

SERMONS, ADDRESSES, AND CHARGES.

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AND CHARGES,**

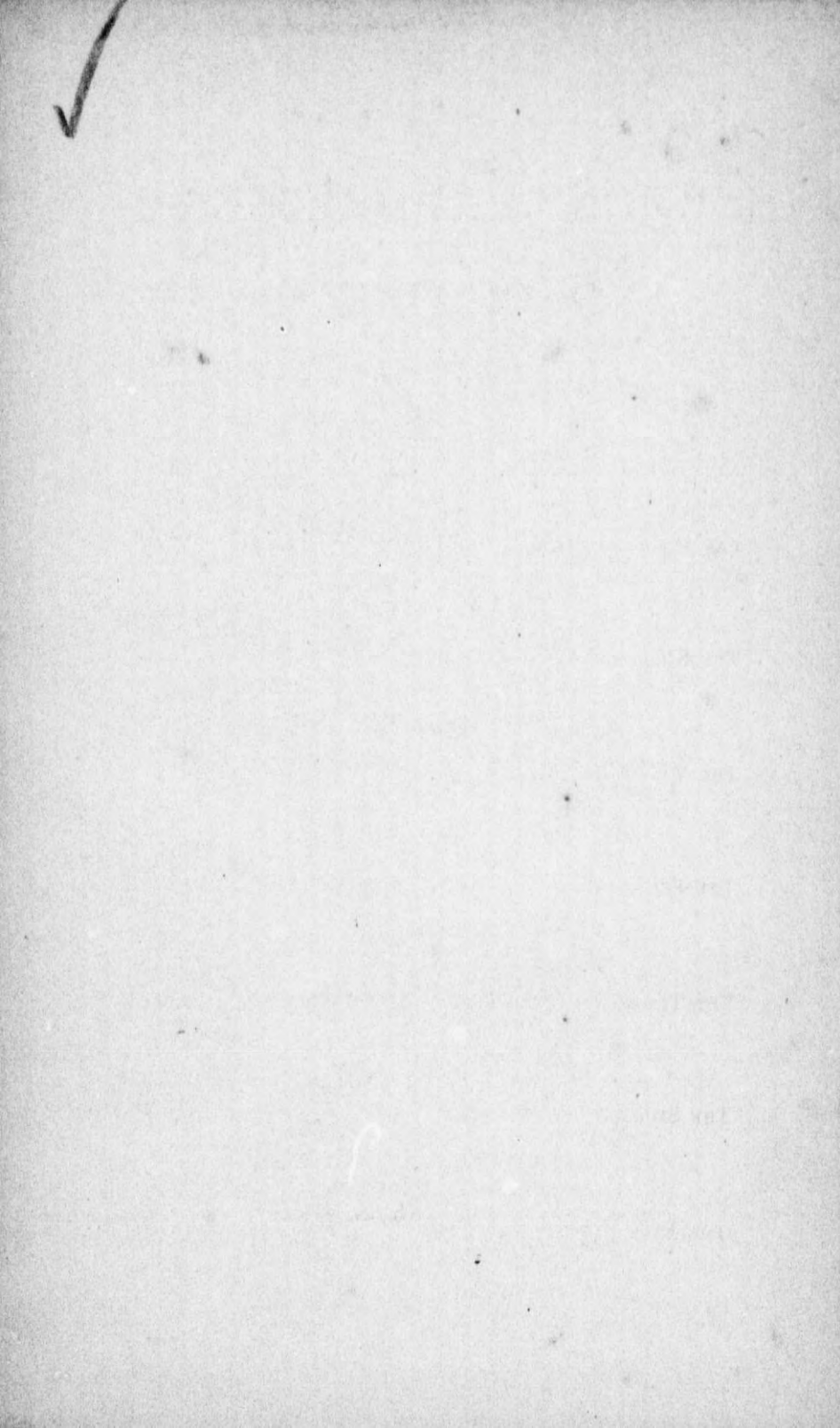
DELIVERED DURING HIS YEAR OF OFFICE,

BY
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CONTENTS.

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I.		
THE MORE ABUNDANT LIFE	<i>John 10 10</i>	PAGE 1
II.		
THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH	<i>Rev 1. 17 18</i>	19
III.		
THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH		36
IV.		
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE KINGDOM OF PATIENCE.....	<i>Rev 1. 9</i>	64
V.		
THE THREEFOLD MANIFESTATION OF THE REDEEMER.....	<i>Rev 1. 12 13</i>	84
VI.		
THE STUDY OF JESUS.....	<i>Rev 3. 1</i>	101
VII.		
THE FACE OF GOD.....	<i>1 Chron 16 4</i>	122

VIII.		PAGE
THE LORD'S LAST PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE	<i>Ph. 1. 24</i>	140
IX.		
SEEKING AND WAITING	<i>Lam. 3. 25</i>	155
X.		
ST. PAUL'S APPEAL TO GOD	<i>Rom. 1. 1</i>	175
XI.		
THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE ATONEMENT	<i>1 John 4. 16</i>	195
XII.		
THE MEDITATION AND PRACTICE OF HOLINESS	<i>Phil. 4. 8. 9.</i>	213
XIII.		
BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT	<i>2 Eph. 5. 17. 18.</i>	231
XIV.		
THE PENTECOSTAL TEST	<i>Acts 19. 2</i>	251
XV.		
THE TONGUES OF FIRE	<i>Acts 2. 3. 4.</i>	270
XVI.		
CRUCIFIXION WITH CHRIST	<i>Gal. 2. 19. 20. 5. 24. 6. 14.</i>	292

XVII.

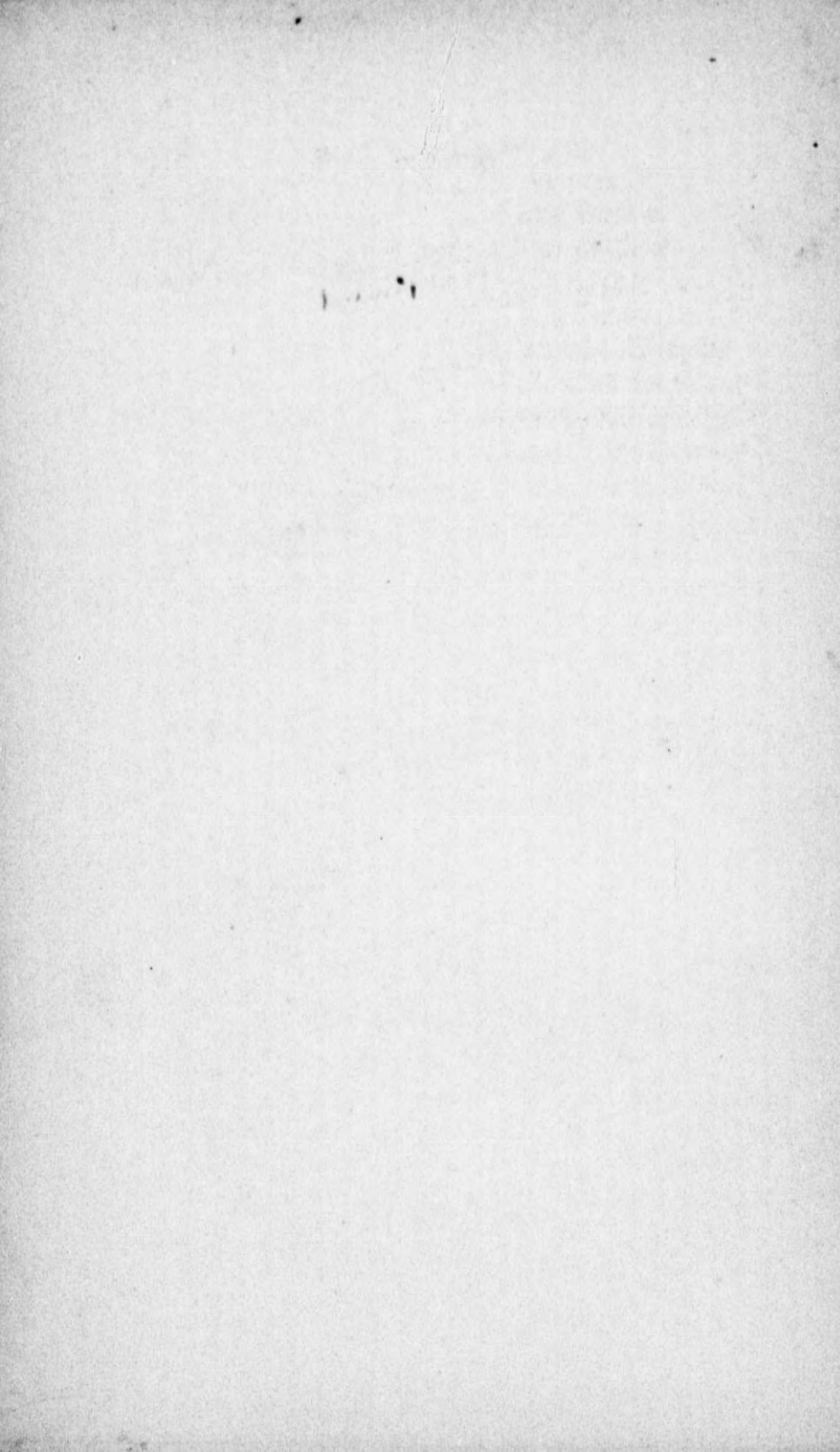
EXERCISE UNTO GODLINESS 156 u. 7 .	PAGE 314
-------------------------	------------------	-------------

XVIII.

PROBATION AND RESPONSIBILITY	349
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XIX.

LETTER TO THE YOUNGER MINISTERS OF THE METHODIST CONNEXION	378
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I.

THE MORE ABUNDANT LIFE.

[A Sermon preached in the Old Market Street Chapel, Bristol, on Sunday, Evening, August 5th, 1877, and published at the request of the Conference.]

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—JOHN x. 10.

WE can hardly fail to mark that the emphasis rests upon the last clause of this memorable saying, and upon its final word: "that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" or "MORE." It is a word which our Lord spoke only once, without explaining it to those who heard Him: He left it, so to speak, for the interpretation of a future day, and to be pondered by His people for ever. We feel, while we hear it, that it contains a truth of infinite meaning, and of boundless application for our faith and our hope.

In order, however, that we may not be lost in its immensity, we must, for our present purpose, observe the limitation imposed by the context, and view it mainly in reference to the death from which the Good Shepherd saves His flock. The wasting and havoc brought upon mankind by sin, and the great enemy who represents sin, are in the Redeemer's thought; and He speaks of His own appearance as having for its design to counteract and repair this destruction. It is as if He had said: "I come to give

life in the place of death, and how much more than merely in the place of it! Where death abounded life shall much more abound!" In what sense let us humbly ask the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to teach us.

I. At the outset an application of this saying is forced upon our thoughts, which must be touched upon briefly as preparatory to all that follows. The Lord encounters our death as Himself the Source of our immortality, and to His people makes that immortality more than mere continuance in being.

The Prince or Original of our life—that is His name for ever—rescued mankind from extinction at the very beginning of its history: yea, before it lost its immortality. It is true this carries back His coming to the dawn of time. He joined His Divine-human, eternal life to our race before our death began its course. To whatever principle we ascribe the deathlessness of the human spirit, it cannot be separated from Him and His gift. If it rested upon the Divine image—"the image of His own eternity"—in man, the Redeemer preserved that image from being effaced. If it depended upon the sacramental food of the tree, He, when that was interdicted, became the life and the light of man instead. "The Thief," or "the Wolf," or "the Murderer from the beginning," would fain have been the means of blotting our name from the book of life, and of cutting off our heritage of eternal existence. But in vain: in whatever sense the human race died in Adam, in Christ it was kept alive. Of that resurrection it may be said that it is "past already."

When our Lord declares, "I am come that they

might have life, and have it more," we may humbly interpret His meaning to be that He had come to bring the fact of our immortality to light; and to give His people more than mere permanence of created life: I may add, to show that from the foundation of the world—the date of all His benefit to our race as such—life had through Him been to the heirs of true immortality more than mere existence. We have only to do, however, with His incarnate appearance; and may reverently paraphrase His words thus: "I am the life; and give to all men their being, their abiding existence, through time and through the resurrection into eternity. But I lay down My life that those who believe in Me may have that without which immortality is not in itself a blessing. I am come to give them life! But that they already share with all men, and with spirits which exist for ever in living death! I am come that they may have it more: to crown their undying nature with the true immortality of life in God for ever!"

Let us, then, fix our minds upon the great truth that the life of our race in Christ is a rescue from eternal extinction which is not enough of itself. He gives us this in order that He may give us more. What that additional life means we shall hereafter see. Meanwhile, let us consider how awful a gift this must be if the more is not added. Our immortality is an eternal fact; and so is the immortality of Satan and the fallen angels. But that prerogative which has the possibility in it of everlasting blessedness has also in it the possibility of everlasting woe. Let no man delude you into thinking

that all who are not in Christ go into everlasting extinction. Throughout the Bible life is not existence merely ; nor is perdition the annihilation of the soul. Our Lord has told us what these words mean. "This my son was dead and is alive again : he was lost and is found." The soul may be dead in another far country, and never live again ; may, in eternal severance from God, be lost and never found. Oh, turn not your immortality into an immortal death. Seek the More in the life that cannot die !

II. This leads us at once to an interpretation of our great word which our Lord in this allegory, and elsewhere, impresses upon us. His people are saved from the condemnation of death ; and that in the most abundant sense. This meaning, however, is, like the former, in an indirect way involved, and must be only briefly dwelt upon.

All who come to Christ, led by the Spirit of conviction, come to Him under the benefit of a certain reprieve or suspension of the sentence which may be called a preliminary life. They are, and know themselves to be, sinners against God, who, by the Divine law, "ought to die." But they do not die : they live to sin still, or they live to have the sentence of death reversed. Whence is this contradiction ? Because a sentence of "justification" has passed upon the race as such ; and all men enter into the heritage of the great Amnesty and Forbearance which lightened the sentence pronounced upon Adam. That life of a suspended doom is, and has ever been, our Lord's free gift to mankind. He came in the fulness of time to explain this secret by His death. And after His

atoning sacrifice should have been offered, it would be fully known what He meant when He said : "that they might have it more abundantly." The reprieve is to the believer perfected into a full discharge. The pretermission becomes full forgiveness. It is a more complete justification bestowed by Him who "abundantly pardons" through the grace which "much more abounds" than the offence. That plenteous redemption St. Paul exemplifies in his own experience : "I was, and am, crucified with Christ ; through the union of faith with His sacrifice I have paid my debt to the law ; and to me, and to all who believe, there is no condemnation. We are freed from the law of sin and death."

To live under a suspended sentence is grace ; but how much more is this full release ! And the reversal of the sentence is more even than simple release. He who has this life has it "in Christ" : he is "accepted in the Beloved." The believer may know that he has not only paid his debt, but paid it in union with One the virtue of whose infinite merit avails to send him from the bar with the dignity of a discharge that is far more than mere pardon. His substitute is his other self, and he is viewed as one with that substitute. Hence he is set free with all the honours of what may be almost called an abundant acquittal. He is not only pardoned and permitted to live ; but in Christ he is regarded and treated as righteous. Moreover, so long as he is found united with his Living Head, he is for ever free from every charge of every accuser. Our Lord says of him that believes that he "shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." He

is placed, as identified with his Lord, out of the reach of the terrors of judgment, and the complaints of the law. As he is one with Christ, the exemption is complete, and final and eternal. Hence, brethren, you see that the life of the believer delivered from death is more than mere pardon for the past and discharge from the consequences of its sin. It is an investiture, in a certain sense, with the virtue and dignity of the righteousness of the Saviour Himself. Life in Christ is spent in an atmosphere above law, and guilt, and fear. Let us seek to know this by experience; and, putting away undue humility and superfluous shame, not only trust in our Deliverer, but glory in Him.

III. We now reach what is the central and most profound meaning of the word. Life in Christ, life from Christ, is the opposite of spiritual death or the separation of the soul from God. Here we must mark the strength of the expression, "I am come that they may HAVE life, and have it more." We are reminded of one of the latest sayings of Scripture: "This is the record," the essence of all testimonies, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Eternal life is something superadded to mere existence: a man may live and not have it, even as he may live and not have the life of freedom from condemnation. As it is the virtue of His blood shed or poured out that saves from the death of the law, so it is the virtue of His Spirit shed forth or poured out that restores the soul to God, and God to the soul, in a fellowship which is life indeed. The Saviour has

come that we might have this as an internal and precious possession ; and still it is added "that we might have it More." Whither shall we now follow this most suggestive and most gracious hint?

Obviously it points to the fulness and consummation of that measure of spiritual life, or movement towards life, which the Holy Ghost imparts to all who are drawn by the Father to the Son. I speak not of that influence of the unrevealed Spirit "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; but of that which is specially imparted to those who are on the way to the Redeemer's fold. The best illustration of this is found, not in any theological creed or statement, but in your own experience. You feel the stirring of spiritual desire; you hear the voice crying, "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead": it is not death but sleep, though the sleep is also death, until the regenerating word is spoken which adds the more to this dawning life. This is not, cannot be, total death; but it is not yet "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." You must not be content with these beginnings and tendencies towards the life spiritual. The Saviour came to give these, and they are most precious influences of His grace. But He came to give more. And He is always sending forth His own Spirit, as the Father sends the Spirit of His Son, to give you, if you seek it, this full life of regeneration, which is the more of our inexhaustible promise.

Again, we must remember that we have not only a regenerated life; but that in a deeper and richer sense than mere spiritual quickening. Not only does

the Spirit pour the renewing influence into our nature; but He abides in us as the indwelling source of it. And, moreover, that is no other than our having the Son, who is our life, within us. Here is the deepest secret of our Lord's word *More*. This life is His life superadded to ours: "not I live, but Christ liveth in me." It is a richer, fuller, nobler life than we forfeited by sin; it is more than the renewal of the original elements of our nature; it is more than our paradisaical estate recovered; more than we lost in Adam. We become "partakers," in St. Peter's very bold word, "of a Divine nature." This is the more abundant life, the more in life, of which our Saviour spoke. He could not yet explain all His meaning; but left it for the day of Pentecost to declare. Yet not wholly so. He Himself uttered the secret which the Holy Ghost should unfold: "I in you and ye in Me." And the same Spirit who interprets the saying fulfils it also: "he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." The Holy Ghost, common to Jesus and His disciples, not more His than theirs, is another life in them, and yet their own. The Son of God is revealed in us as He was revealed in St. Paul, the Prince and the Source of life which is more than life. As our spirit rules our body through our soul, so His Spirit rules the ruler, and pours a Divine vigour into all the springs of our feeling and action. Our being is not melted into Christ's, but we become one Spirit with Him: His thoughts are our thoughts; His will is our will; His life our life. The Incarnate Son is in us by a vital union for which no earthly analogy can be found. Analogy must be sought in heaven: "as

Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee; that they may be one in us;” and this because “I in them!” What a blessed mystery is in this More!

Our Lord spoke of His having come to bestow this, as if it had never hitherto been bestowed. We cannot fully understand our special privilege: but we must not doubt it. That Christ was the secret life of the sanctified in old time is as certain as that they were justified through His propitiation. His Spirit not yet poured out was their strength, even as His blood not yet poured out was the ground of their forgiveness and peace. But the Lord was in their hearts, and they “knew it not:” we know the precious secret. Moreover, they had not, in the fulness of our evangelical privilege to possess Him, the indwelling Christ. That was the mystery hid from them, but now revealed: “Christ in us the hope of glory.” They had manna from God in the wilderness; but Moses gave them not that Bread from heaven. Upon us the ends of the world are come, and in the revealed Lord the beginnings of the treasures of heaven. Doubtless, the ancients will be partakers hereafter of the same Christ: we without them shall not be made perfect. But now we have the advantage over the fathers. High as were their prerogatives, the least in the kingdom of heaven is higher than the greatest of them. “I am come,” the Saviour says—speaking expressly of the fold and the sheep of the ancient covenant—“to give them life, and that they might have it More.” Alas, we too often forget this high dignity: and live as though the Lord were no nearer to us than He was to the ancient saints. Alas,

how many of us are immeasurably below the standard of those who saw Him only afar !

You will, perhaps, think, while hearing all this, that such a doctrine of life in Christ is more in another sense; more than can be rationally understood and accepted. And this I grant. It is emphatically called a mystery: whether it respects the union between Christ and the church, or the fact that Christ is within each of us, the hope of glory. But however past our comprehension, and to carnal reason extravagant and mystical, it is the simple truth that the Christian believer, living according to the highest rule and standard, is "a man in Christ" having "Christ in him." He has a fourth element added to his triple nature of body, soul, and spirit; and the Form of that fourth is the Son of God. Bow down your souls before this amazing revelation, or rather raise your souls to the contemplation of it. Do not ask the old question in another form: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat, and His Spirit to live in us? How can this God-man become incarnate again in me?" Seek that "the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Ponder the blessed secret within you with awe, and wonder, and ceaseless rejoicing; think always of your life as hid with Christ in God, and as therefore More than life.

IV. Let us go a step further—deeper and higher we cannot go—in the doctrine of an abundant victory of spiritual life over all that is its opposite. The contest is not yet ended. There is the remainder of

death still in the nature which must be expelled by the energy of this heavenly principle. That enemy who is abroad among the sheep is also within them in another form. Now, whatever the residue of death may be in the believer, there is the promise of a more abounding life to counteract and more than counteract it.

The pasture here spoken of illustrates this. We need not dwell much upon the figure, but use its words freely. The sustentation of this life is internal and external. It is the Holy Ghost within: the strength of God poured into the inner man. He is given to us, not indeed without measure, but without any other restriction than our finite capacity. He forms Christ more and more fully within the believing soul from day to day. Hence the apostle prays that we may be "strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man," thus making "Christ dwell in our hearts by faith." There is no restraint in the internal operation of the Spirit of life within the soul of the Christian. But this sustentation is provided also in external ordinances. It is the Shepherd here, apparently, who goes in and out, and finds pasture; but the same holds good of His sheep also in the use of the means. The word of Christ dwells in them richly: the source of unfailing enlightenment, encouragement, sanctification and strength. "The words that I speak unto you; they are spirit and they are life." The sacramental supper is both the pledge and the means of our invigoration. We ourselves "go in and out and find pasture." We have "the finest of the wheat" and "honey out of the rock" to satisfy us. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

righteousness: they shall be filled," even to their most insatiable desire. The very stones are turned into bread for their sake. The rock whence they drink does more than follow them: its streams are "a well of water springing up in them into everlasting life." All things minister to their nourishment. They find the aliment of their souls in everything, whether within or without the house of God: the table is spread within, where they eat and drink abundantly; and it is spread also in the wilderness without in the presence of their enemies.

But the fulness of this new life, and the promise of its victory over all that bears the character of death, rests upon the strength of Christ Himself within His people. What can resist His indwelling power! Let us remember this, and by it measure the word abundantly: it will then endure no limit. This mysterious sentence, which the Lord sent out over the heads of the disciples around Him, is to be interpreted by every man according to his faith. If our faith is limited, and our notion of the inward presence narrow, the abundance will be scanty. If our faith is large, and our interpretation generous, the More will stretch with it even to infinity.

It promises a measure of life that shall be the expulsion of all that is called death; of all such spiritual disease as is akin to death or leads to it. The law of the Spirit of life tends ever to perfect soundness. The more abundant life is the restoration of vigorous health, of such health in God as drives all infirmity before it. This life as it strengthens—that is, as the life of Christ pervades

absorbs and controls it—mortifies the body of sin with its members. It is indeed the supreme act of the Lord and Giver of life alone to give the final death-stroke. But before that moment comes, how blessed is the experience of this deepening life; expelling disease, covering the bones that did stick out with fatness, and imparting the indescribable sense of existence worthy of the name. How blessed, under the rule of the Spirit, and fed with food convenient for us, to know that sin grows weaker day by day; that the hard work of religion becomes daily easier, and its heavy burdens more lightly borne; to fight not as beating the air, to run not as uncertainly; and to have the blessedness of the growing assurance of stronger and ever-strengthening life! Yet after all, it is only when the contest with death is over, that the true blessedness of life can be known. The secret of the soul's existence is never found until the vision of God is granted to purity of heart. Until our sin is utterly gone, we shall never find out for what our spirits were created, of what they are capable, and how happy the Author of our being can make us. This we must die to know. But not necessarily by leaving the body: for there is a perfect death, to self and sin and every creature, which even in the flesh admits to more than half that secret.

Here, then, brethren, is the test of our religion. The Saviour's declaration of our privilege marks our responsibility, and should set us on the most earnest and searching self-examination.

It most surely condemns us all. Some tests we may sustain with a certain confidence, by the grace of

God. But who does not feel that this word—this vast and boundless word of promise—finds out the poverty of his religion? Be it what it may there is more. Who does not confess that he falls below the standard: alas, in the case of too many, how immeasurably below! How grievously have we “limited the Holy One of Israel.” Where is the abundance of our life answering to the abundance of the promise and the provision! What do we what suffer we, what do we renounce, what sacrifices do we make, that can prove the vigour of our Christian life? Where are the tokens of our full prosperity in the life of God? Where are the proofs that Christ is in us, and that we are not reprobate? O how are we rebuked by the calm and tranquil word of our Master, “that they might have it more!”

But this, like all the Lord’s words, even the highest and severest, is one of precious encouragement. “I am come,” He said, looking round in love upon the dead and living, and half-dead and half-alive, “that they may have life, and have it more!” “I am come,” He says now to this congregation. To some of us He adds: “Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.” Alas, it is true that He may be offering to you a blessing that it is in your power to reject for ever. Remember that other saying: “Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: ye shall die in your sins,” and live on eternally in a more abundant death; more abundant in proportion to the life that is despised. Take not another step in that way of destruction, which is also, alas, “a way everlasting.” But He is here for the diseased and desponding of His

own flock. To them He says: "Awake thou that sleepest!" His presence is here to quicken your torpid souls. He is here whose lightest breath is better than Ezekiel's "four winds of heaven" to revive your half-dead spirits, and turn His hand against your enemies. He knows why your spiritual vigour is so small. He is revealing to you the miserable secret; learn it, and renounce your plague, and suffer Him to "feed you with the finest of the wheat." He perceives in the weakest of us a scanty remainder of life that no eyes but His perhaps could discern. The censorious neighbour might think "He is dead;" He says, "not dead, but sleepeth." "I am come to awaken him out of sleep." Rise then and shake off your mortal languor, and receive out of His fulness something of that MORE which shall be to you as life from the dead.

Let us all make this text our watchword, and fix our utmost desire upon the promise that it bears. Receiving from His quickening breath a stronger life, let us go down determined to know all the greatness of His power, according to the mighty working of His resurrection. Let us set our thought and and hope upon a higher, nobler, purer, better estate of privilege than we have ever known; in which all things evil shall grow less, and all things good increase from day to day: a life in which there shall be less of sin, less of the world, less of self, less of all that Christ is not; more of the Spirit of Jesus, more of His power, more of His life, and, above all, more of Himself for ever unto perfection.

V. But that perfection of life is not, in its fullest

sense, the portion of man in this world. Our Lord had a still more abundant meaning when He uttered this great word. Speaking of His own death and departure, He thought of ours also. He lifted up His eyes to the great and glorious future: the More of an eternal fruition.

The Saviour's life is eternal: begun in time, hid with Him in God, and to be revealed in eternity. In the present world it is of necessity less than perfect; were it only for this, that the body is not as yet made partaker. "The body is dead because of sin;" the "sin unto death" is not in its case cancelled, but suffered to run its course. Life in the spirit and death in the body go on simultaneously. Every trace of that death which is separation from the Source of blessedness shall be finally removed from the soul; but during the process the tabernacle which it inhabits is falling to decay, and while that gradual dissolution is going on, the development of the higher being is checked and hindered and kept from perfection. But there is a glorious promise in reserve. The pledge has been given that eternal life shall be the enjoyment of the believer in his whole humanity, and include the sleeping dust of the saints. "I am the resurrection and the life" follows hard upon the saying of the text. The perfect man, living, incorruptible, immortal, in the integrity of his nature, and crowned with a higher dignity than Adam ever knew, or without redemption could have known, shall rejoice in a life of union with the Triune God in Christ which in the present state it never entered the heart to conceive.

That life will be released from every condition that

fetters it in the probationary state, and from every hindrance to its perfect and full development. The Paradise of man's final estate shall be safe from the visitation of the tempter; among these sons of God, children of the resurrection, Satan shall no more enter. Man's suspended, interrupted, and now perfected destiny shall run on without let or hindrance for ever. Then shall we know for the first time what life really means: for what we were created, for what we were redeemed, for what the Preserver of men has kept us. To impart this more abundant life the Redeemer will come again, with the words of our text in His heart if not upon His lips: "I am come that they may have life, and have it More." We know not now, we cannot know, what life in Christ is and will be when freed from every impediment and every element of danger and of fear. But then shall we know the utmost preciousness of His more abundant gift. No wonder that the holy apostle disdained the thought of any other and lower perfection than this. No wonder that the last cry of the Spirit and the Bride is, "Come, Lord Jesus!" In the hope of this superabounding consummation, let us encounter the residuary penalty of death in the body with confidence and joy. Let us treasure in our hearts the deep secret of our eternal hope, and keep our eye fixed, not upon death and the grave, but upon the life that is beyond death and the grave, in the prospect of the glory of which they are already swallowed up and lost.

The more of eternal life shall have its literal meaning for ever. The gift will go on increasing

with the increase of God throughout eternity. In fact, the true progression of the perfected spirit shall then only begin: only when the perfection of the probationary life is reached shall the pursuit of the utmost possible good of the soul be entered on. There will be a neverceasing progress towards the beatific vision, of which, as seen in the face of Jesus, it shall be no more said that no mortal can approach unto it. Beholding, no longer in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed from glory to glory throughout eternity: for ever aspiring to what can never be reached, but finding in the pursuit a growing blessedness for ever. All that is called life in Christ shall go on illimitably expanding with the expanding faculties of the immortal spirit. The narrow path shall be broad enough, and broaden to infinity. For there is no limit either in time or in eternity to the Saviour's MORE. To Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever. Amen.

II.

THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH.

[A Sermon preached in Oldham Street Chapel, Manchester, on occasion of the death of the late Rev. G. T. Perks, M.A., and also at Ivybridge on occasion of the death of the late Mr. John Allen, of Ivybridge and Plymouth.]

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.—REV. i. 17, 18.

THIS last and most glorious of all our Saviour's manifestations upon earth is seen by the apostle as the representative of the suffering church, and on its behalf. It was reserved for the hour of deepest trial, as always the brightest revelations are vouchsafed in times of heaviest distress. The kingdom of the tribulation and patience of Jesus was in sore need of the utmost consolation of its Head. And it was granted in express fulfilment of His own word: “I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come unto you.”

For it was the revelation of Himself, and His testimony to His own person, that gave its supreme value to the inspiring prophecies of this book. Without that, no mystical scenes of its future destiny would have availed to comfort the persecuted flock. The introductory vision was more precious than all that followed, or rather, all that followed would without the vision have lost its glory. And this our Lord knew full well. Therefore, before He vanished from His servant's view, and before He opened to him the

perspective of ages to come, He said: "write therefore the things which thou hast seen": His glorious Self in the midst of the candlesticks being all that the evangelist had seen as yet. Let us also with reverence behold this great sight, for the invigoration of our faith at this time of our bereavement and sorrow. Let us ask the help of the Holy Spirit that we may receive the testimony which our Lord gives to the death that He accomplished for us on earth, and to the life which avails for us in heaven.

I. Looking back upon His incarnate course below, our Lord testifies that He, the Eternal Living One, died in the verity of His human nature. The solemnity and grandeur of this allusion to His death, and the wonderful way in which it is connected with His Person as the fountain of life, conspire to make this testimony of the ascended Lord unspeakably impressive.

We cannot but be struck by the fact that, in His review of His past among men, our Lord makes His having died sum up all. He does not speak of His having become man, or taken our nature, or passed through an humbled estate, or tasted the bitterness of the preceding agony. It is simply, and with all the emphasis of extreme importance laid on it by Himself: "I, the Living One became the Dead!" There is sublime silence as to everything besides. Nothing in all the testimonies of the New Testament to the soleness, the supremacy, the transcendent and boundless import of the death of our Redeemer is more suggestive than this. His apostles have one after another paid their various tribute to the cross. In all

their writings it is the object of glorying. To it they ascribe all the preciousness of Christ. His death inspires all their doxologies, down to this last, which blends their earthly and their heavenly strain in one. It is magnified as much in heaven as upon earth. But there is no tribute that speaks more mightily its sovereign value than this. When our Lord sums up His history upon earth, all is spoken in one word: "I became dead." This was the end and issue of the manifestation of the Son Incarnate. And indeed, there is a most remarkable likeness in the expression here used to that which St. John uses concerning His advent in our nature. "The word became flesh." "I am He that liveth and became dead." It is impossible to do justice to the Risen Saviour's words unless we make them the measure of the design of the incarnation itself: God became man, that the Living One might become the Dead.

Great, confessedly great, is the mystery of godliness, that God was manifest in the flesh; but the mystery within this mystery itself is, that He became flesh in order to die. There is much tendency, and always has been, to make the assumption of our nature the end and issue, the pith and substance, of the Saviour's intervention for our race. This springs from many motives, to which however we need not now refer: our text has nothing controversial in it. It is the simple dogmatic statement of a truth of unbounded importance, the application of which we may make as we need it. Our Lord's mission to mankind culminated in His death: without that He would not have been perfect. All is wrapped up in this one word. The

reason of this transcendent import of His passion is left, as it were, to the testimony of the worshipping congregation, which sings its theology: "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

But we must remember, on the other hand, that this all-comprising death derived its value for us from its having been the death of the Living One Incarnate. We perceive while we behold it and listen to the words that this final manifestation is so ordered by the Redeemer as to assert the perfection of His Person in the union of the Divine and human natures. He who speaks in the likeness of the Son of Man, is evidently no other than the Eternal God Himself.

The form that appears to the beloved apostle is man by every token. It is true that the exhibition is almost grander than comports with human nature. But the true humanity is not lost in the effulgence of the Divine. It is described, I may say carefully described, as a human appearance: "One like unto the Son of Man"; language which, from Daniel downwards, has expressed a certain glorious difference between His humanity and ours, but consistent with its being absolutely the same. He is perfect man, from the crown of the head which shone with more glory than the sun, down to the sole of the feet at which John fell as dead. The members of His glorified body are discerned and traced one by one: "It is the Lord" John once more felt, though language failed him to say so. It was the same

Jesus, but with more than the glory of the transfiguration. The head that sank in agony is now more dazzling than mortal can behold. The hands that were nailed to the cross hold the seven stars; but they are the human hands. The eyes which are like flame of fire are the same which were quenched in death. The voice that is like the sound of many waters is the same that uttered the exceeding bitter cry. It is the same human Jesus. It is not an expanded and enlarged man, glorified into something that we cannot identify as our own. He is still the Representative of mankind.

But we have here most abundant and most blessed assurance that this Man is God. If former testimonies have left wanting any evidence, it is here abundantly supplied: either this witness must be effaced, or we must give up every lingering vestige of doubt. As He Himself at the close of His ministry showed the apostles plainly of the Father, so here He shows them plainly of Himself. He assumes those names and attributes which in the Old Testament most jealously guard the majesty of the Godhead. There is no definition of the eternity of Jehovah more emphatic than this, that He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last." Such is the glorious assemblage of phrases by which in human words the Supreme declares His own essential existence, in contrast with all the phenomena of the universe created by His hand. In all their infinite diversity He folds them, and lays them aside; but He abideth the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Here the full glory of these

Divine attributes is Christ's. Once, yea twice, does the apostle hear this, that the glory which belongeth unto God belongeth unto Jesus. It was not the Father who spoke behind His human Son, or above Him as at the baptism and the transfiguration. It was Jesus Himself; and the evangelist who had lived so long in His Master's fellowship, and heard the beating of His human heart, and beheld as few beheld His glory, fell at His feet as dead: he is not overwhelmed by the revelation of a new truth, but because it came so near him. Then did the Saviour utter those words of Divine encouragement, with which the Old Testament has made us so familiar: "Fear not! I am the First and the Last, and He that liveth!" It is the voice of a God who is also a Man. We cannot, we must not, we need not distinguish the Divine from the human. To us there is one God, and one Person of the Mediator, Godman; what is declared throughout the entire New Testament is here declared with much more abundant emphasis; there ought to remain no shadow of uncertainty.

Now this, beloved, is the glory of our testimony, that the unity of the Person who speaks as God incarnate gives all its value to His death. "I am He that liveth: from eternity it was Mine to have life in Myself. But I became dead." This most mysterious of all mysteries, this profound paradox of the Gospel, that the Living One died for human redemption, we receive from His lips and adore. It gives us eternal assurance of these two things: first, that whatever intention was in the death of atonement, a Divine value is stamped upon it; and, therefore, secondly,

that the Church placing its trust in that atonement may be absolved from fear for ever.

It was a human death of sacrificial obedience that had an infinite value. What this precisely means we never can know: we can never fathom this depth. The Scripture declares what it does not attempt to explain. But it does not shrink from the assertion that the blood which purchased the Church was the blood of its Lord or its God! Here is the secret of its inexpressible preciousness. Not because it was the pure self-sacrifice of an heroic soul. Not because it was the offering of a life unspotted by sin. Not because it was counted precious by the Father simply. It was the sacrificial passion and death of One who is God and man: Whose sacrifice, therefore, for whatever purpose needed, is of unlimited value. If it was required to pay our debt, there is no debt which man can contract that this price is not sufficient to pay. But we are not called to consider how the infinite value of the atonement is applied. The great testimony alone is given: that it was the Incarnate Godman who laid down his life for our redemption. If He was in any sense our Substitute and Representative, nothing can be more secure than the salvation and peace of those who are His.

But it must not be forgotten that the "Fear not!" does not follow the testimony to the death and introduce that of the resurrection. It is the argument of the death itself as well as the life that followed. In the fact that the Lord of life suffered and endured the uttermost distress of the Passion is the abiding encouragement of His afflicted saints. He signifies

that He remembers His hour of unspeakable agony, and sympathises with His people in their tribulation. He could also like John himself, but with infinitely more meaning than His apostle, say: "I, Jesus, your companion, and fellow, and brother, in My tribulation and kingdom and patience"! He has gone through boundless sorrow, and He knows how to succour those who are tempted. He underwent such calamities as none besides have ever known. "Be of good cheer," He cries, "I have overcome the world!" He never forgets the awful bond of sympathy that links us with Him and Him with us. He appoints us all our crosses; but He bore the heaviest of all.

Nor must we pass on without pointing the application of this "Fear not" still further and more particularly. We shall presently see that the Redeemer has the keys of hell and of death, and that our abiding consolation is in His heavenly life. But we must remember that His dying for us has abolished death as a terror. If we are resting upon the Saviour's sacrifice on our behalf, and in union with Him have received the Spirit of life, there is nothing in the last encounter that can hurt us. Without that fellowship everything in death is terrible. It is terrible in itself; terrible in all its preliminaries and accessories; terrible in its results. But meeting the king of terrors in union with Jesus we need not fear. Never rest then until you have the assurance that the condemnation of sin has passed away from you; and that death is already swallowed up of life.

II. But all this, Christian brethren, has only prepared the way for the Lord's testimony to His incar-

nate life above. Mark once more the simple and profound strength of the assurance: "Behold! I," the Same I who died, "am alive for evermore."

Undoubtedly there is here an undertone of triumph over death such as becomes Him who, by dying, conquered the last enemy. It is as if the Lord who confesses that He was dead asserts that notwithstanding He still, and ever, lived. In virtue of His essential life, He could not be holden of death; but continued in His incarnate Person to live evermore. It seems, as it were, a Divine defiance and note of victory. But that is not, strictly speaking, the general style of Scripture in referring to the Lord's risen life; and He, like all His servants, means that He rose from the dead to enter upon that dominion which he obtained by His death. Such we know to be the strain and spirit of this book especially. Having died for mankind He now lives to be Lord over all, or, as St. Paul says: "To this end Christ both died and revived that He might be Lord of the dead and the living." His own testimony is: "I am alive for evermore." It is His eternal encouragement to His troubled church and to every individual member of it.

That He speaks to His flock under persecution, suffering, and the shadow of death, is most obvious. The entire vision is of the Risen One in the midst of the candlesticks; and the whole book was written for the consolation of His people. It was on the Lord's day that He appeared: the day that for ever celebrates His victory over death. We remember what He once said when first He gave His congregation a

new name: "On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of Hades He thus defied in its hostile schemes to swallow up, ruin, and destroy His cause. Here it is enough that He says: "I have despoiled My enemy: the keys of Hades are Mine." We must not enter into details. Christ lives; and we may say, in His own words, "It is enough"! That is ample and all sufficient security against every foe, and guarantee of every blessing.

The apostle was a representative of the afflicted church, but he was not forgotten as an individual. When the Lord saw the elect disciple whom He loved so well fall down as dead, He said to him, with a tenderness that remembered the past, "Fear not." But John was the representative of every troubled servant of the Common Master. He was himself not simply and only overwhelmed with the glory of his Lord. He was depressed and cast down by the general gloom that overshadowed His kingdom. His fellows had all been, one after another, taken, and he might say with Elijah, "I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away"! and in this he speaks for every dejected fellow-servant to the end of time. For our sake he receives the sympathy of his Lord, Who forgets not His own strong crying and tears. Though He does not mention them, He remembers Gethsemane, and the way to the cross, and the great tribulation and anguish of His bitter cry. We must all feel that the inspiring words: "I live!" are meant to quicken, animate, and encourage, every poor soul like St. John who is found in his

Patmos, a brother and companion in the kingdom of tribulation.

But we must especially mark the testimony to our Lord's dominion over death, and the intermediate estate of departed souls: Hades, the region where the dead congregate until the judgment; and Death, the minister who admits them. When the Redeemer says, "I have the keys," He here means simply His jurisdiction over the destiny of mankind until the great day when Hades and Death shall both be swallowed up.

As to that vast region where the innumerable multitudes of our race, in comparison of whom the teeming millions of the earth's present population are but a handful, He declares that He Himself, and none but Him, rules over it. When He sank under the power of death, He descended into Hell, or this Hades of which He speaks; and Death surrendered to Him its keys, calling Him Lord. This is given as a broad general revelation. Like every word of our testimony, it is left in its stern simplicity to be pondered rather than interpreted. It is the assurance given to His people that the destinies of all who are gone hence are under His control until all things be accomplished. He once said to Peter that the keys of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, in a certain sense, were left to His church as represented by the apostles; but to John He declares that neither to the church nor to the apostles does he commit the keys of the other world. They are in no hands but His own.

We must not, however, think that Hades is the waiting place of all the dead without discrimination. Though no distinction is alluded to by our Lord, and

though the tone of encouragement in this testimony forbids us to think that He meant by Hades the Hell of the lost, yet we must remember that on the only other occasion on which He used the word, we find it the scene where the rich man is tormented. We must not forget that there is a region into which they pass who have rejected the Redeemer, and are lost. In modern times we call that place Hell: but the special Gehenna which is reserved for those who are separated from God eternally is not here as yet distinguished from Hades or the world of the departed. It is not necessary to say more of this prisonhouse than that the key, whether of admission to it or exit from it, no one has but Christ. No one enters there without His decree. He opens, and no man shuts: no spirit is consigned to the hopeless looking for of judgment and fiery indignation whom the Redeemer does not Himself from His throne consign to it. Unwarranted speculation has forged other keys: one of which may open the door to eternal annihilation, while the other may open it for the final return of all to God. But He alone hath the keys: "He shutteth and no man openeth."

If we have gone beyond the actual testimony in speaking of the lost, much more may we go beyond it in speaking of the saved. There is a region where are found the saints who die in acceptance and hope: waiting for the brighter day and the larger heritage of the state called heaven. In it the Redeemer may be said to dwell. He has for a season pitched His tent there, set up His throne, and fixed His court. There He specially administers His government:

though it is only the gentle government of One who leads, and whose people follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Both He and they have there a common hope: the glory shall be revealed. Into that region of Hades all our dead in Christ are carried: there is no intermediate disciplinary state; they go to see the King in His beauty while their eyes do see corruption. It is Paradise, to use our Lord's own word; but it is heaven also, since He is there.

The risen Saviour has also the keys of death: that is, He controls the entrance of that state into which the saints depart. Death as an event is ordered by His providence in the case of every man, and especially every believer. And death as a dispensation is under His most gracious sway.

No Christian dies but at the time when the Lord appoints. There is a sense in which this is true of every mortal. Of all the multitudes who enter Hades through the gates of death, whether sent by war or what men call accident and human violence, not one enters without the permission of Jesus, and, as it were, at the set time appointed of Him. But there is a very special sense in which the death of His saints is cared for. Their life is precious to Him, and He will see that without just cause it shall not be abridged by one moment. Their death is precious, and He honours it by making it the object of His personal care. To him who is in Jesus there can be no premature end, no death by accident; no departing before the call from above. To him the sun never goes down while it is yet day. The messenger who summons the servant of Christ has his

Master's feet hard behind him : in fact, we scarcely press the figure too far when we say that the Lord Himself and in person opens the door, and receives the dying saint. St. John tells us of those memorable words in which the risen Saviour fore-announced to himself and to Simon Peter how each should glorify God at his end. Not all of us are equally honoured with them : to have the details and circumstances of their departure arranged and ordered and even predicted as these apostles had. But the same thing in reality is true in them and in us : I was going to say in us and in Him ; as our Lord had His set hour, so also has each one of us. It is sometimes exceedingly hard to believe this. There are many strange and wonderful anomalies in the ordering of death generally, and of the death of Christians in particular. But, to obviate at the outset all misunderstanding, our Saviour gives this great assurance before He finally retires into the invisible state. We must die by faith, as well as live by faith. In this faith we must resign our friends to His will : sometimes it requires a very strong exercise of this grace to reconcile us to their manner of departure. When we see a father or a mother abruptly taken away, the very prop and stay of the family, it is difficult to understand that the Lord holds the keys. When we see a young man furnished for abundant usefulness, and exulting in his future, suddenly cut down, it seems one of the "strange acts" of Providence. On the other hand, that the aged servant of the Lord should be removed after having served his full generation, and had some time at the close to

stand and wait, is acceptable to every instinct. There is a harmony, grace, and completeness in this which is obvious: the mind is satisfied. But when, as now, we see a servant of God, who has gathered much experience, and entered into the possession of qualities which render his life more precious than ever to the church, suddenly smitten and removed, this is a dispensation which we must receive in silence. Granted that often the departure is hastened by undue pressure, and survivors may have to speak of those they mourn over as victims to hard work or want of care or what not, it all at last comes back to the will of Christ, Who has the keys of death and of dying, and never leaves them out of His own hands. Happy are we if we believe this implicitly, without seeking ever to understand all its mystery; and if we make it the repose of our heart whether as bereaved or as expecting ourselves to die.

The Redeemer's dominion over death means something more than that. It signifies His control and authority over our dying as a dispensation of such discipline and such most special trial as no mortal can endure to think of without a certain fear. This is the one terror which is common to the church and to the world, to the saint and to the sinner. Here, again, our Lord makes a difference between His own and all others. For His servants He controls the preparations, circumstances, and issues of death in the most gracious and solicitous way. Recall once more that word concerning the death by which His servant should glorify God: it is not said of Simon Peter that he glorified God in his life,

however true that was. By his death he did glorify Him. And so did they all whose deaths are recorded in Scripture; and so also have unknown multitudes since. There is no province of our Lord's government where He more graciously rules. There He is the Shepherd, in His own favourite figure. David sang for all ages of the valley where the keys of Christ, changed into a rod and staff, keep off all enemies, and where the sacramental cup is full and the richest unction is given. We need not be jealous of the prerogative of death to set the seal of perfection on the life. It does this by the ordinance of Christ. We know much, but we cannot know all, about the Lord's most tender administration of the touching circumstances of the dying chamber of His saints.

In another part of our book we read that the keys will be laid down when this department of our Lord's government ceases to be administered. What it means that death and hell are to be abolished and swallowed up, we are not by this testimony required to ask. Suffice that the dispensation of dying shall be ended: the last generation of the world will celebrate a preliminary victory over death, not dying at all but being changed. The very memory of the last enemy shall be abolished; death will die, to rise again for man no more for ever, and Hades be left utterly desolate. For part of its inhabitants there is a second death, of which we need never know the secret. Of those inhabitants of Hades with whom we have to do, it may be said that they will pass through its other gate—not the gate of death but the gate of life—and thus enter with the Lord at their head into the eternal

kingdom. The last exercise of the Mediator's sovereign authority shall be the use of a key which He has never used save for Himself. He will unlock the final mystery of the inmost and seventh heaven, and the Paradise of the intermediate state, which is the Presence of Christ, shall be the eternal heaven of the Presence of the Triune God, though still a God manifest in the flesh.

But we are going beyond our testimony and beyond our vision. Let us return to Him who here speaketh from heaven and yet to us upon earth. We have been dwelling at length on His words; but we have not forgotten the mystery that was seen before the words were heard. Let us bring ourselves, brethren, with all our memories of bereavement, and all our eternal hope struggling with our temporal fears, and bow down before His feet; He is manifest to our faith, not yet to our sight; and we do not fall as dead before Him save in the death of self. But, surrendering the issues of our life and of our death into His hands, we shall each of us hear Him say for our encouragement and joy, "Fear not!" To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

III.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

[Preached, by request, at Trinity Chapel, Bristol, and Oldham Street Chapel, Manchester, on occasion of the death of the Rev. John Lomas, September, 1877.]

THIS hymn is the pilgrim's song of the soul on its way to eternity. The Psalmist, brought back from his early wanderings, and yielding himself to his Guide, perfectly happy and wanting nothing, amidst pastures that grow on no earthly soil, and listening to the music of a river that has no earthly source, sings his way to God. There is a dark valley somewhere in advance, and its meaning is death; that, however, is only an accident of probation, and is soon lost again in life: just as the shadow here falls upon the little psalm for a moment, then quickly vanishes and is gone.

But, beautiful as the hymn is when set to this music, it is equally beautiful and much more impressive if we take the central death as its keynote. Then all that goes before is the preparation for that dark crisis which is the turningpoint of endless joy. The valley rules the whole: what precedes is its anticipation, and itself is the anticipation of heaven. However this may seem to do violence to the joyful strain of

the psalm, it does no violence to its religious meaning; and it is in keeping with the solemnity of the present occasion. Death must now have the pre-eminence; and, accordingly, we view the valley as looked forward to, as entered, and as left behind by the pilgrim, giving, however, our best attention to the sacred experiences within itself.

I. Mark with what exquisite simplicity the anticipation of the valley is introduced. "I am now," the pilgrim sings, "in the fulness of content and joy, without an internal or external care. But if I walk, when I walk, through that valley, I will fear no evil." It is part of his habitual religious forecast and provision. The godly man, the godly young man—for such was David—never forgets that the course of life leads that way. The idea of death is inwrought into his habitual thought. You perceive this by the artless and natural turn of the words, which glide into the reflection upon the coming change by the easiest possible transition. But the anticipation, while it does full justice to the gloom and horror of the coming change, is not one that discomforts or even troubles the soul.

It is, indeed, "the valley of the shadow of death" in its deepest sense that is looked forward to. This is the first time the figure occurs; it is often repeated in the Old Testament, though it disappears from the New; and it means simply and literally the dark and awful defile through which all that breathe must pass: in fact, the death that is "appointed once" to every man. It is not simply the thought of reverses and afflictions generally, as if the Psalmist

meant, "I will fear no evil if the scene shall change and trouble darken my pastures and murmuring river, and my sun be clouded for a season." There is a sense, indeed, in which life is a continual alternation of light and shade, of open pastures and shaded valleys. Nay, the whole of our probation may be said to be spent under the shadow of the great death that sin hath begotten, of the terrible cloud that has come between us and God: we live and move and have our being in "the valley of Baca." But here the lesson is that true religion is a constant and distinct realisation of the fact that we live to die, and must so live as not to be taken by surprise. This will give to life a certain solemnity and pathos which nothing else will give. It will for ever remind us that all earthly joys are transitory, that all earthly possessions are held only for a season, and that there is in the distance, and possibly near at hand, a great exchange of all things pleasant for the oppressive gloom of death. This thought disenchant's earthly life of its illusions, and aids the soul's detachment from all created things. It teaches every period, from youth to extreme age, its one lesson, to "remember the days of darkness." There is no variation in this note throughout the Bible. It is true that in the earlier days, before death was abolished and life and immortality brought to light, the tone of forecast was a desponding one. Some of David's other hymns are most pathetically mournful. Such was Job's dirge, "Cease then and let me alone that I may go to the land of darkness." Such was Hezekiah's anticipation of being "cut off from the land of the living." It is true also that Christianity,

on the other hand, teaches us to think more of being with Christ than of the stern event which leads to Him. But the Bible, as a whole, is faithful to the sad instinct of human nature, which dreads death as a wrench from the light of day, and as an entrance into the valley of a darkness which nature abhors.

But it is, nevertheless, certain that the expectation of the valley cannot really distress the religious soul. It is very different from that horror which the ungodly and the unsanctified feel. All must anticipate it in some way. There are none who live and have made a covenant with death that it shall not touch them. Multitudes rejoice in simply putting away the thought, and accustom themselves to vanquish the intruding fear. This may suffice for a season : amidst the green pastures and musical waters of a merry life—for God allows both in a certain sense to others besides His saints—they forget the valley and the enemy not far off. But how dire to them is the great reverse when it comes ! Others carry about a secret dread that haunts their spirits and poisons their pleasures, and robs them of peace, but will not seek the only deliverance from this mortal apprehension. May God give them grace, if they hear me now, to go to the Conqueror of Death and Giver of Life that they may learn the true secret of living happily when about to die ! There are some, too, who are all their lifetime in bondage, though true Christians, through want of trust in the resources of the Gospel. Many reasons conspire to this palsy of their faith. They love the world too much, they do not drink deeply enough of the river of life, they do

not meditate as they ought on eternal things, and thus they cannot join the chorus of our hymn.

But the anticipation that makes this psalm so glad is better taught. The Christian singer is one who lives under the powers of the world to come; and those powers are to him the working forces of the present state. He lives in a supernatural world, and regards everything in its relation to that world. The thought of the valley becomes the familiar and cheerful habit of the soul. It does not diminish the energy of life, nor blunt the appetite for such pleasures as God does not interdict. It keeps every day the remembrance of the last day in view, but without the morbid rehearsal of the miseries of dying. The valley is thought of always—especially in times of affliction, of bereavement, of such solemnities as these—but it is not lived in and passed through by a too minute anticipation. It is a foreboding that takes its special character from circumstances, and adapts itself to every period of life. To the aged, whose doorway is beset with fears, death lying always at the gate in waiting, it is an anticipation with much of the rehearsal in it. To the man of activity, rejoicing in his strength, it is a calm, rational, deliberate, earnest remembrance that the world must be used without abusing it, and that every day, though filled with promise of other days, may be the last. And to the young man, in whose case it seems an unreal thing to mingle thoughts of dying with the early breath of life, it is a tranquil interior prediction of what God does not require him deeply to realise. But to all, and

all alike, the preparation for the valley is part of religion.

II. For now the singer sings his way into the valley that he had predicted for himself. The language of his poetry blends wonderfully the future and the present: "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." Here we must not be careful to keep up the figures of the allegory, though every one of them will be found to have its Christian meaning.

The first thing is that the pilgrim is guided into it by the good Shepherd Himself. Here is the secret link between death and preparation for death, about which nothing has yet been said. The blessedness of all our religion, whether in life or death, is union with Jesus. We now of course go beyond the ancient Psalmist. "Thou art with me" was all he could say; and in a certain sense nothing can surpass that: "if God be for us, who can be against us!" Our preparation to die well is the habitual communion of our soul with God. But we must not forget that it is the glory of the Christian dispensation that every member of Christ's mystical body is united to Him, and one with Him, in the profoundest meaning of the word, by a bond which, though sin may sever it, death can never dissolve. A Christian man, whether he live or die, is in the Lord. We live with Christ, and die with Him, in this most peculiar and sacred sense. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." It is the Spirit of Him who is "the Head of every man" that leads us into this last wilderness to be tempted. And what can harm us while this union is unbroken! No floods can reach us in that ark. No arrow speeds

in its mission thither. And, returning to our text, we need "fear no evil," entering the valley in Christ and with Him.

We cannot but think, however, of our Lord as guiding us through the valley that He traversed Himself. He also went that way of sorrows before them. Whenever He called Himself the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, He invariably mentioned in connection with that name His death. We read in the holy narrative, though we can never understand all that we read, how this psalm had its highest fulfilment in Him. And another psalm also, preceding this, which most affectingly describes the Lord's own "night seasons," and His song in the night, when He entered the valley, one seven times darker for Him than for any mortal who ever trode it: exploring the inmost secrets of the horror of death that we might never explore them, but that we might sing the same song without its undertone of anguish. And yet another psalm, that which follows, where the everlasting doors open at His approach, and He enters as the King of glory in our name and for our sake! I may boldly say that this our own pilgrim song was sung by Himself as He entered His valley, and, though to Him it had a meaning it can never have to us, we have strength to sing it because He sang it before us. But to return. "Thou art with me!" signifies to us, who are united to Christ, that the Supreme Pilgrim through the valley of the shadow will be our Protector through all its horrors. "He will be our Guide even unto death." Our Leader and Friend and Director through all the

scenes of life, He will be in the last and decisive crisis our Guardian in a sense never experienced before.

