to every creature.