Of nothing in the whole compass of truth may we be more sure than of this, that the Saviour will be, that He is, most intimately with and in His dying servant. At that hour, whether we know it or not, no one is so near to the departing saint as his Saviour is. All else, as it were, disappears, and Jesus is alone with the soul, the soul alone with Jesus. He is instead of all comforters, the only and supreme Comforter by His Spirit. It may seem a hard thing to say this; but I do not deny the presence of other comforters, whose consolation He uses. Never are human friends more precious. How unutterably dear their ministries and words and looks and pressures of love! Christ's pastors and ministers, how are their offices valued then, perhaps as never before! But after all the Lord is the only light of the fading world. Every name He bears, every attribute He has, every aspect of His word, finds then its supreme and heavenly and all-sufficient meaning. Never is He so near as when the spirit is hemmed in the valley between time and eternity. It was with reference to this last danger in particular that He said Himself, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." This was His defiance to the enemy lying in wait for the last encounter. Then it is that He "calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out:" out of the terror into eternal day.

But the psalm is not only thus general. We

might say concerning all this, It is enough; what needs the Christian more? If He be thus most intimately near, what further consolation do we need? Our psalm, however, dilates with delight on the full meaning of His holy presence in the valley, which we may now regard as the chamber of death. He is the protector from all the enemies, external and internal, that surely congregate there. His rod is the symbol of His authority in the domain of death: it is His alone. The staff is the symbol of the strength He gives the dying saints; He multiplies that, and gives each dying pilgrim one.

The Pastor's crook, the Shepherd's rod, is no other than the Redeemer's mediatorial sceptre swayed over one special region of His vast empire, that which is under the shadow of death. He keeps "the keys of Hades and of death," to admit whom and when He will, and to govern all that belongs to the intermediate state. But with His empire over the vast congregation of the dead we have not here to do; the rod of which our hymn speaks is the Saviour's authority over death and the sphere of death in the present world. He extends His jurisdiction in a special manner over all the accesses, preparations and circumstances of the final hour of His saints. It is not only that He governs in the valley, and allows no enemy to rule there; He also appoints all the details of His people's departure: their death is "precious in His sight." Dying is not merely an event which our Lord will help us through; an accident that happens to His people in common with all mankind. To them it has a quite peculiar character. He has made all

things new, and death is not excluded. "He is the Lord of the dead and of the living:" I may add, "of the dying" also. Thus may we understand those many seemingly hard sayings concerning His people's relations to death, which utter gracious paradoxes to the understanding but the most gracious and simple truth to the heart. "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He that believeth in Him "shall not see death." Those whom He conducts into the valley never know all its horrors; death to them has lost its sting; it is no longer the dreadful penalty of eternal sin, the first death leading to the second. This, my living fellow Christians, is simply matter to us of faith and hope. We must look forward to our final hour as an hour which the Conqueror of death will order for us in His own most gracious and sovereign way. Thus it is our privilege to dismiss all fear of the last enemy; we may, blessed be His name, be entirely delivered from this. He Himself endured its utmost horror vicariously that we might not endure it. He cried, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me," under the awful and unknown pressure of our universal sin. But neither that bitter cry, nor that more exceeding bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" need we ever utter. If we live under His sceptre as the Lord of the living, we shall enter the mystical and sacred region of death under His sceptre as the Lord of the dead and dying. Then let us make anew this permitted "covenant with death," to fear it no more.

But the staff has its own meaning. We may interpret it of that special support which the Redeemer

affords to every dying saint when his heart and flesh would otherwise fail. The terrors of death do not all spring from external foes. We may suppose these quelled and disarmed by the Prince of Life; the strong man armed for his deadliest encounter vanquished by the Stronger than he; Satan, and his minister, death, both rebuked as terrors, and dismissed from the last scene. There yet remains the reality of the internal conflict which every one must pass through; there is a shadow in the valley even if no enemies were there. Then it is that the meaning of the staff comes in. The spirit sinking into eternity as into an abyss, is propped by this staff, which is only another word for the "everlasting arms." Never is it said in Scripture that the believer escapes the bitterness of physical death: save indeed in the last generation, when it will be exchanged for the blissful agony of transformation. Though the New Testament does not allow the ancient figure of the "valley of the shadow" to enter its sacred text, and continually speaks of death as abolished, as it were a thing not seen, we must not interpret this of the hour and article of dying itself: this is and must be the failing and exhaustion of nature; an experience that no man acquires until it is passed through. And the solace and help then afforded is also one that we must die to know. How the arms of Christ will then uphold us, and how His staff will then support, we must struggle with death to understand. Let us make it matter of our most steadfast faith beforehand!

But, dear fellow pilgrims to the valley, the

Lord's guaranteed presence is infinitely more than mere defence. It is the pledge and source of abounding spiritual nourishment, and of the final anointing of the departing soul. We cannot but feel that the Psalmist is in poetical style referring here, not to an experience on the brighter side of the valley, but to an experience in the valley itself. Whatever the commentators on David's idyl may say, we look to higher authority than they, and nothing less than this satisfies the Christian meaning of the hymn.

Here we have, as it were, the sacramental table spread by the hand of the Lord Himself in the presence of the last enemies of the saint. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: my cup runneth over." Before and in the full vigour of life the nourishment of the soul is described by the figures of green pastures and still waters. But the last encounter demands, so to speak, the deepest strength and the richest essence of spiritual life. And they who die in Christ shall have it; they have the life, and have it "more abundantly." Though they can no longer "go in and out," as of old, and "find pasture," their ever faithful Friend will bring it to them; like Himself, they shall have "meat to eat that the world knoweth not." He gives His dying saints at that great exigency the mystical "food convenient for them;" for this He reserves "the finest of the wheat," and "the wine on the lees well refined." Sometimes He administers to them by His servants the literal bread and wine which seals their union for the last time with His church and with Himself. But, whether that be so or not, He spreads His

invisible table, and holds, with or without the visible elements, His sacramental feast with them. While the anxious survivors are preparing the most delicate viands to tempt the appetite and sustain the flagging energies of physical life—and, alas, how vainly—He gives the inner man its unfailing nourishment, and “renews it day by day.” While the natural life is declining, and the natural taste is dead, and the natural eyes are fast going “to see corruption,” the spiritual life is strong, the spiritual taste is quickened and satisfied, and the spiritual eyes see the King standing by, “girding Himself,” and ministering as He once said He would. The wheel is broken at the cistern, the pastures are no longer green to the vision, the rivers of earth have no longer their music to the ear; but the better food is the “honey out of the rock,” and “the cup runneth over.” Undoubtedly, we who look on do not always see the tokens of this heavenly banquet. We do not always mark—and sometimes grieve because we do not mark—these signs of heavenly communion, and the superabounding joy that should attend it. Not all our dying saints appear to enjoy this wonderful sacramental feast. Sometimes they seem to cry, “My leanness! my leanness!” down to the last; and not seldom they have “the bread of adversity and the water of affliction” night and day. But we must be careful not to interpret this too hastily or too harshly. We should not mistake the absence of sensitive joy for the absence of spiritual consolation. Much in this matter depends upon the natural temperament which religion does not entirely abolish; much upon the character of the past life;

much upon the Saviour's secret will. But we may, with all deductions, be sure of this, that no departing soul, in union with Christ, retires from life and encounters death without consolations, secret and rare, that the world knows not of. We must not let exceptional cases mar the application of the Psalmist's most touching and joyous words. The history of the Christian Church is in nothing more glorious than in its records of the triumphant end of its professors. Precious in our eyes, as well as in our Lord's, is the death of His saints. Every religious community brings its many tributes to the catalogue of final scenes that are among the best evidences of the truth of Christianity. Few Christian families are without their own memorials, which they treasure among their best possessions, of the deaths by which their faithful departed have glorified God. Their examples are for our encouragement. It is not adding a new article to the faith to assert that every one of us may believe that by the grace of God he will triumph in death. I do not say you may expect an ecstatic entrance into heaven: yes, certainly that: but not necessarily a triumphant and ecstatic departure from earth, which is a very different thing. You shall die well if you live well; you shall be partakers of Christ, the Bread from heaven, in the valley, if you live on Him in the way thither. Determine to believe this. Do not depend too much, either in life or in death, upon emotions of which you may be sensible and others may witness. But be assured that you shall have that heavenly feast, better than angels' food, in your last failing hour, if you hunger and thirst after righteousness now.

The Redeemer's presence in the valley is also the pledge of the last sanctification for heaven of the pilgrim-spirit. "Thou anointest mine head with oil." There is a sense in which the work of final purification is not necessarily reserved for the seal of death, and there is a sense in which it is so reserved.

But before we think of the last unction, let us dwell upon that other word of confident trust. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." The singer prophesies over himself that the lovingkindness of God taking the form of mercy will not fail him to the end: that the great pardon will finally seal the forgiveness of all his days, ten thousand times ten thousand acts of mercy being crowned with one sovereign act at the close. Translating this into the language of the New Testament, "we look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." This is the right frame of mind in which to anticipate and enter the valley. In its straits our profoundest humiliation and our highest triumph meet; but it is a path of constant humility that leads to it. If you would be ready to die in peace you must put yourself under the safe conduct of mercy. There is no other hope, either for time or for eternity, but in the boundless compassion of a sin-pardoning God. The consolation in these words is endless. He who does not feel it to be so is not prepared to enter this scene. Though with all your heart you renounce sin, and go on your way rejoicing in forgiveness, you must still feel your utter and unspeakable unworthiness, and put away the dread of

dying only by the thought, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"!

It is the pardoned soul that is consecrated to God, sealed by the unction of the Holy Spirit. And we surely have a right to take the anointing of this hymn as signifying that last effusion of the grace of the Sanctifier which fits the spirit for heaven. Of course, it is not meant to say that its final sanctification is of necessity effected in this anointing. His supreme outpouring may cleanse us wholly from all sin before that. But on this we need not dwell. Suffice now that there must be in death the last and heavenly consecration for God and eternal life which will enable the pilgrim to go in peace. This may not have been in David's thoughts. The oil of which he spoke was possibly the oil of gladness that would seal his victory over sorrow and death. But we cannot avoid thinking of the true and Divine extreme unction which is the spirit's sufficient viaticum for the long journey. Purified from all iniquity, and joyful in the ratification of all past pardons, the saint is dedicated, hallowed and sanctified to God for eternity: "meet" in the fullest sense "for the inheritance of the saints in light." His last attachments to time are snapped asunder: the last vestiges of earthly love are lost, or swallowed up, if they remain, in the love of God. Christ sends another spirit, through death His messenger, faultless and pure to Paradise. This unction remaineth: death cannot remove the seal, and every other power that might interfere hears His voice, "Touch not Mine anointed"! Beyond this we cannot go. The emancipated soul is

sealed for the day of redemption when the body will be restored; and goes on its heavenly way rejoicing with this oil of gladness on its head.

III. And now our Hymn suddenly and abruptly leaves the valley. We must follow whither it leads, though our words can here be but few and restrained. As David sang, his meaning was to himself obscure; for he was one of those prophets who searched diligently what they were taught to say concerning the sufferings of the Christ and of His people, and the glory that should follow. David's presentiments doubtless went forward to an eternal house, but his words clung to the old familiar house made with hands as the type of the home of all pilgrims journeying to God.

They suddenly "rest from their labours": that word signifying not merely the toils of service—from which they will not cease, for they rest not day nor night—but the toils and perils of the pilgrim life. The thought of rest fills the hope of the traveller on earth whether in the Old or in the New Testament. From the time when man began to be a pilgrim, driven out of God's presence by sin and bidden to return in mercy, the soul's rest has been earned by wearisome and chequered labours in the way of probation and discipline. How natural is the turn here given to the psalm, and yet how cunning is its art! We do not hear anything about the ending of the way. The mystery of dying and of death is omitted. There is a blank, a pause, an omitted verse: then suddenly "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The pilgrimage, with all its chances and

changes, the final stage of which is filled with horrors, is over for ever. There are to be no more fightings without and fears within. "The wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Not a word however is said of this: the grateful psalm sings only of goodness and mercy following the soul with tender fidelity, like guardian angels; and makes no allusion to the hardships of the way. But the deep suggestion is the "dwelling in the house of the Lord." In this world we visit, as it were occasionally, the earthly house which is its type. But then we shall dwell there and go no more out. Not another step of pilgrimage, not another hour of probationary trial. The Shepherd will then change His name—for His sheep are men, the redeemed by His blood—and, as the Elder Brother, open the doors of His Father's house to receive us and lead us in to the Father's presence: having first fulfilled again His ancient ministry, between heaven and earth, of washing the disciples' feet for the last time from the stains of the way, and putting on them worthy garments instead of their journeying garb. And then, having wiped all tears from their faces, He will lead them in and they shall know the final meaning of their Master's promise: "I will give you rest." "Afterward they shall eat and drink": at a table no longer "spread before their enemies."

It must not be forgotten that the resting-place of the pilgrim is the eternal temple. The Good Shepherd is Himself the Lamb who is the light thereof. The High Priest no longer, He receives His perfected saints into the everlasting sanctuary where they will

worship the Holy Trinity eternally. They enter through those "everlasting gates"—borrowing from the next psalm—which were lifted up when the Lord ascended, and which have never closed again. These are really the "gates of eternity" which shut out time for ever. "I saw no temple," said one: for the Triune God, in whom we shall live and move and have our being, will be the rest and eternal sanctuary of our souls, and the Incarnate Lamb will be the light thereof. This everlasting home in God is the highest aspiration of the Christian pilgrim. The whole world is his hill Mizar, whence he constantly longs for the eternal vision. And if this is our habitual longing, and we regard this life as one never-ceasing rehearsal of our eternal worship, singing our way to the new song, we shall enter and go no more out. Here is the emphasis of the word "for ever": it is not eternal rest, eternal relief from pilgrim toils, but to dwell in the temple of God, to go no more out, that is the highest strain of the Christian hope.

To that everlasting house God's people are thronging from every land. The unnumbered multitude are gathered together one by one: you must not forget the individuality of the psalm. Each saint is conducted by a Guide who leads the individual as if he were the only pilgrim: He, the Good Shepherd, calleth thither each "by name." By name He is calling us this night. Let every one of us listen to His sacred interior call, and renew his consecration to the supreme end of life, and join himself more closely than ever to the company of pilgrims who hear the cheerful New-Testament morning cry: "the

night is far spent, the day is at hand"! But still remember that our psalm is the psalm of the individual pilgrim. "The Lord is my Shepherd"! "Though I walk through the valley, I will fear no evil"! "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Strictly speaking, there is no valley to the pilgrim company as such. But to you and to me as individuals the valley is somewhere in advance, and must be anticipated, must be entered, and must be passed through to the house of God. Let the unity of this triple thought more fully govern our life from this day forward. Let each one of us surrender himself to the Good Shepherd and fear no evil! To Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

JOHN LOMAS.

[The following Address was delivered on occasion of Mr. Lomas' funeral, and is appended here by request.]

ONCE more we have brought our dead into the presence of the Lord, that the dust which is His may be consecrated finally by Him before it is carried to its long home of humiliation. Our Saviour regards these relics as His own. He has invisibly in person met them at the threshold and received them into His house, thus sealing them for Himself before He surrenders them to the grave.

And He who once said, "I am the resurrection and the life," for the eternal consolation of the living, has uttered these words again this day. He stands here between the living and the dead, the Mediator between the two worlds, and makes both one. He says to the survivor now, to this sister also who remains, "Believest thou this? Then sorrow not, but commit thy brother unto Me. He shall rise again at the last day; and meantime he has not really died, and shall never die. Though he were dead, as men call death, he shall live and does live still; for he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." It is not, however, to this one relict that He speaks. We are all survivors to-day. Our venerable friend has left but few of his own immediate kindred to

mourn their bereavement. But we are all his bereaved family, all of us mourners with one common emotion. The household of Methodism follows him as it were to the grave. I now represent the whole body, to which the Redeemer addresses His never-failing consolation.

There is no room, however, for deep mourning here. The sentiment we feel with regard to our departed is indeed sorrowful; for we have sustained a heavy loss, and cannot miss that gracious form and countenance without real sorrow. But our sadness is almost lost in the abundance of consolation and hope. We can find no one element of unmingled grief; no unfinished career to be regretted, no family left desolate, no lamentation over a beclouded life. All in this case is finished and complete, wanting nothing. If the Scriptures are true, and we hear aright the will of God expressed by His Son, then there is but little to lament over in this decease. We have nothing to do but own that the set time has come when our friend and brother—perhaps I should say our father—must needs go up from us. It becomes us to be thankful that he was with us so long.

It is our joy to commit this dust to the grave in the full assurance that he who once inhabited it has finished his Christian course of probation and gone to the presence of his Lord. The spirit that has left this inanimate body has, we believe, accomplished the end of life, been made meet for the inheritance of the saints, and has won Christ for ever. And what a blessed thing is that to say of any one—

old or young, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, eminent or of low degree. What, in comparison of this, all other issues of a long life! What, in comparison of this, all other possible distinctions achieved! To look upon the deserted corpse, and to feel confidence in saying that the spirit that dwelt here has been washed and sanctified and received to paradise with the Redeemer, is to say all that need be said. It leaves no room for lamentation, certainly not for unmingled lamentation.

The late Mr. Lomas early gave his life to God; indeed, the whole of it has been spent under Christian laws, and conditions, and influences. The son of a Methodist preacher, he was very early converted; and the religion of Christ has stamped its impress on all the successive stages of his long career—on his childhood, his youth, his adolescence, his maturity. The history of that career is known by me at least in its outline only, and it can only be generally referred to now and here. We have the record of a blameless course, of good works, and diligent attention to duty, and unspotted fidelity for nearly seventy years of conscious confession of Christianity. We need ask no more. He whom we resign to death and the grave this day hath One that judgeth him. But we may safely anticipate His judgment.

Not, indeed, that we have only the witness of an unspotted course. That is not all. We have sure evidence that the interior life was wrought in him to perfection. It is true that he who is gone did not abound in the expression of personal experience. He was, especially in later life, singularly reticent, as

many most eminent saints have been. He shrank from everything that seemed like self-revelation to others. He has left no such written memorials as might help us to draw a picture of his hidden communion with God. We must, therefore, at least on this occasion, leave the veil undrawn. But, if it were drawn, it would be seen that the religious course of Mr. Lomas was one of deep and uncommon experiences. He knew through life the secrets of a mental and spiritual discipline which not many have been called to pass through. He has experienced what it is to suffer with Christ. He has drunk of a cup sometimes mingled of ingredients bitter to the taste. The sword that pierced his Master has pierced His servant also. None but those who were most entirely intimate with Mr. Lomas knew of these things. And they knew only in part how much interior pressure, and struggle, and agony his soul has endured in its gradual approximation to the image of the Lord. Suffice that he also was made perfect through suffering; the essential interior discipline of a true Christian has been passed through, and the calm and peaceful corpse in our midst is not more calm and peaceful, we steadfastly believe, than the spirit which has gone through all its stages of joy and sorrow, of light and darkness, of heights and depths, of elevations and depressions, and won the victory at last. Let us glorify God in Him, and learn a lesson for ourselves.

We have nothing but joy in the retrospect of his ministerial career. John Lomas, for I must give him his lifelong name, was, as it were, a predestined theo-

logian and preacher, called almost from the womb to one high service.

His faculties and preparation for this vocation were such as meet in their noble combination in only few men. His richly-endowed and finely-proportioned intellect was, one might almost say, eminently theological. He had a natural reverence for things supernatural, and this was in due time sanctified into an intense awe of the high and deep mysteries of the faith with which his ministry was always familiar. His mind was large and strong, and yet exquisitely delicate in its movements. It was an organ capable at once of the most vigorous and of the most subtle functions; and it was trained to a remarkable analytical skill. He was a deep thinker, a most logical reasoner; his imagination was more grand, and his fancy, the humble minister of his imagination, more rich than falls to the lot of most profound thinkers and reasoners. He studied theology, especially biblical theology, with much success. As a preacher, he concentrated his natural and acquired abilities on one object for nearly sixty years of all but continuous ministry. He expounded the Scriptures as perhaps none can expound them but those who are trained by learning to deep familiarity with the letter, and are imbued by the Holy Ghost with its spirit. He had a rare ability to bring out the hidden subtilties and graces of his text, as multitudes remember to their great joy; and his beautiful English, moulded by fervent study of the classics and the discipline of a very pure taste in composition, was a vehicle worthy of his high

thoughts. The result was that for many years he was an almost unrivalled preacher. To me and to many of his younger brethren this is a tradition. We have known the preacher since he ripened into a rich expositor, calmly delivering his gracious and most luminous meditations. None of us who have heard these later discourses can ever forget them. Not a sermon but contained some sentences that linger and will linger in the memory always. There are, however, those still living who can recall the time when Mr. Lomas was as vehement, fervent, and enthusiastic as he was afterwards calm and contemplative. And very many—literally very many—survive who cannot measure in words their debt to him.

What made him a great preacher made him also a good teacher of theology. For several years he thus served his generation. He did much to impress upon a considerable number of students the claims of systematic or dogmatic divinity in opposition to the latitudinarian characterless negation of belief that has been, and is, creeping in among us. Mr. Lomas was an able teacher of the methods of defending Christianity; and all the more so because he knew how to doubt, and how to sanctify doubt, was tolerant of honest difficulties, and felt and exemplified beyond most men the importance of a suspended opinion in matters where God has not spoken.

If there is anything to regret in this long life, it is, that the press will give permanence to so little of its intellectual toil. What is in print is so valuable that we mourn to think how few are likely to be Mr.

Lomas's literary remains. He wrote on the tablets of his mind with exquisite skill and perfect finish a system of theology and many most noble sermons. It would be grievous to think that so much has passed away with him. Perhaps also it would be premature to say so.

There is no need of further enlargement. It remains only before we go further to bless God for the remembrance of this complete and rounded career. How often have we to enshrine in our memory names of those who were called away while in the morning or noontide of probation; musing, whenever we think of them, of what they might have been. Our honoured friend has fulfilled the Saviour's own sketch of a finished life: the long day spent, according to His own figure, in ploughing and feeding cattle, the waiting for a few evening hours behind the Master, until He gives the signal of rest, and refreshment, and reward.

How shall we all treasure up the memory of this complete life—a life that has done all who came within its sphere good and not evil for nearly two generations! How peculiarly pleasant will be all our associations with the remembrance of this most honoured man. We shall respect his public career as that of one born to impress his age and dignify high positions. But we shall all most affectionately remember also the sweet character of his private life: the infantine playfulness, the irresistible charm of his simplicity, the graceful humour that gleamed, or sparkled, or flashed in familiar conversation with indescribable grace; the wide knowledge of men

and things ; those fruits of a large reading (for which it was hard to account, considering all things) that made his company as profitable as fascinating. All who knew him well will give his memory a place unshared while they live.

But his memory is no private inheritance. It belongs to his community and the Church of God. Among the Methodist people at least there will be no name sent down to posterity which will carry with it more associations of combined reverence, admiration, and love, than that of John Lomas !

IV.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE KINGDOM OF PATIENCE.

[Preached in the Centenary Hall, on Thursday Morning, April 25th, 1878,
and published at the request of the Committee of the Wesleyan Methodist
Missionary Society.]

*"I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and
in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."—REV. i. 9.*

THRICE in these introductory words does St. John mention his own name, which he had never mentioned before, and with all the tokens of farewell solemnity. The first time he speaks as the servant of Christ, honoured to be the prophet of the great apocalyptic visions. The second time it is as the surviving apostle, with his formal benediction to the seven churches of Asia. Now at last he speaks as a man: as John, the brother and companion of the universal fellowship of the kingdom of Christ's tribulation and patience. Here he descends, as it were, from his high apostolic prerogative to the level of the common brotherhood, and sends out his greeting to the Church of all future ages. Let us receive his salutation this day as addressed to ourselves; and, by the help of the Holy Ghost, who speaks to us through him, consider his testimony as reminding us of our individual relationship to the united confederacy of the kingdom which has its ground in Jesus, its sphere

in the visible Church, its spread in the work of tribulation, its development in the test of patience, and its consummation at the coming of the Lord: the keynote being the personal relation of every "I" to this glorious company.

I. The ultimate basis of our fellowship we find where we find everything, "in Jesus": for such is the literal phrase of our text. But it is hard to say here whether the individual or the community comes first. Both are in Jesus: "the Head of every man is Christ," and "He is the Head of the body."

Union with the Lord—personal union—is the precious secret and deep foundation of all our fellowship. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." The Spirit common to Him and to His people makes them partakers of Christ, and of all His interests; even as Christ becomes a partaker with us and all that is ours. The Christian is no longer his own; he has come out of himself; he has a new life, breathes in a new world, the sun and the air and the nourishment and the life and the end of which is the Lord. He is a man still, but a man in Christ. And, thus entering personally into Jesus, he enters into a kingdom which is in Jesus. There is indeed an interior kingdom set up in his soul; and the labour of his life is to bring every thought of his mind, and every feeling of his heart, and every energy of his will "into captivity to the obedience of Christ": that He may reign within "until all enemies are under His feet." But this is not referred to here. The believer is received into a mystical kingdom, where there is one Lord and His name one, where all are subjects and yet all are kings. "He

hath made us a kingdom." In this kingdom all is spiritual; and all is invisible. In it there are no orders of ministry; for all its living subjects are members in particular of one mystical corporate fellowship, which is the organic body of the Spirit of Christ. By this holy fellowship of saints our Lord carries on His work in the world. It is His fulness, itself expanding into larger fulness from age to age, until through it He will fill all things. In this kingdom the distinctions of human denominations are not recognised. There is no name known but His. It is itself the kingdom which it is spreading everywhere. It shall not fail nor be discouraged; it shall never be superseded on earth; but by it every purpose of the Redeemer shall be accomplished.

St. John greets you, brethren, as brethren in this company in Jesus. And I challenge you, in virtue of your "gathering together in Him," and by this most interior bond of our fellowship, to offer Him afresh this day your pledges of loyalty. Let us renew our sacramental oath in His presence: at the feet of that higher than the mountain in Galilee, where He still says, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth!"

II. But the Lord before Whose presence we here bow down is not in heaven but on earth. It is very remarkable that the last exhibition of His risen Person by the Redeemer was in the midst of the visible church, with its ministry and service, as the sphere of the extension of His kingdom and the fellowship of His servants. He is not seen at the right hand of God as by Stephen; nor armed with the

glory of heaven as by Saul; nor amidst the unutterable mysteries of Paradise as by Paul. His presence is in the Church of earth: His glory and ornaments and symbolic attributes are all taken from the lower sanctuary. His right hand is strong with the power of a human-angel ministry. The candlesticks that receive their light from Him reflect on Him their glory. And it is to the Churches represented by these candlesticks that the Apostle cries: "I John your brother and companion." Hence the fellowship of Christ's kingdom has its sphere in the visible Church or Churches established in the world: the Churches, for they are seven; the Church, for seven is, as we see by the Seven Spirits, the symbol of unity in diversity. All true Churches are one in the unity of this common object: the kingdom of Jesus.

The seven Churches signify the various communities, fellowship, connections, organisations which it is the will of the Spirit to use for the bringing in of the one perfect reign. The kingdom is one, nor does the Scripture throughout all its variations of phrase speak of more than one: the kingdom of God, of heaven, of Christ, and of God and His Christ; but never the kingdom in Asia, or Ephesus, or Smyrna, or Rome. This sevenfold testimony to the Churches seems to be an announcement at the very beginning that it was the design of the Holy Ghost to use the instrumentality of fellowships distinct from each other for the furtherance of one common end. Every Church was intended to be a centre to the district around, and at the same time to send forth its agents to form new centres, until these multiplied spheres shall blend

into one vast circumference, and the whole world be translated or transformed into the kingdom of Christ. But these visible communities shall not have gone their several way, and accomplished their several tasks, one by one, or two and two, or however they may co-operate, until the Lord Himself shall come to exchange all earthly forms of churchly life for the one eternal and heavenly kingdom.

But the seven are one, and this is the secret of their unity : that the King is in the midst by His Spirit, controlling all their agencies to this great end. There has been indeed a gigantic conspiracy to bind the Churches into one under a common human head, or vicar of the Supreme. There is nothing more plain, either in Scripture or in history, than that this is a delusion. The only visible head the Churches ever had was perhaps John himself while he remained the solitary surviving apostle : the first and last and only pontiff. But how would he, like his brother Peter, have spurned such an ascription as this ! "See thou do it not." He points us to that Dread Form before whose presence he fell as dead. It is He and He alone who is in the midst of the Churches, the centre and the secret and the glory of their unity. Of their unity both in worship and in service : for He Whom John has drawn for us in His Divine-human Person was clothed both in priestly and in regal garments. He is the one sovereign High Priest, by the token of His vesture ; but we know the name written upon it, "the King of kings and Lord of lords." In that is our bond of unity.

The history of the Churches bears witness to the

truth of all this. While they have been faithful to this original law they have prospered; when they have dishonoured it they have been lightly esteemed. Go back to the first annals of Christianity. Beginning at Jerusalem, the testimony of Jesus was to be spread to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Lord's command was obeyed so far as Samaria; but from Jerusalem His gospel went no further than Judæa. At length the impatient Spirit made Antioch the new centre; and new apostles were sent to carry the tidings to the way of the Gentiles. And what became of Jerusalem? Was it not all but lost to the unity of the kingdom? A generation had passed when these seven Churches were addressed: we find that they also had begun to decline from their first love, and that their candlesticks were fast growing dim, some of them to extinction. I cannot trace this truth through the mingled history of Christendom. But it may be safely said that no Church has kept its glory which lost its zeal for the kingdom. Even degenerate Churches have been preserved alive because of a certain measure of fidelity in this respect. But none that have forgotten the one supreme dominion of Christ have been worthy of His name.

It is our happiness to live in days when the grand idea of the kingdom reasserts its claims; not against the individual Churches, but as the consummation of their existence, and the end of their organisations. Nothing has more gloriously marked our century than the revival of the law that every Christian community must take its place as a squadron in the great

army for the crusade upon the world. We as a people have had our full share of the influence of this new principle: not indeed a new one, rather the old one which we had from the beginning, but had not enough remembered. Our highest value, during a whole century, has been our fidelity to the Catholic kingdom. How much our origin and rise and establishment had to do with the revival of this law, it is not for me to say: God will not forget it. Provoking others, and by others provoked, we, in all our branches, confess that we exist for something higher than our own polity. Our candlesticks are set on the hills of the earth. We have been stars in the Right Hand of Jesus in every part of the world. In comparison of this we think lightly of a perfect interior organisation. We are content to be disowned by many ecclesiastical theorists, and to be severely criticised by explorers of Christian archæology. We own that we exist for the kingdom that cannot be moved and is beyond all censure; and appeal to Cæsar.

But we have to do with the "I John": the individual brother in this general brotherhood. The most eminent Christian then living was only a unit in the vast aggregate.

Hence, every servant of the kingdom must belong to some Christian Church or fellowship. The word of God knows of no irregular, unattached, desultory enthusiasts for the universal cause who are absolved from the yoke of society obligation. The "brother in Jesus" must be a "companion" in the Church. Of course, there may be instances of solitary workers,

carrying the gospel in their own persons, but only as having the germ in them of a future organisation. Such was the Ethiopian; and the beginnings of the Gospel have had them everywhere. But these only prove the rule. There lives not a perfect labourer for Christ whose name is not written in the roll of one of the seven Churches: of whom it may not be said, as of Epaphras and the Colossians, "he is one of you."

But this brotherhood does not imply equality. He whose "I John" we hear was the first Christian that ever called Jesus Lord, survived all who had known Him in the flesh, and had an unapproachable place in the personal and official fellowship of the Master. He, like the other prophets and apostles, and martyrs and confessors, had a dignity reserved of the Father for them for whom it was prepared. There is a diversity of gifts; a descending or ascending gradation of name and place among the principalities and powers of the Christian fellowship. Equality must be asserted, but equality with a difference. It was the humblest of all, "the less than the least," who said: "Are all apostles?" This "I John," this great personality, is more than your I or mine. But we all stand in our lot, now as at the end of the days; and each has his appointed place in the scale. Let every one think of himself soberly according to his measure of faith and proportion of gifts. Our dignity is our humility, our humility is our dignity. On this we may for a moment profitably dwell.

The greatest in the kingdom is he that ministers most humbly. The spirit of our individual service

must be an everpresent consciousness of our utter insignificance and personal nothingness. "Without Me—in yourselves—ye can do, ye are, nothing." "What am I, and what my father's house"—what in myself and what in my original—cried one of old when he heard of the honour that God would put upon him. Great as was and is the evangelist whose name is in all the Churches, how does he dwindle into nothing and less than nothing in the presence of the Holy Form of his Master, before whom he falls as one dead in the death of self. How thin and slight his voice amidst these vast harmonies of heaven and earth! What is any mortal man, what is any creature, in relation to this stupendous and past all human estimate glorious cause! In the presence of the Sun here shining in His strength the highest agent ever employed is only a mote in His beams.

Our humility is our dignity also. There is a tone of exultation, if not of exaltation, in the apostle's language. Every man who has this kingdom in his heart and in his thoughts is in the Divine estimate great. The servant in this kingdom is himself a king. "He that serveth Me, him will My Father honour." The secret of the right sentiment is the perfect combination of humility and dignity: humility, becoming the creature of a moment used in a work which makes heaven and earth, time and eternity, one; dignity, such as becometh the companion of the King himself, admitted to His counsels and to His heart, and to be a co-assessor on His throne. In ourselves less than the least, in Him we are higher than the highest. When St. Paul, in the vision which was

more than vision, was rapt into the third heavens, it was, he rejoices to say, as a "man in Christ": only a man, his apostleship is left below, but as a "man in Christ": an honour which neither earth nor heaven could either give or take away. This good degree we may all purchase. Like John we must die or be as dead to self: never so full of life as then.

III. But this combination leads us to the tribulation of the kingdom which is its leading character in the present world.

Every one of us is a companion in the service of the kingdom of the Cross. Such it is now, whatever its coming glories may be. It was founded amidst infinite suffering. The prince of this world was cast out, not by the majesty of the Lord of glory, but by a sacrificial death which gave the Saviour a judicial right to the world which was otherwise His own. Amidst the deep darkness and horror of the passion—the hour and power of evil—redemption was accomplished; but the kingdom was only then begun. And this its foundation in the uttermost self-abasement has given it a memorial for ever: it is the kingdom of the Tribulation of Jesus. Its history has been in strict keeping. He left it to His apostles as men who must "drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism" of fire, filling up the measure of the affliction of Christ. It has had no other lot in the world. Its advances have been made in the night seasons of persecution and sorrow: its decline has been only in the days which knew no tribulation. So will it be to the end. The tribulation of those days to come will be such as the like has not been seen from

the foundation of the world. Thus our Lord Himself has told us that as it began it will end, and be rounded by tribulation.

The service of this kingdom has for its fundamental law personal self-sacrifice: no law was more constantly, none more sternly, none more affectingly, enforced by our Lord than this. I need only appeal to the lesson He gave when He approached the last conflict. He saw His own glorification in the coming cross; beheld the prince of this world cast out, and the whole world drawn to Himself as lifted from the earth; and said: "Except a corn of wheat die it abideth alone! He that hateth and loseth His life shall save it! If any man serve Me let Him follow Me in the tribulation of death to self, and to all things temporal for My sake and My kingdom's." This has its application to the care of our own souls; our own kingdom in the kingdom. We serve the cause without by a principle of self-sacrifice which we learn within. Only by much tribulation do we enter the kingdom of God: only by much tribulation does it enter into us. We must know the interior fellowship of Christ's sufferings and be made conformable to His death, if we would bear His cross in the contest with the world. Let us never forget this profound secret of all our warfare: crucifixion with Christ in this inner Calvary. Then shall we approve ourselves companions in the great tribulation without: suffering ourselves when called upon, and companions in sympathy with all who thus suffer.

We shall take our own share in the hardships of

the cause: each of us, like St. Paul, "filling up in ourselves what is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body the Church." Of course the demands upon us vary. Some there are who bear their testimony amidst tranquil lives and universal respect; others have to seal it with the surrender of all or with their blood. Some have to toil hard with their souls exceeding sorrowful even unto death; others are called to labour rather vicariously with their substance and their prayers. But, whatever the vocation be, the spirit of self-sacrifice in the Christian must always be ready. He that loves self, and anything that is his, more than the kingdom, is not worthy of it or of Christ its Head. He must by his oath of fidelity make the kingdom his supreme object. Woe to the Christian who is at ease in Zion, whilst the armies of the Lord are in the thick of the conflict without him! Ask yourselves then what is the measure in which you are "pressed in spirit" by the demands of this all-exacting cause.

But we are companions in the great tribulation by the spirit of intense sympathy with all its toils and sorrows. Souls touched with this most precious affection become identified with all its sufferers: from the Supreme, Who may always say, "Of whom I am chief"; through the long army of martyrs, who have literally borne the cross in all but its expiation; and the confessors, who were ready with the last sacrifice that was not demanded, down to the indistinguishable multitude of those who have endured persecution, and died in life or lived in death for the testimony of Jesus. This may seem enthusiastic; it may be

smiled at as mystical or sentimental: terms too freely lavished. But it is profoundly true. The faithful servant of the kingdom feels that he inherits the sufferings of all the past by sympathy. That sympathy extends to all who now labour and suffer. "Who is afflicted in this cause and I mourn not"? He feels himself burdened, like St. Paul, with the care of all the churches. The afflictions that are accomplished in his brethren throughout the world are his also: in all their afflictions he is afflicted. This he learns from his Lord; and this is the secret of his companionship.

IV. "Tribulation worketh patience," is a principle of personal religion which we may carry into our relation to the great fellowship. The kingdom is one of slow development; and all who serve it must wait in patience, which is, like charity, one of its royal laws.

We have entered into the companionship of a kingdom which in its past historical processes has been the slow evolution of a mystery. Our Lord was King in Paradise. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" was in a sense the King crowned from its foundation. He was the Person signified in that timeless decree, "I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." But with what patience did the ages wait for Him! "Thy King cometh" was the ancient cry; but the prophets searched in vain what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify. "How long, O Lord, faithful and true?" was their appeal, in the former world as well as in Paradise. At length He came, and it

seemed as if with Him the kingdom would be set up in all its glory; as if patience had had its perfect work, and was released from its long expectation. And so in one sense it was. But the hope long deferred began again in another form only. Having laid its foundations He went again, wonderful to say, to "receive a kingdom and to return." The apostles like the prophets had to search what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them also did signify. They had to reconcile the fact that "the mystery hid from ages and generations" was revealed with the fact that they were entering on another long term of patient endurance. It might have been expected that with the ascension of Christ the law of the kingdom would have changed, and that it would no longer be bound up with human contingencies and fluctuations: that it would at length come "with observation." But our Lord precluded any such hope, and His servants gradually understood Him. Most of His kingdom-parables declared that it must come as the issue of a various contest with evil. The utmost He said was, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!" Only "not prevail against it": the gates of hell—the great deep of final extinction, death, Hades,—should not engulf it. And what a commentary on His words has the whole history of Christianity been! The work of faith in tribulation, the labour of love in self-renunciation, the patience of waiting hope! The Apocalypse was written to give warning of this, to arm the Church with patience. But it was not given even to the apostle-prophets to know how much was involved: they hardly knew,

could hardly have borne to know, that other millennia of patience were to come.

But we have to do with the patience of the present. It behoves us to cherish the spirit of a silent adoring submission and awe in the presence of the Supreme Disposer who by the gospel of His kingdom is slowly, surely, and, with infinite wisdom of what men call patience, working out His plans. When Daniel heard that the vision must be shut up, for it was to be for many days, "he fainted and was sick." St. Paul stood as one astonished before the mystery of God's developing counsel; but he simply threw himself where all must find refuge, in the "unsearchable judgments and the ways past finding out." The spirit of human curiosity, restless and impatient, must faint and sicken and die that a healthy and tranquil reliance on the "God of patience" may live and grow in us. This is the lesson we must learn, or our peace is gone! It is the lesson taught throughout the Bible: which angels gave the patriarchs, which psalmists set to music, which prophets transmitted to apostles, and the apostles gave to us: the patience of the kingdom of God and His Christ.

More particularly, we must learn to be patient with our own work and with ourselves. We must submit to the Divine methods when they cross our own. The Lord said to His apostles and to us: "I call you not servants. All things I have made known to you; and a servant knoweth not as ye know what his Lord doeth." Yet they were kept much in the dark, and their plans were often baffled. God often uses means we marvel at, and disappoints schemes on

which we built high expectation. "Should it be according to thy mind?" We must carry to the Lord the tale of our failures, disappointments, discouragements, and vexations; and ever remember His own calm word: "In your patience possess ye your souls!"

Let us learn a lesson from that strangest perversion of our principle which the Pantheism of our day presents. Men persuade themselves to accept a law of silent, ceaseless evolution ruling in the economy of things, to which "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." See how patiently they wait upon the slow travail of millenniums and cycles of ages; watching the disappointments of nature as feeble types perish, and allowing vast periods of time for every new and better feature to be stamped on the ascending creature. Their language is "thou law"—not "Thou Lord"—"in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of thine hands." I say, let us learn to confirm our faith by their irreverent unbelief. While they abase their minds before a dread irrational necessity or force, and patiently wait upon it, let us humble our minds before the eternal majesty of wisdom in "the patience of the saints."

But our apocalyptic patience has to do with the future: it is the "waiting for the end."

We must labour in the patience of uncertainty. "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons," neither the length of the processes nor the critical periods which end them. It is for us to bring them about, not to know them beforehand; they are, so

far as our duty goes, bound up with the freewill of man and its laws. It is our patience to submit not to know the epochs of the future until they are unrolled. Meanwhile, a series of perspective prophecies is stretched before us for our encouragement in waiting: few, else would the patience of the kingdom cease; but some, lest it degenerate into despondency. The fulness of the Gentiles must be brought in; the Jews as a people must rise from the dead, as it were in a true first resurrection; an awful opposite of Christ—one like unto the son of Satan, yet a “man of sin”—must appear and delude the world. “Then cometh the end.” But when? Both heaven and earth echo the question which neither answers. “Here is the patience of the saints”! is the reply of the Apocalypse.

And we must labour in the patience which expects the kingdom as the consummation of its present agencies. There is a patience abroad which is most impatient. It reads a mysterious chapter of this book as predicting that the Lord would come Himself, bind Satan, already bound, for a thousand years, and accomplish in His own person what the weakness of His gospel could not do. The Brethren who hold this notion are unsatisfied with the present economy, and put their own impatience into the mind of the gentle Lord. They think that He has been only experimenting with the “everlasting gospel”; that it is a disappointment to Him; that He Himself knows what He will do. They read “Lo I am with you UNTO the end of the world,” into, “Lo I will be with you AT the end of the world.” But our patience—

the patience of the saints—believes that the coming of the Lord will be the issue of a great success, not the rectification of a great failure. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." And why should we? Then let us, brethren and companions, renew our faith in the very work we are carrying on. Our patience must endear to us the old system with all its defects. We have been with it in its tribulation; let us not desert it. Let us avoid the error of those who misread the "patience of Christ" into the "patient waiting for Christ." They are "brethren" like St. John, but not like him "companions." They slight the fellowship of the labouring churches, spend all their pains upon interior preparation for Him who is "at hand," and leave the groaning creation outside to the mercies of the coming Christ. The Lord is at hand; but we must be found labouring as well as watching.

V. The glorious consummation, brethren, will surely come. The bright prospect precedes our text and sheds its glory on it. "Behold He cometh," was the inspiring assurance in the strength of which the last apostle greeted the church: "I, John, your brother and companion in this hope!" Then will the kingdom be revealed without its ancient attributes of tribulation and patience.

"If we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him:" as it is now, so will it be then. The kingdom is in Jesus, hid with Christ in God: it shall be revealed with Him in glory. He, like us, is waiting for the end. Meanwhile, in all our afflictions He is by sympathy with us afflicted too. Though He is high

above all indignity, yet on earth He still wears "the crown of thorns": seems still to wield the reed instead of the sceptre; and submits to hear "Hail, King of the Jews"! "King of Hebrew fanatics, King of visionaries!" But this will then cease for ever. When tribulation has had its perfect work, He will by one last triumphant manifestation of His power reduce to silence all opposition, and end the labours and sorrows of His kingdom to begin it again in an eternal reign of peace. Then shall His own word be finally fulfilled to us all: "Ye have been with me in My temptation; I appoint unto you a kingdom.

Then patience, having had its perfect work, shall have its perfect reward. That beautiful grace, which was glorified equally with love on the cross, will vanish: unless indeed we for ever witness its triumphs in other worlds than ours. The long waiting of the ages and generations of time, the long waiting of Paradise for the second opening of the everlasting doors, will be ended. And the eternal secret of the mystery hid in Christ from the foundation of the world, and only partially made manifest in time, shall be laid bare for the adoration and joy of all eternity.

All the companions of this tribulation and patience shall share in the great release. They shall share as an eternal fellowship. The kingdom will be the whole company of the redeemed gathered and perfected into one. The last revelation of this book makes that company "the Bride" to note the unity, the perfect union with Christ, and the everlasting

bond of love between His people and Himself: the Bride standing beside the King's Son, in better than gold of Ophir; not standing now, but sitting with Him in eternal rest and joy. Thus does the kingdom seem to disappear. Like all the separate organisations and churches, it will itself be glorified into an eternal mystical unity with Christ.

But the old idea of the kingdom returns for the individual. Every one of us will be a brother beloved and a companion still in the rewards and services to be rewarded for ever of the everlasting kingdom. The last recorded word of our Lord to any servant in particular was: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with Me in My kingdom!" Let us take this to our hearts. Not one will be forgotten. The poor malefactor, hanging on his cross, though he entered the kingdom without serving in it, gives us all a personal prayer: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." We utter the prayer under very different circumstances, and it will be answered to each of us, though in a different sense. In what sense Daniel long ago told us: the promise that he still waits for is ours also: "thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days!" The Lord of the great house knoweth every one that is His; and His memory is as unfailing as His love. And with His own words we sum up and close all: words spoken with express reference to the service and reward of His kingdom: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" To Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

THE THREEFOLD MANIFESTATION OF THE REDEEMER.

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“ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us : Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others ; For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world : but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment : So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.—HEB. ix. 24—28.

In this paragraph we have the entire history of the atoning work of Christ connected with the three great historical stages of the Redeemer's manifestation. Taking them in their natural order, we begin with His appearing on earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ; then we follow Him into the heavens where He appears in the presence of God for us ; then we are called to anticipate His final appearing without sin to consummate the entire economy of redemption.

It is observable, indeed, that the text makes emphatic only two appearances, and those as taking place upon earth : the first at the figurative end of the world, as the sphere of progressive dispensation ; the second at the literal end of the world, when all dis-

pensations of grace have ceased. The middle appearance, that of the ascension, is common to both; and from it the two others are seen in opposite perspective. It therefore takes the lead in the apostle's great review. We are required to ascend this hill of the Lord with Him, and from it to survey the past and the future of the atonement. In other words, the appearance of the Lord in the presence of God is the consummation of His descent to earth for sin, and the preparation for His return from heaven without sin. But it will be more simple if we take the successive appearances in the historical order.

I. The Redeemer's first appearance in the world was His incarnation in the fulness of time as a member of the human race, to endure the death appointed to sinners, and to obtain for us eternal redemption.

It is obvious that the atoning design of this appearance of the Son is alone referred to. Though the word is the same which elsewhere signifies that "God was manifest in the flesh," it is not the Divine aspect of the incarnation that is made prominent, but the human. He did not appear as God; His appearance was that of man. He clothed Himself in the infirmities of our human estate, became a member of our dying generations, and was Himself, in a sense more absolute than may be said of any other, "appointed once to die." That was His special vocation, at once predestined and voluntary: He was sent that He might be "offered to bear the sins of many;" but He also came freely, that He might "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Let us, before we go further, impress it on our minds that the first

appearance of our Lord on earth and in time was one of deep humility. He "made Himself of no reputation," that he might humble Himself to death. That was the stamp and character of His fleeting manifestation among the children of men. He was a Sojourner with us for a night: a night-season of profound darkness, which has given us our eternal day.

Yet the text does not expressly say that Christ was manifested that He might undergo our common lot and "die once." That penalty laid upon the race signifies a far more dire calamity than death. Our Lord appeared that He might "bear the sins of many." He did not simply suffer death, but He was offered as the victim on Whom the sins of mankind met, according to that word of the prophet which is here remembered: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." We are appointed to die; our Redeemer was appointed to bear the penalty of our sins, which has a meaning in it much deeper than the death which we all must encounter and endure. He came to bear the consequences of man's transgression, and to offer for the human race an atonement which should satisfy both the justice and the love of God. Before He went back again into the holiest of the eternal temple it was needful that He should in the outer court of justice be "made sin for us Who knew no sin." This was the awful *MUST* that rested upon the incarnate Son from the moment of His first appearance until He went back again whence he came. It was this that made Him the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." This was the secret that "marred His countenance" and "broke

His heart." Whatever glorious displays of the eternal Son we see and rejoice in throughout the gospels, this was the underlying mystery that must never be forgotten. In every age there has been too much danger of forgetting this. It was so in the beginning. When He first declared the necessity of His atoning sorrows to His disciples, Simon Peter cried, in strong revulsion, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," not knowing what he said. "Pity Thyself! spare Thyself!" was what he literally exclaimed; and his language is still echoed by too many. But, blessed be God, as His Father "spared" not His own Son, but delivered Him for us all, so the Son spared not Himself. We must not in our superfluous compassion turn away from our Saviour's atoning sorrows. Alas! that the shame which He endured should be unendurable to our theology. Blessed are those who, like St. Paul, cry, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The attainment of His sacred purpose is marked in the words which tell us that He "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." We feel that what the Saviour undertook He has accomplished. "For this purpose," says St. John long afterwards, "was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." And we cannot do justice to such words unless we understand them to signify that our Lord, during His brief revelation in the flesh and before He left it again, in some sense abolished the doom of the race. His being offered to bear the sins of many was the process or the

means; the doing away with sin was the result. When He cried "It is finished," and the end of His brief manifestation in the flesh was reached, that issue of all was obtained: sin no longer exists as an eternal wall of partition between God and the world. We know, alas! that it still exists as a fact; and awful has been its history since "Christ put away sin." But He has made a provision for its removal which is available for every member of the human race. He has obtained eternal redemption for all, that we may obtain it one by one. However we regard the sinfulness of sin, the atonement meets it at every point, and makes it nothing. If it is the condemning sentence of the law, He endured it for us, and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." If it is a debt that man can never pay, He has laid down the price of His most precious blood, that goodly price which would ransom a universe of guilty worlds. If it is a deadly power of evil that holds the soul in captivity, He has obtained the Spirit of a full release. If it is alienation from God, He is Himself the Mediator in Whom and through Whom we may be one by one brought nigh and become "one Spirit" with the Lord eternally. If it is interior pollution, He has obtained the virtue of an effectual cleansing which shall pursue the infection through all the avenues of our nature and expel every trace that it had ever been there. Our Lord, Who appeared among us for a few short years, did not depart again until He had by His blessed work and suffering made provision for the eternal annihilation of human

iniquity. He hath "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

But this appearance was "in the end of the world," which points to the mystery of a long delay in the manifestation of the redeeming purpose and of Him who accomplished it. During the earlier ages of the world His coming was foreshadowed by symbols and types; in the fulness of time He displaced all these by appearing Himself. But we must not understand that the sin of the race was not provided for by atonement until its history was coming to a close. Our text introduces the whole economy of typical sacrifice—the earthly sanctuary, the mortal and sinful high priest, the alien blood, the ineffectual and therefore ever-repeated expiations—to show that they are all abolished because they were only moving shadows of a great and steadfast Reality the virtue of which encompasses and pervades all time. Christ appeared, but only as a Redeemer from the beginning Who had not as yet been manifested. He might have become incarnate at the gate of Paradise, within Paradise itself; for though manifest in these last times," He was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world," and indeed "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." These sublime oracles must unite their voices. According to the one—that is ours—the atonement for sin might seem to wind up its awful history; according to the other a sacrifice was accepted for it by anticipation before it began its duration. Their consistency is found in the blessed truth that they make the grace of propitiation fill all time: the one doctrine sends the stream of its virtue

upward and backward to meet the beginning of condemnation; the other makes it flow down through all ages to the last transgression of the race. But the streams meet, and the swelling tide makes glad the city of God in every dispensation; on its abounding waters the ark of God's mercy and of our peace rests secure. It is the one atonement in virtue of which all sinners of every nation and of every age, who have been or ever will be saved, are accepted.

II. All this implies that second appearance which carries our thoughts beyond this visible sphere into heaven itself: the ascension entrance into the presence of God was the glorious end and consummation of the Redeemer's atoning appearance on earth.

There is a certain change in the word now employed by the writer that suggests a boundless difference between the humbled and the exalted estate of our Lord Himself. He appears boldly and gloriously before God. His manifestation in time was throughout marked not only by self-abasement, but also by visitation from above. He was the "Man of sorrows;" and His Father "put Him to grief." In a sense we never can understand, He Who "came forth from God" was sent out of the Divine Presence as the Representative of our sin. Although as the Eternal Son He never was nor ever could be separated from His Father, yet as the Saviour of mankind He was "made a curse for us," and did not obtain our eternal redemption until He had tasted the sharp experience that wrung from Him the exceeding bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—only here, "My God"! Our reverence will not suffer us to think

out, much less to utter, the conclusions of our theology; but we must not doubt that in the mystery of the atonement "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," and He was for one infinite moment separated from the Face of God. But now is Christ risen, and ascended back to His Father's bosom. He "appears in the presence of God" again, welcomed with boundless love: "This My Son was dead and is alive again; He was lost and is found." He has returned from the far country whither His love carried Him to seek and to find the lost. It was a prelude of this eternal complacency that glorified Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. But, though He received honour and glory there, He saw in the distance that other mount, and descended again into the valley of humiliation to reach it. He goes up to be glorified eternally. He "appears in the presence of God" to go out no more.

We must not forget, however, that the emphasis rests upon the words "for us." Our Lord is in heaven the accepted propitiation for human sin. He pleads the virtue of His atonement, which is the virtue of His Divine-human Self, as the glorious Antitype of the typical high priest entering the holiest on the day of atonement. That day united, as you know, in type the propitiation on earth and the propitiation in heaven. Hence it was the pre-eminent day of the earthly high priest: at other times he was the representative of the priesthood, and acted by others; then, and then only, he was himself all in all as the type and representative of our Eternal High Priest. Our text, indeed, does not

forget to tell how unlike he was to his Antitype, in that he first made atonement for his own sins; but we need not dwell upon this. It is enough that on that day he made sacrificial atonement for the sins of the entire congregation. He presented two innocent victims before God, each of which bore the sins of the people vicariously. The blood of the one he carried with profound solemnity within the veil into the dreadful symbolical presence of God. Lest, sinful mortal as he was, he should perish before the awful glory of the Divine Holiness, he waved the incense, which signified the virtue of the atonement, around his head; and then, drawing near with trembling, sprinkled the blood seven times before and under the golden mercy seat. This act of propitiation availed for the whole temple and for all its worshippers; and the Holy One of Israel, because of its virtue, accepted His people and still dwelt in their midst. To declare this with double assurance, the other goat was taken; the universal sin was confessed over its head and transferred to it; and, thus laden, it was sent away into a separated land, a far country, a land of forgetfulness, where sin and guilt are remembered no more. But this was not another atonement. The two goats represented one sacrificial idea. The second proclaimed the acceptance of the first. That which was slain typified the Lamb Who "was offered to bear the sins of the many;" that which was sent away typified Him who "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The typical scene has vanished for ever. The abiding Reality is in heaven, where our High Priest, "having found eternal re-

demption " for us, pleads in one continual " Now " in the presence of God the virtue of His sacrifice for all who come to God through Him upon earth.

Here rises before us that great word now in all its majesty, impressing its force on every topic connected with our Saviour's appearance in heaven, and guarding it from every error. It contrasts the agony of the Oblation on Calvary with the triumphant presentation of the sacrifice behind the veil, and declares, in opposition to much false teaching, that the Redeemer began on earth the High-priestly office which He only continues in heaven. Vain is our trust in an intercessory function above which is not based upon an expiatory death below. It tells us that the sacrifice perfected in heaven needs no repetition on earth. The continuation of the sacrificial offering, though an unbloody one, is a return to Judaism which this epistle, as indeed the whole New Testament, absolutely forbids. But chiefly this great word assures us that we live under the Now of the perfected administration of the atonement. The fact that our Representative appears in the presence of God declares that His propitiation is accepted for ever. The passion of earth is sealed, ratified, and established in heaven: it gives the law to all the Divine dealings with men. What the resurrection declares below the ascension confirms above: that our Surety is released, and our debt paid, and our sin cancelled to all eternity. If the ancient high priest had not come out from behind the veil, it would have been a token that he had died, and the people's hopes would have died with him. But the assurance that our

High Priest appeareth without fear, without any safeguard but His own Divine-human perfection, in the presence of God, and that He abideth there, is the token to us that His atonement hath reconciled God and man, and that all men may surely put their trust in Him. He is in heaven the living pledge of the great reconciliation.

But that reconciliation belongs to the whole race of mankind. We must note the emphasis resting upon the words "for us," which define a certain class for whom He intercedes, and the nature of His intercession.

For the world He is a vicarious sacrifice: without our knowledge or concurrence He redeemed our race. But He saves us one by one, and not without our co-operation, for we must "come unto God by Him." It is a great mistake to think that He takes the case of His predestined elect into His own hands absolutely, and holds Himself responsible at all hazards for their final salvation. Interpret the words in the light of the old ceremonial which illustrates the text. The great atonement availed for the people as a whole, but every individual must secure his own part and lot in the matter. Israel as a people was accepted: but there was no atonement for the high-handed sinner in its midst. So our Representative is in the presence of God "for us:" to lead us with an irresistible grace of introduction into the Awful Presence. But we must come for ourselves individually, and use His name while we plead our own cause. He is waiting for you there, with your name ready on His lips. The ancient high priest bore only the names of the

tribes on his heart. Our High Priest remembers each one of us. If you come to Him He will not cast you out; and, if you make His name your plea, by His eternal fidelity to His Son the Father will not cast you out.

For all who are His He receives the heavens. His presence there is the security that they shall be there also. The words of the text on this subject are mysterious, and scarcely can be here made plain. The old worshippers had a right to their place in the temple only because all its courts were "purged with blood." Neither could their God remain with them, nor could they dwell with him, unless the defilement of their sin was thus taken away. "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." The virtue of our Saviour's atoning presence renders it possible that sinners from earth should dwell with God in heaven. In plainer words, our Lord has told us that He is gone "to prepare a place" for us—to take possession of our forfeited place in the presence of God. But this little differs from saying that He is securing our preparation below. He provides all needful grace for the perfect purification of our nature from the conscience of guilt and the consciousness of sin. For this He is in the presence of God: to obtain for us the Holy Spirit in the inexhaustible variety and abundance of His gifts, to rid and deliver us from all that would make us unmeet for the inheritance, to make us "pure in heart" that we may "see God."

III. Then cometh the end in a last appearance. The Redeemer "will appear a second time without sin unto salvation." Here it must be remembered that a long chapter of the Church's expectation is omitted. The millennial history that precedes His advent, the glorious circumstances of His coming, and many wonderful events that derive their glory from it, are all passed by. The atonement is consummated, and that is all: it ends, for He comes without the cross: it is perfected in the salvation of His saints.

The Saviour will appear that second time without sin. But what does this strange fore-announcement mean? We instantly and naturally think of the Redeemer Himself Who, when He came the first time, was reputed a transgressor by man, and expiated human guilt by suffering the death of a malefactor. Sinless, and incapable of sin, He nevertheless came "with sin." He was numbered with the transgressors. We know that His righteousness was vindicated in His resurrection and ascension: in heaven His eternal holiness is adored, and all the universe unites in glorifying the love that once endured the imputation of wrong. But there must be a more full demonstration and acknowledgment. After His death also cometh His judgment: His ascension began it, but the second coming will finally show that He too overcometh when He is judged. He will "be seen" in His transcendent glory: it will be "the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Then will be the final resolution of all doubts as to the mystery of a Sinless Sufferer for sin. The history of the atonement will

end by a last demonstration that One had been "made sin for us Who knew no sin." He will, in a certain sense, have His own justification in the judgment before He judges us.

But that which will be a glorious vindication for Him will be a direful vindication for His enemies: who in fact will be simply and solely the enemies of His cross. "Those Mine enemies," He once said concerning such as rejected His government. But you must remember that the only government of Jesus which men can reject is the government He suffered to obtain. He will lay down His cross, not its glory, but its reproach; and never repeat His atoning passion. It was appointed for Him "once to die;" that "once," which is so precious to the saints throughout this epistle, will be the watchword of eternal woe to all but them. Only ONCE to die: and throughout all the future "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." His people will not need another: to those who are not His another will be impossible. Sin may then cry out for a Saviour; but in vain. Indeed, the apocalyptic description of the terror of the enemies of the Lamb speaks only of their amazed appeal to be rescued from His wrath: using the very words which belonged to the vocabulary of the atonement, "Hide us," cover us, "from the wrath of the Lamb." There is no hope in that cry. "Ye shall seek Me, and ye shall die in your sins:" this He once said, referring not so much to the malignant Jews as to all who finally reject His sacrifice. "After death, the judgment!" Judgment, in the case of those who die in sins, is simply the being found sinners without the

shelter of a propitiation. Separated from God there will be nothing to make reconciliation for them. The Redeemer will come without His cross. There will be no atonement for rejection of the atonement: that is the one unpardonable sin. The very means of reconciliation will turn against the unreconciled: nay, the Reconciler Himself will be unreconciled for ever. How awful is this word which seems to say so little—it is a light thing that Jesus should come without sin—but which really says so much. Now, in the most profound and new meaning of the word, He is “separate from sinners”! As God liveth that will be true. But it is for you, O sinner unpardoned, to see to it that you make the Redeemer yours before He folds His garments from your touch, and “casts out your name from His lips.”

For His saints He will appear unto salvation. This is a somewhat startling application of the old word, which is so constantly connected with our Lord’s first appearance. What is it as to the second? It is no other than the final confirmation of a salvation already imparted. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” but both death and judgment will be abolished to the saints. It is true that the believer dies; but yet “he shall never see death.” It is true “we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ:” but yet we shall “never come into condemnation.” Our Lord will appear, to those who have no other desire in heaven or earth but Himself, not for judgment, but for salvation. They died with Him, and they shall live with Him: they suffered with Him, and they shall

reign with Him. It will be the ratification of a sentence long since uttered: not the resurrection, but the judgment is "past already." It is salvation from judgment, or, if you will, in the judgment. He will come to ratify a perfect deliverance. Observe that the word is, after all its glorious associations, a negative word: salvation from the consequences of sin. It will be the last revelation to the Lord's people of His name of Jesus. Those whom He will bring with Him will be as sinless as Himself: they also will come "without sin unto salvation." The living He will purge before the judicial fires begin. But we cannot be satisfied with this. Though the word means no more, it must include the redemption of the body. St. Paul says, "We look for a Saviour, Who shall change the body of our humiliation and fashion it like unto His glorious body." Here "we are saved by hope." In this life salvation is of the spirit; and that salvation is perfect, save as the spirit is the soul encompassed about by the infirmities of its bodily organ. Many penalties of sin remain untaken away while we live below. In Paradise these are gone, but there remains the widowhood of the disembodied spirit. Not that the salvation is incomplete, but it is perfect only in part. When we receive Jesus, and are made partakers of Him for ever, then will salvation be full, "complete in Him." That is our salvation, the full virtue of the atonement, which is union with God in Christ for ever: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." For what is beyond—if anything is beyond—we must go to the

Apocalypse and other scriptures. But we need go no further. Now, it is enough. The promise gives us Him whom we look for with unutterable longing. The history and mystery of the atonement in us is finished. It began with our release from guilt, it continued in our sanctified expectation on earth, and it gives us Him to Whom we owe our all as the beatific vision of God for ever.

Meanwhile, that is in the future: "Yet a little while He that shall come will come and will not tarry." Still He says, as once, "A little while!" but we do not, like our forefathers, murmur, "We cannot tell what He saith." This text forbids. But do we love His appearing? More than all His gifts Himself? The melody of our hearts responding to that question is the answer that He loves. But let us come back to the now which spans the whole reign of grace. It is the now of every hour and of every moment. To our faith this scene dissolves: only the shadow of things in the heavens. We see Jesus the High Priest in the Holiest, and we are here beholding Him "far off" in His beauty, yet knowing He is also "at hand." To faith there is no longer any veil: this is the Presence of God. Let us come with boldness and wait for the token that our High Priest is remembering us. Let us claim all and each the Priestly benediction which is our portion: the present and the perfect virtue of His finished atonement; and He shall have the doxology, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory for ever." Amen.

VI.

THE STUDY OF JESUS.

[Preached in Edinburgh, in October, 1877, at the ordination of the Rev. Alexander Borrowman, and published by request.]

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."—HEB. iii. 1.

THE Holy Ghost invites us in these words to a specific duty which is our highest privilege, that of applying our earnest, fixed, and profound study to Him who is the Supreme Head and Only Centre of the Christian Faith. The strength of the appeal is in the chosen word "consider," which in its present application is found here alone. It does not exhort us to "look" to Jesus for personal salvation: that, indeed, is included, and we are supposed to be among those who are saved through having beheld the Lamb of God. It does not bid us "behold" the glory of the Lord with the contemplation that transforms; though that also is latent in the word. It does not refer to the "seeing Him as He is," which, being yet to come, is the goal of the vision of faith. But it calls upon us simply to fix our mind's fervent and habitual meditation upon the Person and the work and the administration of one Lord and Master.

Hence the injunction is addressed to us as a fellowship of students called into a heavenly school, under the teaching and guidance of the Divine Spirit. We are "holy brethren," sanctified to this sacred duty by being made "partakers of the heavenly

calling," and are joined in the maintenance of a common Christian "profession." We are shut in from the world amidst the highest mysteries, and must make these our constant study through life, as they will be in another form our study through eternity. Rejoicing in our high vocation, let us consider the lesson we all have to learn. We all, I say; for, though I have to speak more particularly to one who is this day set apart to the holy ministry, and to those who, setting him apart, are thus reminded of their own obligations, the very terms of the text show that all are included who call Jesus Lord by the Holy Ghost. May He shed upon us His light and influence while we obey His command.

I. The Person of Christ is the great miracle and mystery of the universe, enshrined in the Christian Faith; and that is the object which we are invited perpetually to contemplate. The text does not use the word person, nor does it expressly refer to that union of the two natures in one which constitutes the secret of the Redeemer's personality. But we must observe the point in the discussion at which the great sight is disclosed to our view. "Wherefore, holy brethren," signifies the lifting up of a veil from before an august Being who has been already described in His two natures, though their union has not been described but is taken for granted.

The epistle in its opening chapter presents for the consideration of the Christian fellowship the Divine nature of our Lord, and perhaps with a richer accumulation of evidence than we find anywhere else. There we see Jesus, Who by Himself

purged our sins, exhibited as the Brightness of the Divine glory, the express Image of the Person of His Father; we hear Him addressed as God by God Himself; and as the Incarnate, brought into the world, still receiving the homage of angels, who receive the command to worship Him lest they might misconceive the humiliation of the Son. We hear quoted as referring to Him the sublimest description of eternal and independent and necessary existence which the Old Testament contains. He it was who laid the foundation of the earth and created the heavens, weaving with His own hands His own ever-varying vesture of created things, which He folds and lays aside, while He "remaineth the same, and His years shall not fail." In no part of the New Testament, full as it is of tributes to the Divinity of Christ, is His higher nature more manifest or more glorious than here.

Then follows the second chapter, unfolding at all points the human nature of the Redeemer with the same exhaustive comprehensiveness. Nowhere in all the compass of Scripture is His assumption of our flesh more amply treated. The reality of His manhood, the profound reason for His participation of it, the glorious triumphs He wrought in the body of His humiliation, the dignity to which He has raised the instrument by which He accomplished such wonders, are nowhere so profoundly and so tenderly explored. In the first chapter our Lord counts it not robbery to be equal with God; in the second He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Each aspect of His wonderful personality is kept distinct from the other; but as the

second finishes we feel prepared for the union of the two, and almost expect a third paragraph to dilate upon that union. No such paragraph, however, is found. The unsearchable secret is indeed behind the veil. But neither here nor anywhere else does the finger of inspiration lift that veil to enable us to penetrate that eternal secret.

We are invited to consider only the result: the two natures united in one wonderful Person who stands before us the confessed "Mystery of godliness," the Incarnate Son of God. There is no further allusion to the unfathomable depth of this mystery. Suddenly, by a "wherefore," the force of which we all understand, the curtain is withdrawn, and with deep reverence the Apostle summons us, as it were, to put our shoes from our feet and as holy brethren contemplate the Being who is at once the foundation and centre and end of our profession.

I need not say that this involves the humble submission of our reason to a truth that can never by it be fully comprehended. In the supreme object of our study all senses of the word mystery meet: He is at once the amazing secret that was to be revealed, and the unfathomable abyss in which our thoughts are lost. His Person, like His love, "passeth knowledge." In the Colossian and Ephesian epistles He is pre-eminently "the mystery of God;" and if we do not learn to submit our reason to what our faith receives from God Himself, we cannot know truth as "truth is in Jesus." There is a sense in which what we here behold is the mystery of mysteries. The Divine essence is past our thought; the constitution of our own human

nature is beyond our understanding ; but here the two mysteries are linked by a third, which deepens both. It is "confessedly great," St. Paul tells us. St. Peter says that "the angels desire to look into it." No human theology will ever avail to make it plain. The creeds may define away error, and guard the accesses to truth ; but they cannot bring that truth within the compass of the human understanding. The stupendous Wonder itself will never be fathomed by mortal mind. But we are bidden to consider it ; to think of our adorable Saviour, the awful Being whose attributes are infinite while they come near to us in finite forms. It is good for our reason and our faith alike to bear this sacred burden, and to consider the mystery that we cannot understand.

It must be remembered, however, that this mystery is essential to the Christian faith, and its consideration as such is constantly necessary if we would form an adequate notion of the religion which we profess. Though none by searching can find out the Christ, it is only by searching into the doctrines of our faith with this key in our hand that we can apprehend the general principles of His teaching. It is a mystery that we cannot dispense with, no not a moment. It is essential at all points. It alone gives unity, coherence, and consistency to the truth of which Jesus is the centre. Taking into account the inscrutable paradox, that One Being exists in the Divine and the human natures at once, many are disposed to say that it is an unfathomable and unthinkable dogma that may be believed in as we believe whatever else we cannot understand ; setting it apart in the recesses where we

treasure our incomprehensible problems. This is a great mistake. You must consider the mystery as at the foundation of almost every vital truth. St. Paul sets out with it when he gives a compendium of the facts, and he sets out with it when he gives a summary of the doctrines based upon those facts. The entire scheme of the Christian revelation rests on the meeting of God and man in Christ. This is the foundation of the Christian religion. It lies at the basis of the entire doctrine of reconciliation and atonement, which has no meaning unless He who offers it is at once man and God: man, for it is a sacrifice for human sin; God, for it must have infinite value to save mankind.

Need I add, brethren,—“holy brethren,”—that the contemplation of this object should be that of absorbed and always deepening reverence. The sentiment we must entertain is one that is absolutely reserved for this Being. It is the awful adoration we owe to God, and yet the Person who receives it from us is in the likeness of our own nature wherein we were born. It is the profound respect and perfect love that our noble nature should receive in its noblest representative; and yet that fairest specimen of our humanity is at the same time God. As His Person is unique, so every sentiment and affection that it claims must be unique also. It is as if for a new object a new sense were required. For this new object most certainly a combination of affections is demanded which amounts to a new emotion, to be capable of which is the glory of our regenerate hearts: a new and most sacred passion which is the very animating

soul of true Christianity. Our Lord is the central object of our profession. He Himself tells us that the bond of perfectness in our religion is devotion to His own Person. After having brought into a new and most marked prominence the supremacy of the love of God, as occupying ALL the heart, and mind, and soul, and thought, He demands literally the same ALL for Himself. I cannot but dwell upon this, though it is not precisely the meaning of the word "consider": it is impossible for any due consideration to avoid issuing in this love. Cherish, cultivate, and delight in this exercise of affection; but always remember that it is based upon thought. "Sanctify the Lord Christ in your heart": that is by a profound and earnest consideration of His claims. "In your heart": not in any side-sanctuary devoted to His subordinate worship, but in the same sanctuary that is devoted to the living God; let me add the sanctuary or temple where God most delights to be worshipped and adored. There, fellow Christians, and especially brother ministers, profoundly ponder the Object you worship. Think of His Deity in frequent meditation: the Son of the Father, whose relation gives to the Triune Essence the infinite variety of mutual love. Think of Him as the central person in the Deity, sent of the Father and sending the Spirit. Ponder deeply His humanity: its wonderful relation to our common nature, and the perfection He wrought out in it. Then think of the One Person again: and "beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord," you will be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory"; your glory answering to His.

Our character is formed by our study of the Lord's. If we are much with Him we are sure to become like Him. Others, our flock and all who see us, will "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus." There is a specific Christian grace that has no name in the New Testament, which is derived from the impress of the image of the Redeemer on the heart and life. Be sure you aspire to this; or, rather, think nothing of aspiring to it: look at Him much, and His image will steal irresistibly into your nature, and form, and life.

II. It is only natural that we should spend so much exposition on the Person of the Christ. But it is His office which is here dwelt upon. He is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession: in which the New Testament makes the nearest approach it ever makes to the idea that Christians belong to a new school or system of thought which is professed in opposition to every other, and which its votaries must learn in the finished work of its Centre and Head. There is to us no Person of Christ without His work: the personal Emmanuel is in the background; but the ministry of Jesus Christ fills up the whole visible horizon of thought.

At the very outset we are met by this important truth: we have to consider that our Lord in all that He is to us is "appointed" by the Father. He has become an official personage. In His infinite condescension He has placed Himself among the anointed agents of the Divine will; and is at the head of an economy of a mediatorial character in which He is subordinate to God, while none the less God for that

subordination. Here, confessedly, our faith lays a heavy tax upon our faculties. We have to reconcile two things apparently irreconcilable. Christ is one with the Father in His Divine nature, and yet in His incarnate Person an Agent of the Father's will. He is the Supreme Creator of all things, and yet is faithful to Him that appointed Him. Learn, brethren, from the text how to encounter that and all other similar difficulties. It is not by turning aside and attempting to explain them, nor is it by meekly apologising for them, and striving to commend them to reason. The writer here is deeply conscious of the tremendous claim he makes upon faith. Hence he throws in a reservation, and then goes on his way without restraint. We see in the great house Jesus Christ the Supreme Servant: faithful as Moses was, and faithful also where Moses was not faithful. But we are bidden to remember that our Lord has more honour than Moses, by how much He that made the house hath more honour than the house. Moses is part of the house after all. Christ is the Son—that Son of the first chapter—over His own house, which He Himself made. That is the style in which Scripture always deals with the great paradoxes of the Faith. Thus it always views the subordination of the Supreme Servant. Now and then there is a saving clause—some clear assertion that He is God, or of His equality with the Father, or supremacy over all the creaturely universe—but generally the mediatorial submission is the rule. When the Son became incarnate He joined the long line of God's appointed servants, and submitted

to a service the consistent exhibition of which runs through all descriptions of His work. He is Mediator, not so much between God and man as by uniting God and man; the benefit of His intervention brings in the Divinity, the means by which it accomplishes its purpose brings in the humanity. In considering the Humbled Estate of our Lord, we must be content with a silent reservation of His Godhead in our thoughts: beholding still the Servant whom the Father hath appointed.

Our consideration, once more, is to be fixed upon the whole work of Christ under two aspects which are here alone combined, though severally they pervade the New Testament. He is the Apostle and the High Priest of our profession: these rare names, rare in themselves and unique in their combination, may on this occasion take away our thoughts from the old and more familiar "Jesus Christ," of which, indeed, they are only the exposition in another form.

He is the Apostle as the Supreme Ambassador of the Divine will, sent out from the bosom of the Eternal Trinity to declare the love of God and the counsels of eternal redemption. The word thus goes back to a period before the incarnation: no man knoweth the Father, but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. It is, however, especially referred to His teaching in our nature. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you!" Thus He connects His supreme apostleship with our derivative mission. He is the first, the very Chiefest of the Apostles, in a sense in which no other could be. As He Himself bears every name He gives us, hallowing

it first in His own person, so it was with this. But there is a peculiar pre-eminence in His apostolate. He alone comes forth from God ; all human apostles, and preachers their representatives, are directly from Him. Every revelation of the Divine will to the children of men passes through His mind and His lips. He is the sole and the absolute authority : Hear Him ! spoken on the Mount, goes back to Paradise and onward to the judgment. All that came before Him only said that He was coming, and rehearsed part of His message. His apostleship embraced in a certain sense the whole of His work, and we are commanded to consider Him well—that is with the attentive ear, and heart attuned to every breath of His voice, trembling with blessed susceptibility at His word—as being in all things the Messenger of the Divine will to our souls.

But we must consider Him as High Priest also. Here only He is called Apostle—putting into one word the sentence, “As the Father hath sent Me !”—and this also is almost the only place in which He is called High Priest. The Apostle comes out from God to reveal the infinite mercy of heaven. The High Priest is taken from among men, and goes back to God with the burden of human sin and its atonement. Our High Priest, however, was not precisely taken from among men : He was and is man absolutely, and goes back to God as being all mankind in one Person. He was the High Priest in the highest sense. The term is here used to signify all that the Saviour accomplished for us with God in the presentation of His offering. The Hebrews were bidden

to consider well every movement of the sacred person of their high priest on the great day of atonement, which was pre-eminently his day: on other days he sanctified the service of others, on this he acted almost alone. We have to transfer all to our High Priest: Himself the Victim slain in the outer court to the law, and Himself the Bearer away of sin into oblivion; the Victim at once that died and that could not die! We have to consider Him within the veil: the Offering, the Offerer, and the Intercessor for all who offer their sacrifice in and through Him.

The two offices must be considered by us in their unity. As we dare not regard the Divine nature alone, or the human nature alone, but must always and stedfastly unite them, so it is here. We should read the two words in the closest conjunction, the Apostle and High Priest in one breath; and lest that is not enough, the two blend into Christ Jesus. Our Lord unites in Himself the Moses and the Aaron of the older economy, and it is the glory and the safety of our theology to remember that He unites them. All His names and offices and works are one: they began together in the counsel of eternity; they were all virtually discharged together from the foundation of the world; and under their full combined influence and sway the history of the generations of men began, continued, and will end. You must not consider our Lord as having ended His apostleship and then begun His priesthood in heaven: this is the Socinian error. Nor must you consider Him as the Apostle only now, leaving His priesthood to His ministers on earth: this is the delusion of sacerdotalism. You must

consider Him as Himself both, and both in one, upon earth and in heaven. His voice still speaketh from heaven. He ever liveth as High Priest to intercede for us. But what we must most earnestly guard against is the tendency to deal unfairly with the literal meaning of these words. How many there are who allow that Christ is the Apostle of salvation, and glorify Him as the Revealer of the saving will of God, giving His apostolic name its full rights, while they shrink from thus understanding the High Priest and His function. They say with the disciples in their truth, "Thou hast the words of eternal life!" but alas follow them also in their early error: "Be it far from Thee" to offer Thy blood!

Once more, the consideration here urged is that of earnest and fervent study of the economy of redemption, incumbent on all who maintain the Christian profession, and specially incumbent on those who are charged with its ministry.

I need not tell you, brethren generally, how constantly the knowledge of the Christ is commended to all who believe. The study of revealed truth is supposed to be the delight of His people, who are supplied with new and ever enlarging objects of thought that ought to interest them for ever. That knowledge to which St. Paul pledged his faculties, counting all other things but loss, is the glory of the disciples of Christ. And this is not merely what we sometimes call by way of distinction experimental knowledge: in fact, there is no such knowledge of the heart which does not rest upon the study of the mind. It is the duty of every professor of our religion

to examine, I will not say the foundations but the superstructure of the edifice, and to rejoice over its proportions, and solidity, and symmetry. We are not, indeed, required to be for ever digging about the roots of the Christian system; at any rate, it is the happy prerogative of the ordinary company of believers to be absolved from that necessity. Happy you, holy brethren, if you consider the blessed doctrines of your faith all the days of your life without once having to ask whether or not they are true. But that exemption only makes it the necessary that you should consider well the doctrines you do believe. You are charged every one of you with the obligation to make Christianity your study: to know the Christ; that is, the official Saviour of mankind whose mediatorial work is the compass of all theology. You may be sure that there is no real growth in the experimental knowledge of our Lord which is not bound up with increasing knowledge of His whole circle of truth. I do not mean, of course, in the case of the whole flock, systematic study of theology so much as consideration of the central doctrines unfolding the Person and work of our Saviour: Himself the text. You are all in the school of Jesus; and, however busy you may be, like Martha, you must find time like Mary to sit and behold and study your Master. You belong to a community of students. The name disciples is too much gone out of fashion. It is too customary to limit study to the Catechism, and cease when adult to consider theological matters. Let us try to cultivate the enthusiasm of knowing the truth as a

compact system. For this let us lay aside much other reading. You have great encouragement. The Holy Ghost is given as your specific Teacher, your private Director: it is past understanding how He blesses the sedulous student. You have warning also. If you forget this, while ten thousand occupations distract your mind, you will pay the penalty. Hear the complaint of our epistle: "When for the time ye ought to be teachers ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk." They lost the strong meat of the doctrine of Melchizedec, and we also suffer for their failure. Dear brethren, strive to enter into St. Paul's feeling: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," and then there will be no fear but that all your other knowledge will be sanctified to His service and glory.

Especially, my brother now finally consecrated to this function, and my fellow-pastors, it is your duty to study these doctrines in a peculiar sense and in a peculiar degree. I may speak to you as "holy brethren" by a double title; and as "partakers of the heavenly calling" in a double sense. In a very pre-eminent way Jesus is "the Apostle and High Priest of your profession." You are bound to consider Him as others are not bound. Nothing is more idle than to affirm that all alike are thus to study: it is one of those affirmations which, undeniably true, become often deep untruths in those who speak them. I do not say that Jesus is more an object of study to me than to those of my hearers

who spend most of their time in the business of this world. But I do count it my sacred privilege that I am obliged to sit down at His feet as my friends do not, and mark Him with a scrutiny needless to them. Of course those who are set apart to the ministry have to pay the price. We have to consider the weak places in our theological systems, and consider them very attentively. We look at the seamless garment, seamless to us, and have to mark where the seams are to other eyes. We go round the temple of our doctrine, which is the temple of Christ's body, and "consider its bulwarks": knowing well that they are impregnable, but noting, nevertheless, where they are most liable to attack. These are figures. The plain reality is, that we have to spend much time in considering critically for others' good what we would rather adore. Let us do so wisely. We must investigate our brief for the court of public inquiry, and then take our compensation by an adoring contemplation alone.

III. But the study of Christ is not yet exhausted : there remains the habitual consideration of the supreme faithfulness of our common Master. This is evidently the prominent thought in the writer's mind ; for it is on this that he expatiates. It is too vast and mysterious a subject to be entered upon at length ; but there are some views of it very appropriate on the present occasion. We may adore and bless the faithfulness to which we owe our salvation, and we may make it the unapproachable standard of our own fidelity.

When it is said that Christ Jesus "was faithful in

all His house," we must needs think of the Redeemer's faithfulness to the work of our salvation when He was bearing the burden and heat of His day upon earth. Here again is mystery confessedly unfathomable. What that pressure was we cannot conceive; nor can we consider it save with amazement that such an awful agony of test should have been necessary, and gratitude that it was sustained for us. But in this we have a subject that we can better meditate upon without words than express even to God in devotion. The same tremendous paradox that meets us everywhere else meets us here also. Our adorable Redeemer came into our nature to save us, left nothing to experiment, and could not be unfaithful. Tested by Satan in the wilderness, tested by man everywhere, and by His Father in the darker wilderness near the cross, He was, because He must be, faithful: like Moses, and yet how unlike!

But it is rather of His present faithful administration that our text speaks, and we are bidden to regard our Saviour as habitually administering the affairs of His church in His own Person through the Spirit. "Whose house are we": in the holy and mystical temple He is ever the Supreme Minister. Of course, thus to consider Him requires the eye of faith: with the eye of sense we do not yet thus see Jesus. But everywhere in this epistle we are in a supernatural order of things: in a temple not made with hands; though not yet eternal in the heavens, for it still includes the earth in its outer courts. The Jewish house being removed, the Christian Church

is its representative; and the whole company of Christian worshippers, embodied and disembodied, belong to that great house, the holiest of which is behind the veil: for though the curtain was rent in the crucifixion, it is woven again of heavenly material. In that house He is faithful: that is the force of the text. There is no other Apostle; His voice speaketh from heaven, and there is no other voice on earth worth hearing that does not merely echo His. There is no other high priest: no other priest, save in the sense that, as we are all priests, He is High Priest of our common profession. He presents His everlasting atonement faithfully for us, though we see Him not. Nor is there a moment, nor is there a place, where the full virtue of the name of Jesus may not be dispensed from His presence in heaven to the worshippers, whether in companies or alone, when looking to Him.

It must be remembered, however, that the Supreme Head of the Church is by His Spirit the Administrator of the house below as well as of the courts above. This must be kept in mind both by ministers and by people. Whenever the Christian assembly is gathered together the Lord is in the midst, faithful to the Father's appointment, and faithful to His own word of promise. He is always discharging His own ministry. There is no disparagement in this to the Holy Spirit, Who is the Agent of all the Saviour's will: "I and My Spirit are one." This we cannot dispense with for a moment: but yet my text must have its rights. He "is faithful in all His house," on earth as well as in heaven. He does not supersede

His own appointed means: the virtue of the worship, the word, the sacraments is not thereby diminished, nor are His ministers displaced. His presence gives all these their efficacy. He presides in our holy places always. Strive to remember this, all ye who are ministered to, and all ye who minister. The High Priest stands at His own altar: an altar as He is there, and a table as we stand before it; an altar as He consecrates the elements in heaven, a table as He gives them to be dispensed by His servants. He preaches in our sermons, or they are not worthy of Him. He inspires our worship, "filled with the Spirit," or it has no strength to rise beyond the breath we breathe. Remember this, young minister, in all the innumerable services you will conduct: from the invocation of God to the final benediction!

But we must finally consider His fidelity as the pattern and pledge of our own. This was, you perceive, in the writer's thoughts. There can be no doubt that he introduced the grand exordium of the treatise, and carried out its details, for this main object, to inspire confidence in Him where nothing else could avail for the maintenance of Christianity. The consideration wrought then, and works now in two ways.

It inspires boundless trust in all the brethren of the Christian profession who keep their eyes fixed on Him who is its High Priest. "Looking unto Jesus!" is in one sense the keynote of the epistle, and in some form or other runs through it. And there can be no doubt that the tone of the whole is: "Keep your eye on Him—not on Moses the apostle,

not on Aaron the high priest—but on Him, and you are safe.” It is my humble and firm judgment that the fundamental evidence of the Christian faith, as it is a new and distinct profession—distinct from Judaism out of which it sprang, and distinct from all other religions which it displaces—is the Person of its Author. This epistle knows no other safeguard for the troubled soul, distracted and tossed by contradictory opinions. “We have an altar,” says the writer, to those who had been wrenched from their old worship, “and that altar is Christ.” The name of Jesus is his panacea: the remedy of all uncertainty as well as of all spiritual disease. So it was with Thomas, who lost all his doubts when he saw Jesus aright: “My Lord and my God!” To St. Paul the mystery of God is Christ, and accepting Him is “the full assurance of understanding.”

Finally, this consideration inspires the glow of generous desire to imitate the Lord. You see how the exhortation glides from one form into another; impressing on us all, and especially on those who are appointed to office in His church, how strong should be our confidence in Christ, and how close the following of His example. From the eldest to the youngest Christian and office-bearer, all eyes must be turned to Him as a pattern. He gives us a standard of perfect faithfulness, and His is the only example that sheds forth virtue to help the imitation. We may study the faithfulness of Moses, and all the saints and servants of God: this will never of itself inspire us with strength! But looking to Him, and considering

His faithfulness, we at once see the Perfect Example and feel the Divine energy flowing from it into our souls. To be faithful in our various ministries is to copy Jesus ; and to copy Jesus is to be faithful. Let us, every one of us, determine to remember this ; and think all our thoughts, speak all our words, perform all our actions looking unto Jesus, to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

VII.

THE FACE OF GOD.

[Preached in connection with the Dedication of St. Paul's Chapel, Didsbury, and published by request of the donors, Miss Heald, and Mr. W. Norris Heald.]

"Seek the Lord, and His strength, seek His Face continually."—1 CHRON. xvi. 11.

THIS hymn is the first recorded strain of the psalmody of public worship. On the day when the ark was brought to its tent in the city of David, "David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord." It was sung in the presence of this sacred object, which was the ancient symbol, or sign, or token of the Presence of God. To those who heard it that day our text explained what the ark meant. "Seek the manifestation of your God, Who shines upon you from over its mercy seat. Magnify and seek His awful power, of which you are reminded by this ark of His strength. And constantly meet Him around this central depository of the covenant between your God and His congregation."

The ancient symbol is gone, being done away in Christ. Those days have come concerning which Jeremiah predicted, "They shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord." But we must not misinterpret these words. It no more is to be sought unto as a permanent symbol of the Divine Presence: the reality is in our midst. But in another sense it is to be

remembered. Christ came not to destroy the old symbols, any more than the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. We must remember every one of these memorials; for, though they are gone, they eternally teach their lessons. The epistle to the Hebrews shows us this. It takes us into the old temple to teach us the mysteries of the new. Thus, as the words of my text explained the ark to the early worshippers, the ark explains to us the words of the text. We must keep it in view, while we consider what is meant by our seeking the face of God, by our seeking His strength, and by our seeking both continually and for ever. May the Spirit of Christ be with us!

I. The God Whom we worship bids us seek His Face. The word is one which runs through the entire Scripture as a most attractive and beautiful figure. But it is more than a figure, and suggests to our thought a most profound and blessed reality, on which we may profitably meditate.

First, we cannot help perceiving that by such a phrase as this we are taught to approach a personal Being, Supreme over all His creatures, and eternally separated from them by His essence, yet having something in Himself that is common to them and to Him. He is an individual Spirit to Whom our spirits may draw near. He asks us as persons to come to Him a Person. His ways indeed are not as our ways; His thoughts are not as our thoughts: but only because they are higher and nobler than ours. There is a sense in which the same things are true in us and in Him. The Bible does not use the abstract term personality or person with reference to

the Deity ; but it everywhere means this. God can say Thou to me, and I can say Thou to Him. No language could more touchingly declare this than "Seek His Face," which is literally, "Visit ye your God!" The face is the expression of our individual self. It is the index of the man : the express image of his person. And this is what our figure appropriates to Him Whom we worship.

Now there are two great errors under which the world has groaned in all ages, which are swept away by this simple testimony.

A certain philosophy has always found it impossible to understand how the Infinite Essence can be distinct from the creature. Almost from the dawn of religious thought a system has been constructed, called Pantheism, which makes everything God and God everything : without a personal Face towards the creature ; for He and the creature, or what we call the creature, are one. He is not a Person Himself, though He gives birth to millions of personalities, which appear for a little while, and then vanish back into His bosom, the infinite abyss of being. This ancient system was revived by a modern Jew, who died two hundred years ago, and whose death has been of late commemorated throughout Europe. In this theory man is not invited to the face of God. He can have no freewill, no responsibility, no sin, no holiness. How glorious is the religion of the Bible in contrast! "In Him we live, and move, and have our Being;" but only as "His offspring," who are children invited to seek their Father, and live in Him.

An opposite error, or the same error under another

form, has multiplied the universal Creator and Upholder of the universe into ten thousand manifestations: "gods many and lords many." This has always been a kind of compromise between Pantheism and the doctrine of a Supreme First Cause. It gropes after one great being behind all the rest, but makes almost every force in nature a lesser god bringing that great abstraction near. The Bible does not speak of Pantheism; but it constantly refers to this other form of it. So in our Psalm: "All the gods of the people are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength."

The worship we offer, the Christian worship, is an eternal protest against these most destructive errors. We have inherited from Moses and the Prophets the doctrine that there is one God. This is the foundation of all the devotions of this house. We visit every time we come up to it a Personal God, one Supreme Being, Who summons us to His Presence. He is afar off: filling and transcending all space, so that the heaven beyond the visible heavens cannot contain Him. But He is also nigh at hand: He is in all the infinity of His being present in every place, and in all His Godhead present here.

Yet, though we approach one God, whose Name is One, there is a Trinity of sacred Persons in that unity. And the term we consider veiled a mystery which is now fully manifested. The Face of God is the Incarnate Redeemer, and its manifestation is by the Holy Ghost. The New Testament teaches us that God hath shined in the Face of Jesus

Christ, the Mediator between God and men, Whose human countenance, from which God looks upon man, gives the figure of the text its most affecting reality.

This was veiled and typified by the ark of the covenant, a covenant not for Israel only, but for all flesh. The term itself implies a mediator. Now Moses was not that mediator, nor was Aaron. It was the Son of God made man in the fulness of time. It pleased God to set forth that truth under types and shadows while the ancient temple remained. The whole economy of its service foreshadowed it; especially those two things which must never be disjoined: the altar and the ark. Approaching from without none could behold the place of the ark without sweeping the altar of sacrifice. Their inseparable union signified that God dwelt among His people only because the great sacrifice had opened the way to Him: had enabled Him to return to man and man to return to Him. Now we must remember that, as it was the great sacrifice of Christ that constantly was offered in type, so it was the Face of God in Christ that shone from between the cherubim. I speak of the ark as it was finally perfected within the temple. This was its glory. There were other arks much like it in Egypt and elsewhere, but none had the golden covering of propitiation, the mercy seat. Others had forms like cherubim, none the Face of God between them. Hence we can understand how it was that, while there was a perpetual interdict about the representation of Jehovah in any form, especially human, yet the people were always encouraged to think of His Face. The Eternal Son was

the Divine Presence in that Temple; the Lamb was already the light thereof. He was in the place, though they knew it not. This was the secret and most precious meaning of "seek His Face."

The ancient secret is fully revealed now. Our Lord Himself expressly tells us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The Person of Jesus through Whom we approach is the very Face of God to Whom we approach. "God," says St. Paul, "Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ." The whole system of mediation is now fully disclosed. But it was in virtue from the beginning. During all ages the eye of faith saw the sacred Form of some Being mediating between God and man: we know Who it was. When Christ came the economy of mediation was complete. In Christianity God does not send a lawgiver, a representative, a teacher, a vice-general, a saviour, a deliverer only: He comes to us Himself in His Son. The Face of God made man was marred for the suffering of death for us. It then became resplendent in glory, and is now the very outbeaming of the reconciled Godhead. God's countenance forsook us in Him on account of our sin: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me!" It then shone out again, and for ever shines, because God is reconciled. Now we know what it is to "Seek His Face."

But that sacred Face is withdrawn: we could not now behold it and live. A glimpse of it has a few times been seen as it were to assure us of its glorification. As the actual Face of God manifest in the flesh it

was not long shown to man. When it was finally marred, and its loveliness spoiled by the vicarious pressure of sin, it was withdrawn from us; but its full manifestation is reserved for the last day. The Spirit is the light of that holy countenance turned upon us. The lips of the Face of God are Christ the Word: the Spirit interprets His every word to us. The eyes of the Face of God are the Spirit of the Father and the Son. And by this we explain the old benediction: "The Lord make His Face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee" in Christ; "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace" by the Holy Ghost. When our Saviour was about to depart, He said, "I will manifest Myself." But how? "The Spirit of truth shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Hence all our religion makes good our Saviour's word: "God is Spirit." We worship God in the Spirit while we rejoice and are glad in the Face of Jesus. We approach not Christ in the flesh: His Person is glorified, and we must seek it and find it by the Holy Ghost.

This revelation is to all and to each. We come up together to see the Face of our God, but every one of us must enjoy the privilege in order to this common enjoyment. On the day of Pentecost the cloud of glory was disparded and sate upon each of the assembled disciples. The command is general, but it is also particular. The ancient service was a united worship, and the people gathered together before the Lord; but the final benediction was upon each: "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Hence you find David con-

tinually longing for the Face of God as he saw Him in the sanctuary. Then seek now your privilege; lift up your heart for your own blessing. "Cause Thy Face to shine upon us and we shall be saved." We proclaim in the name of God, "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel." This the Spirit interprets as a personal absolution, lifting upon each the light of His countenance. We must seek His favour everywhere: it is not limited to the congregation. But it is certainly the blessed privilege of every penitent to have a special evidence of acceptance in the place of which our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," undoubtedly referring to the old promise, "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

II. From the Face to the Strength of God the transition is easy: the light of His countenance is the strength of God in the soul. The ark, however, was called emphatically the ark of His strength, and the people were called to visit it for two reasons: to acknowledge the glory of the Divine power in their midst, and to seek its manifestations within themselves.

Our supreme business in this house, and in all worship, is to extol the Divine name: the noblest employment of those who have seen the Divine face in reconciliation. The strength of God is the assemblage of His perfections, of which omnipotent power was the representative. This was the attribute that came nearest to the ancient people, and of it the ark was a constant remembrancer. Jehovah was called "the

Strength of Israel." It was His Right Hand that had delivered them from the beginning. They extolled His power especially, while they also remembered His wisdom, fidelity, and other perfections which were behind. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength: give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name." In all their worship, the glory of God was the uppermost sentiment. The ark, so awfully shut in and dwelling in such unapproachable light, kept that evermore before them. We are without the symbol, and in much danger of forgetting the highest object of our assembly. Let us mark this first psalm of public worship, and see how great God is in it, how secondary, in comparison of Him, man in his person and in his requests is held.

The glory due unto the Supreme the ancient worshippers offered as worthily as we can offer it. But there is a sense in which they did not so perfectly offer it, because His being was not fully known. The Three-one Deity had not been revealed. That secret was kept back, though it could scarcely be hid. Although the "Holy, Holy, Holy!" is not surpassed even in the New Testament, yet this was the Name by which Jehovah was not known to the fathers. The Jews spoke much of an unpronounceable name: such was the Trinity rather than Jehovah. To us, brethren, the Strength of God is the Triune revelation. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work!" But Christ is the power of God, as if His power had not been known before. And He said that the Holy Spirit should more mightily work! "Ye," that is He through you, "shall do greater works than these!" We glorify the

utmost strength of the Eternal ; we have the last resources of His essence and of His attributes to adore.

To us the Triune name and the Triune perfections are one in the glorious works of the Redeeming God. And when we hear the words, "Declare the wonders that He hath wrought," of what do they remind us ? The ark told the Israelites a marvellous story ; it had witnessed all their triumphs and all their disgraces ; it was the will of God that with it should be attached the thought of His mighty interpositions. When it finally rested the poles that bore it were not drawn out but left visible for a memorial : the people saw not the ark but these they saw. We have no visible symbol ; but of what does our house of prayer remind us, what does that table silently commemorate, what is the burden of this hymn book, what is the high subject of the New Testament ? We have that to remember and extol which dwarfs the Jewish annals to utter insignificance. All the wonders that Judaism delights to remember were but the beginnings of our history. They break off where the true wonders begin. The least Canticle in the New Testament has in it a grander wonder to proclaim than all the psalms of David. Here is the glory of our Christian worship.

But we cannot more effectually adore the strength of our God than by seeking its manifestation. He does not only wait in His holy temple for our tribute, as if He had only to receive and we to give. Whoso offereth Him praise glorifieth Him, but equally he that honours his God by seeking and trusting in His power. The ark was a perpetual token that there was a reserve of strength in the God of Israel at the

people's service. In the New Testament the word is, "Where two or three are gathered together there am I in the midst of them." There is no limit to the power of the Spirit in the assemblies of His people who pray. His strength is everything here ; we must only seek it in the consciousness of our utter impotence. "In His temple every one speaks of His glory." So in His church, which is His temple, there is no power but of God. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." Glorious things are spoken of Zion, but they are the glorious things of God. We can do nothing, but He can do all. We must go out of ourselves, for there is no strength in us. Our beautiful service of song and litany is without grace unless He hear and bless. Our preaching is vain unless the demonstration of the Spirit accompany it. The only power in our assemblies is the power of the Lord. The ark was a perpetual remembrancer of that. It humbled the people by reminding them that when God was not with them they fled before their enemies ; that it was only when He was with them that they conquered. We have no symbol to remind us, nor do we need it. God Himself speaks and bids us remember that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. "Without Me," said the Lord, "ye can do nothing."

But God is here in His strength. The ark was the pledge that the ancient God of the people was with them. His name was still, while they trusted in Him, the Strength of Israel. The record of His past achievements reminded them of what Scripture calls the "hidings of His strength." We must try to

entertain a lofty, constant, and influential sense of the boundless power that is in this place. All that He has done suggests the infinity of what He can do. The measure of His strength among His people is "the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead," the "exceeding greatness of His power." The standard to us is, "According to your faith be it unto you."

Then we must seek it in prayer for the carrying on of the work of salvation in our midst. We must pray that the great design for which we are made a people may be accomplished mightily in ourselves, by the edification of the saints and the conversion of sinners. These two are really one. What is the edifying of the body but its making increase? We grow up as a people into the fulness of God, just as we are united in the pursuit of holiness: our cold and lukewarm members being stirred up to seek richer grace, our children being soundly trained and brought to Christ, our unconverted neighbours being converted. Now all this is done through the word of God and prayer. We must use both means, and rely on the Divine strength for their success. We may be exceedingly confident in our prayers. There is a power in this place for the conversion of every sinner that ever enters it. Our common supplication must plead for it, our common faith must expect it, and we shall then have the desire of our heart. Let us expect the strength of God to invigorate our work all round, and we shall have prosperity sent to us beyond our utmost hope.

Enlarging our view we should remember that we

belong to the catholic temple of the church. This is one little congregation of one section in the great house into which all nations are to be gathered, having room enough for all. If you study our psalm you will see how it embraces the heathen throughout. "Fear before Him all the earth." "Give unto the Lord ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength." This is prophetically to them. To us it is, "Declare His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works" of redemption and grace "among all nations." This we do by our missions abroad, and we do it by our prayers at home. One form the prayer takes is, "Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen." The church prays for its own gathering together from among the nations, but also for the gathering of the nations into the church. "My house," our Lord testified, "shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." Mark the two-fold meaning. The church shall include all praying nations, and it shall pray for them till they enter. This house which we have dedicated to God must never forget that He is the God of the whole earth.

Once more I must remind you that the strength of God which is sought in His ordinances is altogether a personal energy within the individual soul. There is indeed a common manifestation, a shedding forth of Divine influence, which sometimes overpowers the whole congregation, and surprises those who neither sought it nor expected it. But every one after all must lay hold on the strength of God for himself. The promise is of a Divine power put forth in the inmost

secret of our nature. Hear the apostle's prayer that "He would grant us according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." But this is according to our own personal faith. We must not expect that He will by His despotic and arbitrary might accomplish our deliverance. When the disciples said, "Add to us faith," their Master answered in effect, "Let your little faith grow, and use it in prayer and fasting." Then all "shall obey you." So St. Paul says, "I can do all through Christ Which strengtheneth me." Our righteousness He is as a free gift; but our strength He is through our own faculties. Seek it then and find it in your inmost spirit. Let it be your constant exercise everywhere to make the Divine omnipotence your own. You little know what God can and will do within you. Put forth mighty prayer in simple faith, and He will "do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think." If you seek you shall find; if you ask you shall receive on the one side, if you knock it shall be opened unto you on the other. There is no blessed manifestation of God to the elect soul, no demonstration of His mighty power in Christ, no Divine virtue for the annihilation of sin which you may not have. Strength to do and strength to suffer, strength to resist and strength to overcome, strength to command mountains out of the way, and strength to uproot the long-standing tree of sin: all is yours. If your religion has been scanty and feeble it is simply and solely your own fault. You have infinite power at command, but you have failed to seek it. Believe

that it is not too late. Determine at once to begin to find out all the resources of grace, and to prove to the uttermost what the strength of God can do by your own hands in the secret of your soul.

III. We must not, in conclusion, forget the emphatic manner in which the expression "evermore" is added, both as exhortation and encouragement. In David's first psalm we read "continually," referring to the ceaseless regularity and perseverance of our seeking the Lord. In another edition in the book of Psalms we have "evermore," referring rather to the New-Testament meaning, and pointing to an unending pursuit which shall find its object in eternity.

The ark was the symbol of God's presence among His covenanted people, and their fellowship in Him was sealed habitually by their gathering together around the sacred emblem.

The actual assemblies we must delight to visit, and be found in our place continually. Here, as in everything else, we have great advantages over the people of the ancient covenant. They came up only by their representatives three times a year, and on certain other set occasions. During the intervals they could only "remember Zion." We have constantly recurring opportunities. Every Christian sabbath we are invited to assemble; and on certain evenings in the week we may join the congregation in the services which are held around the invisible altar and ark. You have a great privilege in this; see that you do not undervalue it because it is so common. Cultivate the habit of regarding this house as the meeting-place between God and His people, and think

it a priceless blessing to be one among them. There are some special occasions when the members of Christ's discipleship gather around the table of the Lord; if I may so speak, nearer than usual to the ark, and its mercy-seat, and its glorious Face. Never be absent then, unless the Lord Himself keep you away. Seek His face and seek His strength continually. From week to week, from month to month, from year to year, be found in the means of grace, amidst the sacramental assemblies, under the ministration of the word, and thus "continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers." You will then and then only know the blessedness of those who "dwell in His house."

But this last word reminds me that there is a sense in which the true Christian is never absent from the house of the Lord, "Whose house are we." We are not commanded to come up at set times to obtain a glimpse of His Face, have our sins forgiven, gain a renewal of strength, and then go away for an interval of absence. We dwell in His house. We live and move and have our being in the mystical temple. The word of the text seems to say, "Seek Him here, but seek Him continually," in our private devotions, in the midst of our duties, in our family worship, and everywhere. You must learn to carry the habit of seeking both the favour and the strength of your God with you into every department of your daily life. Blessed, thrice blessed, is that worshipper who brings his own interior temple into the general assembly, and does not leave it there; who combines the two, continually persevering in secret worship,

and also delighting to be found in the assemblies of the saints.

This "evermore" echoes in eternity. It is not necessary that we should determine how far the Hebrews understood the reach and meaning of this word. Whatever they believed, or hoped, or felt in presentiment, we have the full revelation that our worshipping assemblies are earnest of an everlasting fellowship of more perfect worship in the house above. There is an eternal temple awaiting us where we shall not need to seek the Face nor to seek the Strength of our God. Both shall have been found in their utmost blessedness, to be lost no more for ever. The countenance of God in Christ shall be the eternal joy of the redeemed. He will then finally show us the Father, and it will suffice us. This is the end of all worship on earth; we shall enter into a house of God eternal in the heavens. There is no vision of the glorious future which does not end with this; every vista throws open to us the gates of an everlasting Paradise, which is a temple without a temple, where the Face of the Lamb will be "the light thereof."

Meanwhile the commandment is to seek His Face for ever. Count time and all its opportunities of seeking the Lord as given for one sole purpose, the preparation for that eternal fellowship. We must hear this voice continually issuing, not from the visible house summoning us to come up to the visible assembly, but from the innermost shrine. "Seek ye My Face in eternal blessedness." Then shall we be careful to come out from the world and its

unholy fellowships ; then shall we be constantly taking care that we are such as shall be counted worthy to enter through the gates into the temple ; then shall we not be content with these lower services, nor rest in them, but use them for the high purpose of finding preparation here for the worship beyond. In that temple there is the true ark, where the glory is without the cherubim, which will not be approached by altar or mercy-seat : the glory of God in the Incarnate. All preparations for entering into the holiest through atonement must be finished now through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory for ever.

VIII.

THE LORD'S LAST PRAYER FOR HIS
PEOPLE.

[Preached on occasion of the decease of the Rev. W. W. Rouch, late of Bristol, at Portland Chapel, January, 1878.]

"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."—JOHN xvii. 24.

At the beginning of our Lord's ministry He taught us how to pray for ourselves. Here at the close He prays for us, and permits us to hear how He prays. We enter with Him into His own most sacred closet, and listen to the words in which He as the High Priest consecrates Himself to our redemption and makes intercession for us all. We hear with reverence the series of petitions for His present disciples, and for His disciples to the end of time, until they reach their close in the words which now linger in our ears. To this last request all others converge. It contains the whole sum of our destiny and of our hope; and on the present occasion our hearts are specially open to receive its fulness of consolation. Its general meaning is sufficiently obvious; but every clause and every accent should be profoundly pondered. And what are the thoughts that rise within

us while we overhear this intercession of our departing Lord ?

First, we mark what His last and deepest desire concerning us is : that we should enter into His eternal fellowship and reflect His glory is the sum of His request for Himself and for us. Then we observe the strength of the peculiar expression "I will," by which He stipulates, as the Mediator of the new covenant to be ratified in His blood, for all the provisions of grace needful in order to the accomplishment of His desire. And, lastly, we remember with wonder and gratitude that this plea is uttered in our hearing. Before He begins the intercessions of heaven He suffers us, in the persons of the Apostles, to witness the beginning of His prayer, both for our instruction and for our strong encouragement. In this order, then, let us devoutly attempt to interpret for ourselves the Saviour's final request on our behalf ; or, rather, let us ask the Holy Spirit to give us the earnest of an interpretation which we must die to receive in all its fulness.

I. The terms in which our Lord's desire is uttered are those with which He has made us already familiar. He asks for the eternal society of those whom the Father had given Him, and this in order that they might behold and share His glory. These two requests include in their combination all that the heart of man can conceive as high and satisfying in human destiny. The former, that we may be "with Him where He is," expresses rather His solicitude for our happiness ; but when He calls us "those whom Thou hast given Me" we cannot but

feel that He thinks also of the satisfaction of His own soul. He would have His own to rejoice over for ever. This last in the sacred text is first.

There is something unspeakably affecting in the designation by which the Saviour defines His own portion in mankind. Many titles had He already given His people. He had called them His disciples, His kindred, His friends, His servants, His flock, and by other names advancing in depth of tenderness as the end drew nigh; but here at the last He recalls one that He had used among the first. His people are His Father's gift to Him: the portion of the Father's goods that fell to Him. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." He does not point to that larger and broader gift of the human race which was the reward of His mediatorial obedience as the Incarnate Son, that to which another prayer refers, "Ask of Me and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance." Nor does He indicate any fragment or section of mankind predestined to be His or given to Him arbitrarily by the terms of an eternal covenant. But the gracious sentiment is that all whom the Father teaches He draws by His Spirit, that He may consign them to His Son's care for salvation and life. As His Father's gift He desires to have every believer with Himself for ever. His people are the fruit of His passion, the recompense of His sorrows; but this He does not here allude to: only that they are His Father's gift. This makes them unspeakably precious. Without them the heaven would not be the same to His Divine-human affection: He without them would not be

made perfect. Every time the phrase is used it is with the like emphasis of love. The first instance was when He cried, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," meaning, as we feel, the perfect opposite: "With what joy will I receive every such soul!" On the same occasion He rejoiced in the Father's will that "of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing." The resurrection should give Him back everything that was His in man. This was at the beginning of His ministry, when the "few men of Israel" were with Him. Now at the close He reckons His little company, the measure of His Father's gift, and mourns over one, the only lost one of them all, and then utters this most precious prayer for all the rest of the little flock, partly as they were the companions of His earthly humiliation, but chiefly as they represented the whole innumerable fellowship of the future. We cannot know the measure of this joy.

But it is also for our sake that He makes the request. He asks that, in a sense impossible upon earth, we may be with Him and where He is.

His people are not as yet with Him in the full meaning of the word. When He was departing, and to the very utmost encouraging their faith, He did not say more than that He would be "with them" for ever, not that they should be with Him. The last promise before the ascension was the promise of His representative, the Holy Spirit. The first promise afterwards was that He would come back Himself. The interval, therefore, must be one in

which His people are not in the most blessed sense "with Him." Save in a few swift transient glimpses His church has never seen Him since other than by the eye of faith. Meanwhile, there runs through the New Testament one perpetual strain of hope, longing, and expectation that we shall hereafter be "for ever with the Lord." Till then we walk by faith, but only as waiting for the better economy of sight. Better, I say, for the present economy is good in its degree; to true believers it is "good to be here" where the Lord is present only to faith. Sometimes this presence is most wonderfully and most vividly perceived by them, a presence that "may be felt." A sacred, unspeakable, undefinable awe scarcely dares say "It is the Lord," yet knowing that He is near. Still, and notwithstanding all this, we are not yet "with Him."

We are not where He is. The heavens have received Him: between His exalted person and the militant church there is a great gulf fixed, as impassable for a season as that of Dives, though for a very different reason. Our Lord coming to us in the present dispensation prays that we may come to Him in the next. Now there is a double fulfilment of this prayer. Doubtless its full meaning points to the final gathering together of the whole company of believers—the entire Gift of redemption—into His presence to surround Him and reflect His glory throughout eternity. But before that day dawns the Saviour's desire is granted on behalf of every individual, given to Him of the Father, in death.

Of this we must needs think first. The disem-

bodied are with Him where He is; and that is almost all we know or need to know concerning them. Much doubt rests upon their condition in other respects, and widely different speculations may seem to find some support in Scripture as to their new tabernacle for the lodgment of the spirit, as to their employment, as to their degree of knowledge and sympathy with their Lord's designs, as to their process of education for the great day. But there can be no doubt as to their being, in some mysterious sense, where He is. They are near His presence, and read our history on earth in His face: His constant miracle keeps alive their consciousness of identity even without the body; and they wait for that other miracle which will put an end to their disembodiment, and restore them to themselves for ever.

When every one of the Father's gifts has been gathered to Him, the whole great gift shall be restored to perfection: His people in body and soul, united and glorified, shall be where He is eternally. We know not where we shall be, any more than what we shall be, in that day. Suffice that we shall be with Him in His new heavens and new earth. It may be on this renewed earth for a season: garnished again like Paradise, without the sacramental tree of life, and inaccessible to the tempter; thence to pass into scenes and employments of which, however, we have no faculty to think or tongue to speak.

Whilst we might be musing as to the glory and beauty of the place to which we are called, the Lord suddenly attracts back our thought to Himself: "that they may behold My glory." What is this glory, and

what is beholding it? The glory of Christ is twofold; the glory of His holiness and the glory of His Person; it is of the latter chiefly if not exclusively that the prayer here speaks.

But the former must not be excluded. There is a Divine radiance shining from the Lord's most holy character which we behold, a glory full of grace and truth. Concerning that He said, "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them"; it is that lustre of the renewed soul which shines through it when united to Christ. Hence He goes on, "I in them." His glory of holiness pervades and is diffused through their whole being by sure though it may be slow degrees. St. Paul shows us the same glory, not as within and transfiguring us, but as irradiating us from without. "We are changed into the same image from glory to glory." It is, however, in the great Hereafter that the Lord's glory will be seen. It is the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, while as yet sin had not required Him to hide His face under the veil of our flesh. When the expiation of sin should rend that veil, His glory, as the eternal Son, would shine through His human nature in an eternal transfiguration. When our Lord speaks of our beholding that glory, He asks for this as His servants' supreme beatitude in the vision of holiness, and as their highest dignity in reflecting it.

To behold glory is language that means no less than the Beatific Vision. "They shall see God," was His promise to the pure; and now He makes that the vision of Himself. For ever He will say, "He that seeth Me hath seen the Father!" The revelation of

God to the soul is its eternal joy; it is the Divine prerogative to make the spirit of the creature glad with His countenance. But it will be God revealed through the Son in our nature, and looking upon mankind with the glorified human face of Christ Jesus. Would the Lord have made this the consummation of His prayer for us had there been anything beyond! "We shall see Him as He is."

And this beholding is our sharing, also, and reflecting the glory that we contemplate. Our Lord's profound thought and feeling is that of our partaking with Him His all. "Ye have been with Me," He said to His disciples and to us, "in My temptation": ye have shared My humiliation and contest. "I appoint unto you a kingdom"; ye shall share My glory. He taught His late-instructed apostle the same sentiment, who says that Christ will be glorified in His saints; His glory reflected back from them upon Himself again will be, as it were, His augmented glory.

II. Hitherto we have listened to the Saviour's desire; the utterance of His heart on behalf of His saints; the final revelation of His unspeakable love. But we are conscious, whilst we hear these words, that they contain more than the expression of a desire. They have the strong authority of a sacred stipulation, by which the Redeemer, contemplating His death as accomplished, makes absolute provision for the safe-keeping and sanctification of His saints during their sojourn in the world. Let us consider the demand of the Son in its ground and in its object.

"Father, I will!" is the strongest language the Lord

had ever uttered in His supplication. He speaks on our behalf as one having authority. Whence has He that strong confidence on our account, sinners as we are? The most obvious ground in the text is the eternal love that existed between the Father and the Son. "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world!" The Saviour, in His self-sacrificing devotion, ready to be offered up, pleads for His people by that infinite complacency which the Father has in His mediatorial work. Before the world was, now at the foot of the cross, and afterwards in the glory of heaven, the Son's plea goes to the Father's heart with an irresistible force. It is His consciousness of that boundless love which inspires the humble boldness of this "Father, I will!" But this is not all. The entire tenor of the prayer on behalf of those given to Him in consequence of His sacrificial death implies that the Son makes His demand on earth, and continues it in heaven, on the ground of a sealed and ratified covenant. This prayer for His people was offered immediately before the outpouring of His sacrifice of obedience unto death, and the sacramental institute that was its forerunner. Here the Son appeals to His Righteous Father as the Head of the redeeming scheme, the God of the Christian covenant. He speaks as having sanctified Himself, and presented His atoning sacrifice; and demands, in His state of subordination as the mediator of the covenant, all the blessings for which He shed His blood. Hence the intercession of the Son on behalf of His own is almighty; its true note, as it is always urged in heaven, is struck here: "Father, I will!" "He could say before the cross," Thou

hearest Me always!" how much more now that He has obtained in our nature that irresistible plea! Hence we understand why this word is spoken before the cross, and on this side heaven, and in our hearing. It is to teach us how mighty is the intercession for us that never ends in the presence of God in the courts above, where the prayers of this David are not ended, nor will be ended until the last day.

What, then, is the object of His intercession thus understood? It demands of the Father, as the Head of Redemption, all the grace that is needful for the sanctification and guardianship of His people in this world, and the final exercise of His power in their redemption at the last day. This prayer is heard and answered: for the provision of grace here the Holy Spirit is granted, and the issues of the great day are left in our Saviour's own keeping.

Christ's portion in the world, His people left in probation, are prepared for His fellowship by a twofold process, one negative and the other positive. "Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." This prayer demands that the infinite attributes of the all holy Name should be pledged for His disciples' defence. One whom He had chosen, and whom the Father had given Him, was lost: the first, alas! of a long series of back-sliders, earnest of a desperate and never weary sifting of the Adversary. For Simon in particular the Lord prayed, in view of the passion: now He prays for all alike. And as surely as He desires His own, and values every individual soul that sincerely calls Him Lord, so surely is abundant and all-sufficient

grace imparted to all. Satan, the world, and the flesh have lost their deadly power.

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" is another prayer which stipulates that all needful grace through the ordinances of religion and the holy word shall be imparted in order to the consecration of His saints for Himself. Our Lord's prayer is granted. The Spirit is given to Him in endless measure for His followers. He commends those whom the Father gave Him to the Father again for their sanctification; and all the provisions of grace are put into His hands as the answer: hence it is said that He is "purifying for Himself a peculiar people, redeemed from all iniquity." Whatsoever is necessary for our perfect deliverance from sin is here pledged to every one of His humbled followers.

Hereafter there will be a final and most glorious answer of this prayer, when the raised bodies of His saints shall be joined to their sanctified spirits and presented faultless by the Son to the Father. Long before this petition, however, the Saviour had told us that by anticipation the power of the resurrection and judgment had been put into His hands: "that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This, the Lord had said, was the Father's will; but here He shows us how: it was the Father's will in answer to His Son's mediatorial Request.

III. This deep desire, and strong intercession expressing it, is uttered in our hearing. We are, as it were, witnesses of this high stipulation. And why are we witnesses? There is something most unusual

and most affecting in this. We have heard of our Lord's incessant prayers, and occasionally some broken fragments of them have entered our ears. But now in our presence He pours out His whole soul; before us all He begins the intercession which still goes on and will not end till we shall need to be prayed for no more. Why, then, does the Lord with lifted voice thus pray? For the same reason, brethren, that He prayed aloud at the grave of Lazarus: for the sake of us who stand by, that we may be inspired by His prayer.

We are taught, first of all, when we connect this petition with all that precedes and follows, where the Lord prays for those who should afterwards believe and prays not for the world, how profoundly important it is to our peace that we should know ourselves given of the Father to the Son. There is a terrible distinction. It runs through the Scripture; but is nowhere more solemnly recognised than here. The Lord says nothing further about those that are not His; but there is a sad series of negatives. "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine": then there is no middle place for those who belong to neither, and if not Christ's souls they are not the Father's. They will not be "with Him where He is." With whom then and where? These are questions I will not urge now, as the Saviour passes them over in awful silence. How may we know that we have been given to the Son? Finding the test in the earlier chapter of St. John, how diligently should we apply it. Nothing is worthy of a thought in comparison of this. Am I one of those whom the

Saviour calls His own? Is my name written among the living? Has the Saviour accepted my soul as the Father's gift, and rejoiced over me as over His own precious spoil? We turn to the discourse in which our Lord has explained His meaning, recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John, and the same question arises in other forms. Have I been "taught of God," and yielded to His teaching concerning myself and my Saviour? Have I been "drawn of the Father" by the Spirit to Christ, and yielded to the drawing? Have I come to Jesus, and found the truth of His most fervent word, Him that cometh from the Father unto Me I will in no wise cast out"? These are simple questions. Whosoever we are, let us make sure that we are His by coming to Him now with all our heart. He cannot reject us. This prayer, for ever resounding in our ears, as it ever enters into the ears of the Father, teaches us our dignity, our duty, and our strong assurance.

With what a transcendent honour are we here invested, and all even the humblest among us. We might be tempted to think that these words must refer to the apostles alone, but the Saviour forbids the limitation. To be the elect of God, the peculiar heritage of Christ, honoured of the Son and to be honoured of the Father for ever! "Where I am there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour"; to be looked upon with such especial regard by the Redeemer, one of a whole that He prizes so much, and so much prized as an individual, how unspeakable this dignity! To have our names, our name, thus on His lips; and to

be pleaded for by the Son of the Father's eternal love! With what ardour should we be inflamed to make ourselves worthy of this honour, of His presence, and His fellowship. If it be true, beloved brethren in Christ, and what truth in this doubting world is so true, that He is preparing a place for us all, and a mansion for each, in that world the glory of which consists in this, that He is there, and about which, knowing that, we care to ask nothing further, what other concern should we have than this, to hold ourselves free from every earthly and sinful entanglement, and to study how we may prepare ourselves for what He is preparing for us. We are His, let Him do with us what seemeth good to Him. And inasmuch as He seeks our co-operation in the purifying our hearts for His indwelling, let us be the doorkeepers of His home within us, remembering that the business of our preservation and holiness requires our own hands, that He still says to us when He beholds our sins, "Take these things hence!" Let us yield up our souls to be the temple of His indwelling, that the glory of His grace within us may fit and enable us to "behold His glory" in Person.

This prayer is our strong assurance and consolation while we watch and labour and pray. Brethren, what would be your mighty encouragement if it were given you, on some great and solemn occasions, to hear the Intercessor within the Veil naming your very name, your very name! This voice from heaven, or rather in heaven, we do not hear; but we do hear Him pray on earth, and have assurance that He is ever thus praying for us above. Our great Intercessor

does not literally present His blood, or lift up His voice, or plead on our behalf; but the tranquil, irresistible "Father, I will," fills heaven, which needs no other language than His presence and the glorified emblems of His passion.

Finally, our Lord permitted us to hear this prayer, for our strong consolation in surrendering our friends to Him in death. It is remarkable that He does not mention this dreadful word, though the intercession is offered, as it were, in the presence of His cross. His prophetic request disowns the terror of departure as it is judged on this side the veil, and according to the flesh: it views the unmentioned messenger only as the introduction to His presence who has abolished death already, and will in the general resurrection abolish the last trace that it ever was known. We who survive have seen our departed wrestling with death, and yielding to him the fleeting victory. But our Lord's prayer should teach us to forget the distress we have seen, and fill our thoughts with the consolation of their welcome in Paradise, which we have not seen. There are congregating around our Lord all who were given him of the Father. He whom we have lately lost from our midst was one of them. Let all who mourn his departure feel well assured that in him the Lord's will has had its effect. And let us all count this memorial service another opportunity of renewing our devotion to Him who waits for us also, when our hour, the hour appointed by Himself, shall have come; to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever. Amen.

IX.

SEEKING AND WAITING.

"The Lord is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."—LAMENTATIONS iii. 25.

THROUGHOUT the Scriptures the two terms Seeking and Waiting run parallel as describing prayer, earnest and effectual prayer, in all its acts and offices. The command to seek the Lord and the command to wait on the Lord have the same general meaning, and the same general promises are given to each. But in this passage they are for once combined: their combination suggesting a certain difference between them, and the perfection of devotion which results from their union. Each has in it the blessedness of prayer: but each has a character of its own as qualifying the other; and both, in their unity, form the highest devotion. Let us, in dependence on the help of the Spirit of grace and supplication, consider their association and mutual influence: as they together make up the idea of all prayer generally, which is the activity of the soul passively waiting on God; as they are united in the humble and lowly pursuit of the God of salvation; as they form the spirit of intense and persevering devotion in the religious life; as they represent the confidence and submission of individual requests;

and, finally, as they are melted into one in the highest form of the devotional life in God.

I. Generally, in the combination of these terms each expresses the perfection of all prayer as it is either the active seeking of God or the passive waiting for Him; in other words, what man does and what he must expect God to do in the whole business of devotion. All communion with God requires this.

Seeking suggests at once the idea of the soul's activity: making God the Unknown, the Unfound, the Unseen, the Hidden, the Distant, or, better still, the Waiting God, its one great object. The spirit in man goes out, as the Scripture says, after Him, on an infinite quest; and its restless cry is, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" Alas, He is hidden from us in our natural state by a thick veil: not by distance, but by worse than distance, by a cloud of thicker than Egyptian darkness, by a veil which our sins and His justice have woven. But that veil has been rent in Christ. We know where we may find Him, where His seat is: on the mercy seat, which is the Cross. While He still "turns man to destruction" another voice cries: "Come again, ye children of men!" Every mortal on earth may go out and find Him in the name of Jesus, a name that unlocks all that is in heaven and in God. Now, the testimony is: "He is good to the soul that seeketh Him."

But that seeking must be a waiting also. God is near at hand as well as afar off. Not only are we brought nigh by the blood of Jesus, but He also is brought nigh: and in a very different sense from that

in which He is "nigh to every one of us." The waiting soul lays hold on that great truth, and calmly expects His revelation of Himself. In that posture the wings of the seeking spirit are folded again, its voice is stilled to silence, and it thinks rather than cries: "O when will He come unto me!" No seeking will find until He make Himself present. "The Lord is good to those that wait for Him." There is a set time for His manifestation of Himself. The seeker after God must also, in the very act of seeking, be a waiter upon Him. In the former man does his part: in the latter God acts alone. As it is the grand function of the seeking spirit to go out in the vigour of its own energies on an infinite search to find the God Who fills heaven and earth with His presence, so it is the grandeur of the waiting spirit that it depends on the set time always for His revelation, deeply conscious that it can do nothing to enforce His presence or extort His secret.

It will be plain, then, that the two terms express one and the same prayer throughout the whole history of devotion; from the moment when the first glimpse of God lights up the desire, through all the acts of special supplication and all the habits of communion with Deity, up to the full possession of God in the beatific vision. All our communion with heaven from beginning to end is the union of our activity with patient dependence on the Divine fidelity to His promise. And this communion is the communion of the Holy Spirit: the New-Testament secret, which we must put into an Old-Testament text. He, from above, lights up the energy of seeking in our souls, and He, from

above, reveals the Eternal God to our souls. But my present point is only this: that the whole business of the religious life, which is, in one word, the finding God, His goodness, and His salvation, is the union of our intense activity and of our most passive expectation. Fix your mind steadfastly upon this. It is the first lesson we are here taught; and it runs through all that follows. In the seeking of God you have a great work yourselves to do: in the waiting you acknowledge His absolute supremacy in your salvation.

II. Again, the seeking stands here and everywhere for the pleading boldness of prayer, which requires to be qualified by its waiting humility.

Nothing is more certain than that the petitioner who brings his request to God is permitted to come with boldness. He is pledged by His immutable word and oath to do for us all that is contained in the covenant. Such is the power of the name of Jesus, and of intercession in that name, that God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And for all further blessings we are to come with "humble boldness" to the throne of grace, and even into the inmost heavens we have "boldness to enter." It is wonderful how we are encouraged to plead by God's own name and honour! In every way we are told to remember that our humility must not forget its rights. Every prayer, from beginning to end, has in it the strength of the Voice, the irresistible voice, of Jesus. And this idea is in the word "seek" as generally used in Scripture; as may be noted where "calling" is connected with it. So, our Lord makes the seeking an advancement on

the process of asking; the knocking of bold importunity or shamelessness, in fact, being its highest character. He always encourages in every petitioner what may be called an undaunted, resolute, and bold spirit of appeal to heaven.

Now, it is obvious that this requires to be carefully guarded. That boldness must be humble boldness, and must wait before God humbly pondering its own unworthiness. No lesson is generally more important. The seeker must learn that, after all that Christ has done to give him right of approach, the fact of his own utter vileness as respects himself remains, and will remain throughout eternity. Now, the waiting spirit is not simply the spirit that is content to tarry, but one that knows why the delay is appointed. Read it here. It is good to bear the yoke. It is good to taste of "the wormwood and the gall" before we think of the "cup of salvation." The lesson of penitence must be thoroughly learnt; the lesson of impotence. Waiting is self-examination. Here is the secret of the Divine delay and the deferred hope. It is not that He delighteth not in mercy, that He forgets to be gracious. After having "delivered up His Son for us all," it is a light thing to give us any particular blessing. That was the great thing; all then follows. But it is the eternal law of the covenant of grace that salvation is given only to those who profoundly feel their need, their unworthiness, and their utter helplessness: I do not say that they be reduced to despair; for that is not the waiting, but the ceasing to wait.

Hence, the combination of these is the perfection

of acceptable prayer : the Scripture terms it "humble boldness." Boldness is sure that the blessing is there, and is the confidence of faith ; humility can hardly be persuaded that the point of personal preparation is fully come. The union is the achievement of the Holy Ghost ; groanings that seek, but use an unuttered language. It is the finished mystery of acceptable prayer : of all prayer, but now we are thinking of the prayer of the seeker, as we very commonly understand the seeker, that is of him who is conscious that he has not yet found his God. Now you must apply this to your case as a penitent seeker of salvation : indeed, it is to your case as such that all this specially applies. You have come to know that you have one sole business before you : to acquaint yourself with God being the one thing needful. Before you think of anything else in heaven or earth that supreme matter must be settled : on that your eternal destiny depends, in that the issues of the everlasting future are wrapped up. Now, you have to seek in the prayer of confession, pleading the promises ratified in Christ, and urging your plea day and night continually. But you must wait as knowing that pardon is a deliberate act of God, to be attested by the Holy Ghost, when all the conditions are perfect. When your seeking and waiting are both one in the perfection of entire self-renunciation and simple faith, God will certainly show Himself good. But not till then. Here is the secret of the Divine delay. He waits to bestow His salvation : to say that He "frankly forgives." But you must feel that you have "nothing to pay." Meditate much on the enormity of your

sins and your utter impotence : you are kept waiting for that. Feel that you deserve to be thus kept waiting to the end of time, and to hear first at the day of judgment that you are accepted. On the other hand, though you merit not that God should look at you, much less that He should embrace and love you as a child, your seeking must be imperfect if you cannot rejoice in His mercy. You need to be aroused : "Be of good courage : rise, He calleth thee." Whoever is here without the sense of pardon, without the taste that God is good,—whether never having found Him or weighed down by some great sin since finding Him,—go directly to the Spirit, and ask Him to enable you now to seek by an instant act of faith His present salvation. Set apart for this purpose one hour, and another, and another : always sure of this that "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

III. Once more, the two terms signify the fervour and earnestness of prayer joined to persistency in that fervour ; and the rare combination of these gives the highest character to the tone of our devotion.

In almost every instance in which the seeking is commanded it is connected with the idea of intense ardour. This is the spirit of devotion generally into which our acceptance introduces us. The man has become a man of God, which is, in other words, a man of prayer. "I—prayer:" the whole being is one active desire for the gifts of God and for God Himself ; and, whether we regard the value of the gifts or the infinitely greater value of the God Who gives, it is obvious that the undivided soul must be engaged in

the seeking. That we call fervour, which is expressed in many ways in Scripture. "Then shall ye find Me when ye seek Me with your whole heart." It is the continuing instant in prayer. It is the concentration of every faculty in its utmost strength on seeking spiritual good as hid treasure. But spiritual good is God Himself. And according to the infinite Being of Him Who is our End, and His power to make us happy, is the fervour with which He is to be sought. There is literally no limit to the degree in which the desire after God may kindle the human spirit.

The waiting habit is as constantly commended to us as the seeking: first, as the test of real earnestness, and, secondly, as its stimulant.

It is its test. There is a vehemence which deserves not to be called earnestness: clamorous indeed and excited for a season, but cooling very soon under the withering influence of delay, if, indeed, its own excitement does not consume it. There is nothing which we need to have more deeply impressed on our minds than this, that strong desires, lively feelings, and the rush of superficial ardour are not themselves evidences of the indwelling of the true Spirit of prayer. They may coexist with a very slight feeling of humility and with a very inadequate sense of the value of what we ask for. But the sure test is the necessity of waiting; this God knows how to apply. We apply it very often to each other. We wait to see what will come of the vehemence of our fellows; and too often we find that it is only "the crackling of thorns." How often has the same sad issue of our own condemned us. Continuance is the infallible test. Blessed is that

deep fervour of spirit which no time changes; which no delay can dull, which is independent of excitement, and knows how to wait.

But waiting is also the stimulant to seeking. And doubtless that is the secret of the discipline of the Holy Ghost. The perfection of the spirit of prayer is the permanence of strong and deep emotion in all devotional exercises. This is what St. Paul calls "continuing instant in prayer:" "instant," that is, ardent and vehement in the breathings of desire; "continuing" instant, that is, keeping up that blessed glow at all times and under all circumstances. Now, the injunction to wait simply means this. We are to make it our study to keep up this ardour. And how is that done but by feeding our desire in the pondering which studies our own weakness and keeps alive the intense longing by considering our impotence without heavenly grace. There is, indeed, a waiting which itself defeats this end: which indolently acquiesces in the Divine delay; leaves all to the set time of grace; and folds its wings too closely. Sometimes theological argument tends that way; sometimes mere procrastination. But the true waiting of the spirit of prayer only feeds desire, and gives it strength and permanence. The soul that meditates much upon the greatness of the blessing sought spends no waiting time in vain. So the disciples were fully prepared for the Pentecost by a ten days' waiting which raised their expectation to the highest pitch.

Let us mark the combination as it is enforced and exemplified in Scripture; and apply it to ourselves.

There is nothing which our Lord has more con-

stantly and affectingly taught us than this. Almost all His lessons pointed "to this end": that men must pray always and not faint, though "God bear long with us." But He always impresses the combination as such. The man whom we remember in His parable sought and waited: but his waiting only rendered him desperately importunate and "shameless." See how the Master of prayer applies His own parable with a difference: every one who asks receives, but the reserved mysteries of blessing are for those who wait and knock at the innermost gate of heaven. So in that parable of real life. How did the Lord keep the Syrophenician waiting! And why? She asked and received something, though we see it not; she sought and found something, strength to knock; she knocked at the door of His heart; and it opened to her. But the most mighty of all illustrations was His own spirit of prayer. "He prayed more earnestly being in an agony:" more earnestly indeed than any mortal has ever prayed. But He waited, repeating again and again the same words. This was the spirit of His devotion, which illustrated His own precept. The Father never heard such fervent and prolonged supplication from other human lips.

The entire history of devotion in Scripture illustrates this combination. We see how the earlier and the later saints showed forth the spirit of prayer which was in them: ardently seeking always and always patiently waiting. From Abraham, and Job, and Jacob, that night-long wrestler with the angel, and Hannah, and Samuel, and David, and Daniel, and our Jeremiah, down to the Great Exemplar and

those whom He taught to pray, we see the utmost intensity of seeking desire combined with the tranquil waiting of silent awe and patient expectation. Their intensity is not measured by the multitude of pleading cries; for it rather tends always to few words, again and again repeated, and even towards the limit of perfect speechlessness. With deepening fervour they wait, and their groanings become unutterable: their transports of desire are prolonged, and perfected into the most passive tarrying for God. There is not an instance of devotion in all the history of the Bible which does not illustrate this. And nothing is more certain than that the glimpses we have into the interior spirit of the ancient men of prayer were given expressly to teach us that the perfection of appeal to heaven is the seeking with desperate importunity which waiting only renders the more importunate.

Be determined, therefore, brethren, to cherish at all costs this sacred spirit of prayer. Learn it of our Master's precepts, and learn it of His example. But remember here two things of great importance. First, that the lesson of this union is to be practised in the inner man of the heart. There is the true place of prayer, where all the sacred arts of devotion are to be learnt. There is the closet within the closet, where the interior doors are shut, and the Father seeth in secret. There is the temple within the temple, where the Lord God is sanctified. There alone can we "pray without ceasing," seek without interruption, and wait without leaving the Divine presence. There we may have ardour without vehemence, waiting without indolence: the combination which belongs rather to

the spirit and frame and tone of devotion than to its direct acts. Therefore, preserve your spirit by all means in that posture and condition : whatever it costs you. And, secondly, keep it ever in view that the Holy Ghost is your Teacher. He is the Spirit of intercession within us. And if you always let Him guide you, the great lesson shall be learnt. He will prompt you to such earnestness, and stimulate you to such deepening fervours, as you cannot now conceive ; and yet keep you in so tranquil a spirit that the groanings shall not be uttered.

IV. We may now profitably apply our two words to the confidence and submission of prayer as it has to do with the seeking and waiting for special blessings. This is a further stage in our present subject : it is not now the general union of seeking and waiting as belonging to all prayer, to the prayer that seeks salvation, to the spirit of prayer in the regenerate : but as specifically concerned with the individual requests of our religious life.

Throughout Scripture we are exhorted to seek everything we need from God. Our wants are endless ; and in all their variety we are not only permitted but commanded to "make known our requests unto God" with confidence. Every day, every hour, brings its specific want ; and there is literally no limit set to the range of prayer as supplication. For everything God will be inquired of ; the permission is as broad as the care of life : "be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known." Here the seeking is the seeking unto the Lord as an Oracle ; as

to a Hand for ever stretched out : as to an inexhaustible Treasury. In fact, it is the application of children to a Father who delights to be for ever hearing the infinite variety of our wants : there is nothing too great, nothing too minute, for the prayer of most confident supplication.

But we must not misunderstand this. Our confidence is simply the making known our requests with certain faith that they are heard : no more. Then submission comes in. We must blend waiting with our seeking ; and leave to God the whether, the when and the how of His granting. He may not bestow what we ask in some cases ; and there is no true prayer which does not leave to His supreme wisdom and love the decision as to the propriety of granting its request. Now, the confidence of prayer is only required to wait in this sense when it is asking the innumerable good things which we think to be good, but which are directly connected with our Providential allotment. We wait only to know His will. He may not grant at the time we ask ; and the waiting spirit meekly learns this lesson : that blessings which we are sure we may ask are delayed because the preparation for them is not complete. What is wanting, then, but pondering in earnest study of our need and impotence ; as the disciples waited till the day of Pentecost was fully come in God's time and theirs. He may have his own methods of granting our requests. This applies to both orders of blessing. And this is the supreme lesson we have to learn. We pray in confidence that our prayer is heard ; but the method of Divine answer demands our waiting.

Let us now see this gracious combination in its effects. The perfect union of confidence and submission will have a most happy influence on our life of prayer, as it is a life of supplication.

It will dispose and enable us to pray for temporal good and earthly deliverances with entire submissiveness to the will of God: confident that we are heard, but leaving the answer to His wisdom. The illustrations of this are endless; but let the context suffice now. The seeking and waiting to which Jeremiah referred was the seeking for deliverance from sore temporal troubles blended with the pure resignation of waiting which accepted the denial of God. We need not ask what the keen trial was which in this chapter pours out its exceeding bitter cry. Jeremiah is a typical man of sorrows: and these lamentations are the lamentations of humanity. He was in his meditation taught the blessedness of simply giving the case up to God. The very waiting is good: "It is good that a man quietly wait." It teaches thankfulness that matters are not worse: "This I recall to my mind. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Sometimes the earthly good is granted: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? Lord, that I may receive my sight." But, in the same chapter, we find it denied: "It is not Mine to give," though to these petitioners also He had said, "What will ye?" It is an absolute law that seeking for all these things must end with, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of them."

But what was true of Providential interposition is also true of the delay of granting many most im-

portant spiritual requests. We must plead for them, and yet learn in waiting the reason why they are withheld. In other words, they are granted in an indirect manner, and in the discipline of graces more valuable than the gifts themselves. This refers especially to the petitioning for special manifestations of favour: which are very often denied, but strangely granted even in the denial. I have spoken of the two petitioners for the great grace of sitting on either side of Christ. Their request was not granted; but they learned the lesson of patient continuance in well-doing, which earned the very place they sought. So, St. Paul had not the thorn removed; but a glorious manifestation of Divine strength was made perfect in his weakness. By waiting upon God for any great blessing we discipline the waiting graces: trust, hope, faith, reverence, obedience, humility, submission. These, though we seek them not, are precious results of waiting. And by seeking the Lord for blessings not granted we discipline our seeking graces: love, delight, expectation, need, hunger and thirst for righteousness, and holy ardour to be like Him. All these are the glory of God reflected in us. "He is good to them that wait for Him."

There is, however, a combination of seeking and waiting which rises to the pitch of assured hope of immediate bestowment. The seeking and waiting are one in the present faith. This cannot be doubted with the Lord's words in our mind. If this were not added, we should be unjust to the covenant. The Great Teacher of prayer does not make faith

always its own reward. There are blessings which He makes unconditionally ours, if we seek and wait in assurance that they are ours. Now, in all these cases He, by His Spirit, prompts us to believe that they are given and must be given. "Believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Of what blessings is such a large word spoken? Of such certainly as concern the honour of our Lord in our present salvation. These blessings are not to be waited for so much as demanded. But the last quotation reminds us of the lesson we must learn from the sycamine tree. The Saviour taught His new disciples how grand was the prerogative of seeking and waiting faith: "Ye shall say, Be plucked up, and it shall obey you!" So of the mountain: "Be uprooted, and it shall obey you!" The faith must wait and grow like the internal life of the mustard-seed; it must also seek in energy of act. And whether it concerns a deadly sin to be rooted out or a great impediment to be removed, waiting and seeking faith is to be peremptory. This applies to the entire victory over inward sin.

V. Lastly, the combination of which so much has been said forms in its highest perfection the devotional state of the soul in which both the seeking and the waiting go beyond their former meanings, and blend into the habit rather than the act of communion with God. Remember that this is not a state which leaves behind the outgoings of seeking and waiting in express supplications; it includes all that has been spoken of; but it superadds something of much importance to the higher spiritual life.

In the state of soul I refer to God Himself is an everpresent internal Reality, neither to be actively sought nor passively waited for: the spirit lives in God; it is purely filled with a desire that needs no words, and is always sensible of His influence without needing to tarry for it. In such devotion the seeking is the silent aspiration that is ever deepening towards infinity; and the petitioner rather waits on the Lord than waits for Him. The soul has returned to its rest. It dwells in God and God in it: and the consequence of that mutual indwelling speaks for itself. That must in the nature of things be the tranquillity of perfect waiting: it must be in the nature of things the ardour of ceaseless longing. It is the abiding consciousness of His interior presence. "The Lord God, before Whom I stand" expresses the waiting reverence of a soul that is always contemplating, waiting, expecting to receive, and yet content to wait. "Trembling at His word" is the note of one in whose humble, contrite, and pardoned spirit God dwells, as in a temple: always swayed by a look, an influence, the slightest word. "My soul followeth hard after Thee" expresses the seeking ardour of the very same soul to which the presence of God is in all things and His blessing the sum of all desire. It is in some of the psalms of David that we find the perfect example of this most blessed state. But it must be the aspiration of every one of us to reach that perfectness of union with God in which seeking and waiting are one. Let us determine to attain it: it is not a third or a seventh heaven into which men like David or Paul are rapt in ecstasy, but which we must not dare to hope

to enter. "I am the way," our Lord says to every one of us; and if we will renounce all other ends and aims of life, and seek and wait for this higher state of existence, He will guide us into the highest union and fellowship with the Father. The Triune God will come and "make His abode with us." Thus shall we live where all seeking and waiting are one in abiding communion with the Supreme Good.

It has been said that such habitual silent communion with God does not supersede the acts and habits of formal worship: it graciously pervades them all.

We must be on our guard against an exaggeration of this deep truth which reckons it the perfection of the devout estate to be free from every desire, and to keep every feeling and impulse of the heart under such restraint as to be absolutely dead and quiet before God, indifferent about everything that is His or from Him, and intent only upon possessing Himself. Whether this is the perfection of heaven we know not; it is not the perfection of earth. The seeking is not to be so entirely merged into the waiting: nor is the waiting to be so entirely robbed of its expectation. We must not set such an unauthorised and impracticable standard before us.

If we follow this high and tranquil spirit of devotion into the public ordinances, or rather, if we are so happy as to carry it into them, we shall feel how good it is to pray for ourselves and for others, seeking earnestly what the Lord waits to give. But our seeking will be one with the waiting which ponders the Divine perfections, worshipping Him while we are asking

His gifts. The whole service will be an act of seeking and waiting combined : all adoration and praise while all is seeking and prayer.

If we retire with it into secret, what is its effect there but such a combination of active petition and passive meditation as makes the peculiar blessedness of closet devotion ? There the laws are very free ; no rules are laid down in Scripture ; the Spirit bloweth where it listeth. There the seeking and waiting are or may be blended in a most gracious way. Sometimes the soul united to God is drawn out in vehement requests which will not be denied : happy are you when this is the case ; yield to the Divine influence, for your life is in it. But at such times, even when you are praying " with strong crying and tears," you must be, you will be, waiting to be heard " in that you fear " with humble reverence. May we all understand more than we do this deep secret ! Sometimes you will be so overawed by the Presence of God that you will be silenced by His glory. Contemplation, silent thought, intense meditation, will absorb everything : it is the best of all seeking when the voice is not heard. Let this be remembered, however, that souls thus united to their Maker in a bond of deep habitual fellowship cannot live without the set times of special devotion. Everywhere with God they must shut the door and bow down before Him also. And they find in the silent sacred hours of their private prayer the constant earnest of that heaven where all will be at once as public as the universe and as private as if the spirit were alone with God in it.

Finally, this habitual union of waiting and seeking

in the presence of God makes the whole of life one constant preparation for the final fulfilment of the promise of the text. After all, the highest reaches of devotion below are only the seeking of what cannot be fully found on earth, the waiting for what heaven alone can reveal. This is the very blessedness of the seeking-waiting life, that its Object is too good for time. The end is not yet: however perfect may be the destruction of sin and the peace of God in the soul. Make it, brethren, the great law of your earthly existence that it shall be ruled by this boundless expectation. You will never be truly happy, nor will you know the sublime secret of religion, until this double idea fills your soul: that God Himself, in the eternity where the creature is forgotten, is the Portion to be sought, and that the revealing day must be waited for to bring that Portion near. Expect much in this world, but not too much. Render to earth what belongs to earth, and to heaven what belongs to heaven. Let your life be the bright night of Jacob-wrestling. The morning will come, and you will have your blessing and your God. Both your seeking and your waiting will end together, when your released spirit shall behold Him as He is; and you will join many others in crying: "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He is our salvation." To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

ST. PAUL'S APPEAL TO GOD.

[A Charge delivered to four young ministers ordained in Dublin on June 23, 1878, and published by request.]

"God is my witness, Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son."—ROMANS i. 1.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,—In the course of the ministry to which you are this day separated you will be much under the guidance of the apostle Paul. His gospel, as he terms it, will be your gospel: not, of course, as his, but as the gospel of the grace of God taught by its most comprehensive expositor. The words which I have read give me occasion to suggest that he will guide and instruct you almost as much by his example as by his formal theology. It is more true of St. Paul than of any other writer in the New Testament, that his personal experience is his teaching exemplified. He clothes himself with his own precepts as with a garment; nor is there one pre-eminent and distinctive exhibition of evangelical truth presented in his letters which is not evidently set forth in himself as a living epistle. He will often be in his own person the text of your future sermons.

It would be easy to illustrate this by a number of most pertinent and impressive instances, running

through the entire course of the apostle's writings. But I must content myself with one: that in which, at the outset of his greatest theological treatise, he lays bare to us his heart as in the sight of God, to Whom he appeals as the witness of his devotion to the gospel; of his entire consecration of spirit to its service; of his fidelity to it in the interior shrine of his soul; and of his faithfulness in the external labours to which his devotion called him. May the Spirit Who made this great servant of Jesus what he was impress his example on your hearts!

I. The ground of this glowing appeal is the consciousness of entire consecration to the service of that God Whom he had found in the revelation of His Son. There are two thoughts stamped upon the whole introduction to the epistle, and everywhere prominent in the apostle's writings: that he had found his God in the gospel, and served Him in the gospel alone.

Before he knew Christ, before that supreme day and hour when it pleased the Father to reveal Himself to him in His Son, his God, as he then knew Him, was already the object of his fear and devotion. He had "served God," he says, "from his forefathers with a pure conscience." The Jehovah of his race and nation had been as full a Presence in his life before as He became after his conversion. But how different was that God, how different the knowledge of Him! The Jehovah Whom he knew was known only in half His attributes, and as the local God of a peculiar people: without the love to mankind which the Son revealed as the bond of His perfections, and that Triune essence undisclosed which makes known the

depths of His Godhead. The service the apostle offered was sincere ; but it was ignorant, bigoted, and blind : a service that knew no better than to reject His eternal Son, and which mingled with the breathings of adoration and praise the breathings of threatening and slaughter against His Anointed and His saints. Whatever it was, in his last indictment against himself he had no other terms for his former character than those of "blasphemer," "persecutor," "injurious;" and would in comparison have said of himself that he was as yet "without God in the world." But now in Christ Jesus all this had undergone a great change. Like the Gentiles, to whom he wrote, he had been brought nigh : for his Judaism, like their heathenism, had been a "far country." It had pleased God to reveal His Son in the apostle's spirit, and the Son had revealed the Father, and both revelations had been made perfect in the gift of the Holy Ghost. In coming to the knowledge of the Trinity of redemption he had found the true God. He received the atonement : the manifestation of a reconciled Father through the Cross. And now his Bible was written to him afresh. He revised all his theology, from its elements to its perfection. He sate at the feet of a Higher than Gamaliel, and learned from Him what his forefathers could not teach. God in Christ became the Alpha and the Omega of Divine things to him. From the face of Jesus Jehovah shone with a new and richer glory. You, dear brethren, have found the same God in the gospel of Christ, without passing through the same preliminary process. You also have

found that Father of spirits Who is known only to perfection in His Son.

And to that God Whom the gospel had revealed to him the apostle gave the service of his renewed spirit: that is, he gave the entire and undivided strength of his heart; he gave himself. "God whom I serve in the gospel of His Son with my spirit." In harmony with his own exhortation at a later point in the epistle, he yielded to the argument of the mercy of God in redemption; and presented in the gospel, through the gospel, for the gospel, all he was and all he had. There is something sublime in the simplicity of the language: "Whom I serve with my spirit." We feel—you feel, brethren, for the apostle is your example—that the expression "in my spirit" means that one service engaged his whole being in its utmost strength. The irrevocable vow had been pronounced in the inmost shrine of his soul, before an altar that gave it an eternal sanctity. Not merely in the sphere of his intellect, because that was convinced; not in the sphere of his emotions, because they had been mightily stirred; but in the hidden man of the heart, in the very inmost self of his Self, he had given his life to the gospel, and the God of the gospel. He had uttered his vows before that altar which Christ had consecrated for ever by His own sacrifice; from which flows the strongest persuasion that can move the human heart. With the whole might of his spirit he had transferred his devotion from the God of the old covenant to the God of the new: to that service he was "separated" in all the fulness of the meaning of the word. And you have done the same:

you are supposed to have privately pledged your life and your all, your time and eternity, by an act of perfect self-abandonment, by a supreme sacrifice of yourself in the presence of that most holy altar on which your Saviour offered all. You have resolved to serve Him in that gospel which has given you a new life: separated to it from every other occupation for ever. And that vow you this day publicly ratify before the congregation of God and at the table of your Lord.

I have now to charge you, and all my brethren whose former vows are now recalled to their memory, to remember this pledge through life as always ratified afresh before Him Who witnesses it to-day, and will witness your fidelity for ever. Henceforward, in a sense which is more true in your case than in that of others, your position is the presence of God, of Whom each of you may say, "before Whom I stand!" that God "Whose I am, and Whom I serve." Cultivate habitually the consciousness of the inquisition of the Holy Eye of the Supreme, witnessing, marking, judging every thought, every word, every impulse, and every act: especially measuring the quality and entireness of your devotion. Let your secret consolation, the richest treasure of your experience, be, "God is my witness." Our apostolic example lived, and moved, and had his being in God. That he could thus at all times—in the mob at Jerusalem, in the broken ship, and in every epistle—"call his God for a record upon his soul" has all the force of a great example, and a most inspiring encouragement. He had no grace that you may not claim. But I must not forget, you

must not forget, that the real secret which enables us to endure this inquisition, and to dare this Omniscient scrutiny, is the habitual revelation in the soul of the Fatherly love of God in Christ: that which enables you to say always, as the apostle says here, "My God!" Without that blessed sentiment, what must be the result of an all-pervading and oppressive sense of the ever-critical Eye watching the current of the common thoughts, weaknesses and unguarded familiarities of life! "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities!" carried to an extreme, and without the protection of filial love, would take away all the confidence of your service, and make your Master the "austere man" of the gospel. "God is my witness!" but He is "my God" in Christ. Let it be your constant aim to unite these two; in all your experience and in all your ministry. May the same ever-blessed Spirit Who bears witness to your worship be the witness of your fidelity! May you always be able to appeal to His one and twofold testimony: assuring you of your right in God as your own, and confirming your assurance that you serve Him "with your spirit."

II. The special emphasis of the appeal, however, rests upon the words "IN my spirit." God was the witness of the apostle's devotion to the gospel in the secret shrine of his heart.

The terms used are liturgical, for St. Paul never forgot the ancient temple; they give us a glimpse, and a most beautiful one, into the secret sanctuary of the apostle's devotion. He does not, indeed, say, "in the temple of my spirit," but we may say it for

him, and then appropriate it to ourselves. The regenerate soul is regenerate because inhabited by God, the Triune God, through the Holy Ghost. Where He dwells must be a temple; and all the glorious things spoken of the ancient dwelling-place of Jehovah may be transferred to the spirit of the regenerate believer in Christ. The Lord has entered, and with the peaceful majesty of His grace has said to the former usurper: "Go out of him, and enter no more into him!" Concerning all that pertained to the former unholy service—for the heart was still a temple, even in its defilement—He cries, "Take these things hence!" But it is the spirit of the new worshipper himself that hears the command, who is both temple and priest: rather the Christian man, spirit and body; for our whole nature is the temple of the Holy Ghost. There is no more impressive view of personal religion than that contained in the injunction: "Sanctify the Lord"—the Lord Christ—"in your hearts!" It means that the great concern of our life must be to preserve our spirit inviolate for the Sacred Indweller, to suffer no abomination of desolation to enter the holy place; to take the Saviour's whip of small cords from His hand, as it were, and use it effectually in cleansing for Him His temple. Nor is there any more terrible threatening than that which says: "If any man shall defile the temple of God"—that is, by any impurity of thought or act pollute the body which is the framework of the Divine sanctuary, or by any filthiness of spirit desecrate it—"him shall God destroy." The apostle lived in the flesh of his bodily life as in a temple: "an earthly house," indeed, which should be

dissolved, but then be built again. He lived in his spirit, however, as in a temple which should never be dissolved, and from which his God should never for a moment depart. And he lived in hope of a better day and a more glorious service, when spirit and body should be reunited and glorified as the eternal dwelling-place of God in Christ. His experience and expectation must be ours. But what was the service that he offered in his spirit? It was the service of God in the gospel of His Son: a worship that expressed, of course, and nourished his own spiritual life, but always as bound up with the interests of others in the gospel.

He served God for himself. No devotion to the welfare of others could supersede that either in him or in any other man. The ancient priests offered for themselves as well as for the sins of the people. We may pause upon the words, "Whom I serve in my spirit." The apostle never left the altar; before it he transacted his whole life; the "order of his course" never was fulfilled or interrupted or came to its end. In a certain sense he was a solitary worshipper, always adoring, always praising God, always praying, always interceding. In his spirit he was ever presenting for himself and for others the one sacrifice; without any danger of the monstrous perversion of a continual external offering of the unbloody victim. In his spirit he was ever offering up himself, and all the thoughts, desires, aspirations of his soul, a ceaseless and an accepted oblation. There the Christian worshipper—St. Paul would command me thus to change my language—presents

to God the whole service of his devotion before it is translated to the outer sanctuary and the visible life. The glorious meaning of the phrase imports that the service of God is and must be all internal before it is external. The outer life is sanctified in secret ; in fact, there is a sense in which it may be said that the whole existence of a Christian is hid in his own spirit with Christ in God.

Here, my dear young brethren, let me again most solicitously impress upon you the apostle's example. Sanctify your God, your Lord, in your heart. This is only saying, in other words, Serve your Lord habitually in your hidden man, behind the veil which hides you from every eye but His. Give Him there the strength of your spirit ; the thoughts and meditations of your mind, which has been sanctified to its highest object ; the affections, desires, the fear and love of your heart, which has found its rest in Him ; the energies, purposes, and aims of your will, which has been entirely surrendered to His control. Dwell much in the secret place of the Most High, which is the inmost centre of your being. Habituate yourself to an interior life, hid with Christ in God ; to sink into your own nature, where the Holy Trinity dwells, and, shutting all else out, hold communion with Him. Let your heart be the temple where no other Lord is present, and from which all is excluded that He cannot tolerate. Count it your business to watch over the sanctity of that holy place, which is the most holy of your regenerate nature. Remember that your body is part of that temple, and let every act and office of your physical nature be offered in

your priestly ministration. Happy, indeed, will you be if you learn early this heavenly lesson. You shall become a man in God as well as a man of God ; a man in Christ as well as a servant of Christ. Joined to Him you will be one Spirit with Him, and your advance to perfection will be rapid and sure.

It may be said that there is some unreality in this, or at least that it is a strained and mystical application of St. Paul's example. Never be persuaded to think so. As surely as Christ has brought God into our world, and into our nature, this is the essence of vital godliness, though few there be who find it. But let me make the descent, if needs be, to what is not most certainly a mystical unreality : the necessity of guarding well your habit of private prayer. There is no exhortation which you more need on this solemn day. There is no duty which you will be more in danger of neglecting. There is none on the observance of which your peace and prosperity more mainly depend. Be assured of this, that the future of every man of you who sits before us this day, and has knelt with us at the table of the Lord, will take its character for good or evil precisely according to the measure of his faithfulness or unfaithfulness to this cardinal law. In this matter you will be your own master, your own director, left mainly to yourself. In other matters you will be under constraint, especially under annual supervision. You will have to give account of yourself to your brethren and to the church of God. And as your fidelity to doctrine and discipline will be tested, so your attention to the obligations of your public office will be under more

or less rigorous scrutiny. But behind the veil you are free ; no scrutiny, no catechising, no examination one by one penetrates thither. Determine by Divine grace to be faithful ; and among your other vows register this with deep solemnity, 'That the sun shall never go down upon a prayerless day : upon a day which has not given its full proportion to secret prayer or devotion in the temple of your spirit.

All this would be insufficient to bring out the fulness of the apostle's appeal if we did not connect it with the unceasing supplications and intercessions for which he challenges the Divine witness. In the temple of his spirit, or in his closet of private devotion—for these two are one—he offered a systematic, persevering, never-weary, priestly intercession, with thanksgiving, for the churches of Christ. Here it is the prosperity of the Roman community that engages his untiring gratitude and prayer. He invokes the Searcher of hearts to bear witness both of his unceasing thanksgiving and of his unceasing supplication. The same he has said, or might have said, concerning every congregation. His litany was large and full, and always presented for the whole church, for every community, for all the pressing needs of all and each, for kings and all in authority, and for the whole world. There is no greater wonder than this in his life of wonders. Into his most secret communion with God all whom he loved entered with him, so that when he was most alone with His Saviour he was least alone. That temple of his spirit was a house of prayer for all nations. He was a priest representing all the tribes of Israel, and

all the families of man, all the kingdoms of the earth, and all the churches of the Lord.

I cannot pass from this without again beseeching you, young ministers, to copy the apostle's example : in nothing more important, in nothing more difficult, than in this habitual intermingling of specific prayer with all his work.

Cultivate through life the habit of formal supplication and intercession for the people of the charge committed to you. For the church universal, and your own communion in particular, you will pray always, as in Christian duty bound. But that is not what I mean. The example of the apostle points to a specific intercession for the congregation over whom he watched. This was part of the care of all the churches laid upon him, and no small part of it. Now, you cannot copy his example, nor expect to be baptised with his spirit, unless you regard yourself as set apart to pray for your people as well as to pray with them and guide their prayers. Every flock under your charge should have a place in your litany. You are sent, like the ancient priests and prophets, to the place of your ministry to be an intercessor for it. You must have your breast laden, not with the breast-plate on which the names of the tribes are inscribed, but with them and all their spiritual necessities. Remember that great High Priest, who, having a world upon His thoughts, and His own sinful people pressing heavily on His heart, gave the warmest place in his devotions to His own. The only formal thanksgiving, and the only formal prayer, preserved in the gospels, were offered for the

little company of whom He was the Minister. How closely did our apostle imitate Him, though he heard Him not! Let me pray you to add this to the resolutions of the day; and, in the sight of God, so to order your daily stated intercessions for your charge, that should you write to them, as St. Paul did to his, you might call Him to witness that you without ceasing thanked God and prayed for them.

Cultivate also the priceless habit of mixing what may be called mental prayer with all your duties and engagements. It seems to me that we none of us value aright this unspeakable privilege: that of commending to the good Spirit of God every action of our life with the assurance that the very lifting up of our heart has all the value of a formal entrance into the Holiest to consult the oracle and receive the light of His countenance on our enterprise. Beloved fellow labourers, stamp this upon your soul to-day, and let the impression never be effaced. A privilege which is a duty, a duty which is a privilege, is commended to you by the apostle's example, of the value of which it is impossible to speak in terms too high. I question if anything more aptly expresses the meaning of our text than this. To serve God in the spirit is to have the spirit, in all its infinite variety of thoughts and movements, ever turned towards Him. It is to make the spirit the everlasting priest of the body, sanctifying and presenting to God its every action. This is the sanctification of all life: whatsoever we do in word or deed doing all "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and "to the glory of God." But how peculiarly binding is this on the performer of

actions that are expressly part of the service of the gospel! You have made the experiment it may be often; and have often failed. But you have never found it without its holy influence when you have succeeded. Return to your efforts. Never rest until you have acquired the habit of invoking the Divine blessing on everything you do: the light of His Spirit on the book you read, the secret guidance of His wisdom on the sermon you write, His presence with you on your errands of mercy, His restraining and strengthening grace when you enter social company, His benediction everywhere and on all that makes up your life!

And remember—what it is of the utmost importance to remember—that in all this God alone is the witness of your fidelity. Let it be your solemn determination this day that He shall know in heaven your faithfulness, and that you will so order your private ministerial devotions as to be able to appeal to Him with confidence. As I have already said, you will be under no public supervision in this matter; the responsibility will be with yourself. But, on the other hand, both with reference to the private care of your soul, and with reference to the habitual fervour of your private intercessions, it will be impossible that your faithfulness should not be known of men. God alone will be the witness of your importunate wrestlings in secret, and of your constant uplifting of heart in your duties; but men will be the witness also of the results. Those who take a deep interest in the success of God's work in the world, and pray much for it, will show the effect

in the warmth, consistency, and perseverance of their catholic zeal. Those who pray for their charge, and for every society in it, will never be found wanting in devotion to its best prosperity. Those who pray much over their sermons, writing them before the altar—why may I not say on it?—delivering them in the spirit of believing intercession, and following them by their fervent outpourings of heart, will never preach without doing their hearers good, whether the good be always apparent or not. There is nothing more certain than that the influence of a praying minister—one whose life is prayer—is felt by all who come within the sphere of his influence. The secret of being much with God cannot be hid. He who is habitually with his Lord receives and diffuses a certain virtue from Him that is a sweet-smelling savour to God and man. He who does not seek this baptism upon the fruits of his industry, and does not surround himself in his work with the atmosphere of prayer—alas for him!—is also known, or sooner or later will be known, of all. He may be tolerated for his office sake—and what a miserable thing is that!—he may be borne with by charity; he may be even used by the Lord, waiting for his deeper devotion. But he is surely marked. His savourless ministry, rich it may be in everything but grace, is a lamentation to the devout and a snare to the unsanctified. My brethren, shun this as you would the final “Depart!” of the Judge. I could almost say, Go back again even from this very altar, if you are not determined to be a praying minister.

III. Lastly, St. Paul here, as often elsewhere, calls God to record the consistency and fidelity of his public life as spent in the furtherance of the gospel. There is no direct reference to this in the text. But in the context there is; for the apostle, as you know, introduces this epistle by a manifold apology into which we need not enter. Throughout his whole course it was his hard necessity to defend himself as well as his gospel: he was often the apologist of both in one. There runs through his whole career—whether as a preacher or as a writer—a continual strain of such emphatic, express, and most confident appeals to his God and Saviour as that which we have here. He sometimes startles us by the awful solemnity of his adjuration; as if the Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay, were not enough, he calls God for a record upon his soul. But if we examine every case, we find always this twofold object; to appeal from man to the only Cæsar, the Searcher of hearts, and thus to assure his own heart before God; and, secondly, to engage the Supreme to vindicate him before man. The result was that the apostle's own soul was always at peace; and that he always carried his cause before the tribunal of all men's consciences. Remembering that we have now to do with your external ministry alone, I have once more to urge upon you a close imitation of this most eminent example.

The first and obvious lesson is that, being separated like St. Paul to the gospel, the whole course of your habits and occupations must tend to the service of that gospel, God being the witness. That is to say, your

plan and scheme of life must be so ordered as to promote the evangelical cause of Christ.

Remember always the supremacy of this highest and most comprehensive of all terms for the ministerial office. It embraces a great variety of functions, which have been already amply described to you and impressed upon your hearts. But this is the largest and most sacred term of all. Every part and office of your ministry has to do with diffusing the glad tidings of the reconciliation with God and the new life among men. You are not so much servants of the church, or servants of Methodism—though both of these—as servants of the gospel: the everlasting gospel which will survive when all else has passed away. You are separated unto this. After all, your noblest name will be Preacher of the Gospel. I charge you to remember that name. The thought of your high dignity to represent the author of the glad tidings everywhere and in all places must be your strong incentive. Let God be your witness, that you never forget this. Do not sink for one moment from your high vocation. Do not descend to be a mere functionary of any ecclesiastical corporation, though it may be the best. You are ministers of the Methodist Church, ministers of religion, ministers of the truth; but all is summed up in one word: you are ministers of the gospel.

And God must be your witness that all your pursuits tend that way. I say God must be your witness. There will be other witnesses who will watch you with more or less charitable censure, and study the manner of your communications. It will be well to remember what men expect from

those who make the profession you make this day, and to preserve your consistency before the tribunal of human opinion. But your chief concern must be to approve yourselves unto God: if you can bear His ordeal you are safe with regard to every other. In the general conduct of your ministerial life this will be simple enough. But there are many matters in which the appeal to the witness of God will be of peculiar importance. The judgments of men differ much as to some things which occupy the time of the servants of the gospel. There are studies, engagements, occupations of time which to many are exceedingly doubtful, while others regard them as wide digressions from the one path. You will never be safe unless you learn to submit everything to the scrutiny of the Supreme. But you must adopt the apostle's maxim in the apostle's spirit. "The love of Christ," he said, "constraineth us;" shuts up to the one object, draws off our thoughts and affections from every other, and forces them all into one channel. This was St. Paul's experience, and I can recommend no better example. Let this supreme sentiment—the grandest that can inspire the heart of man—rule you, and you will do nothing superfluous or inconsistent. Our apostle's life was crowded with cares and concerns that had slight affinity with preaching proper. But, whether travelling, earning his bread, exploring the enemy's territory, collecting money, writing theology, inspecting churches, hearing appeals, or giving his friends the hard entertainment of his prison, he could say, adding the word he did not put in, "This one thing I do." So also must you. You are

master of many of the subordinate details of your time. Remember, "God is my witness, Whom I serve in the gospel."

It will certainly, brethren, follow from this that you will have the testimony that you please God, and He will vindicate you before man throughout your whole career.

The latter is not unimportant. I can promise you by the apostle's example that, so long as you can appeal to God with confidence, He will never fail to stand by you. You are wise enough to know, however young you are, that you will have to encounter difficulties, persecutions, misconstructions, evil surmisings, adverse criticisms, and very much generally that will try of what stuff you are made. The apostle's example, I said; but your test will be light in comparison of his. However, light as it will be, you will often have to fall back upon the supreme vindicator: "God is my witness." When St. Paul was maligned as a timeserver—strong with the strong and weak with the weak, a Jew with Jews and a Gentile with Gentiles—he admitted the acts but denied the character. "This I do for the Gospel's sake, that I may save some," and then in a covert way he appealed to God: "I run not as uncertainly, not as unsettled in my convictions. The Omniscient knows my one consistent rule of action." You must meekly bear the comments of men on your methods, whether "mad" or "sober"; you must be amenable to all reasonable censure; but, after all, your appeal must be to Cæsar. God will support your cause.

But it is with that other assurance I would wish

to close. There is something in the words "God is my witness" which as the watchword of life is past all exposition. I have dwelt much, almost exclusively, on the ever present Eye that marks our fidelity, and to which we must make our appeal. But it must not be forgotten that the constant appeal has a constant response. He that walks in the light of God's purity walks also in the light of His countenance. The "man of God"—I give you now the name St. Paul gives you through Timothy—who lives to God, lives in God, and has his being with God, has the abiding testimony that he pleases God. Go hence to your future ministry, with all its cares and burdens and responsibilities, cheered by the strong assurance that you need never spend a day or an hour without the tokens, secret and inestimably precious, that He whose approval is the very light of earth and dawn of heaven counts you faithful. Let this be always your rejoicing. We have thought much of the apostle. Let us end all by thinking of a Higher than the apostle, Who said, "Therefore My Father loveth Me because I do always the things that please Him." He is the True and Faithful Witness of Whom so much has been spoken; and His final testimony concerning you, "Well done, good and faithful servant," you must expect with confident and sacred joy. He will give you the earnest of it every day, and in His own day confirm it to eternity: to Whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory for ever. Amen.

XI.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE ATONEMENT.

[Preached before the Irish Conference, assembled in Dublin, and published by request.]

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."—
1 JOHN iv. 16.

HERE we have the last touch of the apostolical hand, sealing perfection on the New-Testament exhibition of the atonement. We find running through this epistle—the final document of revelation—a series of most exquisite allusions to the redeeming work of Christ, every one of which is marked by a certain novelty, while all present only the old truth that was given from the beginning. The present passage takes its farewell, so to speak, of the sacrifice of our redemption, by bringing it more emphatically than it is anywhere else brought under the supremacy of the love of God. The Divine charity is the one thought that rules the whole, giving the doctrine its final bond of perfectness. Taking a large view of the paragraph in its connection we perceive two lines of thought: one dwelling upon the manifestation of this high attribute in the finished work of Christ for us, and the other upon its power as a principle ruling within our nature. Let us, accordingly, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, consider the love of God in the atonement as first revealed to us, and then perfected in us.

I. The mission of Christ to redeem and save mankind is not, indeed, here for the first time connected with the love of the Triune God. It is uniformly in Scripture traced up to that principle as its supreme ultimate source. The Saviour's passion is always declared to be a demonstration of the Father's charity to man. And the apprehension of it by faith is everywhere bound up with the shedding abroad of that love by the Holy Ghost in the heart. But the peculiarity of our text—the last revelation on the subject—is this, that these three are brought together in the most impressive and affecting manner. The Persons of the adorable Trinity shed their distinct mediatorial glory on the work of our salvation. Herein was that love displayed, in that “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” But it was as a “propitiation for our sins” that the Redeemer manifested that eternal charity; and, finally, it is “because He hath given us of His Spirit that “we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” Let us reverently dwell upon the place of the Three Persons severally in this threefold revelation.

It is impossible for language to be more emphatic than that which makes the love of the Father, as the Representative of Deity, the originating principle of our redemption.

First, the apostle gives us the highest assurance when he declares that the nature of God is love. We must not lose ourselves here in transcendental speculations as to the Divine essence and attributes, and as to the precise relation of love to both. Our hearts must receive the profound word as we here find it.

We should not argue about but adore this wonderful testimony to the Divine nature. It is the last and the best definition, reserved for the utterance of the beloved apostle. Pervading the Scriptures in all parts it had never been spoken before: no, not by prophets, nor by psalmists, nor by apostles, not even by the Son Himself. That God is loving to all; that He so loved the world as to give His Onlybegotten for it; that He commendeth His love in that gift to sinners, had been the never-failing theme. But not until its last page does revelation burst into the perfection of the announcement that "God is love." It does not explain the words. It is permitted to us, however, to say that **love is the nature of God as governing its movement towards an object.** It is not His absolute essence; but its energy in eternal rest. Not of necessity going out of itself; for the eternal love of which we speak had its object in the infinite being of the Most Holy Trinity. The **only** flash of revelation thrown back by the Great Revealer upon the Godhead as apart from the creature, declares, **"Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."** That is the sublimest exposition of **"God is love."** Now, in our text, that object is found outside of the infinite abyss of the Godhead; it is found in the world, towards which the eternal love of the Father to the Son flows forth for His sake. It is the Divine nature ruling its manifestation to the race of mankind.

For, we must not forget to observe that this essential attribute—so we may now call it—is ascribed to God in relation to us, His sinful creatures. Love is necessarily a personal emotion; it requires a heart to beat

in, and here it is given to God as the Father, bringing Him into the most tender sympathy with a race of transgressors as His children. "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us." This most expressive sentence says everything. He loved us as alienated, and as foreseen, or rather foreknown, sinners against Himself. It is no longer the love of holy complacency in His own holy and pure creation; if, indeed, in that love He ever rejoiced over our race. From the very beginning of our history the Divine charity must needs take the character of infinite compassion. That is the only form of it we have ever known. It is upon this that the apostle lays all the emphasis. Divine mercy rested upon a world of sinners: "not that we loved God," gently but forcibly tells us the whole secret. But it also seems to say that it was a glorious necessity of God's love that He should, if it were possible,—and it was possible,—save the world. Laying aside as yet any reference to other attributes with which this one might come into collision, we receive the assurance in its simplicity that "God is love," and that therefore His charity, by an eternal obligation, moved in the form of mercy towards the children of men.

Then here we take our stand: on the inviolable principle that redemption flowed from the love of God. No theory of the atonement can be sound that is inconsistent with this great truth. Whatever we are taught as to the Divine wrath against sin, love is the bond of perfectness even in God, and His wrath is only another aspect of that nature which is love. Whatever the mystery of propitiation

may be, it cannot mean that the Father was by it constrained to love His creatures. On the contrary we are most absolutely sure that it was Divine love that ordered our salvation, that ruled and harmonised the Divine perfections in its accomplishment. This royal law of heaven, as well as of earth, must have its eternal prerogative. "Herein is love." Every doctrinal statement and inference drawn from it must be made consistent with the teaching that God is love. This is the very strength and assurance of the Christian revelation of the Father in Christ, Who sheds the light of this supreme attribute over all His works, and its glory over the Cross. Love in the whole administration of its own eternal design must have the pre-eminence.

Now let us descend—if, indeed, it is a descent—to the supreme manifestation of Divine charity in the mission of the Son. In exhibiting this we must follow the apostle's own method. He gives us three distinct declarations on the subject here, which for our present purpose we may take in their inverted order. In their connection and harmony they furnish his finished teaching and the final doctrine of the atonement.

"We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This is a large and general statement, which, in a certain sense, all Christians must concur to accept. Some limit the compass of the world, others limit the salvation; but all accept the grand proposition that the love of the Father sent the Son to assume human nature—"in the flesh," as St. John had just said—to be His Apostle of mercy to the human race. This

catholic truth received of all Christian men—thought “worthy of all acceptation,” even by those who go no further—let us hold fast in its most catholic meaning. Without now asking how the Incarnate became the Saviour, and what are the limits and the conditions of His salvation, we rejoice in the precious truth that the Father’s love sent the highest and dearest Messenger that He could send, “His beloved Son,” to declare His love to the human race and to win back His creatures to their allegiance and their devotion. We accept it, I say, in common with multitudes of our fellow Christians who decline to follow us beyond this. We accept it as the fundamental element, the first instalment, of the great doctrine. But while we do so we must protest against taking one class of passages out of their connection in Scripture, and founding upon them alone the superstructure of the Christian Faith. This word of the apostle which we have taken first comes last in order, and must be interpreted by the next, that central one, to which we now turn as containing the pith and essence of all his teaching and the teaching of Scripture generally.

Mark, brethren, that this clause is introduced as the others are not. The sublime and profound preface must have its full force: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Here we have the love of God demanding the propitiation of His holy displeasure and providing it in the Person of His Son, and triumphing in the acceptance of His atonement. Let us dwell upon each of these.

It might seem to our impatient human charity, after what has been said, that the love of God, bent on saving man, must by a holy necessity save him in its own arbitrary and despotic compassion; as if the Divine love, like the Divine power, has only to speak and it is done, to command and it stands fast. But it was far otherwise. Love cannot in God take effect as mercy without a vindication of the Divine glory of justice. There is a sacred displeasure which loves the sinner while it is angry with the sin that he commits. It is useless to fight against the wrath of God, either in the rebellion of the life or in the rebellion of theology. There it is, in the universe, an eternal Fact, protesting against the misinterpretation of the axiom that "God is love." Nothing is said of any such collision of attributes as we sometimes find it needful to presuppose. The reconciliation of justice and compassion is silently declared in the announcement that the Divine charity prepared the propitiation for the sin that should need it. The highest triumph of love that has been or can be known was the sending of the Incarnate Son to be the representative of a sinful race and the expiation of human transgression. I have said His "Incarnate Son;" but we are taught here and everywhere that the Father's love preceded the incarnation and provided it. The Son is called most emphatically the "Onlybegotten Son," the most beloved of all His eternal titles. Here we are on the threshold of an infinite mystery, and must restrain our thoughts as well as our words. It is hard to say which is the more awful wonder, the existence of evil under a God of love or

the possibility of a sacrifice in God which should surrender His Son to atone for that evil. On this the Scripture itself gives only a hint. But it speaks plainly enough when it declares that, after the Father had sent the Son to become incarnate, to represent mankind, He freely "delivered Him up for us all." In His perfect love to a sinful world He gave up His spotless Son to be dealt with by His justice in its stead.

And His perfect love reigns in the accepted propitiation. We often speak of the justice of God being satisfied: we may with equal propriety speak of love in God being satisfied. God is one, and His justice and His love are alike supremely glorified in the oblation of Christ's life upon the cross, and in the presentation of His offering in heaven. For here we may establish a certain distinction in the word "propitiation." First, it refers to the sacrifice which was once offered for the expiation of the guilt of human transgression. In this sense we may insert the two words "TO BE the propitiation," though they are not in the text. The Incarnate Son honoured the Father's love, and supremely proved His own, by becoming the representative to justice of human sin. "He was made sin for us;" He "suffered for sin the Just for the unjust;" or, as St. John says, "Hereby perceive we THE LOVE because He laid down His life for us." God Himself in His Son bore the penalty of the law: nowhere more truly than at the cross might He have said, "I and the Father are one." "Greater love hath no man than this!" Greater love hath not God Himself. But then the Son is in His own Person the Propitiation. As justice was perfectly

satisfied upon the cross, so love remains satisfied for ever in the acceptance of the Son as the living and abiding atonement for mankind. He offered the sacrifice of expiation for sin, He is the perpetual propitiation for the sinner. Here is the blessed secret of the supremacy of love. Christ Jesus is, as He has ever been from the beginning, the pledge of God's love to our race. He was the Propitiation before He came into the world; securing mercy to man from the very gate of Paradise. He came into the world to die in human nature for human sin; He ever liveth as the eternal security that love governs all the dealings of God with men. Let me impress this word upon all who hear me. Christ is the Propitiation. It is the echo of another passage where for the first time it occurs in Scripture. "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the Propitiation," Himself the Living and accepted Propitiation "for our sins."

This leads at once to the third testimony of the apostle concerning God's love in the atonement. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His Onlybegotten Son that we might live through Him." Here it is most clearly indicated that the effect of Christ's work of redemption is to secure life for the individual believer. There is a sense, indeed, in which the Saviour's intervention has secured life for the whole world. But that is not what is here meant. However abundant the manifestation of God's love in the history of the redeemed race, His grace has not its full display

save in the rescue of the souls of His people from the bondage of sin and death. There are many who think that the love of redemption reaps its triumphs in the regeneration and new life of the race of mankind as such. We must needs agree with them that all men taste the benefit of the death of Him who tasted death for every man. But the constant testimony of the Scripture is that the love of God in redemption has only provided a treasure of grace which must be applied to all men individually: in other words, that Christ Who is in one sense the Head of mankind as a whole, in another sense gathers to Himself one by one the members of His mystical Body. "He loved me and gave Himself for me," is St. Paul's testimony for himself and for the entire church. The language here is express: "that we might live through Him." So again: "God hath given to us eternal life. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." The great aggregate of those who are saved through the atonement is made up of individuals saved; and, alas, the great aggregate of those for whom it is offered in vain will be excluded from its benefit as the result of individual rejection. Let us therefore see to it that we do not too widely, or at any rate too unconditionally, extend the benefit of God's love. It must be a personal revelation to the soul. On the ground of the catholic love of the cross there must be a distinguishing manifestation to the individual. But this leads to the relation of the Third Person of the ever blessed Trinity to the love of redemption.

The office of the Holy Ghost is to reveal to the

world by testimony and preaching and to the individual by the secret bestowment of life, the love of God in Christ Jesus. With the former we have not now to do; indeed it is included in the latter. The objects of Christ's redeeming love know by the influence of the Spirit that they live through Christ, and that they live in Christ, a life that is eternal.

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness" concerning Him "Who came by water and blood." He sheds the love of God abroad in the heart that He Himself has prepared by contrition and faith. That love is pardoning love, which imparts the life of forgiveness and redemption from the death that the law pronounced. The expiation of the world's offence becomes the remission of the personal penalty of sin. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us": that is to say, through the gracious testimony of the Holy Ghost the general tidings of redemption for mankind have become matter of personal experimental knowledge. Release from condemnation, or the gift of a pardoned life, is what is called in the text life "through Him." But there is yet another life, which is said not to be *THROUGH* Christ but *IN* Him. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." It is the Holy Spirit Whose indwelling is the source of Christ's life within us. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." This, brethren, is the perfection of the blessing of the atonement. Because He lives, and as He lives, we live also. That life is

hid with Christ in God as to its mystery: it is revealed with Christ in man as to its issues. We need not give it any other name. It is all the blessing of Christ's mission in one word. It is life physical: for we shall be raised with him. It is spiritual: for the Holy Spirit produces it. It is eternal, for it is independent of time. It is life in Christ as distinguished from its only Biblical opposite, life or existence not in Christ.

With the revelation of this life in the soul the external love of the atonement becomes internal, and we pass to the second branch of our subject. But, before doing so, let me urge upon all who hear me the importance of securing this interior manifestation of the Divine mercy. You cannot understand what follows unless you know this. You know nothing indeed to good purpose concerning the love of God in Christ Jesus until the rays of that love are reflected upon your inner man from His face. Seek with all the earnestness of importunate prayer for a direct evidence of the Divine loving-kindness to yourself. Never rest without it. Wait at the foot of the cross, or at the foot of the throne, or at the feet of Jesus, until you know and believe the love that God bears to you. Then will you join the company of those concerning whom it is said that they dwell in love, and that God's love is perfected in them. To this interior work of the Divine charity in Christ let us now turn.

II. The same completeness and perfection which we observe in St. John's doctrine of God's love to us in redemption may be observed also in his treatment

of our response of love to God. Nowhere in Scripture is the return of love so affectingly set forth : first, as a principle in us awakened by the Divine mercy ; secondly, as ruling the whole life ; and, thirdly, as the perfect sanctification of the regenerate spirit. In alluding to these I must adopt the tone of the apostle himself, that of exhortation, for which all are prepared who have received life in Christ Jesus.

“ We love Him, because He first loved us.” This is St. John’s memorable way of saying that “ the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” The Spirit rules the regenerate soul by the might of charity to the Triune God in response to His infinite love in the atonement. It is not that the new life is love : love is only its ruling principle. Regeneration, or the life in Christ, is not this affection itself ; it is only the seat of the affection. The pardoned spirit, conscious of a new existence, awakes to a sense of infinite obligation, and begins at once to love with a new and sublime passion that will grow stronger through eternity. Hence also it is not merely natural affection sanctified : it is the energy of the Holy Ghost. “ God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him.” The indwelling Spirit is a spirit of love, and love is “ of God ” as the strongest religious principle of the soul. Hence further it is one that must be cherished and cultivated by us. By constantly keeping alive in our hearts the memorials of Christ’s dying charity, celebrating there an eternal sacrament, we must nourish our love

to the God of all grace. There is no duty more binding; none that we so much forget. Here is the secret of all spiritual strength. "The love of Christ constraineth us": suppressing every alien affection, and growing by its own internal constraining influence. This is what is meant by "dwelling in love," or "dwelling in God," or "God dwelling in us." The true Christian lives and moves and has his being in love: the love awakened by redemption.

This Divine principle must rule the life. "Dwelling in love" can mean no less than this. And, if we mark well St. John's words here, we see how it rules the entire being as a law of consecration to God, of charity to man, and obedience to law.

"We love Him BECAUSE He first loved us." We must lay the right emphasis here. It is, so to speak, love for love, sacrifice for sacrifice. We are not our own, we are "bought with a price." Our consecration is not now simply the sentiment of creaturely devotion to our Maker, but the sentiment of men redeemed at an infinite cost, whose hearts are touched with a feeling that none can know but the redeemed. Love stands here for the free, spontaneous sacrifice of all that we have and are to the Triune God of redemption, on the new altar which Christ has sanctified by His supreme oblation, that it may sanctify us and all our gifts. On this altar, brethren of redemption, lay your very selves afresh this day; and strive by the grace of God to make your whole life, in all its purposes and acts, a perpetual witness to the strength and entireness of your love to God.

The rule of love is the rule of charity to man in

imitation of the love of redemption. The mercy that saved us rested upon all men ; therefore our catholic lovingkindness must embrace the world. You know how strongly, yea how sternly, our apostle dwells upon this. He calls him a liar who says that he loves God Whom he hath not seen and loves not his brother who is always with him and represents God his Saviour before his eyes. All men everywhere, and every individual man, must be to us what they would be if we saw Christ standing by their side and pleading for them. Specially does this apply to those who share the new life with us. "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth also him that is begotten of Him." This simple directory of Christian charity, like charity itself, "never faileth." In its beautiful simplicity it may govern the whole of life. What the Redeemer is to you, let all who are His be to you. Love your brother as yourself, and let both loves be one in your love to Christ. See to it, all ye who are partakers of the heavenly gift, that the charity of the cross finds this perfect reflection and response throughout your lives.

Lastly, the keeping of His commandments is made the proof of love to God in the regenerate. Observe how, in one remarkable verse, St. John unites the three, and seems almost to give the palm to obedience as a test. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." Not that obedience is in itself nobler or superior ; but it forms the simplest, most practical,

and most all-embracing test. To love, the commandments are not grievous; though to every other principle some of them are intolerable. Keep always the response of charity to the redeeming mercy of the Father warm in your hearts, and obedience to all His laws, which command love itself to God and man, will be the easy law of your new natural life. It will become the necessity of your nature to obey. Thus, brethren of the new righteousness, receive once more the exhortation to make the whole of life one supreme act of loving submission to Him Who through His one Obedience has rendered your manifold obedience possible.

This principle of charity, thus ruling, becomes the perfect sanctification of the soul. God's love is the agent of our holiness, and makes us perfect in love.

It is, in the administration of the Spirit, the energy that carries us onward to perfection; and all the glory is His. Nothing is more characteristic of this epistle than its reiteration that God's love is perfected, that is, has its perfect operation, in us. Thrice have we this impressive word, and with reference to the three departments of religion just set forth. "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in Him. Herein is our love made perfect." Thus the indwelling presence of the Spirit proves its power; the God of atoning charity perfects the operation of His love within us. It accomplishes all His will; it strengthens obedience unto perfection; it

expels every sinful affection, rendering entire the consecration of the heart ; and it raises the new nature to a full conformity with Christ and preparation for heaven.

It perfects also our own love. The last of the three quotations I have referred to changes the form of the expression: "love with us," or "our love" is perfected. And that it is to be made perfect, in the utter destruction of all that is called sin in us, is proved by what follows. There is no part, or principle, or region of the soul that is not here brought under its sway. It takes away the fear that hath torment, and fills its place with the evangelical fear that is the highest glory of our nature. It gives boldness in the day of judgment, whether the judgment that now is or that which is to come. Above all, it makes us in this world what He is Who is the sum and pattern of all perfection. Let us, Christian brethren, believe this record, in spite of the hesitations of our frail nature, in spite of the deficiencies of our own experience, in spite of the contradictions of men. The love that had its perfect work internally and for us in the finished sacrifices of the atonement, can have and must have and shall have its perfect in our individual hearts. "Herein is love with us and in us made perfect."

Finally, and there is nothing more suitable for our conclusion, I must impress that one word of the text: "God dwelleth in us." You will observe how, each time the perfect operation of Divine love is mentioned, that clause is introduced: "God dwelleth in him." Here is the justification of our highest

hopes as we are saints, and at the same time the rebuke of all our human glorying as we are sinners. God in us, and we in God; Christ in us, and we in Him; the Spirit in us, and we living in the Spirit; these are the sublime watchwords of a perfect religion. What is impossible if God and our spirit are thus one in mutual indwelling. But the Triune God is love. Let us, then, bow down before this mystery of grace, and ask the Divine Spirit, the Comforter, to shed it afresh in our hearts this-day. Let us beseech Him before we separate to honour His own word by revealing in us more clearly than ever before the love of God in Christ, and by kindling to new energy in our hearts the response of love: that so we may arise and go hence, singing in our hearts the New-Testament song, "We love Him because He first loved us": to Whom, in His Triune charity to man, be all glory for ever. Amen.

XII.

THE MEDITATION AND PRACTICE OF HOLINESS.

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"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."—PHILIPPIANS iv. 8, 9.

A SECOND time the apostle gives us in this epistle the conclusion of the whole matter. Once before he had summed up all he had to say as to the attainment of salvation and the experience of grace, the joy of godliness, in those glowing words, "Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord." The whole history of conversion, with all its preliminary struggles, its terrors and sorrows of repentance, its hopes and fears of faith, finds its issue and rest in this: glory in the Lord your Saviour. But here there is a second Finally. There is something beyond the exultation of deliverance through Christ; and that is the attainment of a perfect character in Him. Here rises the second goal and new horizon of gospel hope. This is the strong emphasis of the preface by which St. Paul commends to our thought and practice all that is attainable in human excellence. Not, indeed, that there are two

exhortations: think on and do. One word rules the whole. We are urged to fix our full and determinate thought upon perfection: to think soundly as to its relation to the gospel of grace; to ponder its unlimited variety of obligations; to give to it the fervent desire of our meditation; to make it our practical concern; and to think of it with the peaceful confidence of hope. Let us, by the help of the Holy Spirit, yield our hearts to this most earnest appeal!

I. The word used here by St. Paul is one that he often employs to signify the thought of due appreciation. It bids us here with strong emphasis to estimate rightly the place morality holds in the gospel: on the one hand not to pervert its doctrine of grace; on the other, to remember carefully that the gospel of salvation leads to all holiness.

It was the glory of the apostle's career to preach Jesus as the Saviour of sinners, to proclaim to all men everywhere that, for the sake of the atoning sacrifice of the cross, the vilest transgressors, presenting themselves before God with a repentance and faith wrought by the Holy Ghost, were assured of forgiveness and should be reputed as righteous. From his first-recorded sermon at Antioch down to the Faithful Saying with which he ends his ministry, he never swerved from that glorious announcement. But it became by degrees the hard necessity of his life to have to defend it against perversion. The enemy everywhere followed him, sowing tares amidst the wheat. The abuse which taught men to sin that grace might abound was the object of his ceaseless protest. This was the thorn that pierced not his flesh but his

spirit. This dreadful error vexed his righteous soul. We know with what abhorrence he recoiled from the doctrine that would make the gospel of free grace pander to man's corruption: "Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid!" It is the same fervent zeal that breathes here. In the former part of this epistle he had dwelt on the worthlessness of all good works as the ground of a sinner's acceptance. He had stripped himself, as the representative of human nature, of all human excellence in order to find refuge in Christ alone. That he might be clothed upon with the new righteousness of faith, he had unclothed himself of all that he had formerly thought true, and honest, and just, and pure, and of good report in himself. And because he had so utterly disparaged human goodness in the third chapter, he now in the fourth vindicates the claims of Christian godliness. On the way to the cross think not of any good in yourself: on the way FROM the cross think of all the obligations of holiness.

For all the provisions of grace have their issue in our moral perfection. Renouncing our own righteousness of the law, we are to attain a righteousness of faith, which, in another sense, must be "our own." The pardon of sin is no other than the removal of an obstacle to holiness. The grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth us to aspire to all good works. Hence at the end of his life St. Paul adds a second Faithful Saying to the first: "These things I will that thou affirm constantly"—that is, the things that pertain to salvation by grace and the renewing of the Holy Ghost—"in order that they which have believed

might be careful to maintain good works." And what he there exhorts the preacher to preach, he here exhorts the hearer to think on: the necessary connection between the grace that pardons and the grace that sanctifies.

To sum up all, there are two opposite errors in thinking about holiness. One is, to regard it as attainable out of Christ. For the unregenerate to think on these things is to admire them, and to fail. It is to encounter the sad irony of Jeremiah "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Vast is the multitude of wasted energies spent upon the premature pursuit of what man's sinfulness for ever denies to unrenewed nature. The other error, and that which the apostle here denounces, is after regeneration to neglect the obligations of morality, and indolently to surrender the soul to a vicarious Saviour from sin. The words, "think on these things" carry this strong injunction: "When your nature is renewed—not till then, for human nature can never retrieve its lost perfection till renewed, but certainly then—survey with a clear eye and a heart of infinite desire the whole sum of human excellence as attainable by yourself."

II. The thought here inculcated is not, however, a general and sound theological sentiment only. It must be the pondering of study, considering well "whatsoever things" belong to every standard of human and attainable excellence.

The apostle here exhorts us to a duty that he constantly inculcates, that of training our minds to a high and refined sense of the comprehensive obliga-

tions of goodness. He best explains his own meaning in the beginning of the epistle, where he prays that we "may abound in knowledge and all judgment" as to moral obligations, so as to "discriminate things that differ." It is true that the regenerate are taught of God and have all the elements of goodness in their renewed nature. They have the Spirit not only to guide them into all truth, but to lead them into all uprightness of conversation. But His teaching does not supersede the use of our own faculties. The Bible shows us "what is good" in its great principles, but leaves us to find out their illimitable application. Our own conscience purged and rectified should "exercise itself unto godliness." It is the moral sense which must, by our own ceaseless and indefatigable study, be trained to a high and sure perception of right. In this study the Divine Spirit is our never-absent Director and Guide; but He teaches us through our own habitual consideration of the principles and practice of godliness. In no other way does He lead us into the land of uprightness.

The object of this thought and study is excellence according to all its standards; and when the apostle repeats so emphatically "whatsoever things," he suggests that every individual virtue presents its own unlimited field of study. He seems to tell us that we must not be too hasty to assume that we comprehend all the heights and depths, lengths and breadths, of moral obligation. What a boundless field of ethical study, for instance, is truth: how much more full of meaning and penetrating in its reach than the simple word might suggest. Follow it

whithersoever it leads, through the spirit and purpose, to the lips, and into the life, and "whatsoever things are true" will open up volumes of various application. And how much there is to be pondered in justice and in purity: the one embracing all religion as conformity with eternal law, in all its illimitable relations to the absolute right; and the other entering into the soul and extending to its deepest recesses, as the object of our own consciousness, as witnessed by man, or seen by the Omniscient Eye. Into what untold ramifications may we pursue the ethical principle of honesty, or a deportment venerable before heaven and earth, before God and man. So it is with all the several terms in this wonderful constellation of morals. Every one must have its study, for it is only the perfection of each and combination of all that makes up a consummate religion, a faultless character, a perfect man.

The result of this constant meditation is the sure education of the spiritual taste into a high pitch of refinement and delicacy. They who thus ponder out continually the comprehensive requirements of the law of godliness will come to understand the extent of its requirements as none others can. Their sense is exercised to discern shades of excellence and subtilties of obligation which the more unreflecting Christian fails to see. Their standard of truth, dignity, justice, and purity, becomes higher than that of other men. They come to recoil from much that others tolerate; and that which satisfies those whose standard is partial, limited, and low, cannot satisfy their severer spiritual taste. Here lies the secret of

the difference between Christian and Christian; between those careless professors of the high discipline of Christ who are always stumbling themselves and a cause of offence to others, and those educated disciples of the Master of morals who adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. See to it, brethren, that you receive this exhortation. Then will you become by degrees so accurate in your moral judgment as never to fail: proving all the good acceptable and perfect will of God. You will be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." In the best sense of the term you will become "a law unto yourselves," and find out all the blessed secrets of a holy life.

III. Once more, the thinking of our text signifies that intent contemplation of perfection which feeds the soul's regenerate longing to attain it.

Mark with what exquisite skill St. Paul—the constant and consistent advocate of Christian perfection—combines the elements of goodness into one most lovely whole. We cannot but feel that here, as in many other delineations of goodness, he is full of an enthusiastic admiration of his own ideal. And we must strive to share that enthusiasm. We must look steadily at this assemblage of all ethical graces until we are enkindled with its loveliness. Not now alone, however, but always. Learn to delight your soul with the thought of sanctity. Set the passion of your heart upon it. Let the "beauty of holiness" inflame your imagination; its heavenly image stealing gently into your spirit, until you cry, "O when shall

I wake up after thy likeness!" And if, brethren, you accustom yourselves to contemplate, and have always present the idea of the loveliness of perfection, it will surely stimulate the pulses of your desire, and to such a pitch of intense and concentrated vehemence that it shall become the master passion of your life.

And as the Christian is exhorted to delight in the thought of perfection as the aggregate of all excellences, so also he must make every individual principle of goodness the object of affectionate contemplation. How beautiful is truth, in itself and in contrast with its opposite: the thought, the word, the act perfectly and eternally faithful; stedfast as the heavens, and like them never swerving from the will of God. How beautiful is the idea of religious dignity: the venerable grace of a character raised above all the degeneracy and degradation of sinful nature, carrying everywhere the sense of a sublime vocation, and reflecting the glory of God on every department of life. How grand the idea of unsullied righteousness: no duty to God or man, no obligation of heaven or earth omitted. And how past all language lovely the stainless purity of a soul purged of all defilement: emptied of sin, swept of every relic of impurity, and garnished with all the graces of holiness. Happy, thrice happy is that humble lover of goodness who accustoms himself to contemplate each of these graces of character with an admiration that is full of love and a love that is full of admiration, having in the secret shrine of his heart an image or ideal of each which he shall daily, having

first placed it in his Lord, bow down before and adore.

For, this affectionate meditation upon goodness must not dwell upon abstractions. We must think on these things as exhibited in the Divine law, as embodied in holy examples, and as realised in ourselves.

The virtues of holiness are displayed and recommended in the Word of God. From its pages all excellences are reflected as from a mirror. And to think of these things is to abound in the meditation of the Bible. The Psalmist rejoiced over his scantier Scriptures as the law of the Lord that was perfect; but what a richer perfection has it acquired for us. That which we have received is the finished exhibition of all goodness as filling the whole Scripture. In all ages those who have loved God have delighted in His word. "O how I love thy law: it is my meditation day and night": love to the book that contains—not duty so much as blessed exhibition of perfection—is almost like passion for a person. To the soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness the written law of God is an everlasting delight. Having found there his Saviour and his salvation, and conscious of an indwelling grace by which he may fulfil all righteousness, he is never weary of studying there what he may become, must become, and will become as an obedient son of the law.

Moreover, such an insatiate student delights to consider all holiness as exhibited in the lives of those who have gone before him in the narrow way. St. Paul here presents himself as an example, and is the repre-

sentative of all the saints who, whether their record is in the volume of inspiration or in human memorials or in human tradition, have embodied the several graces of religion in their lives. One Supreme Pattern above all appears, clothed with all perfection, the living Bible, the Word of God incarnate, the Incarnation of a perfect life, Who also cries, "What ye have heard and seen in Me, do."

But it is observable that St. Paul does not say this. The example of our Blessed Lord is altogether of a different kind from that of His saints. He is the Supreme Standard and Pattern of the result; they are examples also of the process. He presents to us the sum of holiness as it came down from heaven perfect and entire, wanting nothing: He had not, as we have, to become true and venerable, and just and pure. But the saints who, like ourselves, have had to travel through all the stages of the ascent from sin to holiness, leave us their example for our encouragement. And every one of them, like the apostle, may say, in a sense in which their Master could not say it, "What ye have heard and seen in me, do!" We must keep our eye on them to copy their example as they pursued their probationary course: following them in the way as they followed Christ the goal. But while we imitate them, we must aspire to Him. As to the glorious issue He alone is the Example: not any one of His saints who borrowed their brightness from Him. Passing over the disc of His heavenly perfection the faces of the brightest saints gather blackness and become as spots. We must study Him for the end of all perfection; and study the

saints of like passions with ourselves to animate us on the way to it.

The descent is great: but we should contemplate all goodness as clothing our own unworthy persons. Every one of us may regard himself as possessed of these several qualities, comparing his past and present character with that other and better self, which grace makes present to his thoughts. Set that imaginary person, which is to be a blessed reality, before you, and follow in the footsteps of the self that is to be. Daily become familiar with your future estate of holiness. Ever have before you your own soul no longer untrue, degraded, unrighteous, impure, and unlovely; but equipped with all these graces and so near to Christ as to be lost in Him. Of that image too you may cry, "I shall be satisfied when I awake after this likeness!"

IV. This leads us to the emphasis laid upon the practical character of the thought enjoined, the act that must accompany and follow it. Here, also, there is a twofold order in St. Paul's meaning. Let not thinking end, but turn all your meditations to practice. Let these principles that engage your mind regulate your lives. Action must follow, or rather must accompany, meditation as its necessary result.

Generally, there must be nothing visionary in our religion. Hence the remarkable change, the abrupt transition, in the apostle's words. When the thinking upon moral ideas was alone in question, he used abstract terms. But these same principles of truth, dignity, righteousness, purity, now become what they had "seen in him;" and all these precepts, and elements,

and works of godliness, must be "done." There is a sentimental religion that thinks loftily and talks magniloquently about virtue, but ends there. From such a religion, and from those who reach it, turn away. Our religion must not be a barren homage to the saintly qualities of others. We must not enshrine the saints, One only excepted, in a higher region, and fall down and worship their holiness. "Stand up," every one of them cries aloud, "I also am a man." And what man has been man may be. A Christian may dare do all that becomes a Christian. While denouncing the vain canonisation of the saints we may offer them the equally vain tribute of our dead admiration. St. Paul's language seems to testify, "You have seen nothing, you have heard of nothing, in me and others that you may not copy and emulate." In the spirit of his words we may say of all holy examples, and even of the Highest, so far as His example enters into the sphere of human life, "What they were, by the grace of God I will be." In their prerogatives of special election I may not share: I am less than the least in merit; but I will copy their holy character and make it, so far as my wasted life may, my own.

Every scriptural ideal of excellence may be realised in practice. This is the glory of Christianity, that it gives the loftiest ideals and makes them possible to our attainment. The Pagan writers who lived before and after Christ had their lofty ideals too; they dilated much upon the beauty of virtue, especially in some of its severer aspects. Much of the light diffused universally from the Light that en-

lightened all was condensed into the writings of Plato and others of the wise men of this world. But although some of these exhibitions of truth, righteousness, and purity are scarcely a descent from St. Paul and St. John, on the whole the Christian ethical system is so immeasurably superior that comparison fails and is ashamed. In no moral treatise outside of the Bible is there such a perfect and consummate standard as this which St. Paul gives us: ranging from its first element of truth through all the spheres of goodness up to every virtue that is possible to man and praised of God. But this is the essential difference, that only in the Christian code is the command found, "These things do!" The highest moralists who sate not at the feet of Jesus despaired of their own teaching, imperfect as it was, and owned that to human nature the practice was impossible, "Unless, indeed," as one unconsciously soliloquised, "God should become incarnate to teach us." Christianity alone has the golden link between thought and practice. It gives the highest ideal, and calmly says, "Do this." Never visited man's mind a dream of goodness that may not be acted out in the waking life. This is the glory of our Christian discipline. The Lord Who responded to Peter's ambition when he would join his Master on the waters, and said, "Come, since it is in thine heart," says to every one of us also, "Come, My aspiring servant, through all the spheres of laborious devotion, to Myself, My holiness, My all." Then let us, fellow-disciples of this Omnipotent Teacher, determine by His grace to do everything that we find

in the book of His new law : everything, even to its highest pitch of perfect duty.

As thinking must not terminate in itself, but lead to practice, so practice must be the diligent regulation of our life according to all the principles of holiness.

The apostle speaks here of the formation of a perfect character as the result of our own act. There is a sense, indeed, in which God must "fulfil in us all the pleasure of goodness." Our religion from beginning to end is His work. His omnipotent power renews our nature. He gives effect to all our endeavours. He consummates the operation of His own grace. It is He who puts an end to our sins, and destroys the last enemy that shall be destroyed in us. The destruction of our evil and the perfecting of our love and our absolute union with Himself is not our work, but His. But the formation of the Christian character here spoken of is our own task under the blessing of heaven. While the consummation of death to sin, the abolition of the empire of evil in us, is God's work blessing our earnest endeavour, we are to seek eternal life by a patient continuance in well-doing, and to attain perfection by building up a holy character. And its perfection is conferred upon us, not as a gift simply—there is a sense in which that is true—but as the seal upon our efforts, and their exceeding great reward.

Then we must work out our salvation and strive after holiness by governing our lives according to these holy principles severally and particularly. If we would be perfectly true, we must endeavour to act out the truth by absolute sincerity in word and

thought, and act. There is not a single movement of life that is not true or untrue: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Be true to the truth down to the slightest detail of your daily life. So, also, with dignity: every single action and every single presentation of our character is either in accordance with the standard of religious elevation or falls below it. And if we would reach the height of perfect venerableness, we must erect dignity from a grace into a duty of life, and act as "the sons of God without rebuke." So also it is with justice: a principle that has to do with the whole of life. What is right before the perfect law? is a question that must regulate everything. At all costs and by every sacrifice right must be done; and by the habit of doing right in ten thousand petty instances the character of righteousness is formed. So is it with purity: the entire of our deportment as well as our outward acts must be governed by this law. Our thoughts, our imaginations, our looks, our reading, all the suggestions and all the overt acts of life, must be unsullied. Spotless purity is the fruit of most earnest and most unremitting pains. So it is with all the rest. To be lovely we must act amiably and make it our study to be loved of all; removing every angularity and harshness from our deportment, and putting away at all costs everything that has made us repulsive to those around us. To attain every virtue, we must labour with all the might of our souls, and then only shall all praise crown our efforts.

Finally, this thoughtful study of holiness is tranquil and confident in its aspiration and effort.

There can be no encouragement more mighty, when it is pondered well, than this, that the God of peace shall be with us. Evidently there is a remembrance of the words that preceded: "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Now it is not His peace only, but Himself who brings it, assisting and then crowning our endeavours.

God will be with us assisting our efforts after holiness, strengthening our souls and animating our pursuit by the assurance of His reconciliation. There is no spirit for the pursuit unless we know that the guilty past is pardoned. The heart must be enlarged if we would run in the way of His commandments. How can the sinner, conscious that the wrath of God rests upon him, lift up his soul to the idea of perfection? If he pursue it he must needs fail; the strongest incentive is wanting. And should he seek, the God Who alone could help him must needs withdraw His aid until forgiveness is first sought. But, more than this, the God of peace is with us in the endeavour, not as the crown only. It is an unutterable consolation that He is perpetually ready to forgive the sins, negligences, and ignorances of his people, if with all their hearts they seek His mercy. Weak as we are, and numbering our failures by thousands, we need to be told that the God of mercy is with us. Strive on, and He will help you. One thing alone is necessary, that which the apostle puts first in his catalogue of graces,—truth. Have you failed even of that? Ask Him to put a right spirit within you, and He will help you to retrieve your fidelity. But on this point be most explicit with yourself and

faithful with your Lord. Neither holiness nor the God of holiness shall you ever see if you do not from the bottom of your heart seek this alone. Vacillation here is fatal. He who has marked your hesitating pursuit is the "God of peace." He is willing to forgive all that is past, and to forgive it now; that with a cleansed conscience, and it may be after ten thousand failures, you may set out again. If you have dishonoured the dignity of your profession by unworthy compliance with sin, having "lien among the pots," He will pardon you this, and help you to regain your lost character and make you honest again. He will enable you to attain a perfect integrity to the last farthing, forgiving your many sins against right. Most wonderful of all, He will restore to you your purity like an angel of God. Forgiving your lack of grace, He will make you lovely and full of virtue, and, whereas He has seen nothing in you to approve, you shall not fail of His praise.

God will be with us, crowning our effort. His peace is more than His mercy and merciful help. It is the full sum of all His heavenly blessing. Peace is the deepest word in all the Scripture; the profound blessing of the Old blessed over again in the New. "Great peace have they that keep His law, and nothing shall offend them." Those who are diligently striving after holiness have the calm, tranquil confidence that all is well with them. Others may have transient joy, superficial excitement, and the irregular, capricious fluctuations of religious feeling, without much settled devotion to holiness. But that deep peace—the secret of the Lord—is the pre-

cious prerogative of those who are pursuing the image of God, and are thinking only of that. They have their peace in this life; not a word is said of the life to come. It is a peace which "passeth understanding": in this like the "love of Christ, passing knowledge" from which it springs. It must be felt to be known, for no preacher can describe it. It is the sacred rest of the soul after its disordered wanderings; its deliverance from the unrest of self, the tumult of passion, and the slavery of sin. It is the rest which Jesus promised to those who learn of Him; the peace of grateful release from the past, of present rest in God, and of hope to be with Him eternally.

Let us, brethren, carry away with us this sacred and stimulating exhortation, and resolve to set our thoughts with more earnestness than ever on the perfection to which we are called. Our standard must be high, as high as the mind of Christ; too high it cannot be. Let us aim at it in the humble diligence of a devoted life, spent in the ceaseless contemplation of the Supreme Example, and evermore remembering that we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us, to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

XIII.

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."—Eph. v. 17, 18.

THIS wonderful exhortation, found here alone, gathers up into one clear full utterance the teaching of Scripture as to the inhabitation of the Christian by the Holy Ghost. It is the final practical issue of every doctrine and every promise concerning His influence.

Especially it may be viewed as the direct application of all that is said in this epistle to the Ephesians.

The epistle is itself "filled with the Spirit;" and in this injunction the sap and pith of its testimony bursts into flower and fruit. No one portion of the New Testament bears so rich and clear a witness to the Spirit's operations, influences, and indwelling. But every testimony finds in the words of my text its finish and consummation. It is—to borrow the words of the next chapter—a "commandment with promise;" a commandment following upon every promise or privilege the document has set forth. I shall, therefore, connect it with the leading declarations which precede, as they refer to the believer's consecration for God, his interior renewal, and his union with the holy fellowship of God's people; invoking the light and aid of the Holy Spirit Himself.

I. We are taught at the outset of the epistle that on believing in Christ **we are sealed** by the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance: the seal indicating that we are God's possession, the earnest indicating that God is our possession. And of this mutual or reciprocal proprietorship that one and the selfsame Spirit is the pledge.

Believers are sealed for God as His own. Whatever other meaning the term may have, it certainly expresses the Divine appropriation of the whole man: "this soul is altogether Mine." The Christian penitent has entered into the secret of the eternal covenant in Christ. He was living to himself, to the world, to the god of the world. But he has heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation; by grace he has made the great surrender, and has been accepted in the Beloved. The transfer has been ratified and sealed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, given by God and received by the soul as the token of acceptance. The seal is impressed upon the whole man, and all that pertains to him: a broad and sacred stamp which includes all that is relatively his and absolutely God's. It is upon his spirit, and soul, and body; upon his mind, and heart, and will; upon his inner and his outer man; for time and for eternity; a universal signature that allows nothing to be exempt. All is sealed for God to the time of the final claim, when the Lord shall gather together all that is His; to the "day of redemption," when the body shall be rescued from the grave, and restored to the spirit then redeemed from all impurity and the possibility of sinning for ever.

In applying the text we must change the figure, because the seal is a Person, the indwelling Holy Ghost. The exhortation to be "filled with the Spirit" is only another form of the command to yield up ourselves entirely to God. It tells us that we must establish it in our minds as a law of our religion that our whole being must be pervaded by the Spirit of consecration. Not, remember, that we are to expect this as the distant issue of a life of struggles, or as the final baptism of the Spirit of Christianity; but as the present gift and, indeed, as one of the earliest gifts of our redemption. The body, indeed, must wait till the great adoption comes; but the soul is to be consecrated now, and consecrated from the beginning. There must be no question about this. "We have an altar;" it is the altar of God, which Christ once sanctified to receive us and our offerings; and this altar remains for the presentation of our whole self which the Spirit will consecrate. There may be many questionings as to the nature of Christian perfection; and as to the possibility of the entire destruction of sin. But there can be no doubt about this; rather there ought to be no doubt about this. We do not understand the first principles of religion unless we believe that is the fundamental, universal law of the very conditions of the Christian life that we may and must be now entirely filled with the Spirit of consecration. Most certainly this perfect oblation is in one sense the end of all our discipline; most certainly it is in another sense the very beginning of it.

What is it, then, that thwarts, or may thwart, the Spirit's law of entire devotion? Without as yet re-

ferring to the immediate context, let us turn to another passage, in which the apostle a second time, and in the most solemn manner, introduces the sealing Spirit. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth:" this begins a long strain of reproof, running through vain and graceless or unprofitable words, foolish talking and jesting, unholy imaginations, and the impure acts that follow, with all uncircumspectness in the walk, that "grieve the Holy Spirit of God by Whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Our thoughts, words, and acts of sin prevent His entire consecration. If the tongue, the eye, the hand, the imagination, or anything that is ours, is desecrated in the slightest degree or but for a moment, He cannot give us wholly to God or keep us wholly His. The sealing Spirit is not easily driven from the house which He has begun to inhabit: it is long before He leaves it to us desolate. He does not soon cast us from the altar as dead coals. But a very little thing will hinder, and long hinder, His filling the soul with His consecrating presence. Though He is slow to depart, He is easily quenched in His holy influences and grieved in His holy resentments. Take this to your hearts. Say nothing about the possibility of an entire and perfect devotion until you have made the experiment of a clear and full renunciation of every habit that takes away part of you from God and His service. Not till then can you be "filled with the Spirit!"

Now look at the counterpart of God's inheritance in us: our inheritance in Him. As the indwelling Spirit is the seal of the former, so He is the

pledge and firstfruits of the latter. The earnest is always of the same nature as the full gift; the firstfruits are the same as the ripe harvest. The Holy Ghost is given to us as the present indwelling God, Who is the soul's only satisfying portion in time and in eternity. Our immortal spirit, formed in the Divine image, must have and can have no real inheritance but Him who made us. As it pleased Jehovah to say, "Israel is the lot of Mine inheritance," so His servant made bold to say, "God is the lot of my portion." We must not be misled by the term "earnest." It does not mean that we have a partial inheritance in Him during the present life. That cannot be. "God is not divided." As to the lower elements of our inheritance, and its individual experiences, it is true that we receive them on earth only in part. But the Triune God, the Father, the Son, the Spirit, inhabits the regenerate soul perfectly and undividedly. That this inhabitation is only in earnest simply means that the indwelling is according to the capacity of our present limited state. He gives Himself wholly, but in such manifestations as we can bear. St. Paul and St. John fell as dead when the Saviour shone upon them with something more than the ordinary light of His manifestation. Be sure you misunderstand not this earnest. It is not that the Spirit is given as the pledge that the Father and the Son will hereafter dwell in us. We may now be "filled with the fulness of God." But fulness is a comparative term. So far as we are capable of receiving Him, God gives Himself entirely to every one of us as an inheritance.

How blessedly here does the inspiring exhorta-

tion come in. "Be filled with the Spirit:" count this your right; and only hinder it not. Reckon it your precious privilege to find your supreme joy and delight in the inhabitation of your God. Set your heart's desire upon a state of life in which He shall be all in all to you: and that not as the future crown of your finished experience, but as the object of your immediate hope. The exhortation speaks to you as having in your own power this glorious enjoyment. The Spirit is in you: "be filled with the Spirit." Let Him, for He desires it, pervade you through and through with the love of God. Many forms does the injunction assume; but always as speaking of one supreme interior blessedness. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." "Delight thyself in the Lord, and thou shalt have the desire of thine heart." In ancient and less favoured times the secret of the Lord—this is the secret—was found out; as by one who said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee?" "All my springs are in Thee!" Be sure that the Spirit, Who knows all the secret springs and possibilities of our nature, is given to fill them with their true blessedness and joy. We were created to be happy! Still more, we were redeemed to be blest!

Again, I ask why it is not thus in our experience? St. Paul tells the reason. As the Holy Ghost is jealous of everything in us which is not given to God for His own, so is He jealous of everything which prevents our making God, and God only, our joy. Our

souls are, alas, too apt to resort to other satisfactions. Hence, also, the Spirit's sacred grief. We mingle other cups with the cup of salvation. We have other wine than the wine of the kingdom. The apostle puts here the extreme case of such infidelity. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess:" an extreme one, indeed, for the Christian who flies either for consolation or for excitement to strong drink has for the time said farewell to the joys of pure religion. The warning, however, is a general one under a particular aspect. There is other excitement, stimulant, refreshment, solace, than that of wine: there is other wine than that which physically intoxicates. Remember that the enjoyments and satisfactions which are not received from God, or from His hand, or with His sanction, or as part of His blessing, are all in excess. Everything is a superfluity which beclouds the interior heaven of the soul, or hides or darkens for one moment the face of Jesus within. Be earnestly resolved to renounce and forsake them all. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon": you cannot partake of the Lord's cup and of the cup of this world. You will never know how happy you may be in God until you have given up all: in intention and aim literally all. Till then you may have the Spirit; but filled with the Spirit you cannot be.

Let us combine these two views of the Holy Spirit's signature before we pass on. Together they carry with them the whole doctrine of a personal devotion to the living God; and, if we blend with them the high injunction of the text, they exhibit to us its highest perfection. Let us not fail to remember the

unqualified fulness of the privilege. One great impediment to a life of entire resignation or self-surrender to God is the secret suspicion that it is too high for the present estate. Until we are rid of that subtle mischief of the unbelieving heart we cannot enter into the perfect rest and assurance of spiritual life. We must leave our gift before the altar, and be reconciled with the wonderful promise, and then come back and present ourselves. The Spirit waits to make us wholly God's; and to make God wholly ours: Himself being the Ratifier and the Seal of this mutual giving and receiving, this most blessed covenant of mutual inheritance. "Be filled with the Spirit:" and in His fulness you shall find how precious is the unity of these two different consecrations. "I am wholly the Lord's; and He is wholly mine: the Holy Spirit being common to Him and to me." With what an unutterable dignity and sanctity does this invest the Christian life!

II. There is another rich cluster of passages concerning the operation of the Holy Ghost to which our text, and its commandment with promise, may be applied: those which speak of the renewal of our nature and its perfect interior sanctification.

The greatness of our privilege is exhibited in that wonderful prayer for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost which preceded the injunction to be filled with the Spirit, and was still lingering in the apostle's mind. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in

your hearts by faith." This signifies no less than the perfect invigoration of the new nature unto all holiness, so that Christ, the Strong Man, may be the strength of our human weakness, and the new life of our life : inhabiting the soul, and making that word of the apostle more than mere figure, "not I live, but Christ liveth in me," so filling it with all the fulness of God. Remember, brethren, that this prayer is a promise. We must not think of it as a transcendent effusion anticipating the glory of the heavenly state. It is simply the expression of the common Christian privilege ; as much so as if it said : "The Spirit is given to drive out all your sin and self, and put Christ in its stead, and fill your inner man with the fulness of the life and power of God." The supplication would be in some respects inapplicable to the heavenly state. It is perfectly adapted to the present life. And it tells us better than many other words what it is to be filled with the Spirit. What, in short, does it mean but that we may be so filled in our interior nature with the Holy Ghost as to know His perfect power in our spiritual restoration to the image of God, and in the protection of that new nature from all its internal and external enemies.

The former suggests the commandment which is hard by : "Be renewed in the Spirit of your mind." Here there is no limitation. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit now inhabiting, and owning, and belonging to our mind ; and, if He fills that, the soul is perfectly restored to the Divine likeness. The body is not yet to be refashioned ; but it will be hereafter "fashioned after the likeness of Christ's glorious body." Then

will the restoration of the Divine image be complete in the whole man. Meanwhile, if the Holy Ghost fills our spirit, it must be restored to its original beauty, Christ the New Creator being Himself the model. "We are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord." The exhortation is to yield ourselves up to the mysterious transforming influence of the Divine Sanctifier Who can and Who will repair all the mischief and disorder of sin. The omnipotence that raised Christ from the dead, the grandest demonstration of the power of God in human affairs, is the standard; and the Spirit of Christ in us is, therefore, without doubt, able to subdue all things to Himself.

The latter, the defence of our new nature from everything that would mar it, points to another double injunction at the close. While the Holy Regenerator is carrying on our renewal, there are enemies bent upon hindering His work. Those enemies are ours, working from without, yet finding their strength within. But every foe of our salvation is powerless if we are living, and praying, and fighting in the Holy Ghost: "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Filled—for we must apply our text—with the Spirit of communion with God, we have Divine strength always near; and that being so, who is he that will harm us, that can harm us? "The sword of the Spirit" is then literally irresistible in our hands. He gives us the ever-ready application of Divine truth to every kind of peril; and in the power both of His wisdom and of His might we are more than conquerors. Thus

we fully understand how glorious the privilege of the Christian is. The Holy Ghost is carrying on in him a work of infinite power, and defending it at all points with infinite strength. "Be filled with the Spirit."

Again, the greatness of our privilege is exhibited in another prayer for our interior enlightenment in the perfect experimental knowledge of Christ: "That He would grant you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may fully know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." This asks for no less than the rich and clear revelation of Jesus in the soul, through the opening of the interior eye to behold Him; so that it may see in Him and experimentally enjoy in the knowledge of Him all the treasures of the Christian inheritance. Before we had the inheritance set before us as God Himself. Now you see that in Christ all the riches of the glory of that inheritance—that is, all the various forms of blessedness wrapt up in it—are to be revealed to the soul through the Holy Ghost. This is a great prayer, but it is simply a great promise; and, more than that, a plain declaration of our present privilege. Let the injunction of our text be brought to mind after reading this promise, and what an abundant blessedness it presents to our attainment, whether as referred to our inward experience or the fruit of it in our outward life!

Hence to be "filled with the Spirit" is to have every, the last, vestige of doubt and indistinctness taken away from our interior knowledge of Jesus! It is the candle of the Lord so lighted as to leave "no part dark." What a rebuke is this to the ordinary enjoyment of Christian people! It is most undoubtedly your privilege to have a clear and rich experience of the things of Christ, such as is meant by His manifesting Himself to the soul. I am not speaking of any absolute perfection of knowledge, or of the lighting up of all mysteries, but of something far better: the cloudless vision of the Lord within. The miracles of the Gospels often illustrate this; such, that is, as had to do with the bestowment of sight. But one of these records in particular is very instructive. The Saviour's hand seemed once to fail of its wonted power. He touched the eyes of a blind man, and that after having led him by the hand; yet the cure was, nevertheless, only a partial one. The man saw his fellow-men, but as trees walking: apt type of too many of us. But how encouraging is that instance of seeming failure when we read on and penetrate its secret meaning. While we are thinking how precisely that expresses our own state, our indistinct and wavering view of Divine things, the second touch makes the patient see every man clearly. Determine to have that second touch; that is, make it your strong resolution that you will not live without being "filled with the Spirit of all wisdom and spiritual understanding." And the privilege is yours if you remove every impediment, and let Him shine with all His strength in your soul.

Again, to be "filled with this Spirit" is to have this interior light kindled from no material sun, and fed by no earthly fuel, flooding the outer life with the irradiation of all holiness. Here, again, we have in the neighbourhood of the text abundant illustration. "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." This is an exhortation which means to those "filled with the Spirit" the universal knowledge of duty in all the contingencies of life, an ever-present directory in the Holy Ghost Himself, revealing inwardly an unwritten Bible, and enabling us to order our conversation everywhere aright. Hence, again, we read that "the fruits of the light are in all goodness and righteousness and truth." These are the fruits of the Spirit in all that is right and good and true; a universal fulness of the graces and works of religion in the outward life testifying of the fulness of the power of the Indweller. But it is most obvious that the abundant fruits will not appear unless there be within us an abundant energy of life to produce them. Our Lord said, "I have planted you that ye should go and bring forth fruit;" after he had declared, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." But it is equally obvious that these fruits are borne only through our diligence in all the works of godliness. Let it be our strong determination to be "filled with the Spirit," with the sap and vigour of a strong spiritual life, that we may be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God." Let us see to it that all the fruits of the Spirit in St. Paul's Gala-

tian catalogue are our daily produce ; let us resolve that our life, inward and outward, shall be rich in the growth of practical godliness ; empty of self, swept of the last remainders of the carnal mind, and garnished with all the graces of holiness. In order to this let the sun shine upon your heart ; let the whole process of your probation co-operate diligently with the Divine husbandry : " Be filled with the Spirit," and your life will be full.

III. There is yet another group of testimonies to which our text must be applied : those which represent believers as entering into the fellowship of the saints. They are builded together for an habitation or temple of God through the Spirit ; and they become members of the one body of which Christ's Spirit is the life. The temple is the sphere or abode of the Spirit of holiness and worship ; and every worshipper in that temple is exhorted to be filled with the Spirit Whose heavenly influence fills the sanctuary. Now, what does this imply ? The Christian, supposed to live and move and have his being in the holy place where God lives and moves and has His being, is commanded or encouraged to open his mouth wide, and to be filled with the sanctity pervading the place, that he may be a temple himself. The very law of the temple is entire sanctification to God. " Take these things hence," is said of all that is common or unclean. It is not in the heavenly temple only that nothing entereth that defileth : at least in the mystical temple on earth nothing that defileth can remain. St. Paul dwells strongly elsewhere on this argument : " What fel-

lowship hath the temple of God with idols? Ye are the temple of the living God. Therefore cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." But here the exhortation is different. Be filled with the Spirit of the temple. Whatever others are, be ye full of the Divine influence that reigns and seeks to pervade everyone within the holy precincts. Every saint in the temple must become a temple himself: sanctifying the Lord God in his heart. What a blessed illustration is this of the text, "Be filled with the Spirit:" let Him, for it is His desire, fill you with all holiness! Only hinder Him not, and He will diffuse His sanctifying energy through your whole nature; so that your spirit shall be the holiest, your soul the sanctuary, and your very body the outer court of this one temple. Let it be, and it will be. How glorious is the strength of this argument for an entire consecration. But you see that here our discourse returns back at the close to the point from which it set out. Grieve not that Holy Spirit of Promise by Whom, not only ye are sealed on the altar, but become the temple itself.

Hence to be filled with the Spirit is to be always ready with the heart's interior devotion for the public service of worship. They who sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord—having their heart, for it is in the Singular, filled with the incense of gratitude—will delight in the general assembly, where, whatever others do, they will speak to one another and to God "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The new wine of the kingdom makes all hearts glad, and the

result is the highest expression of adoration in "hymns" or canticles of praise to the Divine Being and perfections; of praise in the ancient "psalms" which the Jewish church gave to the Christian through the lips of Christ, the Greater than David; and in "spiritual songs," or compositions of the church itself, setting to music all the divinified experiences and hopes of religion. When we bring our secret melody to join the general harmony, filled with the Spirit, there is no happiness outside of Paradise to be compared with the gladness of the worshipping assembly. It is the joy of heaven begun on earth. Are you a member of this mystical fellowship of worshippers? then see to it that you be "filled with the Spirit."

Again, the believer belongs to that one body which has one Spirit of life. The Church is the temple of God: His fulness, and filled by Him. But the same church is the body of Christ, and all we members in particular. The temple suggests the holiness and the worship; the body suggests the common life and the common service. We belong to the organic body by which our Lord acts in the world.

Now what is it, what must it be, to be filled with the life of the Spirit of Christ, but to have the heavenly vigour and energy of the living Head diffused through every faculty of our being, in virtue of our incorporation into His living body. Speaking to the first representatives of that body, our Lord said, "Separated from Me ye can do nothing, ye are nothing." Every member is supposed to be filled with the Spirit of the

common life, just as every worshipper in the temple is supposed to have the unction from the Holy One making him holy. Of course, it may be said that many members of the living body are half dead while they live: alas, that is only too true. But that is not the will of Christ, who said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Think how dishonourable it is to the living Lord that He should have members in His body only half pervaded with His life: they are in a fair way to be cut off, dried up, and withered. Surely that ought not to be. Let every one of us give a generous interpretation to the text, and determine that the life of the Head shall fill him abundantly out of His abundant fulness. For, in the mystery of grace, every one becomes himself the body of the very Christ. What wonderful words are spoken on this subject! If the worshipper in the temple becomes himself a temple, so the member in the body becomes himself the body. Ponder well, in connection with our text, two most wonderful words. "The Head of every man is Christ:" this surely means that what a man's head is to his body Christ is to him. And this still more wonderful one: "He that is joined to the Lord is One Spirit." There is one body and one Spirit. I am that body, Christ's Spirit is not more His than mine; and I may be to Him His ever-ready, ever-obedient organ: His Spirit moving in my eyes, and hands, and tongue, and feet for His glory. O what a meaning does this give to the injunction of the text: "Be filled with the Spirit!"

And to be filled with the Spirit of this one organic

body is to carry our life and strength into the service of that great church of which we after all are only members in particular. We do not act for Christ in our own independent devotion only. We belong to the fellowship through which He is saving the world. You must be in His service an individual member: giving your strength to the common cause. And depend upon it as an everlasting truth that with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again, as our Lord said to His first labourers. Use what measure of the Spirit's dispensation you have and it will increase: aiming always at being filled with the Spirit of self-renouncing, laborious zeal for the service of Christ, the salvation of souls, and the glory of God. The secret of all success is to be actuated by the Holy Ghost in the discharge of every individual duty; but we cannot command the full energy of the Holy Ghost in any especial work we undertake unless we are generally "prepared for every good word and work" by being in the highest and universal sense "filled with the Spirit."

I have said that our text is the only instance of such a commandment or injunction. But we must all have been thinking of that great first day of the Christian Church, when what is here an exhortation was first made a great reality. The day of Pentecost was the glorious illustration of what has just been said, and, indeed, of all our discourse. Then the ancient symbol or sign of God's indwelling in the Church—whether by the Son or by the Holy Ghost—for one moment overshadowed the whole community of believers. The veil was done away, and the

Divine Trinity made the whole assembly one living temple. Never had it been so seen in Israel before.

The sign has never since been seen. But the great fact it represented has remained true, and will be true for ever: "The tabernacle of God is with men." But remember what followed. The emblem disparted into fragments, and sate upon each of the one hundred and twenty. And yet each fragment of the glory was the whole gift of the Spirit, sealing each for God, as we have seen in this epistle; filling all and each with His renewing power, and adding each to the worshipping and working assembly of the saints.

Then let us, brethren, in conclusion connect the one exhortation of our text with the one great Pentecostal promise on which it is based; and make this our day of Pentecost.

I except none. There are, indeed, some present who have not prepared for it in any sense. They know nothing of the Spirit, and are as if they had never heard that there is a Holy Ghost. They are "sensual, having not the Spirit": that is, they have not the Spirit as a conscious and blessed possession. They are sensual: if not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, and seeking in carnal and disgraceful joys and excitements their happiness, yet they are given up wholly to the things of sense. They are in the way that leads to an entire emptiness of the Spirit. But they have not yet reached that miserable goal: that farthest of all far countries. They still have the Spirit, though they know it not. He moves upon you now, if you belong to that class, prompting you to come. Come to Him; and, though I do not

promise that you shall this moment be filled with the Spirit of blessedness, you shall be filled with the Spirit of conviction, and begin a course of earnest prayer that shall surely end in that richer fulness.

As to you, fellow Christians, who desire but have not all that is implied in this exhortation, come to the Holy Ghost that He may preach it to your hearts. Rejoice over this great commandment with promise. Forget everything but your deep need; and the riches of the offered supply of the Spirit of Christ. Fix deeply in your mind the most gracious truth—hinted at already, but not enough impressed—that the fulness of the heavenly gift is yours if you let it be yours. This is the peculiarity of the injunction: that it is not so much a commandment as an expression of privilege, with exhortation not to forego it. It as it were asks you to let yourself be filled with the Spirit. That He, having once entered your soul, should possess and actuate it wholly is the natural course of things in the supernatural order. Let it be so, and so it will be. Ask your ascended Lord, the Giver of this unspeakable gift, to make this day to you a day of Pentecost, or as of one of the Pentecostal days. Cry unto Him: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst fill me with Thyself!" He will, I am sure, reply: "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" Your swift prayer must be: "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!" And then will He seal your blessedness by speaking the commandment and the fulfilment of it in one gracious word: "I will; be filled with My Spirit!" To Whom, in the unity of the Father and the Son, be glory for ever. Amen.

XIV.

THE PENTECOSTAL TEST.

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"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"—ACTS xix. 2.

MUCH in this narrative is obscure, connected with historical circumstances of which we know little. But there is one thing plain enough, and of universal importance; that the apostle makes the conscious reception of the Holy Ghost a test to detect and explain an imperfect Christianity. Travelling up and down in the service of the gospel he finds at Ephesus a little company of "disciples," who were in some sort Christians, but Christians separated from the common body, and strangely ignorant of the common doctrine and worship. To that company he joins himself for a season. He enters among them with apostolical authority as a sacred inquisitor; and very soon perceives the secret of their isolation. He notes the absence of something essential to the religion he was raised up both to preach and to defend from perversion. The defect which he himself marks, he makes them feel, by putting an abrupt question at the end of their service: "Did ye when ye believed receive the Holy Ghost?" These men prove to be as sincere as they were ignorant; what measure of

light they enjoyed had prepared them for more. They explain their case; they receive fuller instruction; they then and there are baptised into Jesus; and the signs and wonders of a little Pentecost for themselves accompany their full admission to all the privileges of the Christian community.

Precisely in their condition none can be found in the present day. These twelve men were relicts, probably some of the last relicts, of John the Baptist's ministry, whose survival at so late a date is a curious problem with which we have nothing now to do. The peculiar manner of their reception into Christianity, and the miraculous signs that accompanied it, may be explained as tokens of signal honour put upon the great Forerunner and his ministry. There were three lesser Pentecosts after the great one: continuing, though with always lessening demonstration, the original signs. When St. Peter threw open the gates to the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost gave His attestation by repeating some of the wonders of the first day. So also when Samaria was added to the fold, there was a renewal of the same signs; for in Samaria the Great Sower had sown His seed, and the apostolical reapers only entered into His labours. And now a third critical event is distinguished by the same tokens: the Spirit's seal upon the dispensation of the Baptist. After this there are no more renewals of the Pentecostal tokens in the history of the Acts: the extraordinary signs of the Spirit melt into the ordinary. All this is of interest at this time, but our business is with the test so happily applied in their case: a test which, like all the fundamental tests of the Christian

religion, is always authoritative, and may be applied with profit among ourselves. We need not, however, lose sight of the Twelve; they will furnish apt illustration as we proceed.

I. It is obvious, especially at the present season, that this question finds out the weakness of a certain vague kind of Christian faith which does not pay due honour to the person and work of the Holy Ghost. Our Ephesians had nothing beyond this incomplete faith. They were in ignorance of the final and full revelation of the Holy Trinity. All that they knew about the Spirit was the tradition that the Forerunner, whose disciples they were, had spoken of a "baptism of the Holy Ghost" which the Messiah would impart. Of the personality of that Spirit, whether Divine or less than Divine, they had, indeed, only an indistinct knowledge; as also of the person of Christ Himself, into Whose name they were not yet baptised, and Whose Divine mission was as yet concealed from them. They had an indefinite notion that a wonderful personage had been baptised at the Jordan, concerning Whom their master had said strange things; but that Being they could not trace beyond the banks of the Jordan, and all His subsequent history was unknown to them. Hence the supreme revelation of the Son had not to them unfolded the Father; nor had they heard the words in which the Revealer described the Spirit Who should afterwards reveal the Holy Trinity. We cannot understand how it was that these disciples of John failed to become disciples of Jesus in more than name. But so it was; and, as the result, Jesus remained to them a son of man only, and not the Son of

God, while the Holy Ghost was only a Divine influence symbolised by fire. Suffice that they stand before us as the first examples of a large class: there are great numbers in the present commonwealth of Christendom who, receiving the complete New Testament, are little better than these imperfect disciples.

Such holders of a scanty creed are not supposed to be present with us. But, were they present, they might evade the test by asserting that they hold all that is vitally necessary in the belief of a God; that they accept the teaching of Jesus as the best directory of true religion; and that they receive the doctrine of a Divine or supernatural power resting on the human mind, whether called the influence of the Holy Ghost or by whatever other named defined. But, in the light of the day of Pentecost, such a faith cannot sustain the test. The Spirit is God in the unity of the Father and the Son. It is not a matter of indifference how we deal with that holy Name into which we are baptised. As there is no Redeemer for man but a Divine Redeemer, and we must honour the Son even as we honour the Father; so there is no Holy Ghost but the third person of the Trinity. Far be it from us to say that none receive any measure of His influence who do not formally accept His person. But He also claims His honour, and, as the Saviour asked in earlier days, "Whom say ye that I am?" so the Holy Ghost, after the Pentecost, asks the same question concerning himself, "Have ye received Me in My Divine dignity? Does your baptismal faith honour Me in the unity of the Father and of the Son? Whom say ye that I am?"

II. Further, this testing inquiry discovers deficiency in many who have no flaw in their faith as to the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Godhead. They are such as hold a correct creed, and recoil with orthodox dread from any suspicion on that subject; but yet in all their views of personal religion practically leave out the Holy Ghost, as if the day of Pentecost had never fully come.

No truth is more deeply stamped upon the entire New Testament than the necessity of a direct illumination of the Spirit in order to an experimental acquaintance with Christ and His salvation. He is the guardian and the interpreter of all the doctrines of the Christian religion; from its supreme mystery, the incarnation and the atonement, down to its most secret influence upon the individual soul. As none know the Father save through the teaching of the Son, so none know the Son or can "call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." All who read their Bibles thoughtfully must see this; and, in seeing this, they see a very great privilege, and also a very obvious duty. Religion throughout all its parts and processes is a spiritual matter, the result of the influence of One Who is sent by the Father and the Son to apply it to the spirit of man. The Holy Ghost makes the word effectual in conviction of sin, in the energy of faith, in the revelation of mercy, in the renewal of the heart, in the sanctification of the life, in private and public devotion, and throughout the entire administration of grace. Whatever Christianity may be without that direct influence of the personal Spirit, it is certain

that the full power and effect of the New Testament depends upon that. But it is equally true that there may be a general belief of the articles of the Christian faith and performance of the ceremonials of Christian worship without a conscious enjoyment of the Spirit's influence; and, wherever that defect is found, the test may be applied with Divine authority: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

St. Paul applied it after witnessing the religious worship of the Ephesian Twelve. Their ritual was doubtless complete as such; and it was not their fault that it lacked the Divine truth which alone could make it a reality. But to how much public worship, based upon a larger knowledge, might not the question be applied, with the effect of detecting its poverty in the midst of the riches of its ceremonial! How many, forgetting that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," make Christianity too much like a reproduction of Judaism, as if they were "baptised into Moses" again, hide the living Saviour under ritualised sacraments, and, in the perfection of their symbolical worship, forget, or are in great danger of forgetting, its one thing needful. On the day of Pentecost the ancient symbols appeared for the last time and then vanished, leaving behind only two very simple sacramental ordinances and the worship of God "in spirit and in truth." It is not uncharitable to say that in the religious services of a large part of Christendom, East and West, and between the two among ourselves, there is need that

a reformer, like the apostle, should enter with the startling appeal: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Alas! that inquisitorial voice is too often carefully kept out.

But it is possible to be very severe on symbols and ritual, while forgetting that there may be a formal unceremonial Christianity which is equally without the Spirit, much less beautiful, and equally void of grace. Too many, with clear knowledge and constant teaching, are nevertheless content with a religion which is only a round of decent prescribed observances. Their form of godliness is never lighted up by the sun of Pentecost. The Saviour may be to them an object of cold respect, but they cannot say that "He is precious." They wonder at the enthusiasm of others; or, perhaps, they have ceased to wonder, and simply take no heed. They know everything about religion but that which is the result of earnest prayer on the part of man, and direct gift on the part of the Spirit. It is high time that they should begin to study the real nature of the faith they profess; that they should study it in the light of the first day of perfected Christianity. The providence of God has been lately directing the minds of many thousands in this land to the first principles of vital godliness. Never were missions and revival services and spiritual conventions so powerful, never have they met with such a response as we have lately witnessed. And still how needful is the solemn question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

III. This little company in Ephesus—these twelve

half-disciples—may be regarded as the type of a large class of Christians, who have received the Holy Ghost in His preparatory influences, but not yet in the fulness of His sealing and regenerating and comforting grace. St. Paul's question found them disciples of John the Baptist, whose ministry was a baptism of repentance, having its value in this, that it prepared for Christ and His baptism of the Spirit. They had avowed themselves penitents, waiting for the revelation of mercy; their religion went no further than the confession of sin, amendment of life, and the pledge to receive the Saviour when He should come. The Saviour had come, and these men knew it not. How it came to pass that they should have lived the greater part of a century in ignorance of the great events that had taken place since the scenes of the Jordan, it is not for us to ask here. It would be an inquiry more curious than profitable, to investigate the strange phenomenon that there existed up and down the world little fragments and remembrancers of the Baptist's transitory ministry, and that these had their chief centre in Ephesus, so far from Judæa. Suffice that the apostle found them in that position, and took a deep interest in their state. It was matter of profound delight to him to fall in with this new class of men prepared of the Lord for his ministry. He sat down among them and observed their devotions. He heard them speak of the Christ, but not as those who had "been with Jesus." He noted the absence of the name of the Holy Ghost; there was neither the Pentecostal doctrine, nor the Pentecostal unction, in their teaching and ritual. How it

must have touched his sympathies to join in a kind of Christian worship with men who knew not that Jesus Who came "with water" at the Jordan, had gone on to Calvary, and come "with blood;" who knew not that the day of Pentecost had ever dawned, and that the church had put on its perfection then. St. Paul had indeed similar experience in the case of Apollos, that illustrious example of the same imperfect faith. Him Aquila and Priscilla had watched, and marked in his eloquence the same defect; taking him apart, they had doubtless put the same question which the apostle here used as a touchstone; and he had in consequence learned "the way of the Lord more perfectly." But neither Apollos nor these twelve opposed the truth. They were not upholders of a sect that resisted the perfect gospel. As the eloquent Alexandrian embraced the Saviour gladly, so did the twelve; and, after receiving them into the Church, or rather presenting them faultless to the Lord, the apostle went on his way rejoicing.

Remembering that the peculiarity of these imperfect disciples consisted in their being sincere followers of John the Baptist and no more, genuine penitents but no more, we cannot doubt that their history is recorded in the Acts purposely to serve as an illustration of a certain kind of imperfect Christianity. Among those who are in earnest about their religion, a large number—perhaps no class is so large—stop short of the full light and abounding grace which are provided in Christ Jesus. Like these twelve they know only the baptism of repentance. Their sins have been revealed to them but not their Saviour.

They are on the way from the Baptist to the Christ, but only on the way. They are coming to the Lord, but have not fully come; they would see Jesus, but they do not press on to see Him as He would be seen. They are lingering, so to speak, by the waters of Jordan, while there is a voice elsewhere, crying, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." They remain long between nature and grace; having a measure of life which is not the life of regeneration; a penitent life, that is, which is not comforted by the conscious reception of the Holy Ghost.

These Ephesians were without that comfort because they had not heard whether there was any Holy Ghost, or whether the Holy Ghost was yet given. But that cannot be said of any in this day, especially of any among us. Why then do so many fall short of the standard of Christian life and experience and blessedness? The class we speak of is one, but there are several varieties in it. When this question is asked, and the reluctant answer "No" is given, it is not given by all for the same reason.

Some there are, in deep earnest, who cannot be persuaded that religion has anything better for them than the discipline of sorrow. To them the conviction of sin seems the last or the only work of the Spirit. Their view of the glorious gospel is that it only provides for a lifelong penitence the hope of being accepted at the last, its first full and clear forgiveness being reserved for the mercy which will "rejoice against judgment" at the final day. This is altogether a morbid estimate of Christianity. While

others are feasting they mourn, as if they literally interpreted the Lord's words, "When the Bridegroom is taken from them, then shall they fast in those days." It may be that they even condemn the hilarity and good cheer of other Christians, and count those who rejoice in their religion fanatics or enthusiasts. But that is not always or necessarily their spirit. They have learned from some masters a wrong lesson, or a wrong version of the Baptist's lesson; and the effect sheds gloom and discomfort over their whole life. Such a sentiment is not, however, absolutely to be condemned. There is a measure of good at the root of it: if that good is not perverted when found. Doubtless there is a sense in which repentance must continue always; perhaps is never so profoundly felt as after God is pacified. It is certain that it is better to sorrow too much than to cry "Peace, peace," too soon. It is true also that those are not likely to be left to perish who go mourning all their days. But, after all that may be said in its favour, this view of religion is not true to the gospel of Christ. The very word means glad tidings, and no theory can be true which forgets this. Wherever these midway lingerers are found, refusing to be comforted, the Spirit asks as if grieved, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed? If I be a Comforter, where is your strength? If I be the Spirit of joy, where is your rejoicing?"

Of many others it may be said that they are without the "comfort of the Holy Ghost" because their repentance is not sufficiently deep, pervasive and practical: they are not earnest enough with their

penitence, which is the most solemn business of life. They are disciples of John the Baptist, but they need to study more effectually the lessons of their master as they are found in the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. More than that, they are the disciples of the Spirit of conviction, or the Spirit of bondage unto fear; and He will not change His character and become the Spirit of adoption until they have better learned the secret of His discipline in His reproof of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The revelation of mercy to the soul by the Holy Ghost cannot be extorted from Him before the set time; and that set time is often deferred until penitence has had its perfect work. There may be a conviction of sin without a thorough forsaking of it in every form, and there can be no peace from heaven where the exceeding sinfulness of sin is not deeply felt. There may be a conviction concerning righteousness that it must come from One higher than self, without an absolute renunciation of all hope but in the ascended Lord. There may be a conviction concerning judgment, and of the doom pronounced upon the god of this world and all who are his, without such a strong and all-sacrificing resolution as shall make it easy to renounce the world's evil and all that has the condemnation of God upon it. In such cases there is need that the repentance itself should be repented of. These disciples must go back to John again. Rather they must abide still under the preliminary leading of the Spirit of conviction Who waits to afford consolation, but His time is not yet.

Finally, there are many who cannot give the direct

response to this question, because they misapprehend the simplicity of that faith which the Holy Spirit is said to seal. "When ye believed," the apostle writes afterwards to these same men, then joined to the Ephesian Church, "ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." That sealing is secret, silent, and effectual within the heart. It is not always accompanied by certain demonstrations, and kinds of assurance which many require and will not take comfort without them. Undoubtedly there is an assurance of faith which all should expect; but it is the faith which is the instrument of salvation, and not the assurance. If such doubting Christians, hesitating to avow that they have received the Holy Ghost, would examine their deepest feelings they might find that the Lord the Spirit is in their hearts, "and they know it not." They have that unspeakable blessing, a humble trust in the goodness of God in Christ, a filial spirit of appeal to Him, delighting in prayer, a secret joy in the name of Jesus, and a hearty abhorrence of former sins. And what is this but the token of the indwelling Spirit? Let it be granted that all does not reach the height of what we read of in the Acts and in the Epistles. The apostles certainly speak of a witness of the Spirit "with our spirit," that leaves all fear and doubt behind. But, while we look for and wait for that, we must not undervalue what we have. On the other hand, it would be wrong, in the presence of the events which this season celebrates, to doubt that every Christian should expect the Holy Ghost to confirm distinctly the release from condemnation in

the mediatorial court of justice, the assurance of sonship in the Divine family, and the conscious consecration of the soul in the temple of God.

But with regard to this great class, with all its varieties, there is in our question an abundant promise. It applies a searching test; but, as in the case of every test of Scripture, it probes only that it may heal, and detects a deficiency only that it may be supplied.

For there is nothing more remarkable in our narrative than the sudden and almost instantaneous way in which these men were translated out of their partial darkness into perfect light. We feel that the apostle, when he startles them by this swift question, already foresees the result, which is as it were a foregone conclusion. He sees their profound sincerity, and makes haste to fulfil his mission. Mark how rapidly the several stages are run through. The catechising is soon over. The perfect baptism of Christianity is at once received, and a faint remembrancer of the miraculous attestations of the day of Pentecost honours the reception of these disciples of John into the Christian fold. We are reminded forcibly of one of our Lord's miracles, which diverts us indeed from the present subject, but gives it a remarkable illustration. In one solitary instance of His giving sight He permitted His own hand to falter in the omnipotent act. One touch made the blind man of Bethsaida see "men as trees walking;" made him the type of what the Ephesian twelve were, and many of us now are. After showing him to us for one brief moment in this unsatisfactory half-healed

state, the Sacred Hand touched him a second time, and "he saw every man clearly."

This is in harmony with the whole tenour of the gospel revelation, which everywhere points to a simple, beautiful, blessed progression from mourning to rejoicing, from penitence to pardon, from the stern repentance which John preached, as his proclamation of the "kingdom of heaven," to our Lord's brighter announcement of that kingdom as "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Indeed, John himself bears witness to this; for, after he had prepared his disciples, he pointed them to the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He kept them with himself only for a season. And how gladly the Redeemer welcomed them we see in the first page of St. John's Gospel: St. John himself was one of the two who followed Jesus under the inspiration of penitent desire. Nor did they follow the Lord far before He turned and said unto them, "What seek ye?" and when they answered, "Where dwellest Thou?" He bade them "Come and see;" and they tarried with him that night, and never left him afterwards. The gentle Master of grace did not repel them; He did not bid them wait and practise their repentance without the light of His countenance. He received them to His fellowship of life and joy. We hear Him in due time lamenting over the generation to whom Himself and the Baptist were sent, because they failed too generally to mark the design of heavenly wisdom, in ordaining first the denunciation of Divine anger, and then the announcement of peace. "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this

generation? It is like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and crying to their fellows, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." But the children of wisdom justified her procedure. They bowed their heads and hearts in lamentation when their sins were brought to their minds, and they rejoiced with exceeding joy when the tidings of forgiveness were proclaimed. So has it been in all ages since the Baptist and the Saviour ceased their personal preaching. That ministry is ever continued in the faithful preaching of the Gospel. Both John and Jesus, with reverence be it spoken, have committed their doctrine to the word of reconciliation. Or rather the ministry of both is united in the office of the Holy Spirit. He works conviction of sin in the consciences of men, solely that He may reveal Himself as the Comforter and the Destroyer of sin.

IV. The application of the test is not yet exhausted. I now carry it into the interior circle of those who are the regenerate and sanctified members of Christ's mystical body, and it detects in them whatever is inconsistent with the high privilege contained in such a gift as the Holy Ghost. They have received the Holy Ghost, but they have forgotten the conditions on which His indwelling presence and testimony and effectual energy are suspended. They have neglected and misused a gift of inestimable value, and have fallen into the habit of "grieving that Holy Spirit of promise by whom they were sealed." They have not been careful to remember that this great power of God is powerless

where the human energy is not put forth in co-operation with Him. Hence, when they hear the question of this text, it serves only to remind them of better days, the light and joy and peace of which are gone. It gives birth to another series of most melancholy questions, the answer to which wrings the heart. Having received the Spirit of Christ, why have you not been one with Him in temper, and desire, and act? Why are your evil tempers untamed, why is the love of the world so strong, why is the beauty of holiness so unattractive, why are the old habits so unchanged, why is devotion so irregular and cold, why is the Saviour's image so dimly reflected? What an answer does their life give to the leading question? Alas! what are they the better for the Spirit of regeneration, adoption, and holiness! By a course of careless living they have become habituated to grieve the person of the Holy Ghost, to quench His influence, and to restrain His grace. They are also in that doleful way of backsliding which leads back to the far country again, where degenerate Christians become "sensual, not having the Spirit."

But if the question awakens a profound regret, in that sorrow there is much hope. The Holy Ghost is not easily driven from the soul He has once inhabited. He hates going away even as He hates putting away. The duty of such a troubled and uncomforted Christian is plain. There is occasion now for a fresh repentance, for a new baptism of which the Baptist had nothing to say, for the superadded grief on account of having grieved the holy and jealous

Guardian of the soul. But that sorrow ought to be very keen and pungent and practical. We need no human confessor to whom to tell our sins, no human director to tell us what to do. He whom we have offended is both Confessor and Director to us. If with all our heart we ask for the tokens of reconciliation, He will give them ; and, in the plenitude of the mercy that "upbraideth not," perhaps as richly as He gave them at the first.

V. The last application of our test is not so gloomy. It detects those who are not fixing their minds steadily on the supreme design of the Holy Ghost in their entire sanctification. Some there are who undervalue the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost as received by the believer on his first being united to Christ by a living faith. They read the question as if it ran thus : "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" that is, at some epoch of transcendent consecration raising the regenerate life into a higher sphere. Now, it is enough to say that the exact force of St. Paul's words is this : "Did ye on believing receive the great gift of the Personal indwelling Spirit?" There is no distinction made in Scripture between a state of regeneration and a state of higher religious life. The same Holy Ghost Whom we receive in the new birth is given for our entire consecration ; and from the very beginning there is no limit to His consecrating energy and grace. One and the same Spirit is given for all future growth in holiness unto perfection. It is wrong to speak of the regenerate life as separated from a higher kind of life. The higher life is only

an increase in degree. The Spirit of sealing was given to every one when he believed; for this is the meaning of St. Paul's words, "After that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." He is the Spirit of promise in two senses: promised to every believer, and in every believer the promise of the highest attainment. Of course there are constant baptisms of that Spirit, according to the fervour and faith and prayer of the believer: illapses of grace which seem to infuse another life, like a new sun rising on the day. But this is only the more abundant influence of the Spirit we already have. You must not undervalue the grace you inherit as having the Holy Ghost. Do not pray as if you had Him not. Pray that His strength may be increased within you. And be sure of this, that if you stir up the gift that is in you, as a regenerate Christian, feeling the new hope and enjoying the assurance of acceptance, you may ask the most abundant sanctifying power of the Spirit, and it shall be given you. There is no limit to His present willingness to fill, and rule, and consecrate the soul.

Let us remember, in conclusion, that we celebrate a season which only began at Pentecost, and has never come to an end. The day which dawned then is now in its full meridian, and every one of us may so enter into the fulness of its privileges as to be able to give a clear and unfaltering and most joyful answer to the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed?" To Him, in the unity of the Father and the Son, be glory for ever. Amen.

THE TONGUES OF FIRE.

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"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."—Acts ii. 3, 4.

THE first part of this sentence marks the end of the ancient symbol of the Divine presence among His people; the latter part introduces the great Reality which superseded and displaced it for ever.

It may be said, generally, that on the day of Pentecost the reign of symbols closed. Not indeed that Divine worship was to be absolutely released from outward and visible signs. The water of baptism was sanctified for permanent symbolical service; and the eucharistic elements were blessed on the holy table for a continual feast until the Lord's return. But a great change passed over the relations of the signs and the reality; whereas in the former economy the symbols everywhere disguised from all but the most piercing faith the things they signified, in the perfected dispensation of the Spirit they vanished because He to Whom they all paid tribute was manifested. Henceforth they are of use only to

illustrate the meaning of that which they formerly typified. This service they always render. And it is a most important service. For instance, the outward and visible token which on that great day of fulfilment accompanied the advent of the Holy Ghost taught its lessons as it had never taught them before. Before it finally departed, and as it was in the act of departing, the emblem assumed a new and hitherto unknown form. Its expiring manifestation explained the descent of the Spirit as the glory of God revealed in the church, and resting upon every member of it; and, taking the semblance of a tongue, it plainly betokened the effect of the new indwelling as going back again in new and sanctified utterance. On these two subjects let us dwell, in humble dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost Himself.

I. Light, diffused or condensed into fire, had been from the beginning of the world the elect token of the presence of God upon earth. From the beginning of revelation down to the Pentecostal end of symbols, this had been the supreme and supernatural sign of Jehovah, Who thus declared that He dwelt among men. A light, drawn from no material source, and fed by no created fuel, hovered over Paradise, rested upon the Patriarchal altars, irradiated the camp and congregation, trembled over the mercy seat, and was the glory of God filling his ancient temple. Now, when the new temple is consecrated by the advent of the Spirit, and sanctified by His inhabitation, the emblem appears for the last time; and marks by the manner of its appearance a change which carries with it the very essence of the Christian privilege.

Although we have no express authority for saying so, we must not doubt that over the whole company of the prepared disciples there rested for one brief moment the glory of the Lord. Before it was distributed, so to speak, into fragments, it was diffused over the entire congregation of the one hundred and twenty: not in overwhelming effulgence, and not remaining long enough to overpower, but as a swift and sudden token that Jehovah had transferred His dwelling-place from the holiest to the upper room, and that His tabernacle was, in a sense unknown before, with men. But specially the Holy Ghost this signified, that the Trinity was no longer a mystery hidden from His people; that the veil which concealed His Triune manifestation was done away in Christ; and that henceforth His glory would be a spiritual and invisible but most real presence with His church. The day of Pentecost perfected a revelation of this supreme truth which had been gradually disclosed. Within the ancient veil the glory of God, as the older Scriptures termed it, the Shekinah, as later Judaism termed it, had symbolised for ages the Three-one God. The Son had come in the flesh, and fulfilled His part of the symbol: "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Onlybegotten." And now the Spirit of the Father and of the Son descends to fulfil His part also; and, when the church was "filled with the Holy Ghost," it became a temple or "habitation of God through the Spirit." Brethren, let me impress upon you this great lesson of the day. Remember that in all your assemblies, greater or less, the Triune glory is in your midst. Make it the

tranquil effort of your faith to keep this sublime thought present in your minds. We have not the ancient tokens; but let not that absence rob you of the reality. We are not in the court without, conscious only that there is within the curtain an awful mystery of light. Let our faith raise us above the need of such help as this. Let us remember in how glorious a sense we are "come unto Mount Zion;" that in all our assemblies there is better than a cloud of glory; that the supernatural world is around us, and that the Triune God is in our midst. O how different would our most familiar ordinances become to us if we only grasped this truth by a faith that sees "Him Who is invisible."

All this I have said we read into the text. But there is one most significant note that is most plainly recorded. Whatever the diffused glory was it presently departed, "and sate upon each of them." In ancient times the light of the Lord was never known to single out and rest upon any individual. True that Moses and Aaron, as the representatives of the people and as types of a Higher than themselves, received occasionally its irradiation upon their foreheads; and David sometimes speaks or sings as if he too had received it and remembered it well in his wanderings. But, generally speaking, this express and distinguishing token was reserved for the congregation; Israel was God's son, singled out from the world and sealed by the light of Divine acceptance among the nations. Now, however—mark it well—the order is as it were inverted. It is not expressly said, though implied, that the glory rested upon the

company ; but it is said, and in a most emphatic manner, that the token of the Divine presence and acceptance was divided into fragments and "sate upon each." For one brief glorious moment each Pentecostal Christian had the sacred light trembling upon his forehead ; the most wonderful symbol earth has ever known ! And what did this import to the elect recipients of this high favour, but that God accepted, and sealed, and set apart for Himself, every one of them without exception ? They were all prepared for the kiss of peace. Judas was gone to his own place. Peter's delinquency had been pardoned again and again. Thomas had already made the great leap from the deepest incredulity to the most sublime confession recorded in Scripture. They were all forgiven men and women. They had been reviewing the past, examining and judging themselves, comforting and encouraging each other, and waiting for the promise of the Holy Ghost. And now He came, in the fulness and glory of His sealing office, to imprint upon their foreheads by a symbol, upon their consciences by His secret influence, the assurance that their sins were blotted out, that their renunciation of the world was accepted, that their self-abandonment to the Lord was well-pleasing to Him, and that He made them His own from that day for ever. Never was a more blessed truth more blessedly taught. No words could so beautifully convey the secret than this uncreated light hovering over their heads. But the symbol went again as suddenly as it came. It could not remain ; for, if it did, the conditions of probation would be changed. Who could sin under the irradia-

tion of that heavenly token? And how could the world go on if the elect carried about with them this mark and signature of heaven? But the reality remains: "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." What the evanescent light taught for a moment, the entire New Testament now teaches for ever: that the penitent believer in Christ is released from condemnation and knows it; that the prodigal led back to the father by the elder brother becomes a child of God, and has "the Spirit of adoption;" that the worshipper laying himself upon the altar is silently sealed for his Maker by the Spirit of consecration. We need not, we ought not to need, we do ill to sigh after, the august symbolical token. Every one of us may have the interior light, the seal of heaven, and "be filled with the Holy Ghost" as the witness in himself. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit."

Brethren, I have said that the sign departed, never to be repeated. From that hour to this we have no evidence that it has been renewed, save on those rare occasions recorded in the New Testament which confirm the rule of its departure. But let us dare to regard it as restored. Let us in the humble use of our imagination suppose the symbolic token vouchsafed to honour the occasion on which we meet this day. On whom of us would the heavenly distinction, the fiery token of Divine acceptance, rest? Would the glory of God, diffused undoubtedly over this assembly as over that of Pentecost, divide as that did, and sit upon each of us? Whom of us would it leave utterly unvisited, thus shut out from God and the fellowship of His saints? Over whom would it

waver and hesitate, and then retire? On whose forehead would it linger, with the promise of descent, as if waiting for the last act of self-surrender? What melancholy separation would it make between otherwise chief friends? What husband would it separate from the wife; what brother from sister; alas, and what communicant at the Lord's table from his fellow? Let every one ask of his secret conscience, Would it rest upon me? These are solemn questions; but, though we may profitably put them, we must withdraw them again. Such tokens of heavenly acceptance or rejection we cannot expect. But we may turn with confidence to the great reality, about which there is no doubt. Make it your steadfast resolve, fellow Christians, never to live without the thing that this symbol would signify. Seek earnestly, until you find it, the interior sealing of the Holy Spirit, assuring you of your pardon and peace so fully that the last vestige of fear may depart; giving you as blessed an evidence that you are the Lord's own possession as if the tremulous light overshadowed you everywhere; and imparting to you the same sense of separation from the world and consecration to God as those rejoicing ones whom the Lord on the day of Pentecost avouched for His own before men and angels and each other. Seek this, I say, until you find it; and when you have found it so live as to lose it no more for ever.

But we must not forget that the light which rested upon these Pentecostal Christians was the light of a sacred fire. This introduces another novelty in the final appearance of the symbol. In ancient times,

and in the former temple, the two were always distinguished. The light was shut in behind the veil, or was only diffused through the courts ; the fire burned continually on the altar without. But now the light is the fire, the fire is the light. Both had then one meaning in the descent of the Holy Ghost, Who sealed believers for God by an outward token, and then filled their hearts as the refiner and sanctifier from sin ; according to the Baptist's prophetic word, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Three baptisms of the Spirit are made prominent in Scripture : with oil, with water, and with fire. The baptism of water we receive once, as a symbol of the washing away of sin for all life. The anointing with oil had its highest fulfilment in the Redeemer Himself, from Whom we derive "the unction of the Holy One" continually for our consecration to holiness. The fire remains as the sacred emblem of the interior purification of the Holy Ghost : signifying, on the one hand, the destruction of our sin ; and, on the other, the perpetual ascent to God of all that is thus purified with acceptance on the interior altar of our hearts. And here, though the sanctification of the whole assembly is not omitted, it is obvious that the symbol has, strictly speaking, only a personal signification.

It needs no proof that, throughout the symbols and prophecies of the Old Testament, fire was an emblem of the searching energy of the Holy Ghost purifying the soul from its corruptions. Wherever the light of God's accepting presence rested, hard by was the altar on which fire consumed whatsoever God could

not accept. With the mercy seat, and the glory upon it, corresponded the brazen altar with its sacrificial fire. But it is in the later prophecies that this emblem occurs most frequently. In that chapter of Isaiah which predicts the day when the "cloud by day, and smoke, and the shining of a flaming fire by night," should be spiritually restored to Mount Zion, it is said that they should be cleansed, and their filth removed "by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning." And this is spoken of as the discipline of "every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem" who should be "called holy." And in the last prophecy of the Redeemer's coming, He is described sitting "as a Refiner and Purifier:" words which the Forerunner put into their New Testament form: "He shall baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire." On the day of Pentecost that fire appeared for a moment, and then the emblem melted into the reality: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost," as the power of an interior sanctification, keeping up on the secret altar of the heart the perpetual fire which consumes the evil of our nature. In its full evangelical interpretation this is the process of that spiritual discipline which delivers us from sin: whether through the agency of afflictions which burn, or of love which melts away, the evil from our hearts. We cannot but be reminded of our Lord's words, which had a meaning far beyond their significance, to James and John, "With the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptised." Here, indeed, there is an infinite difference. The Saviour's baptism of fire was to expiate our sin;

and in that profound sense we cannot share with Him. Moreover, the fire that came down upon Him found nothing in Him to purge away ; His personal baptism had for its symbol the dove, and for its heavenly commentary, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." With us it is far otherwise. We must enter into the fellowship of our Saviour's sufferings : that our sin may be embittered to us, and mortified, and destroyed. It is still His baptism, but for a different object. He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost ; but the same Spirit kindles that fire within which the Lord came to send upon the earth. And, whether by the sharp discipline of external and internal afflictions, or by the sweet and gentle influences of His grace, whether by the fire that burns or the fire that melts, the Spirit's work must be wrought in us unto perfection. The fire must burn on until it is quenched through having nothing more to consume.

But in its other meaning it is a fire that never can be quenched. Going back from the prophecies to the Levitical symbols we perceive the sacred meaning of the fire on the altar to be this : the refuse was purged out in order that the rich essence of every offering should ascend trembling to God with perfect acceptance. Our sin being burnt out of it, all our lusts and all our impurities being turned to ashes and driven to the oblivion into which our guilt has been cast, the ethereal sacrifice itself goes up to God a sweet-smelling savour. This is the meaning of the perpetual fire on the hidden altar in the secret sanctuary of our hearts. Our whole being must be for

ever ascending to heaven in abiding consecration. The fire sends up all. Interior religion makes the spirit a "whole burnt-offering," or holocaust. God will have nothing less: we must be "filled with the Holy Ghost," as the interior principle of an entire oblation. There were in the law some sacrifices part of which only were burnt. These had their own meaning. But that sacrifice which foreshadowed the entire oblation of Christ, and of every Christian in the fellowship of Christ, was the "whole burnt-offering." As the Redeemer offers in the heavenly sanctuary the oblation that takes away guilt for ever, so the Holy Spirit offers in the sanctuary of our heart upon earth the oblation of our sanctified nature delivered from sin.

Here, brethren, let us once more pause, and bethink ourselves how intimate is the connection between the light and the fire; between the Divine acceptance through the atonement and our interior meetness for that acceptance through the Spirit. And let me urge upon you to remember—what has not much been dwelt upon hitherto—that we ourselves must be the attendant ministers of that holy fire on the altar of our hearts. The fire is kindled from heaven, as it was from the beginning; as it was from the beginning, it must be kept burning from below. You must stand by it, and for ever keep it fed; whether by casting into it what must be destroyed, or by casting into it what must be sanctified and made meet for God's acceptance. The Eternal High Priest by His Spirit puts the fire on your altar; you must be the Levite to bring the perpetual offering. See to it that you minister to it

habitually. Feed it with your lusts, your vanities, your idols, your sins; until, these being destroyed, and through the infinite grace and power of God the very source of them abolished, it shall be quenched. Feed it with your best affections, your holy words, your every action, with the sacrifice of your whole life: it will burn more and more gloriously, until your whole being shall be ready for the perfect sacrifice of heaven; and there it never shall be quenched. Make this the business of your life; and evermore bear in mind the lesson of the day, that the light of God's accepting grace is the same as the fire that makes you acceptable, and "fulfils in you all the pleasure of His goodness."

And remember, all ye who are living without the Pentecostal blessing, that there is a most awful counterpart to this. For all who refuse the grace which this day pledges there is prepared a fire that in another sense "never shall be quenched." From the rejected glory of the Lord they shall be cast out; and, instead of the interior fire of sanctifying grace, they shall be the prey of another fire that shall not sanctify. You cannot but recall the Saviour's most dread alternative, on that memorable occasion when He spoke of the "sacrifice salted by fire." He explained His own figure and enlarged its application in words that cannot be too deeply pondered. "It is better for thee"—He speaks to your poor soul—"to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." What can the meaning of this be but to suggest to

your thought the two opposite fires: one that enters the soul, and purges and torments it for its good, and makes it suffer, and sends it through sharp and, it may be, excruciating discipline to heaven, being then eternally quenched; and the other into which the soul enters to go no more out for ever, to be disciplined in it, but not for the kingdom of heaven? Oh, let the one fire be cast into you at all costs, and rage it ever so fiercely; and save yourselves from being cast into the other fire, which never shall be quenched.

II. Thus far the great symbol of Pentecost has illustrated to us the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the church and His entrance into the souls of individual believers. But now another variation in the sign meets us. That which sate upon each of the disciples **assumed the form of a tongue**; and this was the most characteristic novelty of the emblem. Never before had it appeared after this manner; nor did it ever so appear again. It was the distinguishing signature of this day of wonders. Accordingly, we find the interpretation of this mystery running through the subsequent history of the day. The Spirit gave the church a new utterance, both of praise to God and of preaching to man; and His indwelling, sanctifying power in every heart was made known to God in new confession and new devotion, to be continued for ever. Thus the "tongues as of fire" signified the new Christian response to heaven, answering to the new Christian privilege from heaven. From this time onwards the Triune God was to receive a new order of worship; because the children

of redemption were to have a new experience of grace.

But, whatever utterances should proceed from the voices of Christians must first be dictated by the Holy Ghost. Hence the tongue signified the great truth, that to the whole company, and to every individual member, was given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. As the light descended from heaven and rested upon each, and entered into all as fire, so the tongue came from heaven and spoke its lessons inwardly before they were outwardly heard. The Holy Spirit has no function assigned to Him on which more emphasis is laid than that of interpreting to the church the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. As the Saviour spoke publicly His parables to those who as yet understood them not, and afterwards explained them to His disciples in secret, so now, after having taught all His lessons and manifested Himself publicly for three years, He gathers together His church to hear the explanation of the whole by the final Revealer. From that morning the Divine Spirit has been the supreme teaching authority: to the Third Person has been transferred the great commandment, **HEAR HIM**. He is the Master of our assemblies: whether we meet for simple worship, or mingle with it the hearing of human instruction. Remember this, all ye who in this place minister and all who are ministered unto, that the Director and Guide of all that belongs to Divine service is the Holy Ghost, Who is the specific Representative of the Godhead here and proves His presence by many infallible signs.

On the day of Pentecost the voice of the Church was lifted up in two ways : first, in the utterance of praise, and then in the preaching of the Gospel : its strains being in both devoted to the glad tidings ; the former in extolling God for them, the latter in announcing them to man.

The first morning of the first day of Christianity was occupied with the praises of the wonderful works of God : for thus must we interpret the irregular outburst of many tongues. Up to this hour the hundred and twenty had been engaged in calm and earnest application for the Holy Spirit, mingled with worship and thanksgiving offered as of old, but through the name of Jesus. But now that their great prayer was answered, their worship and thanksgiving began a new dispensation, and rose to a height unknown before. They extolled the finished work of redemption, and all the wonders with which the life and passion and ascension of their Lord had filled their minds. The great Interpreter revealed to them what it had never entered the human heart to conceive : such a view of the glories of the Redeemer and His kingdom as exceeded all the pictures of prophecy, and perhaps surpassed all that has been since vouchsafed. The Spirit—the Tongue of God to man—made known to the first Christian assembly the wonders of the incarnate Saviour as they had never been made known before. And the same Spirit—the Tongue of the Church to God—dictated a hymn worthy of the revelation. It was not, however, the ordinary worship of the Christian temple. It was too high and transcendent to be con-

tinued as a pattern : blending, as it were, the remembrance of the strains of ancient prophetic rapture with the anticipation of the strains already begun in Paradise. It was not such a hymn of tranquil praise and prayer as we afterwards hear in the same church under its first persecution. It was, in fact, a morning service, unique, and never to be repeated. The Spirit so ordered that it should be a type and prophecy of the great future. The worship was offered in many languages and dialects, as heard by the multitudes who came together, which, however, as heard by God, were blended into one. There was no preaching in all this : it was pure and unmingled worship. Hence it remains, brethren, as a perpetual memorial to us of what our holy assemblies should be : first, and above all, worshipping assemblies, inspired by the Holy Ghost with the spirit of pure adoration and praise ; and sending up to heaven its tribute of large and abounding gratitude. How often do we lose sight of this, and let prayer for ourselves and preaching to man absorb the best of our thought and care ! On the first Christian Sabbath man was kept long waiting while God's wonderful works were sung, and always afterwards we find the congregation described as first "praising God," and then "having favour with the people."

But in due time the new tongue was heard in preaching also. The crowds were gathered together by the sound of the Spirit's voice ; they were prepared by the miracle they witnessed for the tidings in store ; and soon the "wonderful works" which they heard the disciples extol they heard one of the

disciples preach. After the sacred tumult of sounds—type of the reversal of the Babel miracle—was hushed, one clear earnest voice was uplifted, and began the preaching of the Christian Church. Simon Peter was the representative of the “great company of preachers” whose word is to continue to the end of time: their representative in his subject, his zeal, the demonstration of the Spirit that accompanied him, and his great success. He was your representative, brethren of the Christian ministry; and that Holy Ghost Who made His appeal so mighty on the day of Pentecost is always as present with you as He was with Peter, your chief. But he was also the representative of the witnessing Church as a whole, as he was when he received the keys. And he teaches you, whom I address this day as a newly constituted Christian community, what your abiding responsibility is: to keep up an unfaltering and zealous testimony for the Lord Jesus in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Never forget that, while your first duty is to proclaim to God Himself His wonderful works, your next is to proclaim them also to man.

But we must, every one of us, bear in mind that the same Spirit is the Interpreter of the deep things of God to the individual Christian. That which was in ancient times the prerogative of some elect rank is now the common privilege. Upon the servants and handmaidens, upon young men and old men alike, upon the sons and daughters of the Church generally, the Spirit descends as the Tongue of the Triune God speaking mysteries to the prepared ear. As we saw

at the outset that the glory so long reserved and hidden was now diffused through the church, and "sate upon each of them;" so now we see that each was filled with the Holy Ghost as a revealer or tongue of God to the interior ear, and also the prompter of the "answer of the tongue" to God. Nothing is more characteristic of the day of Pentecost than the emphasis laid upon the equal privileges of the individual members of the community, and their universal enfranchisement as receivers of the Spirit and instruments of His will. The tongues like as of fire, did not rest upon the heads of the apostles alone, as is too often supposed, but sate upon each of those concerning whom it is said, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." In the perfected religion which the day of Pentecost set up among men, the essential privileges are common; and all those deductions which the economy and order of Christianity require are transitory, not pertaining to essentials, and quite independent of the supreme benefit of the gift of the Holy Ghost. His highest function—that of revealing Christ in all His offices to the believer—is discharged with perfect impartiality towards every soul. Then remember, fellow Christian of every degree, that you must humbly claim your own privilege; and enter the congregation, as you appear before God, with humble boldness. While you must count yourself to be less than the least, and be willing to take the lowest place, you must not forget that there is no privilege in the covenant of grace which is not as free for you as for every Christian who ever called Jesus Lord.

But the symbol teaches you that in the whole worship and preaching of the church you must individually take your part. The perfection of the Christian order of service is that which provides for the melody of all voices. It has been one of our distinguishing characteristics as a people that we have made this provision : the prayer and the praise have alike carried all voices and all hearts with it. But there is a strong tendency everywhere, and it bids fair to hurry us along with it, to introduce such music and other accompaniments of worship as must needs reduce many a poor member of the congregation to a mere spectator. Whatever may be the case in this respect, determine that you will do your duty to the utmost of your power. Let no one rob you of the privilege of singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Remember also that you must take your part in the preaching service of the tongue : not, indeed, as a professed preacher of the gospel, unless you are sent by the authority of the congregation ; but certainly as a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus, always ready to defend His name, to diffuse His glory, and to recommend His salvation to your fellow men. We, as a people, owe very much of our place and usefulness to the measure in which we have made "all the Lord's people prophets," under due regulation. But we could never have reaped this advantage had not our people been trained by the Holy Ghost to give their individual labour freely and without reserve. I make bold to say that there is no quality or attribute of the New-Testament church which we ought more jealously to aim at reproducing

if we have not, or of retaining if we have it. But we can never retain this primitive excellence, and keep our present place among the working communities of Christendom, unless you individually, who make up our societies and churches, do your duty well and use your spiritual and regenerate tongues as the Spirit gives you utterance.

We must not leave this emblem, however, without observing that it is throughout Scripture the symbol of the outward expression of the interior Spirit generally. Let us not think now of any particular form that it may assume; whether of adoration rising towards God, or of preaching directed to man. Let us consider only the universal truth, that the secret of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost cannot be hid. If He occupies the whole heart His influence must pervade the whole life. It is true that much of His most profound and transforming operations are never revealed: they pass the revelation of the tongue, even as they pass the knowledge of the understanding. There are experiences of grace which cannot be poured into any human ear; there is a secret communion between God's Spirit and the regenerate spirit in whom He dwells which it is not His will that His creature should attempt to describe. But the effect must be seen and known, though the secret working of the cause may be hidden. The light and glory of interior holiness must irradiate the life. What the tongue is as a revelation of the character—a witness that seldom deceives—the language of the life is as a revelation of the measure of the indwelling Spirit that is in us. If we have but a

slight degree of His holy influence, then will there be but a scanty evidence of His power. If it is our happiness to have His holy presence filling all the chambers and recesses of our nature—leaving no part empty and no part dark—then will the whole course of our outward life show forth the interior mystery. The more intimately the Divine Interpreter discourses to us, and the more profoundly He reveals the deep things of God, the more fully will our life—although it may be in silence—show forth the secret in its melody to the Lord. What His tongue speaks within, our tongue will show forth without. And here, dear brethren, is the glory of that religion which put on its perfection on the day of Pentecost. It is no other than a soul filled with the Holy Ghost, and the light of sanctity filling the whole life. To that let us all aspire, each in the hidden shrine of his spirit invoking the plenary presence and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Who desires to possess us all and each without a rival. If everything that might hinder and thwart His indwelling be renounced, He will by the necessity of the covenant of grace fill us wholly. This is the lesson of Pentecost: the full inhabitation of the Spirit is the law, to which on the first day of the new economy there was no exception. Alas, there are exceptions many now, as there have always been. But let each one of us determine that he will walk by the ancient rule; and, filled with the Spirit, fill his life with sanctity.

Brethren, our thoughts have been carried back to the first day of Christianity: a day which cannot be understood unless we regard it as a standard for all

the future. Its wonderful symbols vanished; to be repeated no more, save in certain public repetitions at a few leading crises. But its great reality—the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the whole assembly, as the final revelation of the whole mystery of the Godhead in the church, of His personal sealing of individuals for God, and His indwelling as the purifying discipline of grace, of His inspiration of the great response of the church with that of every member in it—remain for ever. It is my happiness to address you as a congregation assembled, as it were, to inaugurate a new beginning in the church to which you belong: a new beginning of union between communities long divided and of the united co-operation of energies that have long laboured apart. May the Holy Ghost, Who came down upon the first assembly, and melted many hearts and many voices into one, come down upon you this day; giving you a token of His present acceptance which it will be impossible to doubt, and a pledge of His future benediction which shall send you on your way rejoicing. We do not expect that any sign from heaven should signalise this memorable day. But we may expect that the Spirit without the sign shall crown our assembly with His sealing and sanctifying grace. And our tongues, hallowed by His fire, shall ascribe together glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Amen.

XVI.

CRUCIFIXION WITH CHRIST.

[Published at the request of the Bradford Conference.]

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ."—GALATIANS ii. 19, 20.

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."—GALATIANS v. 24.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—GALATIANS vi. 14.

SUCH language as this concerning union with Christ on His very cross is peculiar to the Galatian epistle. It gives expression to a thought which nowhere else in the New Testament is put into words. We know that it was ever present to St. Paul's heart; in some passages we feel that he is about to utter it; but it remained unspoken until now, and was never spoken again. To use his own words, the apostle is "very bold;" and the reason is that he is constrained by the enemies of the cross to offer to it the sublimest homage he had ever offered. He binds himself and his theology to the Tree in the language of almost perfect identification. It is as if he would say: "Your false teachers diminish the glory of the Redeemer's crucifixion; they seek to reduce it to an accident of His mission, or to raise to a level with it the rites of the old ceremonial. To me it is all in all,

the alpha and the omega of human hope and destiny. As for my doctrine, and myself who teach it, both are bound up with the crucified for time and for eternity. I am—and that is my last word—crucified with Christ” is the keynote of the whole strain. Wounded in the house of his friends, he flies to the foot of the dishonoured cross, and there, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes, for his own relief, what may be called the crucifixion-epistle. The cross is “evidently set forth” and stamped upon it from beginning to end. St. Paul expounds it, defends it, clings to it, glories in it with all the fervour of his soul: while its enemies are in his judgment bewitched from it, he, by a heavenly fascination, can think of nothing else. Many times we hear him vindicating the cross: there is nowhere else a vindication like this.

But we should do wrong to think these passages only a sacred apology as against enemies. They contain also a calm and luminous exposition of the doctrine of a believer’s union with Christ, under the particular aspect of his union with Christ crucified. Viewed in this light the three texts I have read exhibit the order, the characteristics, and the perfection of personal religion as fellowship with the Redeemer’s death. In the first, the sinner condemned by the law makes the sacrifice of the Great Substitute his own, and is therefore legally released from his penalty. In the second, the flesh, or the old man remaining in the pardoned believer, is hanged up and delivered unto death in the same mystical fellowship. And, in the third, the saint, glorying in Christ cruci-

fied as the ground of his acceptance and the source of his sanctification, is crucified with Him to the world and all created things that belong not to the new creation.

Let us, brethren, read these words where they were written, at the foot of the cross, and strive to forget everything, and while we take a very general view of an inexhaustible subject, let us ask the Holy Ghost, the Interpreter of these mysteries, to show us what is the height and depth, and length and breadth of our privilege in union with the death of our Lord.

I. "I am crucified with Christ" imports such a personal union with the Redeemer's death to the law as implies a necessary freedom from its condemnation and an abiding sense of release. The language here used may be taken as St. Paul's forcible way of describing in his own person the highest prerogative of appropriating faith. I need not say that it cannot mean in any sense whatever an actual participation in the sacrificial offering which delivered us from the curse. In the highest reaches of its aspiration to be one with the Lord, St. Paul's doctrine never contemplates that. It never forgets that in His crucifixion the Saviour trode the winepress alone: that His was the solitary, unique, and unshared endurance of the sentence of justice and satisfaction of its claims. Yet the apostle looks back to that awful passion, and dares to say, "I was and am crucified with Christ." There must, therefore, be a sense in which he regards believers as sharing the virtue of their Lord's death; as so joined with Him that what He thus did they did, and what He thus suffered they suffered. He

does not describe this union by any term; but it is most obvious that his strong figure expresses something beyond a general dependence on the atonement. His language carries much more than that. Mark how impressively the figure is introduced: "I through the law died to the law. The law itself gives me a legal release. I have paid my debt to it. Not, indeed, in myself and by myself; but in Him Whom the law itself accepted as my substitute. I was crucified with Christ. When He was uplifted as a sacrifice, and satisfied the law by dying to it, I was uplifted with Him. He needed not to pay its penalty for Himself. It was for me He paid it, and I paid it in Him; and I am therefore dead to the law. As His infinite love took my place, so my strong faith shall take His: He died, yet not He only; I died in Him."

Here we have the clear statement of the doctrine. But it is more than a doctrinal statement. It is the language of that personal faith which in its majestic boldness appropriates all the benefits of our Lord's death, and is assured by the Spirit that it has a right to appropriate them. Those who believe through the grace of the Holy Ghost are by Him persuaded of their privilege, and therefore can use such language as this without faltering. They can sing in the deepest and richest melody of their hearts, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It would be injustice to the words to make them only a theological formula; the apostle speaks from the very vitals of his own experience. Never, indeed, either before or after, did he so ex-

pressly and directly appropriate to himself the virtue of the atoning passion of his Lord. Never elsewhere does he bring the love of redemption to converge on his individual soul: unless indeed he did so when at the end he cried: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Generally he dilates on the Saviour's vicarious death for the world, or for all who are His, as when he said, "If One died for all then all died in and with Him." But here for once—being deeply moved in spirit—he makes Christ and His cross all his own, and consciously his own: "He loved me and gave Himself for me." And these words are the most affecting illustration of "I am crucified with Christ," which they follow. It is as if he had said: "His love remembered my guilty soul on the cross; He carried my transgressions to the altar; He offered Himself in my place, and endured what it would have been mine to endure. In His death I died once for all, and the sentence of condemnation hath no more dominion over me. I am free, and, believing on my Lord, may defy the law with all its terrors." Brethren, the apostle uttered this most bold and blessed declaration, not in his own name and as his own prerogative, but as the representative of every penitent, and as an example to all who should afterwards believe. You also, joined to the Lord by living faith and one Spirit with Him, may challenge and defy the terrors of the law. In Christ you are safe from every accent of its condemnation; no arrow from its quiver can reach you; its swords are all put up into their sheaths again; and the Mount Sinai

which you now approach is translated into the Mount of Beatitudes.

Always this is the secret of the soul's profound peace; but there are times when it is and will be your supreme and only solace: a comforter when all other comforts fail. St. Paul took refuge in it from the Judaizers who would send him back to the law with its impracticable obedience. Not one of these declaimers on behalf of Moses had made a more sincere and earnest experiment of what the law could do for sinful man. In fact, the earnest young Pharisee once thought that he had found in its obedience the treasure of peace with God. But with what inexpressible joy did he come to hail a Deliverer from the bondage of its requirements. Let the echo from the neighbouring epistle be heard: "What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ. . . . I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness." The same sense of relief that breathes there breathes here also: "I through the law am dead to the law." But we must not let St. Paul have all the triumph; we share it with him. Believing in Jesus, we know that we are secure. If Satan, the great Judaizer as well as Antinomian, tempts us to trust in our own endeavours, we fly to the cross: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If conscience, the advocate of Sinai, reminds us of our multiplied offences and failures, we think of our perfect atonement and say: "Were it ten thousand times worse there can be no condemnation." Hardest of all, if in times of despondency our innumerable and peculiar sins, not against the

law but against the very gospel that saves from the law, are pressed on our spirits, we can still take refuge in the cross, and think : "I have paid my debt in Him Who died not only to discharge the obligation to eternal law, but also to expiate offences against the gospel itself, Who atoned for sins against the atonement, and suffered on the cross for dishonour done to the very cross on which He suffered." And there is, or will be, a time to every one of us, when, amidst the thick darkness that divides time from eternity, we shall find no other consolation than this : "I was crucified with Christ, and my debt is paid."

It is most obvious, brethren, that this is a doctrine as perilous as it is precious : in proportion to its transcendent importance to man is the danger of its perversion. This the apostle was not long in finding out. Indeed, he from the beginning made the peculiar error which corrupts the doctrine of a free non-imputation of guilt for the sake of Christ's atoning satisfaction the object of his ceaseless vigilance. Observe that in the very act of defending it he always puts it in the strongest possible form. You may note this everywhere. But mark it here. "I was and still am, always am as a sinner, crucified with Christ." Now, only suppose this perfect tense of the verb carried out to its extreme meaning. Where are we then ? In the doctrine of an eternal justification which nothing can essentially disturb. However sin may abound through the infirmity of the flesh it cannot multiply so as to outgrow the virtue of the atonement that wraps the sinner round. In many ways does St. Paul meet this subtle enemy.

He appeals to our common sense, to our sure instincts, to the very lesson of the cross itself: "Is Christ the minister of sin?" But nowhere does he more effectually subvert the error than in this epistle, where that most startling form of the truth that gave occasion to it is found.

II. The effectual safeguard of the first doctrine of crucifixion with Christ is this, which we find at a later stage, but flowing from the former as its natural sequel: "They that are Christ's, or in Christ, have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." We rejoiced together while dwelling on the former; let the consideration of this latter teach us to rejoice with trembling.

Observe, first, that the language of identification here fails. With most exquisite precision the apostle does not say that we have "crucified with Christ" the flesh with its lusts. This he could not have said, for our adorable Redeemer crucified no sinful flesh of His own. It is true that on one occasion—the only instance in which outside the Galatian epistle he referred to crucifixion with Jesus—he speaks of "our old man being crucified with Him." That was a sudden flash of remembrance, which, however, passes indefinitely into the context. But here there is nothing indefinite. "They that are Christ's themselves once for all crucified, as it were on His vacant cross, their corrupt nature. He was crucified in the likeness of sinful flesh; they crucify the very reality. It was their own act, at the time of their conversion: the first act of their new and regenerate life. They deliberately, thoughtfully, thankfully renounced and delivered to death the remainder of

their evil. They were constrained by the love of Christ, and by a deep sense of the design of redemption, and by a pervading hatred of the sin that brought Jesus to the cross, to wage a ceaseless war against iniquity in their own hearts. I must press upon you the emphasis of this personal act. Though in His death our Lord condemned sin in the flesh, He did not vicariously deliver His saints from its indwelling. He did vicariously satisfy the law; and freedom from condemnation is, both on earth and in heaven, ensured by the faith that makes His suffering our own. Believers may "reckon themselves indeed dead unto sin," so far as its condemnation goes: in no other sense. Vicariously He does not accomplish the death of the old man still remaining in us. We must enter into the fellowship of His sufferings in another sense, and in another sense die with Him. In other words, every Christian must have his own Calvary, his own cross, set up in the secret shrine of his soul; and crucify there, and keep crucified until crucifixion ends in death, all that belongs to his flesh with its affections and lusts. This, fellow Christians, is the impressive figure stamped upon our minds in the epistle of the cross: a figure that should never be absent from our thoughts.

But, figure as it is, the reality is not figurative. The process by which the old sin lingering in our regenerate nature is brought to death and destruction is one that involves such spiritual suffering and mortification as cannot be detached from the notion of hanging on the cross. The flesh generally is the old man, or the old Adam, whom or which regeneration does

not kill. That must be treated as an interior enemy, never to be spared: having a spiritual body of sin that must be pierced through and through without remorse. It is an indwelling foe which must die; and it is the business of the Christian man to use every sacred effort to hasten that death. Negatively, it must be denied its every gratification. The rule "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink," must not hold good here. "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." If it hunger and thirst for old satisfactions and solaces, we must not feed it nor give it to drink. The least favour shown gives the dying enemy strength; and if it be habitually nourished it will gather power to wrench its members from the cross and come down and save itself: to the loss of the soul that was unfaithful to its trust. Positively, it must be afflicted, and smitten, and abhorred, and thwarted in its every movement. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." The affection that passively waits for the solicitations of sin, always ready to be courted by temptation, must be kept bound to the cross that it may weaken and languish and die; more or less slowly, but with certain decline, sinking towards that torpor and death which the voice of no charmer can awaken. The lusts which actively go out in quest of sinful indulgence—not courted by the world, but themselves courting its sinful delights—must also be kept firm to the cross, that they may not seek their prey. Here, of course, the figure fails us; but the reality is plain enough: both the latent concupiscence and the active desire must be bound to

their living death until they perish from within us. And this is, and must needs be, matter of sharp experience. Let us here forget the details and think of the deep reality. To be crucified with Christ is a phrase the figure of which ought deeply to touch our hearts. We must not forget what the terrible word means. Granted that the virtue of His atoning death is ours without our suffering the keenness of that agony which redeemed us from the curse; yet the true repentance out of which faith springs is not without a real touch of the bitterness of the cross, and certainly the anguish of interior crucifixion is a deep reality. It is not without much wrestling and conflict that our sensual lusts are weakened and tamed. But what are they in comparison of the more subtle and spiritual lusts of the flesh: its pride, its vain glory, its unsubmission to sterner providences, its covetousness, its many idols and its one all-pervading self! Do these die without sharp agony?

There is peril here also. And, as in the case of the former crucifixion the figure is explained in such a way as to defend it. In close connection with the striking words that tell us how stern our task is, the apostle shows that all our work of self-mortification is really only the operation of the Holy Ghost within us. After describing in their abomination the manifold and manifest works of the flesh, he goes on to exhibit the manifold and manifest fruit of the Spirit, living in us as we live in Him. The law of death in our sinful members is only another form of the law of life in Christ. It is the same Spirit Who both killeth and quickeneth. The glory is His alone in Whom we live

and move and have our being. Here is the effectual defence of our doctrine against all its perversions. Though we have crucified our flesh, and keep it bound to the cross, it is not the rigour of our ascetic severity that destroys our sin. It is the breath of the Holy Ghost which withers the fruits of evil in our nature ; and it is His condemning word that blights the tree of evil in us unto its root. Though it is said most expressly that we crucify the flesh, it is not said that we put it to death, and "destroy the body of sin." That is the sole work of the Divine Spirit Who watches the expiring enemy within us, ready to inflict upon it the last stroke that shall despatch it finally. We must not doubt that He will finish the work He has begun in us. Crucifixion is not death ; but it is unto death, and death is supposed to be its result. If we do our part, and spare not our affections and lusts ; if we keep the sinning Adam in us crucified, and watch and pray, and wait in fervent expectation, we shall "see the end." And we shall see it in this life ; for there is no work of sanctification beyond the grave ; and surely there is no necessary connection between the death of the body of sin, and the death of the physical body. The final triumph of the cross of expiation is reserved for the judgment and eternity ; but the final triumph of the cross on which our evil nature hangs shall be known in time. The Holy Ghost, we may hope, will cry over our crucified flesh, with all its affections and lusts stilled and extinguished for ever, "It is finished." Meanwhile we are "led of the Spirit" towards that land of uprightness. We must "walk in the Spirit"

whithersoever He leads; and then most surely His sanctifying grace will perfect that which concerneth us.

III. Nothing can be imagined more triumphant than the manner in which the apostle introduces a third time the leading thought of his epistle, and takes his farewell of it. After having set forth the sacred mystery of his union with the external cross of Christ through faith, and established the doctrine of an internal cross for the mortification of the remainder of sin, he combines the two, and carries his doctrine a stage further, in the passionate tribute with which he closes: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the 'world.'" Here he introduces himself again: partly as a representative of all believers, and partly as a representative of all who are set in charge with the gospel of Christ.

First, we must observe that St. Paul in this generous outburst himself glorifies, and teaches us all to glory, in the doctrine of the cross as blending the external and the internal in one mystery of grace. The two are most distinctly recalled and united in these words: "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers to His vicarious sacrifice; "by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world," refers to his own interior crucifixion, in the fellowship of Christ, to all things outside of the new creation. But the two are now one; and the sanctified apostle glories in the cross because through its virtue condemnation is gone and sin destroyed in the unity of his Christian experience. This is the pith and heart of our grand apostrophe, too often forgotten by those

who fail to mark that it is the conclusion of the whole matter. Some there were who despised the vicarious death of Christ and made it of none effect; some there were who, unduly trusting in that, explained away the necessity of an interior passion. Against both this apostle of the cross protests with holy vehemence. And the force of this protest is this: that the one without the other is not enough, that each is the complement of the other, and that their union is their perfection. Against the former he cries: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ. Apart from that I am dead, twice dead. Crucified with Him my sinful self died to the law; and the life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God. My own life was forfeited; I live, yet not I; my life is given me back in Him and by Him and for Him." Against the latter he cries: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. My old nature is crucified with Him. I die to the world, and by His grace live only the new life of holiness. God forbid that I should glory in the cross save as by it I am delivered from this sinful world and rejoice in newness of life." Let us, brethren, pitch our own strain to this keynote of the apostle. Let us also rejoice in the external and in the internal cross. Let us not dare to triumph in what Christ has done for us if we are not conscious of His purifying work within us. Let the cross be evermore "set forth evidently" to the eye of our faith, that we may look towards it as the secret symbol of our heart's trust in constant assurance that through its virtue we

are saved from guilt. Let it also be the symbol of an interior process for ever going on: the gradual death of every sinful principle within us through our own co-operation with the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. Then, but only then, will nothing make our glorying void.

But, apart from all controversy, and independent of this protest, the apostle's language describes what may be called the perfect issue of the two former crucifixions in his own, or rather in the believer's, absolute separation from all that is in the sinful world. Although the words do not say so, we cannot help feeling that they express what is the consummate effect of the religion of the cross upon the spirit of the saint. We have in them the third and perfect stage of the blessed process of union with the passion of Christ: viewed negatively as the death of the whole man to all things belonging to the world as such, and positively as the life of the whole man only and really in the new creation.

We must observe specifically that St. Paul's "I" and "Me" return. The person crucified here at the close is not the sinner condemned by the law, and offering satisfaction by death; that was, so to speak, the Saul of his history, or himself considered only as a doomed transgressor; and of that, mark you, he says, "I live, yet not I." Dying with Christ to the law, that condemned personality never lives again. "Reckon yourselves," the same apostle says, "dead indeed to sin." The profound and precious idea is that, as a sinner, you have suffered and died, and exist no more. The law cannot find you, for you are

not. Remember the emphasis of the word, "I was and am always crucified with Christ." "I live, yet not the I that deserved to perish. That is gone; and if I remember it at all, it is only to quicken my gratitude." St. Paul called himself, when about to enter heaven, the chief of sinners; but note the connection: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "In me first He showed forth His grace." Though in his grateful memory he was the chief transgressor, in his happy present experience that transgressor was utterly dead with Christ. Hence it is not that condemned person which is crucified to the world. Nor is it the remainder of sin or the flesh that is said now to be crucified; that is crucified to sin, and the victim hanging on the cross is not the whole man, but the old man, offered up by the new that it may perish: the sinful remainder of nature thus dying daily. But they that are Christ's are a blessed host of cross-bearers, following their Lord, and known by this affecting badge. They are "led by the Spirit" in the steps of Jesus, bearing His holy cross, which is their own. Hence it is the pardoned and regenerate soul of the apostle which is crucified to the world. It is the saint himself, restored to his integrity, and, if I may so speak, with the evil nature dead, who glories in perfect deliverance from everything outside of God and the new creation.

For this is the strict meaning of the mutual crucifixion here made so strongly emphatic. What does the apostle tell us but that he, the new man in Christ, offering up the sin of his interior nature to

death, lives a life which is a living death to everything in the universe that is external to the kingdom of Jesus. That the crucifixion is mutual only signifies that it is perfect and entire. We must not press the figure here any more than in the former cases. It is enough that the believer, released from condemnation, and internally dead to sin, goes on to the perfection of release from every sinful creature. He has his citizenship above; and from this present evil world he is delivered. He is supposed to be, he becomes, in his perfection he is, utterly dead to the laws, customs, pleasures, delights, hopes, aims, and general course of this world. All these are no more to him than the raging, tumultuous sweep of life in the street is to the cold corpse within the wall. He has gone out unto Jesus without the camp, bearing His reproach which is His cross, and has already found his continuing city. His conversation is in heaven; and all in this world that he may care for and can enjoy he makes part of his heaven. For, it must be carefully observed that the world which is abjured and renounced by the perfect Christian is only that old moral world which belongs not to the new moral world. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature in a new creation." In the phraseology of Christian perfection life is in Christ, and outside of Him all is death; the world is all that the Sun of Righteousness does not shine upon, that is not wrapped round with the atmosphere of His Spirit, and is not fed with Him as the bread of life. As to any other world it is, touching this matter, indifferent: neither to be re-

nounced nor to be adhered to. So far as it is or may be pervaded by sin, and minister to the old creation, it is of course evil, and the Christian is crucified to it. But, apart from that, a sanctified soul, living for heaven and living in heaven, may as such rejoice in the beautiful world through which his passage lies to one still more beautiful.

The strength and grandeur of this apostrophe is, after all, its tribute to the name of Jesus. We know what St. Paul means by the word "glory" in such a connection as this. It carries with it the whole force of his mind, and heart, and will; his perfect devotion, thankfulness, and love; the concentration of every faculty of his being withdrawn from all other objects whatsoever. Christ's cross is, so to speak, Himself. In fact, there is no possibility of determining whether the apostle meant particularly the cross or the Lord of the cross. We prefer the one or the other, according to state of our feeling at the moment. If we are thinking of our sins, and of our sinfulness, and of our bondage to sense and to the world, it is the cross of our Lord, on which we suffer with Him; we cannot forget our penalty and our desert. But if it is our hope and our aspiration that governs our thoughts, and we are filled with the glory of our vocation, under the full sway of the powers of the world to come, dwelling rather on what is before than on what we have left behind, then it is by Christ Himself that the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world. But, whether the one or the other, the perfection of personal religion is the glorying in Christ alone. Elsewhere St. Paul teaches us

calmly to consider how much reason we have to rejoice in Him "Who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." But here he leads the way by a protest against all other glorying, the strength of which happy are we if we can feel. It is such an outburst of joy and confidence and love, as has scarcely a parallel in the apostle's writings; a glowing tribute which he has scarcely surpassed since he left the world. There is no record of his experience—among the many that we have—which we ought to desire to emulate so much as this. Think of it, brethren, and consider well what it means. It is the renunciation of all things, and of self itself, for Christ; it is the finding all again in Him with thousandfold increase; and it is the glorying in Him as the supreme and satisfying delight of the soul. Who among us would not rather feel what St. Paul felt when he said this, and go through the world uttering this triumphant note, than have all the great endowments and miraculous favours which were bestowed on him, in which he might have gloried but did not, counting them also in comparison but loss.

Such should be the thought of every one of us, while we listen to the apostle as the representative of all. But we cannot read the words attentively without perceiving that St. Paul is more especially the representative here of the whole company of those who were set for the proclamation and defence of the gospel. It is not common for him to distinguish between his own public or official and his own personal or private life. He sometimes does so; and this epistle, in which he is defending his doctrine, is an instance.

He is throughout challenging false teachers as an apostle extraordinarily commissioned by the Lord Himself. And here at the close he seems to stand before the Galatian church and all churches, before the Judaizing teachers and all teachers, to deliver the eternal and unchangeable truth of the gospel in the form of a fervent protest on behalf of the cross of Jesus. Let me take advantage of my present position to exhort my brethren, especially my younger brethren, to preach always and everywhere a gospel on which is stamped, as it were with the apostle's large letters, this threefold cross.

In fact, there is no other gospel than that which proclaims the first of them. Whatever preaching of the way of acceptance with God stops short of a full declaration of release from condemnation, for time and for eternity, for the sake of Christ's atoning death, is not faithful to the cross. Infidelity or unfaithfulness here takes the most subtle forms: no wonder that the apostle spoke of an "angel from heaven" devising them. It is said that God cannot accept us for the sake of another, be that other even His incarnate Son; and that He has only rescued the world, in order that every one restored to holiness through grace may then be accepted on the ground of his new character. Now it is true that no one is eternally saved who is not made holy; but it is also true that his final position before God will be determined by the virtue of Christ's atonement, and not by his own virtue. After all, the atonement must wrap him round as a garment; and even when the last trace of sin is removed, he must still cry, "I was crucified

with Christ." It has been the glory of our Methodist ministry that it preaches the sole meritorious sacrifice of Christ without undermining the claims of the law. Let not our glorying be made void. We are in danger. We may so recoil from the error of Predestinarianism, and Antinomianism its shadow, as to lose, without knowing it, the essence of the gospel. We may come to regard faith in the cross as only setting a man right at the outset; and as then sending him onward, pardoned and accepted, to work out his own salvation. This was the germ which developed into mediæval error. It was by the doctrine we now preach that the Reformation awakened the world. It has slumbered and slept again; and needs once more to be aroused. Let our sound as set for the defence of the external cross not be an uncertain one.

While we are as clear and as decided in our proclamation of the sole virtue of the cross of Christ as any preachers in Christendom, let us also be more earnest than ever in enforcing that which is the shadow of the cross within us. Much, very much, depends on our fidelity here. You know that the only time the apostle spoke of "the enemies of the cross of Christ" he meant those whose lives were without the power of internal and practical godliness. There is not, indeed, any danger of outward persecution if you are faithful; but there is a most subtle danger of unfaithfulness. The current of the age is against it. The evil is that those who have made the internal cross their watchword have hurt their doctrine by forgetting the cross external. Let us show that we can preach it more consistently than they, and more in conformity with

the gospel of Christ. But, apart from controversy, let me urge you to make your theme that interior religion which is death in life, and life in death. Preach it not solely as a blessed power of the Holy Spirit of Christ ruling and swaying and giving rest in Jesus: as if he who is in Christ is sanctified from sin, and struggles no more with self. Preach it not solely as an interior mortification, which has nothing in it beyond severity and asceticism: unwarmed and unlighted by the glow of Christian confidence. Preach the two unitedly; and so will you avoid some of the greatest errors of the age. The exterior cross for death with Christ, and the interior Spirit for life in Christ: these together, but neither alone, are the true doctrine which you, my brethren, must never cease to set forth evidently in your ministry.

Finally, let us all surrender our souls to the mighty influence of the apostle's last apostrophe and confession. Let us make that our own in its deepest meaning. On this day let us supplicate the Holy Spirit to inflame our hearts with the love of the cross. I cannot ask for the Methodist Conference, for my hearers and my brethren in the ministry more particularly, a richer blessing than that every member of it should know something of the feeling that inspired St. Paul when he cried, in the most impassioned words of his life, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

XVII.

EXERCISE UNTO GODLINESS.

[An Ordination Charge delivered at the Bradford Conference, and published at the request of the young Ministers ordained.]

"Exercise thyself rather unto godliness."—I. TIM. iv. 7.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,—The solemn service of the morning must have impressed your mind with the fact that there is a large portion of the New Testament which from this day will belong especially to you. You have heard long extracts from the teachings of our Lord and of His apostles, describing the dignity of your vocation, the extent of your responsibility, the urgency of your duties, the abundance of your aids, the strictness of the account you will have to render, and the rewards of your fidelity as ministers and pastors of the Christian church. These have been only extracts, representing much more of the same kind that will hereafter and henceforth be yours: your own special property in the heritage of Scripture, your Bible within the Bible, a treasury the key of which is put into your hands that you may find there literally all that the exigencies of your office will ever require. You will often direct the several classes of your flock to their own particular field of promise: remember your own. I can-

not lay upon you a better charge than that of reading frequently your own clauses in this great Testament: reading them I mean at set times, with deep solemnity, earnest self-examination, and strong purpose to make full proof not only of your ministry but also of your ministerial inheritance of encouragement. You cannot hear any human addresses the influence of which will be worthy to be compared with that of the quiet, sacred, soul-stirring paragraphs you have heard this day, received from the lips of the Lord Himself through the Holy Ghost. Keep the little book that you have had in your hand this morning: keep it not only as a memorial but as a remembrancer. Read it sometimes, especially on certain commemorations of this day, and ask for a constant renewal of the holy influence of which it will always remind you.

It was observed that our extracts have been taken from the ministry of our Lord and His apostles. This suggests a certain difference to which it will be well to advert. The Master's ordination charges—if I may reverently so call them—were specifically adapted to a peculiar order of ministry, or rather orders of ministry, into which none of us are admitted. The Seventy whom He sent forth, like lesser forerunners, to prepare the way of His own ministry, have, like John the great forerunner, no successors. The directory given to them we could not receive: some of its prescriptions indeed are in direct opposition to those designed for us. The Twelve whom He sent, even as He Himself had been sent, apostles from the Great Apostle, on whom He breathed His own sacred breath, the vehicle of the

Holy Spirit, have also no successors. They were to the world what the Seventy were to Judæa. Though we share a large part in their commission, we have but a small part in their special prerogatives. Hence we do not seek the substance of our addresses on occasions like this in the gospels. It is true that certain eternal and irreversible principles are there, and there in all their majesty and force alone: such as the fundamental law of the forsaking of all for the Lord and His service. But we must go to the later New Testament for the elements of our ordinary commission. When the extraordinary subsided into the ordinary ministry, and the church was finally organised, and faithful men laid hands on faithful men, the full materials of our ordination service were presented to us. The Master is behind or in the midst, but we are now before the Presbytery as a body permanently intermediate between Him and His people. And it is in the Pastoral Epistles, so called on this account, that all other scattered notices are gathered up and made complete. Timothy receives now the charge in full that had been given him in its rudiments when he was ordained; and he receives it that he may communicate it to others and to us. Strictly speaking, it is the one and only complete ministerial charge in the New Testament.

But, while these epistles keep the ministerial character always in view, they never forget the underlying personal character. If you study them carefully and devoutly, you will find that the Holy Ghost is everywhere speaking to you in both relations; never confounding the two, or forgetting their distinction;

but never making them avowedly distinct. The strain is throughout twofold. "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine," "that thou mayest both save thyself and them that hear thee," are specimens of the separation between the official and the unofficial. But the forcible sentence which I have read to you, taken in its context, remarkably blends them again; "Exercise thyself unto godliness" enjoins upon Timothy, and upon you, the necessity of regarding a godly character as the aim of most earnest, systematic, and absorbing personal and ministerial discipline. The emphasis laid upon "thyself" seems to say, "While taking care of others, forget not thine own soul." But the "rather," which our translators have felt necessary in the turn of the sentence, refers to our vocation: "In all your pastoral and teaching exercises, let it be your supreme end to bring your people nearer to God."

I. Then I call upon you to make this day, the day of your official and final dedication to the ministry, the day also of your renewed consecration to the pursuit of personal holiness, or, as the apostle here calls it, godliness. This word signifies a religious character, in all its integrity, with special reference to God; it is therefore the highest idea to which your aspiration can be raised. It is not simply salvation from sin, or holiness as separation from evil, but the result into which both flow. It is religion known by its highest possible name. And this piety, thus clothed with its perfection, you are bidden to seek as the business of your life; as the goal of all other aspirations. There is not in the Bible a more

impressive and stimulating appeal to your own individual energy. The words scarcely allow us to pause for the consideration of any theological difficulty. They assume it as the universal law of the supernatural order, that one condition of our spiritual well-being, indeed of our spiritual life, is our own sedulous self-discipline. Whatever other view we may take of our absolute dependence on grace must be made consistent with this. The harmony between the two truths,—that, on the one hand, the whole process of our salvation, from the first thought of good in the far country through acceptance with God up to the beatific vision is of Divine grace, while, on the other hand, eternal life is the blessedness of those whose patient continuance in well-doing seek for it—is not in our theology an insuperable difficulty. We accept the heavenly and the earthly side of the great process with equal confidence, and leave their reconciliation where we leave many other mysteries. It is with the human side that we have now to do. Let me exhort you, brethren, to remember, not only in your ministry, but in your own personal religion, that, all the rights of heaven reserved, you will be what you make yourselves. There is a price put into your hands with which to buy wisdom: there is a grace put into your hearts with which to win perfection. You are converted men; by the very supposition and confession of the day you have received the renewing Spirit, Who has become “the Spirit of your mind.” Keep it ever in remembrance that that Spirit is not in any other sense a vicarious Sanctifier than as the Son of God is

a vicarious Redeemer. Our Lord has vicariously redeemed the world; but every man must plead through Him the cause of his own soul, and appropriate for Himself His atoning propitiation. So the Spirit of grace is given to all as a universal and unmerited gift, but given to every one of us that we may profit withal. As an indwelling Sanctifier, the Spirit of all holy discipline, He does not educate us to perfect godliness save through the instrumentality and co-operation of our own faculties. While He is intent upon forming Christ within us, and bringing us to the perfection of the Divine image; while in the gentle mystery of His ceaseless grace He is always creating the beauty of holiness in our nature, He requires that we do our necessary part towards the glorious result. Far be it from me to say one word that would disparage or derogate from the supremacy and, in a certain sense, the soleness of His effectual energy within us. But my text must have its rights: it also was spoken by the same Spirit Who commands us to yield ourselves to His own unhindered operation that we may be led by Him. Let me imprint upon your minds the force of this word "Thyself." If you examine the sentence in the original you will see that the holy apostle has deliberately moulded his phrase so as to make it emphatic. He does not say, "Accept and rejoice in religious exercises, under the gentle inspiration of the Holy Ghost," but, with a rough energy better felt than described, "Make thyself the object, the patient, of earnest spiritual discipline." My brethren, there is much music in the air that is not played to this note.

There is a danger of our resting in Jesus, and casting all our care on Him, in a sense for which He gives no authority. We send you down to your work this day with the apostolical injunction ringing in your ears: Exercise thyself unto godliness.

There is the same energy also in the word EXERCISE. It is perhaps the most forcible term this master of right words could have chosen for his purpose: to express, that is, what St. John, not a whit behind St. Paul in his theory of Christian energy, meant when he said: "I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome that wicked one." St. John gives the young man's strength, and its result in victory: St. Paul puts between these the athletic vigour of strife: his pithy phrase shows us the candidate for life stripped, and displaying to the foe a trained and disciplined form, he who contends with which will not "beat the air." The word is the echo, and scarcely a fainter echo, of the Master's phrase which bade us all to strive or agonise to enter into the narrow way through the strait gate, or by the narrow way through the strait gate; for it is still an exegetical uncertainty which the Lord meant, and whether the strait gate is at the beginning or the end of the Christian career. But the very ambiguity is impressive, and in any case the Captain of our salvation only utters here what was the habitual strain of His teaching, that while all our security and strength must spring from our being inwardly one with Him, our final and finished salvation must also be the result of outwardly following Him in the earnest devotion of a self-sacrificing life: the order

is ever, to Him, IN Him, AFTER Him. Once more, then, dear brethren, let me beg you to impress upon your minds the necessity of renewing this day your vows of strenuous devotion to the toilsome pursuit of holiness. Perhaps this may seem like a slight disturbance of the tranquillity of your feeling before the sacred altar. Your present uppermost thought probably is: "I yield myself to God, to be and to do all that He appoints; to have no will of my own, but to be henceforth guided by His will in all things." A better sentiment you cannot have. But if that resolution is inwrought by the Holy Ghost it will be prepared to receive the stimulant of St. Paul's words to Timothy. For, to be guided by His will in all things is to strain your every faculty to follow that heavenly example which is the expression of His will. He who gives you—freely gives you—rest from the disquiet of conscious guilt and the distress of unpardoned sin, bids you take His yoke upon you and learn of Him that you may find another rest: He freely gives the one that you may be encouraged to seek and find the other. And you will find it only by the unwearied, systematic pursuit of godliness as the study and aim of your life. By passing from the servant to the Master we have fallen, as you see, into a confusion of figures. But that is of small importance: the deep truth is the same. This leads us, however, to a more precise consideration of the force and bearing of the word "Exercise" in the apostle's charge.

It evidently suggests a certain analogy between the training or educating of the body with its variety of organs and the discipline of the soul with its variety

of faculties. We need not refer to those special physical exercises which entered so largely into the economy of ancient life; nor consider the apostle as purposing anything like a minute or formal comparison between the earthly and the heavenly disciplines. The general drift of the analogy is obvious enough. "Bodily exercise profiteth." St. Paul says nothing to disparage the benefit of physical regimen generally. The perfection of the body with its functions is reached by the unconscious exercise of nature, and still more by the deliberate use of systematic training: not otherwise is the wonderful store of its capabilities found out. The five senses may be severally educated to a pitch of acuteness of which their ordinary use gives faint indication. The intellectual faculties, so far as they are dependent on physical organisation, may be disciplined and are disciplined to a vigour which, without this exercise, they cannot attain; and the triumphs of science and literature are the result. The muscles of the body and the functions of its more delicate members—the hand, for instance—owe everything to the sedulous training of ceaseless education; the arts and handicrafts of life, and all the wonders of civilisation, attest this. The difference between training and not training is simply the difference between savage and cultivated life. The instrument of the spirit in man becomes what he makes it: that is, within certain bounds, and for certain limited purposes. There is indeed a limit, and here comes in the apostle's disparagement of bodily training, so far as it is disparagement. Bodily exercise profiteth little: it does not include the spirit itself, as that is independent

of the physical organ ; it has nothing to do with the higher life ; nor does it project its benefit into the life to come. It is valuable, it is essential, for the life that now is. But it is bound in by the domain of sense. The physical eye cannot be educated to see God ; nor can the physical hand be educated to the touch of faith ; nor can the mind itself by any effort be made, without the Holy Ghost, to apprehend spiritual realities. Moreover, this discipline reaches sooner or later its maximum ; and the cunning habit formed by innumerable acts of training is unwound again. The eye grows dim, the hand loses its exquisite magic, the voice no longer enchants the world ; the whole fruit of physical education is lost, and becomes mere nothing and vanity. In the dust of death all bodily exercise is defeated of its aim, and for ever defeated. It is true that many of its achievements may be transmitted to posterity, and that the fabric of civilization is built up of the results of past physical training. But for the poor artist himself it is as if it were not and had never been. The apostle, without saying all this, by one swift stroke shows that the same kind of discipline, expended on the soul, may educate its faculties for immortality and eternal life. The spirit has its members as the body hath. There is, in this sense, a spiritual body as there is a natural body ; and that also yields a rich reward to the hand of diligent discipline. The analogy is exceedingly suggestive, and might be pursued in many directions with advantage, provided only we remember that it is only an imperfect analogy at the best. There are spiritual eyes, and hands, and feet to be trained to their highest

vigour of sight and touch and alacrity. The faculties of the mind may all of them be cultured in the service of godliness, to which each may be made tributary. The spirit in us, now awakened and regenerate, and possessed by the Holy Ghost, may be disciplined to those high reaches and acts of energy which far transcend the domain where reason judges according to sense. But chiefly, and this is the pith and strength of the whole, the entire man—spirit, soul and body—in that integrity which alone can be called the Self, may be trained in the service of godliness. In no other service, I make bold to say, can the whole man be disciplined. It is only the sacred pursuit of the Image we have lost that enlists all that is in human nature. Apart altogether from religion, the body may be exercised to the highest physical perfection which the fall allows; very much independently of religion, the soul, or the spirit using a physical organisation, may be cultured to a wonderful development. But only godliness enlists the whole man, and puts all he has and is under discipline for eternity. Nowhere outside of the Scripture do we find such a sentence as this: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God that your whole spirit, and soul, and body be kept blameless."

The apostle does not go beyond this general enforcement of habitual and systematic discipline of the soul unto godliness; and the injunction might be fairly left to your own more specific application. But I cannot resist the impulse to say a few words on two branches of this godly regimen: one which has to do with the spiritual exercise that strengthens

the spirit to resist ungodliness, or the defensive discipline of religion; the other, which has to do with the positive exercises of the religious life, or the discipline which wins holiness. In some respects these two are one, as there is no defence against evil which does not involve the culture of what is good; but for my present purpose they may be conveniently divided.

Nothing is more certain than that the apostle himself would sanction the application of his words to the constant invigoration of the soul by exercise in the contest with sin. It is a special characteristic of his view of personal religion that it is a ceaseless struggle between the flesh and the spirit in man, or between the flesh and spirit of man and the Holy Ghost: ceaseless, that is, until the Divine Spirit has attained the absolute ascendancy, when, of course, the violence of the struggle ends. No writer, indeed, dilates more than St. Paul upon the secret of strength in the Indwelling Saviour, Who is in every regenerate soul the Strong man armed; or insists more constantly that to him who is in Christ "old things have passed away." But no writer lays more stress upon the regular, systematic discipline of the new man in personal hand-to-hand encounter with the old. We undoubtedly find a series of passages which speak generally of Christians having once for all "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," as if it were left to perish on the cross, uncomforted, unnourished, unmourned. But another strain is to be found, especially connected with himself, which speaks of a daily and arduous contest, not indeed to win the victory, but to maintain and to keep it. "I buffet

my body, and lead it along as a slave." It is not the duel of the seventh chapter of the Romans, between the flesh and the enslaved mind, wherein the victory was on the side of the flesh. In the conflict we have now to do with, of which also St. Paul made himself an example, the victory is on the side of the spirit; and the great business is to assure and perpetuate and perfect that victory. Now that requires a constant discipline and watchful observance of all the holy tactics of spiritual warfare. In these tactics retreat and flight, and what may be called self-abandonment, are sometimes needful. There are sensual evils with which we do well not to contend by measuring our strength against them; but by simply forgetting them and banishing the thought that they exist: in fact, our exercise must be to keep out of their way: "flee youthful lusts." There are some animal or bodily cravings that we must try to suppress altogether if we would be safe; and there are some that we only need daily to regulate and watch and control. The discipline of uniform temperance, of frequent abstinence, and of occasional fasting is part of these sacred athletics which no eminent saint on record among men has altogether neglected: certainly none that have copied our Lord and His apostles. The contest is not however between the flesh and the spirit only, but between the fallen spirit and its better self. The sharpest, keenest contest is with self. To mortify the vainglory, self-complacency, and self-terminating ends of the hidden man; and to mortify them daily, habitually, and at all points: that is the purest and noblest exercise

unto godliness on this negative side. Receive, dear brethren, the word of exhortation on this subject. Enrol yourself afresh among the select few—the very select few—who are not only bent generally on winning their salvation, but make their daily victory matter of disciplined valour; who study the weaknesses of their souls, and regard every form of infirmity as a deadly enemy. Determine to fight down and fight out of your soul every bad habit. Check at once the very first solicitation of evil, and the very first ebullition of concupiscence to meet it. Do not disdain the slightest enemy that wears self on its forehead. Never give up: if the very same foe return vanquish him again and again and again. So will ten thousand little victories issue in your perfect triumph through Him Who will make you more than conqueror.

Make you more than conqueror: remember always certain words of our Lord that have their impressive application here. Referring once to the roots of bitterness that springing up troubled His disciples, and urged them to cry, "Lord add to us faith," He calmly told them: "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Whatever a strict principle of exegesis may take away from this promise as being hyperbole, it cannot take away its wonderful encouragement to faith. Our Lord would imprint this deep in our hearts; for, on another occasion, when the same disciples mourned over their want of power, He told them that this was the effect of

their "want of faith; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Let the words of St. Paul be confirmed by these words of One Higher than he. Receive them as an assurance that no evil, rooted within or frowning without, shall withstand your faith. But forget not, my dear companions in this conflict, the warning with which the Supreme Athlete crowned the whole, a warning that criticism may take from the text but never from the Lord's meaning: "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." And, with this comment from the gospels re-enforcing its strength, receive the exhortation of St. Paul: "Exercise thyself unto godliness."

It cannot be denied, however, that the exercise here inculcated is rather that of positive devotion. With regard to those habits which belong to godliness, which conduce to godliness and are in fact themselves of the very essence of godliness, the injunction has its fullest possible force. It prescribes that such spiritual exercises as tend to cherish a godly spirit and temper should enter into the fixed arrangements of your life. I charge you this day to determine that they shall be henceforth—whatever the past may have been—interwoven with the web of your whole existence. What the nature of those exercises shall be, as to their form and characteristics, must be left very much to your own judgment. There is but little reference in the word of God to any specific rules, either of ascetic dis-

cipline or of religious culture. But be firmly resolved that in your pursuit of godliness you will adhere to some rules. The freedom allowed you by the silence of Scripture must not be misinterpreted. We find there, it is true, no canonical hours, no prescription of set periods of devotion during the day, no recommendation of special helps and rules for the education of the devout affections. St. Paul, who speaks so much of his continual prayers, never utters one word as to his personal habits in detail. And while he recommends Timothy to read and meditate generally, including of course private spiritual meditation, he throws out no hint of any methodical plan and distribution of the religious life. But this silence, while it leaves much to your own discretion and the suggestions of the free Spirit, does not abrogate the general suggestions of Scripture and the witness of the example of all saints, from the Highest who was much more than a Saint through their whole glorious company within and without the Bible. I may add that it does not abrogate the laws of our nature, which ordain that permanent habits shall be the fruit of many acts of uninterrupted effort. Doubtless, much may be said in favour of the doctrine that a habit may be infused from above: as habit means the posture and frame of the soul it may be imparted by a direct and mighty operation of grace. But we have only now to do with the injunction of the text, which bids you to exercise yourselves by rule and discipline unto godliness. If this word signifies communion with God in all the ways of devotion, then the advice means—

and I shall so apply it—that you make your private religion matter of systematic regulation; and not only so, but that you also study to order it in a way to educate every good habit. To walk with God suggests the thought of something far above all mechanical laws; yet even the walk with God may be by rule. Set times of prayer, never to be needlessly invaded; periods of solemn retirement or retreat known only to the Father in secret; orderly and yet most free meditation on the word of God; periodical self-examination; and all the other sacred devices of the devotional spirit, belong to this exercise. How far books of devotion, rule of holy living, and other helps of our infirmity are desirable, I need not say, unless asked: if asked, I should reply, Happy is the young minister whose library has its devotional shelf always near his right hand. The spirit of true devotion will not lean too much upon these; certainly it will not altogether reject them. But godliness also means likeness to God; and the exercise which aims at the standard of perfection in Christ knows no set times. It has literally no intermission. It must for ever be studying how to keep the Divine Exemplar in view; and make the remembrance of the nearness of God a perpetual practice. There is no duty of godliness which has so full a reward; nor is there any that is more dependent on discipline. Upon this I would lay much stress, and single it out for emphatic application. Make that, young man, your exercise: to keep a sense of God ever present to your thoughts, either as a Holy Presence within you or as a Holy Presence everywhere around. If you forget

Him, let it be your exercise gently to recall your wandering thoughts. Never give up the endeavour. By degrees you will grow perfect in the sacred discipline. To-day you will keep Him near during the morning, to-morrow in the afternoon also, the third day till nightfall. And so He will at last be in all your thoughts. If it be said that the high promise of the Saviour to all is that the Holy Ghost shall "dwell in us," and to each that "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him," this must be granted in all its fulness of blessing. If anything that has been said seems to impair the truth that the Father does, through the Son by the Spirit, make Himself present always to the soul, let it be retracted. But still it remains that we must exercise ourselves unto our privilege. The same Jesus Who in prophetic promise said all this, gave us His own example in prophetic type, "I have set the Lord always before Me." Only by combining our trust in the promise with our exercise of the duty can we reach the perfection that rejoices in the calm consciousness, "I am continually with Thee."

But we must not too rigorously distinguish the defensive exercise unto godliness from the positive exercise of godliness itself. Very many of the noblest actings of religion, in the present life at least, are both in one. Time will not allow to this truth the full illustration it deserves. I will content myself with one that concerns the highest aspiration of human devotion, the imitation of Christ; and based upon our Lord's own supreme, unalterable, and irreversible

condition of all discipleship. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me." No one can doubt that to do this is to exercise ourselves unto godliness. It is equally certain that the Apostle of our profession does not here distinguish between the ascetic severity of self-denial that carries the cross, as one branch, and the following of Himself as another for which that prepares. The two are one. Rather, I may say in this trinity there is perfect unity. To follow Jesus—which is godliness, for godliness has no higher definition—is to renounce self as the essential principle of life: "Even Christ pleased not Himself." To follow Jesus is to bear the daily cross: He was the Supreme Crossbearer; so long as we see Him on earth He is bearing it, and, when He laid it down, He gave it to every one of us, lightened of its infinite weight. To follow Jesus is, in all this, to rise insensibly but surely to the likeness of His human sanctity. Now remember, brethren, that word "daily," which the Holy Ghost instructed St. Luke to insert, as a precious fragment to be gathered up that it might not be lost: whatever else it means, it tells us that the religion of our whole life, till it ceases to be the exercise of the days of time, must consist in this three-one godliness. Your law of devotion must not be first fighting against evil that you may follow Christ; but in following Christ to put away sin, and in putting away sin to follow Christ. Keep ever in view the Supreme Pattern of self-renunciation: practice it, rehearse it, act it out every hour. This is the universal law of Christian life: when the apostle

pointed to that one act of boundless Self-sacrifice for man, he said to us all, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The Lord will help your endeavours to make this imitation of Himself your law. The discipline is not the same in Him and in us: His exercise—not UNTO godliness, but IN godliness—we dare not describe; it is one of the unfathomable mysteries of eternity. But He will train us to the result through a process He never passed through. The Wrestling Angel departed at the break of day from Jacob; but He continues the blessed encounter with every one of us; and the one night vision has become to each as the day reality. To change the figure back again, He practises us in bearing His cross until we reach perfection; first all but bearing it with both His hands, like the good Cyrenian, vicariously for us; then withdrawing His one hand, then—shall I say—leaving us to bear it alone? No, never quite alone. O that you may swiftly advance in this sacred discipline!

But with respect to all the exercises of a holy life—whether the training of the soul to overcome sin, or its education to habits of deep devotion—evermore remember, brethren, that the aim must be godliness, and nothing but that. Here is the protection of all religious discipline against the abuse to which it is liable. The constant maintenance of this one supreme principle in the soul will shield all its religious acts and exercises from perversion. For instance, if your end is likeness to God, as God is revealed in His all holy Son, you will never rest, you cannot by the very supposition rest, in the means. You will not

mistake the aids and helps of religion for religion itself: you will for ever be forcing your way through them to Him who is the end. Your prayer, your self-denial, your interior mortification, your public and private religious duties, your humble familiarities with your Lord, all these will not be your godliness, but only the way to it. You will be effectually shielded from that subtle snare of all more earnest religious exercises, the spirit of vain-glory. It is marvellous, but it is true, that the deadliest enemy of all true godliness, pride, lies at the door within which its most refined and exalted mystery of worship is going on: in other and plainer words, the most diligent in religious exercises—whether ascetic as against ungodliness, or contemplative in the pursuit of godliness—are peculiarly exposed to the secret assault of the spirit of complacency as it regards self and censoriousness as it regards others. Now if godliness is your stedfast and only aim you are safe. True godliness would fain forget self altogether: in the Master's own word it hateth its own self. It trembles at the faintest breath of human praise, even as it trembles at the faintest breath of Divine praise: but how different the trembling! They whose rigorous abstinences and fervours of public profession permit them to indulge in secret self-congratulation and hard thoughts of others are not exercising themselves unto godliness with success: they mistake their end, though the mistake is in all sincerity. If you have in view the very image of Christ, you will abhor the thought of any merit of your own; and when you

have done all, your publican hand will smite your publican breast: "God be merciful to me the sinner." In that spirit I venture to say that no self-discipline can well be too severe, nor any surrender to mystical contemplation too complete. Godliness being your end, you will also be protected from the opposite of all this; the habit of careless and irregular, and, as it were, irresponsible religious living. Of course everyone of you—for I must, by the law of the occasion, point my address to you, dear brethren—will have some kind of religious exercise. Your daily course will be, in some sense, "sanctified by the word of God and by prayer;" it may be scanty and swiftly despatched prayer, and a repast of only Biblical herbs; it may be, I pray God it may be, methodical and regular prayer, and a daily repast of Biblical strong meat. But I must tell you—alas, very much from experience—that the pursuit of godliness, in all the height and depth and length and breadth of that work, is incompatible with the former, and will cry out for the latter. Now, if your soul is smitten with the sacred thirst, if your poor heart has been carried captive by the "Fairest among ten thousand, and the Altogether Lovely," if you have that end in view which is the death of self, abstraction from all created things, and life in God, you must be in earnest with religious exercises. Begin afresh this day. Be not dismayed at the unfaithfulness of the last four years, and of the years before them. For, another and a last protection of the sole endeavour after godliness is this, that it defends the sincere soul from all thought of giving up the pursuit. I can suppose

repeated failures to produce utter despondency in the case of those who are aiming at a spurious godliness: the form of it merely, or ritualistic perversion of it, or self-invented notion of religious duty without Divine command. But, if the whole soul is set on genuine godliness, no failure will divert its pursuit from that. The very sincerity of its desire will shield it from despair.

II. In these last words I have anticipated the bearing of the apostle's charge upon you, my brethren, as you are ministers of the gospel, and bidden to aim at a specific standard of godliness. There can be no doubt that St. Paul included this when he gave his sentence the turn which we express by inserting the word "rather," with so much emphasis. It is as if he had said, "Timothy, my son, reject the profane and foolish fables which many put in the place of truth. Thou hast been nourished in the words of the faith; and, if thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou wilt be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. Let all thine exercise, as a minister of the gospel, be unto godliness, both in thyself and in them that hear thee." I do not say that the standard of your ministerial religion must be higher, only that there are some special characteristics in it.

Surely the spirit of the charge is not missed when we regard it as warning you against all ends and aims in your ministry which fall below the highest aim of that godliness which is peculiarly ministerial. Our godliness as ministers is simply and solely our likeness to the Supreme Minister, Who pleased not Himself, but poured out His soul unto death in the service

of His flock, to bring them to God. That is our professional religion, our official holiness, if such terms may be used. To keep ever in view that high standard, and strive to approach in spirit an absolute self-sacrifice for the good of souls—whether it may be reached I dare neither affirm nor deny—is the idea that must govern all our ministerial self-discipline. From everything below the sun that might distract your thought you must turn away with fear and abhorrence. How impure and how full of sin are some of the aims which would intrude, which will intrude, unless you exercise yourself in the imitation of the mind of Christ, and in the accomplishment of His designs! In the light of His awful example, how utterly unworthy does everything else appear! With our minds fresh from the contemplation of this, we can scarcely bear to think of any lower aims. But we must think of them, that we may be on our guard against them. Let us, for a moment, paraphrase the apostle's warning. Instead of "the profane and old wives' fables" in the subtle weaving of which we must not exercise ourselves, let us substitute in our thoughts, rather than in our words, the distractions to which the best of us are liable. What are those unworthy aims and diversions from the right aim that your knowledge of your past self suggests as your own danger? Set your faithful memory to hunt them out, and when you have found them spare them not. Your godliness is bound up with an entire surrender to the gospel of Christ. You are set apart to it. Your exercises must be governed by that one supreme principle. If, therefore, you would be perfect in this

respect you must renounce all other ends. You must not let inferior motives interfere. To seek to be eminent, learned, eloquent, a master of rapt audiences, a leading member of religious counsels—all these have their uses; but it must be the object of your ceaseless discipline to keep them down, if not to keep them out. I do not denounce them altogether; but you must make it your exercise to keep them under authority. Be very earnest in this matter, for your ministerial life is in it. Among your covenants of to-day, quietly note this: to labour diligently to keep your law of life thus pure. Do not expect to maintain your standard without diligence. I know that just now, with the holy incense of the altar around you, it may seem impossible that you should aim at any lower mark: but there is a great trial before you. Indeed, you know it already full well. But now you are really, and truly, and finally separated unto the gospel. Let your exercise be to give your life to it. We have seen that your godliness in this differs not from that of other saints. All of us must be swayed by the mind of Christ: for every Christian that lives is bidden to look at, to reverence, to emulate the great Self-sacrifice. But I say it is moulded by a different law. It has this peculiarity: that your holiness is bound up, absolutely bound up, and in a very sacred and pre-eminent sense, with your entire consecration to one great business of advancing the gospel and the kingdom of Christ.

And if the godliness which becomes a minister, and is his peculiar character, demands exercise in keeping its aim pure, it also imposes another obliga-

tion: that of the habitual training of the whole sum of his faculties to subserve that end. I say habitual: for this education goes on without intermission. In your case, young brethren, the injunction literally runs: Putting away all other objects, or, at least, bringing them into subordination, train all you have and are for the service of the ministry. It would be an unreality to say that you must renounce the thought of all culture of mind and exercise of body which does not make your ministerial equipment its direct end. But it is the very language of truth and soberness to say that indirectly if not directly, with a latent if not an avowed reference, your every exercise should tend that way. You have a noble calling, and one that is as exacting as it is noble. It demands yourself, and excepts nothing that is yours. Having accepted the oblation of your whole being, the Master gives you back your whole being to be kept in the highest state of efficiency for His service. It is your religion to make yourself as perfect an instrument of His will as your natural endowments permit. More than that the Lord will not require; if you offer less it is at your peril. Then you must train the body to its highest vigour, for the Lord's sake. There lies the supreme obligation of temperance, chastity, and all other wholesome physical regimen of exercise, regular living, and early rest and early rising. Speaking to you, as Methodist preachers, I need only to hint how much your efficiency will depend on physical conditions, and how carefully you ought, for the sake of this Connexion as for the sake of its Head, to watch over the

healthy vigour of the body through which the rough work of your heavenly ministry is done. Much more, however, is this true of your mental faculties, which, so far as the human efficiency of your labour is concerned, are yourself. Exercise yourself unto the service of godliness. This is a duty always incumbent upon you. Your mind has capabilities which study and training will for many years improve; indeed, there is no limit of time for their education. If you have not acquired the habit of patient study, make haste to repair the defect. Begin at once, under good guidance, a course of systematic mental drill: for the strengthening of your power of thought, the improvement of your memory, the quickening and regulation of what imaginative faculty you have, the culture of your taste, the enrichment and purification of your style, and the universal improvement of all your faculties. This is part of your godliness as a "man of God" dedicated to the holy ministry. Let me add that the most essential element in your training is the intimate knowledge of the Scriptures of truth. That Timothy had known these from a child was, as it were, a prophecy that went before on him, presaging his future eminence. It is the first essential of your exercises that you train yourself well in the great textbook. It is well to be practised in systematic theology. A minister of the gospel without this is like a lawyer or physician who has gone through no curriculum: his success will be more matter of chance, and mostly he will be an empiric. But the failure here is not so much your

danger. What I, in the name of this Body, would urge you to remember is that your first duty is to study the Scriptures in their original tongues, slowly and patiently and hopefully; to become familiar with the fabric of the Bible as a great collection of books; to have biblical theology in all its beautiful freedom near your heart and your lips evermore. All this belongs to that type of godliness which I have termed the ministerial. Be you what you may, and adorn your character to the utmost with social amenity and official diligence, if you neglect this you cannot be a godly minister, and your exercise will be incomplete, your striving not lawful.

Once more, the perfect standard of ministerial fidelity will demand strenuous care that your entire ministry shall tend to the unfolding and exhibition of the gospel as a "doctrine according to godliness." You cannot but feel that St. Paul means this when he writes these words. How far the injunction or the warning was applicable to him we need not inquire. We can hardly think that such a man as he was could turn aside to the Jewish fables of the Cabbala, and mingle them with the pure food of the gospel with which he had been nourished up. Timothy had not been brought, like the apostle, under the influence of Jewish rabbis, and was the inheritor, as St. Paul testifies, of an "unfeigned faith." Yet again and again, throughout these epistles, he is warned—with more emphasis than rests upon any other warning—against "vain babblings and oppositions of science." Indeed, our epistle closes with this earnest protest. Hence we are con-

strained to think that the apostle speaks rather for the sake of the men whom Timothy had to ordain than for his own sake. With a sacred impatience he deprecated and protested against all such teaching in the future as would obscure the central truths of the faith once delivered to the saints, as those truths lead to godliness. The exhortation is to you this day. And it impresses on your mind the importance of remembering that in all the exercises of your ministry you have one supreme business: to bring the great mystery of godliness for ever before the minds of the people in order to their salvation. This will apply to your preaching proper. The entire course of your public instruction must aim to promote the moral design of the gospel. There is a kind of preaching, faultless in other respects, that forgets this. It is possible to set the truth—the whole truth and nothing but the truth—before the congregation in such a manner as merely to inform the mind. Without the introduction of old wives' fables and inventions of men we may nevertheless rob the word we preach of its true force by our manner of preaching it. At the same time, there is no small danger of actually introducing the fables themselves. Much of the preaching of our age is what the apostle would not have scrupled to brand as vain disputation, profane babbling, and contentions of science falsely so called. You know what a variety of phrases, severe and sarcastic, are applied to the ministerial rabbinical exercises which were delighted in by the schools, but which the apostle would keep for ever out of the church. They have found

entrance in many communities around us. How often is the teaching of the pulpit a mere exhibition and exposition of symbols: some of them real but exaggerated, others simply the inventions of men. How often is the reconciliation of science and religion attempted, but from a wrong direction, and with no standard of appeal: instead of the pure gospel, doubtful philosophy and science—not always falsely so called, at least only when substituted for the truth as it is in Jesus. Such questions that gender strifes seek entrance among us also. Let us keep them out. There will be strong temptation to join in the general discussion of so-called first principles, and you will be inclined to put in your claim to a little science also. Well, if needs be; and if you are master of this art: ill indeed if it be otherwise. But your business is to promote godliness. Do not attach too much importance to the cry: "In these times the pulpit must be looked to for instruction in science, for right views on general questions of economy, and be the rostrum of debate on every disputed point." This is not true, or only very partially true: the pulpit is simply the place where you teach your flock. And what applies to your preaching applies to everything else pertaining to your ministry. You are set for the promotion of godliness. You have to order the worship and manners of the people in a thousand ways: to watch over their recreations, their lecture halls, reading rooms, bazaars, and all that they do. Remember that the promotion of godliness is your end. Keep an eye on the music, the bazaar, the sacred drama, the discussion class, everything. Be not fastidious and over-

critical ; for that might defeat your end. Give fair latitude. But in all your ministry let one thing be your appeal. How does this promote godliness ?

And here arises another solemn truth : that the minister of religion, set apart for the service of the doctrine which is according to godliness, is bound, is charged, is expected to exemplify it in his life. He is required to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity : " an injunction closely followed by "Take heed to thyself." This adds nothing, I know, to the essential obligations of a religious life. But it is a strong additional incentive, and it introduces a most admonitory caution. You will not only have to teach the principles of godliness, but so to live as that your conversation may teach them without the word. You must, in the whole course of your life, in your going in and out before the people, reflect a godly character : reverence for divine things ; respect for human order ; and perfect homage to everything lovely and of good report. You must let your light shine. Here will be an effectual secret spur to your devotion ; a perpetual private monition guarding your habits and controlling your natural temperament, and shielding you by a wise, prudential caution. A secret incentive, I have said. The apostle never meant that you must make it an exercise of your life to exhibit the pattern of religion. I cannot conceive of anything more repugnant to the beautiful simplicity of a young minister than the straining after religious effect. He who should practise himself in the art of godly presentation of

himself—posing himself, so to speak, when in presence of his flock; arranging his demeanour, and words, and arts, so as to declare, as by a herald, what godliness is—misses his mark. Your perfection as patterns, my young friends, will be found in so living as that your life shall reflect the Saviour behind you, and lead the thought to Him rather than to yourself; so that you may not be spoken of as godly, or marked out as such, save when appeal is made on any point of ethics. Then, indeed, your flock should be able to turn to your example for an end of all strife.

Finally, it follows from all this that the exercise of your whole life must be to combine the ministerial godliness with the personal: that they may blend in one gracious unity through your whole career. There cannot after all be two kinds of religion: the one official, the other unofficial. The very highest descriptions of holiness are presented as the privilege and possibility of all members of the Christian Fellowship. Yet there is a peculiar stamp upon the character of one whose individual holiness shines through the vestments of such office as yours: a character which is a high and difficult achievement, and requires the most diligent energy of religious exercise. It might seem otherwise. It might be supposed that a young man, consecrated to the ministry that he loves, living entirely in his religious functions, dwelling fast by the oracles of God and always dealing with Divine things, having spiritual realities around him as his very atmosphere, would make swift advances towards perfection and be rapidly nourished up in the words of faith. It might seem that the constant care of

others would tend to the extinction of self; and that habitual commerce with the supernatural world would neutralise the attractions of the world that now is. There are indeed special promises for their encouragement. "He that watereth others shall be watered himself." "The labourer faithful shall be first partaker of the fruits." We are sure that He who said, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," acts on the same generous principle Himself. The faithful Lord will not fail you if you are not faithless to yourself. If a minister falls, his fall must needs be the issue of much most miserable secret unwatchfulness. Still, we are all of us only too certain that there is a special danger. Familiarity with sacred things, vicarious experiences, the agitation and unrest of public business, and perhaps a special watchfulness of the enemy of souls, who still "desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," all point to a peril against which you cannot be too solicitously on your guard. Let this be your holy resolution this day: that your ministerial exercises shall not hinder but rather further your growth in godliness. Remember that the watchful and provident Master Who warned His apostles of the sifting process through which they should all pass, said to that one who was in most danger: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Think yourself that one, and, while you do your best to keep yourself, depend upon His special intercession for you. Determine to watch against a minister's, a young minister's, besetments. Read, study, and prepare for your public engagements in

the spirit of devotion. Learn to hear your Master's feet behind you wherever you go. Preach to your own soul when you preach to others; and, praying for others, pray also for yourself. Whilst bent upon making every service a means of grace, so far as in you lies, for the people, see to it that your own fleece be not unwatered. Take care to exercise yourself, while you are training others, unto godliness. And believe that, so doing, your ministry will bring you nearer to your Lord than you could be brought by any other vocation under the sun.

And now, dear brethren, I leave with you the stimulating word of the apostle's charge. Do not forget what has been said about it; but let the word itself sink deep into your hearts. St. Paul addresses each one of you as an athlete: a secular word this which better than any other reproduces the pith of his exhortation. Strive to realise its force, as if he himself were speaking to you, with all his holy ardour and quenchless enthusiasm and concentrated purpose in his eye and on his lips. Bring your soul into harmony, and keep it in harmony, with this inspiring word. Exercise thyself! Oh for the apostle's own enforcement of his own words! Oh that you could feel as Timothy felt when he read: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things:" understanding in all things, but especially in those three things of which he had just spoken; first, that you should be unentangled soldiers of Jesus Christ; secondly, that you must strive in the lists according to rule; and, thirdly, that you must be husbandmen for others, partaking yourselves

of the fruits. Say in the fervour of your heart: "Write my name down this day; I also will be a good soldier, a not uncertain runner, a faithful husbandman." We all, dear brethren, congratulate you on your past; we rejoice with you in the present; we hope with you for our common future. We receive you into our fellowship with perfect confidence. We send you forth, as we have ourselves been sent: in the trust that you will surpass us who send you in everything good. We pray for you that you may prosper in your supreme endeavour, and that the profiting of your exercise may appear to all: not only in your sound and deep theology, in your faithful and successful administration of our economy, in your earnest and zealous preaching, and in all the gifts and graces that adorn the Christian ministry; but, in what is above and beneath and around all these, in your exercise unto godliness. Go and "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus:" to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

XVIII.

PROBATION AND RESPONSIBILITY.

[A Valedictory Address delivered to the Students of the Westminster and Southlands Training Colleges, on Saturday, December 22nd, 1877.]

MY DEAR FRIENDS GENERALLY, AND STUDENTS IN PARTICULAR,—It gives me much pleasure to be present on this festal occasion: for festal it is, notwithstanding its farewell character. This has come to be one of the high days of the Westminster and Southlands Colleges, anticipated with delight, generally bringing with it a rich blessing, and leaving when it is gone a good memorial in the remembrances of all. The day has very many and various elements of deep interest to the members of these institutions themselves, and to the friends whom they invite to share their joy. To these I must not venture even to advert, save so far as they converge to the Valedictory Service of the hour. This may be supposed to reduce the jubilant tone of our meeting to gravity, if not gloom. But there is no need of that. Of course, it will not be possible to suppress altogether the pathos of the season. The idea of separation and farewell must haunt our thoughts. But I would remind you that the term "valedictory" does not now mean—that it never did mean—simply "farewell." You are accustomed to

analyse words and to dig about their roots. You know that to say VALETE ! or VALEATIS ! is to join MAY YOU PROSPER ! with FARE YE WELL ! I shall take refuge in that simple and etymological fact, and blend the two ideas together in all that I have to say. My address will be, like the word "valedictory," Janus-faced ; and point those who are leaving to the limited past which now reaches its close, and to the unlimited future which now awaits them.

This day marks the end of your term of probation. You are now closing a period of very great importance in the economy of your several lives, the importance of which you at present know only in part, but will understand and appreciate more fully as it hereafter recedes into the past. It has been to you a golden opportunity. You came to this place with the assurance that it would be such. That was impressed upon you in every possible way, privately and publicly, by those who sent you hither, and by those who received you here. You have never been suffered to forget for a day that your residence in these Colleges has been full of the possibilities and promise of the greatest good. You have spent out your term : a few sessions or years of sequestered preparation under the most favourable auspices for the business of your life. This happy time is gone—gone never to return. Not a day, not an hour, not a moment of it can be retrieved : a trite observation, you will think ; but, however trite, I repeat it ; the season of your most precious probation is gone, irrevocably gone. Whether you have passed it well or ill ; whether you have exhausted its oppor-

tunity or trifled with it; whether you have learned what you might have learned or thrown your advantage away; whether you have profited by the instructions of your teachers much or only little; whether you have yielded up yourselves to the unhindered influence of the discipline of the place, or interposed obstacles that have neutralised its best virtue; whether, in short, with this price in your hand, you have been wise or have been foolish; whatever use you have made of these years, they are ended and done.

It is my privilege, and the instinct of our common generosity, to suppose that you have made a fair use of your privileges: a fair and average use. I will not say a perfect use; for that would suggest an ideal of student life and student diligence which might depress some who hear me, and give a tone of unreality to much that I have to say. Nor will I, on the other hand, hint at the possibility that any have grievously failed. That is a suggestion which would indeed sadden the hour. For, however much such a probationer, repenting afterwards, might strive to retrieve the slighted opportunity, that would be utterly impossible. Time so misused cannot be in the fullest sense—in any happy sense—redeemed. It is true that some of the worst consequences of strenuous neglect may be repaired; but no young man, no young woman, who is systematically unfaithful to the obligations of Colleges like these, can ever become, can ever approximate towards becoming, what diligence there might have made them. The student who has Esau's spirit will have Esau's

temporal doom: he will find no place of repentance, though he seek it carefully with tears. Rather—for this seems harsh—like Jacob he will go halting all his days, though not for Jacob's glorious reason. But you have all sustained your test and are approved, by the very token that you are here this day. Had you recklessly squandered your time and proved yourselves incompetent or utterly indolent, you must have been found out. It is my joy, accordingly, to congratulate you on having passed the ordeal of your probation honourably, and to say farewell to you in the name of these Training Institutions, as accepted teachers.

But I must not forget, before proceeding, that many are now listening to whom the farewell is only for a season, who will return very soon to their discipline here. What has been said may not be lost even upon them. Indeed, on them it has a very obvious, however indirect, bearing. It may suggest the inquiry: Am I obtaining all the advantage I ought to obtain from the helps afforded by this place? Have I during the last year done my utmost? If not, then let me come back to amend my course of life and action. Depend upon it, my young friends, you cannot over-estimate the value of this period of your life. Be you who you may, whatever natural talents you may possess, even supposing them to rise into genius, however favoured you may have been in past education, there is not one of you to whom every hour and every lesson of this discipline of this place is not of very great moment. If, therefore, you are only in the midway of your course, revise your theory

and bring it to perfection. Be sure that if you do so you will sit there twelve months hence, if spared, with a thankful remembrance of the lesson of this morning.

But to return. You, my friends, have ended your term of trial. So far as others have been testing your vocation, it is assured ; and it is this day, so to speak, finally sealed. Then let me congratulate you on the vocation itself, and exhort you to cherish a lofty estimate of its dignity. The order of Preceptors has in every age ranked very high in the scale of importance to human development and prosperity. You join a noble brotherhood ; to which have belonged the loftiest intellects and the most accomplished that have ever toiled in the service of mankind ; the very elect and best of all ages. You enter one division of a Service which embraces a wide variety of ministers : ranging from the teachers of the highest science, mental and physical, in our Universities, through manifold gradations down to the teachers of those ragged-schools which are at once the disgrace and the glory of our age. Into this illustrious order you now enter : candidates till now, you are now accepted, approved, and initiated. It is true that your place is not the highest in the great Service : it is perhaps even lower in the scale than the middle of it. You are not called to give the finished education that prepares for the high professions ; you have your function in a much more humble sphere. But the humblest is high. You have the earliest stage of the training of the children of the general mass of the people. It is hard to conceive of anything

more important than that. You must magnify your office. No one really prospers in a vocation which does not carry his enthusiasm and, if I may say so, his glorying. However we may smile at the man who looks at his profession with the eyes of a fanatic or a devotee, we instinctively respect him; and, what is more, expect great things from him. Be proud of your calling and of the noble brotherhood in which you will now be enrolled. But always remember—I make haste to say this—that a high exultation in our corporate vocation must be conjoined with a very lowly sense of our own individual insignificance. Generally, let me say that this is the perfection of the temper in which we should discharge the duties of any calling, whatever it may be, that joins us to a brotherhood. I may say *OUR* calling; for in this the Christian ministry and the preceptorship of children are one. I must entertain the loftiest possible conception of the grandeur of the ministry which represents Christ to the world; as to my poor self I am unworthy to occupy its lowest place. You must feel that the teachership of the children of the generation is as high and noble a function as can join men in a community; but as for your poor self you are not worthy to be a doorkeeper in the ragged-school.

Your vocation being thus sealed—and sealed, as to the majority, for life, though some voices that have a right to be heard will demur—we take leave of you as being, so far as we have been able to ensure it, equipped for its duties. I do not now dwell upon that technical acquaintance, which you have acquired,

with the art of wielding, or managing, or handling a school. That is undoubtedly of great importance; worth spending many months in Westminster to acquire. Value that professional ability; one of the points which mark most strongly the advantage of modern over ancient teaching is to be found in the skill with which teachers, by the gentlest means, produce the most commanding effects, and, in fact, teach a school by simply governing it. But remember that the authorities whom you most respect do not wish to bind you down to a certain mechanical, invariable method or system. Try by all means to combine as much freshness and variety as you can with the approved traditional style imparted to you here. Without dwelling upon this, however, I would give you a farewell hint as to the value of that elementary grounding which you have received in the principles of all such knowledge as you have hereafter to teach. The utmost that this preliminary education has aimed at is simply this: to put you so fully in possession of the keys of science and literature, that you may be able to open its treasures for yourselves, and dispense them duly and intelligently to others. Nothing beyond that enters into the design of this place. My honoured fellow-labourers will allow me, I am sure, to say this with confidence. Far be it from me to disparage the amount of substantial instruction in the various branches of learning, science, and literature, imparted in these Colleges. But be it what it may, it cannot, in the nature of things, go beyond the putting into your hands instruments which will aid in your future education of yourselves and of others.

It might be said, indeed, that no education, and no results of education, go much beyond that. There is a sense in which the very highest attainments are but the acquisition of a greater number of keys than others possess; keys that admit to recondite mysteries which are interdicted to most men. If this be in any measure true with regard to the possessors of encyclopædic knowledge, much more certainly is it true that you, my brethren, may count yourselves happy if you have a working use of the instruments by which knowledge is acquired. Suffer me to dwell upon this for a few moments, and to illustrate it by the pursuits to which you have been devoting your time. The utmost that you have learned in the physical sciences—the utmost you will probably ever attain—must needs be literally no more than the familiar use of the language in which their wonderful revelations, discoveries, and results are written. But that is of great, almost inestimable value to you, whether as a teacher or as a student. If you succeed in making your own the terminology of these sciences, and something like a clear conception of their mutual relations, their characteristic differences, and the process of their history and development, it is all that you are likely ever to command; and it is enough. You have, then, the key to them all; and can, when occasion requires, explore them severally with an intelligent appreciation. What is even more than that, you can then understand at once the bearing and tendency of the wonderful things with which science is every day astonishing the world. To follow with earnest and discriminating sympathy the amazing

progress of natural philosophy does not demand very extensive researches, or any researches of our own. But it does demand what I may call an instrumental knowledge, or a knowledge of the elements. It imperatively requires a competent acquaintance with the nomenclature of the sciences.

I hardly need tell you what an immense amount of useful information is stored up in the very terminology of science. Any good dictionary of scientific terms will show at once how much our modern language is enlarged by the progress of physical research, and also how important, indeed how indispensable, to the student is this branch of instrumental knowledge. The advances of science are registered in terms of Greek and Latin derivation. Now this suggests another subordinate illustration of my point. You may, or you may not, be what is called classical scholars; if you were trained in this direction early, that may be probable; if not, it is as well now to renounce the ambition of repairing that defect. But such an instrumental familiarity with Greek and Latin as shall enable you to see at a glance, in many cases, the principle, or fact, or theory underlying a term, or, if I may so speak, to read at sight the music of science, every one of you ought to have, and is supposed to have, received here. There is a great deal of useful knowledge of which scientific terms are the symbols, as it were, and remembrancers: the exact appreciation of the terms is enough of itself to light up the whole subject and preserve it from fundamental and discreditable error. Illustrations are literally endless:

almost any page of the dictionary will furnish them. Take this assemblage of words in one of the sciences, or rather in one little cluster of sciences : air, ether, atom, molecule, vibration, radiation, undulation. These express in their very origin, most of them, a theory, or phase of theory, of great importance ; and so to understand the terms as to explain them succinctly is to have and to communicate the key of much interesting science. Who does not see at once what a beautiful mystery there lies in the difference between the two words atom and molecule, taken simply according to their derivation. Whoever of you will clearly explain these seven words individually and collectively is now, or soon might be, a good teacher. While speaking of the physical sciences I may refer to the value of another key to them besides that of their nomenclature ; I mean, of course, a slight, but sufficient, acquaintance with mathematics. We all know that a scanty acquaintance is not enough for those who seek to become masters of the field of natural philosophy, especially of that part of it which carries us beyond the limits of our own globe. But you do not, you must not, aspire to that. Such a measure, however, as you legitimately aim at, such a measure as you ought to have in order to explain to the inquiring minds of young people what they will incessantly ask about, demands a certain elementary familiarity with the principles at least of geometry and of the symbolical methods of calculation. The same line of remark may be pursued into almost every other region of knowledge. There is an instrumental

equipment in psychology and metaphysical science. You cannot be thoroughly versed in ancient and modern philosophy, properly so-called, and be at the same time the servants of the public in the absorbing and exacting post of the day-school teacher. But you may get—and unless I mistake have got here—the key to these systems; in other words, their leading principles, and especially the salient points in which they harmonise or come into collision with common sense, the dignity of man, and the decisions of the word of God. You may have, and must have, the familiar use and, I take it for granted, of course, a rooted persuasion of certain ideas which revelation has given to philosophy, though philosophy has too often disdained the gift; principles which deny that the whole of man came of the dust of the earth, and affirm that the better part of him came from the breath of God. The difference is formulated in many terms, which are the key-terms of modern philosophy. So is it with theology, the mother and the queen of all the sciences, and the only one in which all have a common interest. In that holiest science you may never be deeply proficient; but you may have—and I am quite sure I may say with confidence you have—the fundamental principles which give an insight into its glorious system. In fact, it may be asserted, with regard to the entire range of the knowledge which you have to acquire in order to teach it, that the key, or rather the whole cluster of keys, is put here into your hands that you may be free to enter and expatiate, but not for yourselves.

It may seem as if I were congratulating you on the

possession of a little superficial learning, and encouraging you to be content with what is proverbially a dangerous thing. Undoubtedly, to those who have no self-knowledge a little other knowledge is apt to be perilous. And there may be some among you who are not beyond the melancholy weakness of overvaluing their slender acquirements. There is a knowledge, St. Paul says, which "puffeth up." But if you are yielding to that snare, you must have failed to learn the first lesson taught in this place. I will rather presume that you have escaped that danger; and, with that charitable persuasion, may confidently recommend you to doubt the truth of the old adage I refer to, or at least to qualify it very much in its application to yourselves. It is a good thing for you to have a little knowledge; if you use it first as a continual remembrance that you do know only a little; secondly, as the means of acquiring more; and, thirdly, as the instrument enabling you to benefit by the richer and deeper knowledge of others. Take an illustration from the highest of all study; that of the holy writings. A little acquaintance with the Greek of the New Testament, limited in its range, but sound so far as it goes, will enable you to weigh and estimate and profit by the commentary and searching exposition of the best exegetes; that instrumental, working knowledge of grammar, lexicon, and concordance is of inestimable value to many of us, though it is but little in itself or in comparison. Take another from secular science. A little acquaintance with some of the principles of analytical geometry and the modern calculus

will enable you to follow with intelligent admiration and joy the amazing processes by which astronomers reach their revelations of the universe; for instance, to appreciate the noble reasoning by which the perturbations of our system were tracked home to that hitherto unknown disturber, the planet Neptune, who had been quietly deranging the orbits of planets within his own for uncounted ages until his hour was come for detection. Your knowledge may be very little; but it makes all the difference between thinking of the great discovery of Leverrier and Adams with a blind and hopeless wonder, and admiring it with thankfulness to God as a wonderful triumph of hypothesis and calculation, the general nature of which you understand. I must forbear from further illustration, and content myself with advising you to get into your possession as many of the keys of knowledge as you well may. Cherish a most ardent and unquenchable thirst to know something about all things. Only let your knowledge be accurate, and it cannot be too universal. In fact, your calling requires this. One of the peculiarities of the teaching vocation—in that branch which you will occupy—is that it has no specialty, no one particular subject in which you must be strong, however weak elsewhere. You must be informed all round; for you will have to give instruction and answer questions on almost all topics. Be not ashamed to acknowledge that you aim to know a little of all branches and not very much of any. Throughout literature—from the humblest of its enthusiasts to the very highest—it is always found that those are the best teachers, and

teach the greatest number, and teach those most effectually, whose central and specific learning is set in the widest variety of general information. Make it your ambition to be utterly and profoundly ignorant of nothing that concerns human interests. Nourish in your heart that passion, which is itself—mark my words—apart from the results of its gratification, one of the purest and most stimulating inspirations that can light a young man on his way. The times we live in are peculiarly favourable to this lowly yet lofty ambition. It is the age of digested and systematized epitomes of all knowledge. The ablest representatives of every department of science and literature vie with each other in reducing to manuals, easy of access and as clear as skill can make them, the finished results of their studies. Books of reference, dictionaries, encyclopædias—which should be the basis of all your libraries—abound as they never abounded before. You need not shrink back from any one of the numberless paths before you for want of a guide. But this word guide suggests what is of the utmost importance: that your guides be safe ones. Some of the clearest handbooks in physiology and the science that makes the thinking soul its object, with others that might be named, are written on principles the introduction of which into your mind would sap the very foundations of your faith in any economy of things not seen, in your own spiritual nature, in the supernatural world at large; and, by rendering God either an impossibility or a mere symbol of something you know nothing about, take religion out of your life, with all its sacred fear on

account of the bounded past, and hope for the boundless future. Now the books I speak of are generally to be found in united series or libraries, written under one superintendence and one common theory. Be sure you have the right one. This holds good also of the encyclopædia, which, in your profession, should be one of your right-hand books. Let me advise you to take counsel on this important matter from your old and trusted teachers. Important it is: for, to sum up all, your duty, discharged in the noblest style, will require you to know and to teach something on almost every subject; to give multitudes of children the right note to start with on all the important points which explain this life and connect it with eternity. Be sure that you yourselves are well taught; have the right keys—a goodly bunch of them; and use them humbly.

Our confidence in you, however, in this and in every respect, rests upon that wherein the secret of your safety lies. We pronounce our valediction upon you as tried and approved young Christians—approved, that is, as far as human inquisition goes. Your probation has been throughout a religious one. The institution which received you was created by a body of earnest Christians to meet a religious want, and is pervaded throughout its organisation by deep religious principle. You were admitted as godly young men and women; your piety has been watched over as sedulously—to say the least—as any part of your training for service. You have been trained on the explicit theory that yours is a religious vocation; that you are to occupy a place among the ministers of the

Christian church in this land. We have no name for you but that of teachers; your sphere of service is only the school; we do not term your office one of the minor orders of the Christian ministry; but we have this understanding among ourselves, that you have a name and a place in a vast organisation for promoting Christian truth. True to that fundamental idea, we meet you this day in the house of God; and pronounce our Valediction, which is our Benediction also, amidst the sanctities of Divine worship. Your vocation is this day holily sealed; it receives the impress and signature of the Lord Himself. Are you sure that you enter into the spirit of this with a clear intention and a faithful heart? Before I proceed, let me charge you to set your own seal to this our mutual covenant. Come to the altar of consecration with your minds, your hearts, and your wills, and present all these; but chiefly present that which is behind all these; each one his perfect and undivided self.

And now my Valedictory turns from the probation ended to the responsibility begun. What a solemn pair of words are these! How profound they are in their deepest meaning; how awful are they in their widest issue! In the deepest sense both cover our whole life; we are all and always in probation; all and always responsible; and both for eternity. Strictly speaking, I ought not to divide them thus in your case; your responsibility began with your probation, and your probation will go on to the end. But for our present purpose it is allowable to say that you are now going forth to your great responsibility.

Let that most solemn word sink into your being. Think what it means. As your manner is, and I hope always will be, decompose it and reduce it to its elements ; it becomes, "I am answerable !" To whom, then ? Supremely to God ; to Whom all are responsible, while He is responsible to none ; subordinately to many under Him. But before considering how that responsibility should affect you, let me pray you to receive fully into your minds, and to keep there as a permanent principle, the thought that you are entering this day on a course for the whole process of which, and for all the infinite variety of its details, you will be answerable to another will than your own. You go hence free of the old control which has compassed you about from the moment you entered this place ; each one will be his own master in a sense. But remember that you are still bound hand and foot in the bonds of the perfect law of liberty. I ought now to dilate upon the various directions in which responsibility will touch you ; but my time will allow me only to dwell upon a few of the minor but yet supreme ethics of obligation which require to be made prominent.

It may not seem the right order to say that you must live under a sense of responsibility to the children committed to your charge. But I will begin with that ; for there it is that the pressure needs most to be applied ; there your ethics will be most in danger. Religion will not let you altogether forget that you must answer to God ; many motives of interest and expediency will keep it in your calculation that you are answerable to committees, and

Government, and public opinion. Such and so rich are the rewards of successful management of the school, and in competition with other schools; such is the magical power of "payment for results;" so great is the temptation to aim at a high official standard as the representative of a committee or a society; that there is no slight peril of your forgetting, or failing to remember explicitly, that your very first, your primary, obligation is to the children themselves. Their numbers, and their helplessness, and the class whence most of them spring, will tend to increase the danger. You must enter into a covenant with your self to remember these rights; and all the more because they cannot enforce them. I may apply the Lord's touching words here: "They cannot recompense thee!" And I may vary them, they are unconscious of their claims, and cannot plead them. They are unprotected in your hands. Against physical despotism they have in many cases a defence. But the claim which Providence gives them upon your best efforts in their behalf—apart from all results of your successful teaching—is at the mercy of your honour, or sense of responsibility.

First, this fine sense of honour will prompt you to do your best in the actual instruction and education of all the children who come under your charge impartially. Impartially, I say; for there, once more, will be the danger of the hireling sentiment, and there will be the opportunity of your most refined and delicate ethics. There will always be a considerable number who will repay your culture, keep up the character of your school, shine in examinations, and

pay well—in the sense you understand—for your best attention. The majority, however, will tempt you to neglect them, and be only too glad to be neglected. They will tax your fidelity to the utmost. Remember that these, too, are to be taught, however reluctant to learn; and are to be disciplined, however refractory to the yoke. Do your best for the bright boys and girls; they will be responsible for themselves. Forget not the others; you are answerable for them. Do not suppose that I am setting up too high a standard, or going off into unrealities. I will make every concession. You are not required to be utterly insensible to commercial results. The labourer is worthy of his hire; and some of the best work done by man is the product of the stimulant of interest. Moreover, the diligent have a right to special care, and both God and man help those who help themselves. But I am pleading for a noble, heroic, and self-sacrificing devotion to all who are committed to you, not forgetting those who need you most. For the Lord's sake—Whose example shines here with blessed lustre—it was the one poor sheep He sought and found and spent His life and blood upon—do this, and you will be a good and faithful teacher.

Again, it will be another result of your high principle of ethics that you will be most solicitous to exert the best influence—direct and indirect, conscious and unconscious—of which you are capable upon all your scholars. Once more, I ask you to weigh the derivative meaning of these words. What is meant by influence but that secret, mysterious virtue or

effluence from you that flows into them, we know not how. I use it here for that effect of your presence and energy and will which is apart from your teaching proper, though not necessarily independent of it. For this you are responsible, so far as it is direct. But this, depend upon it, you will be tempted to neglect. The impartation of learning, from its elements upwards, you will, so far as in you lies, never forget: you will have too many remembrancers of duty to allow that. But that best of all education, which is the subtle impact of your character and your will upon "the hidden man" of the children—their "hidden" man in a special sense—it requires a high moral effort in the teacher to impart habitually. In the routine of teaching you simply watch and direct; the children have the hard work there—that is, in the mere acquisition of knowledge. But in the endeavour to evoke, educe, or educate what is in them, to stimulate their energy when it flags, and to infuse into them enthusiasm for their task and delight in it, the hard work, depend upon it, will be yours. In that lies the difference between teacher and teacher. May your ethics in this particular be of the highest culture! Once more I pass over the heads of all below and go to the highest illustration: who does not know that over and above the words, parables, and miracles by which He teaches, there is the heavenly virtue that goes forth and melts His soul into ours and our souls into His?

It may appear strange to say that you are responsible for your unconscious influence. By the

very theory, this is produced without your volition, and, therefore, it might seem that you cannot control it and answer for it. Now here is a beautiful mystery in ethics, that the influence you silently and unthinkingly exert may very probably be the weightiest factor in your work. Certainly it springs most directly from that in you for which you are most responsible, your moral character; hence there is a logic not strained which would say you are more responsible for that than any other. But let us leave this paradox. The question is, How shall you exert constantly, unintermittingly, a wholesome and sound influence? Obviously, by walking in the midst of your little household with a perfect heart. If you live and move and have your being in the light, you will necessarily, without knowing it, radiate light; nay, your very shadow will be profitable. "Let your light so shine;" rather "let then your light shine!" If it is light it will shine. Here, once more, I come round to the topic which ought to be the supreme subject of my exhortation and of your solicitude. Your unconscious influence will be according to the measure of your devotion. If you live in the presence of God, your reverence of His Name, His Word, and all that is His, will do much toward impressing upon your children's minds—naturally disposed to receive that impression—a solemn sense of a supernatural world. If you are flippant, irreverent, or even unconcerned and indifferent about Divine things, alas! they are naturally—though naturally only in a secondary sense—disposed to receive that impression too. Remember that you

will form them rather by the incessant plastic influence of your demeanour than by your teaching proper.

The other element of your responsibility to which I must refer as being in some slight danger is this: Your function is in direct and indirect relation to the kingdom of Christ. There was a time when it would have been thought the most unchristian of all anomalies to educate the children of the Christian Commonwealth without reference to their place in His government who said "of such is the kingdom of heaven." This word remains for ever in its instructive ambiguity, teaching its lesson to adults that they must become like children, and to children that they share the privileges of the adults. It is a great mistake to think that it is possible to have the care of the young—for a long time almost the sole care of them—and to evade responsibility to Him who counts all children His. With those whose theory of their duty systematically renounces this obligation—you know what obligation I mean and of whom I thus speak—I have nothing to do. Let me charge you to bear in mind what I have spoken of as the direct and the indirect relation of your duty to the kingdom of Christ.

Directly, you are in an important sense responsible for the training of your children in Christian truth. Be not alarmed. I do not mean alone, nor even chiefly, responsible. Your hands are to some extent tied, and your tongues under restriction; and, were there no other restraint, the time you can devote is limited. We must not exaggerate your import-

ance in this matter. But we must not under-estimate it. If you will, you can do very much toward laying the foundation of a confidence in the Christian revelation which, laid in the earliest years, will probably never be shaken. If you are so minded you can make the religious instruction very perfunctory, and effectually prepare the young for a time when they will be taught that religion is only a beautiful—though not altogether a beautiful—delusion. I say you may, by a certain style of despatching the religion of the school, make the children ready for the more positive infidelity that waits outside to despatch it in another sense and more effectually. Or, if it is in your heart, you may in a quiet and efficient manner lay the deep and immovable foundations of Christian truth in thousands of minds. If you use the Catechism, you may be the instrument of depositing something like a system of doctrine such as will always afterwards have the precedence of every other. If you do not use it, nevertheless, there are certain fundamental doctrines which you may, as a loyal servant of Jesus, so incessantly instil into the early faith of your children, that they shall with great difficulty be dislodged. Of course, this is a question of your higher ethics, as I have said before. You may get the children through any examination on religious knowledge without doing what I mean; nor will the neglect of what I mean ever be very keenly investigated. After all, then, it is left, my fellow-servants of Jesus, where very much of our best service is left, to the free and beautiful supererogation of our love. We do not like the word

supererogation, and we have good reason for rejecting it. But it will serve my purpose here. You will never do anything for the Redeemer which is not your duty to do, and yet you may have a thousand opportunities of doing something for Him which is not absolutely required by the terms of your day-school covenant. Here comes in one of the finest subtleties of your professional ethics.

It would be easy to show in how many ways your indirect influence might tend to the furtherance of the kingdom of God. Without aiming directly at the conversion and religious edification of your charge—which it would be unreality to include in your province—you may co-operate with influences going on elsewhere, or dispose the children for those influences; just as, alas! you may hinder or mar the work of parents and teachers, though that side of the alternative I will not take into account. After all, you have, or will have, advantages possessed by no other. You will have the first command of their ears. What you say will always have a peculiar weight, indeed a specific influence belonging to your office, which you must value exceedingly. Moreover, you have them always with you. You will be the reigning authority all day, nearly every day of the week, almost all the year round, and perhaps for many years. “As the eye of the servant is up to his master”! has no illustration, save in the perfect Christian, like that of the child looking with its indescribable combination of fear and love to his master. Let me pray you to remember this when you go out, and to give your solemn resolution on the

subject this day. Make your humble promise to the Lord of your life, upon His altar this hour, that you will consider yourself, whatever others may think you, a minister of His kingdom, and teach the thousands of little ones who will come under your care as His. Remember that you are joint ministers with us in that outer court of redeeming grace where all the children are.

In redeeming this pledge by-and-bye you will have some difficulties and some discouragements. But your resolution must overcome all these. You must set out well, beginning your high duty on the first day with a principle firm in your own mind, and gradually to be made plain to all, that, whether formally or informally, Christianity is to be the established religion of your domain or little state. You will have endless, literally endless, opportunities of carrying out that principle. You will accustom all to reverence the Holy Name and all holy things, to honour the Saviour of mankind, and to bow before the Bible. An edict as strong as Nebuchadnezzar's, and much better observed than his, will go forth, that no voice is to be heard against the Christian's God. It will soon be known in your dominions that there are subjects around which a veil of mystery is thrown, and that must never be approached or spoken of without awe. The elementary principles of the Gospel will in time become accepted and honoured commonplaces among your children: using the word commonplaces in its ancient and honourable meaning. A certain character that is purely Christian, requiring Divine grace to attain it, but which all may attain, will by degrees

become the standard of morals in your little community. But, to return to the other point just touched—which is literally of unlimited importance—it will be understood among you that there may be truths that poor limited human reason may be unable to understand; the same keen little minds that are encouraged to track everywhere wonderful phenomena to their more wonderful causes, will be taught at once to accept some things that God teaches without perfectly comprehending them. It will be a common understanding in all the classes that from the Bible there is no appeal. O what an inestimable service will you render if you train some thousands of children, from their infancy, to what many would call a superstitious reverence for Divine things!

Of course all this will indirectly tend to the advantage of Christianity according to the measure in which you predispose favourably the minds of those who will be the main element of the future congregations. The time is coming—I may say it has come—when the day schools pour their children as adults into our chapels; and can it be supposed to be other than matter of equal importance that they should come with all the advantages of preliminary training? This of course immediately suggests that the congregations I refer to are Methodist congregations, and I shall not repudiate the suggestion. There is no reason why you should not be reminded, on leaving this place, that you have been received here and are now sent forth as Methodists. We are of course desirous that our good cause should reap the full benefit. We expect you to feed our congre-

gations and prepare hearers for the ministry and members for the Church. We desire that between you and the ministers of the Connexion there should be a close concord, closer than has hitherto existed. We do not wish that you should let the denominational or Methodist element appear too strongly in your teaching; we see no reason, however, why it should be altogether excluded.

But you promote the kingdom of Christ by contributing your part towards elevating the character of the population of our land. The influence of our day schools is only beginning to be felt. It will be felt more and more. And no one who watches the currents of social and political thought can fail to be anxious as to the nature of that influence. The masses of the people are steadily acquiring increased power in public affairs; and, by open as well as hidden organizations, shaping the character of the times. You will have no insignificant voice in the decision whether they shall be a vast community of sober, law-abiding, orderly, Christian people, or a loose, unruly, discontented mob, ready for all sedition and anarchy. This is putting it too strongly. But without doubt you will have a large number of the roughest children of the land to influence for good or evil; the future artisans and electors will come under your power while they are still plastic, and before they can well resist you. I do not say that you must shape their politics for them. Certainly you must not intermeddle with party politics. But if you are determined to do your best for Christ's kingdom in this land, you will try to train good

citizens, loyal subjects, and submissive respecters of the powers that be. You cannot comment fairly on the Old Testament and the New without teaching them some wholesome principles that ought to underlie all varieties of politics: abhorrence of all the vices that sap national prosperity, and respect for all laws and usages and even conventions that consolidate society and nourish reverence for the good old English Constitution. Remember that you have, and will have, very great power. You have the attention of these future citizens and Englishmen and Englishwomen before any others can talk to them. Determine to use your authority well.

Whether directly or indirectly, my young friends and fellow-labourers, it is your highest honour and the promise of your deepest happiness to advance the kingdom of Christ. As the first and highest prayer is "Thy kingdom come!" so the first and highest duty is to help its coming. We are precisely each of us what we are to that kingdom. Our relation to that is the measure of our value. It is exceedingly hard, as the modern word is, to realise this. It is exceedingly hard in the midst of endless distraction to make it our governing principle. But it is strictly and to the very letter true; so far from being an unreality, it is the most real thing in our whole life. Your worth is, individually, exactly what you are in God's sight; and your worth as a member of society what you are to the kingdom of the Redeemer. "None of us liveth to himself, no man dieth to himself. To this end Christ died and revived, that He might be Lord

of the dead and living." Will you endeavour to keep this always in view? Mentally charge your soul, in faith promise your Lord, and pledge yourself to us, your fellow-servants, to redeem this pledge; to conduct your school as a little province; or, to use the Saviour's illustration, the little city of your administration for Him. Mentally and in faith, I say. We want no open avowal now. Let it be the private and most religious vow of your soul in that hidden shrine where you sanctify the Lord Christ in your heart. Say nothing of it now; but remember it hereafter. Make it a very solemn and a very joyful purpose: a very solemn one, for whatever has reference to the Lord Christ should be most solemn and earnest; a very joyful one, for it is set to the music of the Christmas hymn, or rather formed, confirmed amidst the inspirations of the advent of the holy child Jesus. That sacred Child, a child no longer, gives you His own example and encouragement. At that season which in Him unites childhood, youth, and maturity, in which, even as in your case, the learner passes into the teacher, you hear Him say: "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's business?" Put your hand in His, looking into His face, as He looked and He alone into His Father's face, and say: "I will, I must, and I shall, be in Thine, O Christ!"

A LETTER TO THE YOUNGER MINISTERS OF THE METHODIST CONNEXION.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I FEEL it in my heart to send you a New Year's greeting, with a few words of encouragement and counsel. May He in whose name I undertake this service seal it with His approval and blessing!

While I am writing, you are preparing for the usual solemnities of the season; when you read what is written these will have passed, but will have left behind them their gracious influence. You have been earnestly reviewing your own relation to the Lord, first as His servant in common with your flock and then as entrusted with the responsibility of ministering His truth. Let me remind you how closely, how inseparably, these are united. Although there is a sense in which you are a Christian man first and then a Christian minister, it is equally true that your religious life in Christ is one life. Perfect devotion to the Redeemer, and perfect ministerial service in His kingdom, are two expressions of the same principle: your union with Him. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit:" the Holy Ghost common to the Saviour and to His

humblest disciple, not more His than yours, His in order to be yours, yours because His, aims to conform you both to the image of His personal holiness and to the standard of His supreme fidelity as the Servant of God. Your entire devotion to ministerial duty must flow from your entire devotion to your Lord; and your entire devotion to the Lord will take its specific form in your fidelity to the pastoral vocation. But each of these in its own order: first is the central consecration, afterwards the ministerial diligence. To remember this is of the utmost importance. Indeed, there is no fanaticism in saying that to keep the soul right with Christ, in the fulness of the meaning of that word, is to be safe from pastoral unfaithfulness, from the errors to which the Preacher is liable, and even to a blessed degree from the bewildering doubts that may assail him. The secret of His pavilion is a refuge from the strife of tongues. If you are tempted to think this too large a promise, suspend your judgment and read on.

Perhaps I touch the most hidden spring in your heart, as I do in my own, when I urge the necessity of the most entire and unlimited self-consecration to the Lord. This ideal of undivided devotion the Holy Ghost never suffers those in whom He dwells to forget. It has been the leading note in our recent services, and is evermore appealing to our souls with an irresistible might. But even this clear note is not clear to all. It is the hard necessity of our over-critical age that we must carry controversy into even the most sacred recesses of experience. There are many who cannot read the words "Consecration" and "Per-

fection" without asking what these words mean and in Christian experience what is their relation to each other. Perhaps you are one of those questioners. Then for your sake—though without controversy—let me say something of a threefold perfection of which it seems to me the Scripture speaks.

First, there is doubtless an introductory or preliminary perfection which sheds its sanctity over the very threshold of the temple: the absolute surrender and abandonment of all we have and are to the will of God in Christ. No words of our Master are more plain, none are more uncompromising, none more unvarying, than those in which He lays down the conditions of entering into His service. "Who-soever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath he cannot be My disciple:" on this steadfast ordinance there is no variation; this also is a Scripture which cannot be broken; this decree changeth not. To comply with the Lord's requirement by Divine grace is to enter perfectly into His good pleasure; to hesitate, to shrink back, to retain one's own will, to have any subordinate end or aim, is to tarry in the outer court, waiting—alas, how often long waiting!—for the final initiation. I have no time to ask how this affects the case of many who have not yet risen into this higher life, and yet in the Lord's gentle forbearance are reckoned His own. Suffice that the Master's rule is peremptory, as the Gospels everywhere show; and that it is the reigning law of religion throughout the New Testament. Every Christian man is supposed by the theory to be perfect in this sense, that the love

of Christ CONSTRAINETH him, that is, binds him down or shuts him up to one only course of thought and feeling and action; he judges that in Him who died for all he himself died to self and must live to his Lord. Let us not think of this controversially. Do not ask if this means a Baptism of the Holy Ghost raising common believers into the higher and better Christian estate. Suffice that the Spirit, the One and Selfsame Spirit, given to all who are Christ's, is given to you already to that end, though His purpose may hitherto have been defeated. Inquire diligently in the secret oracle of your conscience if it has been defeated in you. But go straight to the feet of Jesus, and make the inquiry in His presence: there alone can such questions be safely asked and answered. Take your Self, as it were, in your hand, and never rest until you know that He has taken it into His. In your great and high intention do this: leave Him to do the rest. But never be satisfied until it is done, and done effectually; until your inmost soul is filled with His Spirit, the Spirit of an entire consecration, delivering you from the dominion of the aims of self as perfectly as if self were literally dead within you.

Until they have reached this first perfection the Lord has a controversy with His followers. When it is their happiness to have suffered the loss of all that is their own for Him, they enter on a second course of perfection, which St. Paul calls "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This is walking in the house of God with a perfect heart; ordering the conversation, interior and exterior, according to the "perfect law of

liberty," that law which is fulfilled in love; and therefore to lead the perfect life, though it is only as yet on the way to perfection. It is simply carrying out the principle of entire consecration into all its daily details; living for God and in God; finding our supreme and only satisfaction in Him; denying self wherever self is found; thinking, speaking, and acting always with a conscious or unconscious reference to the Divine will and approval. It is the supreme love of Jesus, showing itself not in the ardours of devotion simply but in the strength of self-surrendering obedience. It is the love of our fellows approving itself in the deeds and words of self-sacrificing charity. Let me counsel you to dedicate yourself afresh to this interior, higher, and hidden life: a life which will then be manifest also to all who see you, but shown in deep humility. Let your daily course be ordered by the strictest rules of the straitest sect of our religion. Crucified with Christ, die with Him daily to sin: reckoning yourself, even before the final hour, dead to all unholy affections. Live in your Lord, and with Him, and to Him: as if you and He were alone in the world, "hid with Christ in God." This is perfection: the process of the perfecting of love to God and man. It is living within the temple; more than that, on the altar itself; and, still more, within the very holiest. Set the clear eye of your mind, and the unlimited strength of your heart, on this heavenly experience on earth. Thrice blessed will you be if you evermore strive to live this life.

A third perfection there is to which these two

lead, and which is reached in no other way. Reached, I say; but not at all by any effort of our own as such, being the supreme, direct, and consummating act of the Spirit of holiness, reducing the evil principle to nought, destroying utterly the body of sin, abolishing that inbred corruption which is our personal share in the original sin of the race, and giving the love of God in us "her perfect work." Mistake not for this perfection its preliminary processes; but let not its preliminary processes satisfy you without that to which they lead. Having in the strength of the Holy Ghost given up self once for all to Christ, living daily under the gentle and stern pressure of His cross; then let your faith continually hear His "Follow Me," and go on, encouraged by hope, towards the mystical moment of your great Release from sin. Proclaim such a privilege, though as yet you know it not. You belong to a company of preachers who utter this truth to its last accent more fully than any others. Preach your doctrine, but preach it discreetly: give it no name but that which you find in Scripture, not committing yourself to any rigid assertions as to either the Divine evidence or the human confession of entire sanctification from sin. Never fail to declare that in this life, and by a ministration of the Spirit before the severance of soul and body, the corruption of the nature is to be done away. Meanwhile, let me humbly charge you, as I charge myself, to make this your own personal goal of aspiration. While others are discussing the various theories of holiness, keep your whole

soul set upon this experimental solution of every difficulty.

And now I turn to the subject of your fidelity to Christian doctrine generally. You are most solemnly pledged to maintain a system of truth which in our estimation is no other than the Faith once delivered unto the saints. Your fidelity is guarded in two special ways: on the one hand, by certain Formularies or Standards to which you have given your adhesion; and, on the other, by the living authority of the Conference which protects those standards and interprets them. You have reason to be thankful, in these days of dissolving confessions, and shifting views, and desperate reconciliations, that Providence has brought you under the bondage of a definite Creed, the only peculiarity of which is its emphasis upon one or two of the grandest privileges of the Gospel. You have, in my judgment, equal reason to be thankful that so many jealous eyes concentrate their watch on your faithfulness. Though to say so may seem an outrage on present public opinion, it is no small advantage to the cause of truth in Great Britain, and therefore in Christendom, that there is such a body as the Methodist Conference, with its living spirit faithful to its ancient traditions: as keen to detect as it is strong to suppress any serious deviation from its standard of orthodoxy in all who are subject to its authority. I am not speaking to the public: I only desire to encourage you to glory in your bonds. You have abundant scope for the free play of personal opinion. The strictness of our Confession of faith is not to be denied; but it allows much more latitude in subordi-

nate subjects than is sometimes supposed. Perhaps I had better not, on this occasion, define in what directions that freedom may range. Let me return to my point. You do well to rejoice that God has placed you in a Brotherhood which is not surpassed in the Church of Christ for its sensitive fidelity to the cause of truth, "as truth is in Jesus."

Our own is not a more critical and scrupulous age than its predecessors. What distinguishes it is this, that its inquiries and doubts are at once superficial and exceedingly bold; a combination, when religion is in question, to be trembled at. The tremendous questions which used to be agitated in polemical folios and quartos are now discussed in the pages of monthly and quarterly serials, where too much of the theological controversy of the day is conducted, by writers the best of whose time is often otherwise occupied, and who devote its fragments and interstices to speculations on the problems of human existence. But this is too grave a matter for pleasantry or satire. What I was going to say is this, that controversy is not confined to our age, or to any one age. The doctrines of the Faith are given to us as it were under this condition: that they must be constantly defended, and become brighter and more precious in the process. This is the price we pay for the inestimable blessing of an inspired revelation. I sometimes think that we chafe unduly under this burden; thinking of it too much as the result of human perverseness and too little as the ordinance of Divine wisdom. It is part of our probation. The cross laid upon us by our Lord is not only ethical; it is

doctrinal also; or, rather, the most refined form of self-crucifixion is the moral sacrifice of our reason, or our ratiocination, to the claims that Divine truth makes on our faith. Was not this in our Lord's thoughts on that only occasion when He spoke of our burden and of our rest? He had been denouncing the most solemn and extreme judgments on those who despised His teaching; He had been uttering with thanksgiving His own human submission to the awful truths committed to His incarnate mind; and then He spoke out to all future generations, and promised rest to all who should, in the spirit of His meekness and lowliness, bear His yoke. There is no such test of our meekness as the pressure of His own most sacred words. Is that yoke easy, is that burden light, which requires us to say, *EVEN SO, FATHER!* to all those most dread revelations of the future which the Son hath taught? Does it not require the most profound humility before God, and meekness before man, to receive and to echo the Master's words when He looked up to heaven and said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," or when He pointed to the Gehenna of another world, and likened it to the Jerusalem Gehenna, with this most vital difference, that there "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"? These are the two uttermost extremes of His imposition on our faith. But, how many exactions are there intermediate between these! What deep submission does it need to hear Him say, and believe Him when He says, of the most fragile infants of the human race, that "their angels do always behold the Face of My

Father," having a spiritual and eternal existence in His presence! And when He declares that "for every idle word that man shall speak, he shall give account"! I cannot pursue this subject. Suffice, that he who sits at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth, should cry aloud for the EPHPHATHA before he listens; and must expect to hear mysteries which even then he can accept only in the faith of the heart which assents, EVEN SO, LORD! while the reasoning of the mind may silently murmur, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it." We are so familiar with the great revelation that we are apt to be startled when some of its most thought-oppressing truths are brought with more than ordinary vividness before our minds. I may well repeat to you that the terms of Discipleship are the same as the terms of Salvation. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be MY DISCIPLE."

This settles for ever to us the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture. There are difficulties, as you and I only too well know, which it is beyond our power to solve. We must use our best endeavours to acquaint ourselves with the results of the latest investigations, and be thankful when they clear away the mists here and there. But we have to carry some to the Mount of Transfiguration, before the glory of which they all must needs vanish. There the Old Testament Scriptures, as it were, ask His authentication and receive it. And there we are bidden to HEAR HIM Who ratifies

the Old Biblical records and gives us New. Meanwhile, we must needs hear science also; but with pre-occupied and defended ears. Just now, the question turns upon the interpretation of the earliest Mosaic Record. The hypothesis of development urges its claims. If this is maintained by Materialists we may disdain the controversy. If by those who insist that a principle of Continuity, or continuous evolution, has been made the law of the construction of the universe of which man is the crown, it is our wisdom to wait until the hypothesis is disencumbered of difficulties that seem fatal to it. Meanwhile, it is equally our wisdom not to be alarmed at anything which scientific reason may enforce upon Christian faith. The principle of evolution may have been used by the Supreme in His wisdom: not according to the working of Natural Selection—a phrase that common sense abhors—but in a way that neither science nor theology can yet explain, and in perfect consistency with His own record. But, whatever affinity we may admit between our first father created from the dust and the beasts that perish, we must remember that the first note of the Bible about Man, that his better part came from the Divine breath, and that he was created in the Image of God, is of transcendent importance. With that breath began the eternity of the human creature; and a race of immortal spirits was linked with the mortal frame of humanity.

To return, however. Our Lord we are pledged to hear: we have staked our reason, our faith, our hope, our all, on His lightest authentic word. Let me beg you to consider well all that this involves. He has guaranteed to us the ancient Scriptures, and

assured us of the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit in the writings of His Apostles. It is a great privilege to be permitted to take refuge in this essential pre-supposition of Apologetics. It does not preclude the labours of apologists: their labours are abundant and they have been greatly blessed. It is my deep and firm conviction that the battle is turning at all points against the assailants of the integrity of Holy Writ. But I am writing to you as to one who has not much time to read this defensive literature. Remember the priceless value of the right you have to set your Master's word in the place—if need be—of all other evidences whatsoever.

It is matter of common observation that, while there is always around us a spirit of scepticism, conceiving and bringing forth the doubt which when it is finished brings forth disbelief, there is generally one particular form of it that takes the lead in disturbing sincere minds. This remark, however, must be taken with some qualification. As the surrender of any one truth carries with it the surrender of others on which it depends, so strong doubts on any particular point may generally be traced to vacillation on some other more obviously fundamental doctrine. Speaking to you in all simplicity, I should say that the special difficulty on your mind at the present moment—if happily not on your mind as a difficulty, yet pressing on it for others' sake as a vital question—that of the eternal penalty of sin, is closely connected with a more or less implicit or explicit misconception of the Atonement. The root of most of the present distress is there.

Time was when the Incarnation was specially assailed ; and that assault was felt to be so vital that the whole Church of Christ arose to the defence against Anti-christ. But now many who accept the Divinity of our Lord—that is, His Incarnate Person—yield to the pressure of human reasoning or sentiment upon the vicariousness of His suffering for our race. We have to decide between two doctrines concerning the great Reconciliation : one which makes it a Divine expedient for moving upon man's enmity and removing his selfishness by giving him a Divine-human Exemplar of the evil of sin ; and the other which makes it also the revelation of a process of unsearchable mystery in the heart of the Holy Trinity, a reconciliation of God to man rendering possible the reconciliation of man to God : in short, an Atonement in heaven before the Atonement on earth.

Between these two theories—if the word may be allowed—there is a difference the results of which are all-pervasive and incalculable. I need only refer to the effect of the former type of doctrine, which is traceable in too much of the theology now counted orthodox. It insensibly but surely lowers the whole tone of the New Testament, while seeming to raise it ; and in particular gives an undefinable unreality to its current language concerning the Saviour's relation to human sin and Divine justice. That He was made a Curse, that He was made Sin for us, that He bore the iniquities of the world, that He suffered for sins the Just for the unjust : all these are phrases that have lost their deepest meaning. The cross is the beautiful symbol of self-sacrifice ; but it is not also the awful

scene of the condemnation of sin in the flesh. Hence this view of the Atonement affects deeply the theological estimate of the nature of the Supreme. The Being who is finally and fully revealed in Gethsemane and Calvary is not the God of this type of modern theology. Its God is not the God of the Holy Scriptures. In His government evil could never have existed at all; or, if it existed, must have been visited most tenderly, if not suppressed by instant omnipotence. I put it to you, my Brother, whether the Gentle Father about Whom enthusiasts declaim so much is the Very God of the providence of this world of sorrow and of the process of Christ's Redemption. Sin itself is, in this theology, something very different from the abominable thing that God hateth, towards which He is a consuming fire. For my own part, I cannot understand this imaginary Judge to whom appeal is made against Himself. But I do find—though I exceedingly fear and quake at finding—in all the Scriptures a Being whose love and whose holiness are one and equal, and who does not “deny Himself” when He separates the wilful sinner for ever from His presence.

Let me impress it on your mind that there is, that there can be, no question as to the Scriptural testimony to an eternal judicial visitation of sin. That cannot be eliminated from the Bible. Our Lord's words, those spoken directly by Himself, contain the severest sayings on this subject ever put into human speech. Indirectly spoken in the Apocalypse, or still more indirectly by the Spirit of apostolical, inspiration, they foreannounce the eternal conse-

quences of persistent rebellion, an eternal judgment or condemnation generally, and an eternal result of that condemnation. Mark well these three instances of the use of the term *Eternal*, and mark their order: it is an eternal judgment or distinction for eternity; this issues in eternal punishment as such; and that as inflicted on a specific class, who not knowing God are separated from Him for ever, and not having obeyed the Gospel suffer the penalty of their disobedience. You will find that the outcry against the everlasting meaning of the word *eternal* is entirely baseless. The word has endurance in its root. It is undoubtedly applied to the ages that run out in time, when it signifies that the duration of the promise, or the kingdom, or whatever else is the subject of this predicate, exhausts the limits defined for it. But the word is used of things beyond the successions of phenomenal existence, when "time shall be no more," and helps the poverty of human thought by speaking of eternity as if it were measured out by "ages of ages." But it never in that application signifies simply "perfect," or "absolute," or merely a duration apportioned to the being of the creature: it always signifies unchanging and unchangeable. St. Paul's antithesis gives the rule of interpretation: "the things which are seen are temporal; the things which are not seen are eternal." By that rule eternal punishment cannot be a temporal and unenduring doom.

Condemnation, Punishment, and Destruction are at once clearly understood if the term *eternal*, which belongs to them, retains its meaning. But this solemn

trinity of words must have their Scriptural interpretation apart from the adjective which carries them out of time into eternity. The CONDEMNATION is to a PUNISHMENT which is DESTRUCTION. Now the condemnation is said to be the wrath of God abiding on a living soul: the act and the effect are denoted by different terms: the act of condemning is one, but the effect of condemnation remains. The punishment is expressed in the plainest language that could express, not the chastisement which corrects, but the retribution which satisfies justice. The destruction, or perishing, or being lost, is, throughout the New Testament, the familiar, alas only too familiar, description of a process going on in the ungodly who are already perishing, who are already lost. Lost in this life, they may be found again; but at the appearing of Jesus Christ they will be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." From that presence Cain went out; but that was not his extinction, nor did it as yet seal his doom. From that presence the prodigal son went out and was LOST; but he did not cease to exist, and afterwards was found. From that presence the finally reprobate will go out for ever. These words are utterly inconsistent with the hope of a universal restoration of all God's banished ones to Himself.

If the word Everlasting or Eternal or—as the euphemism runs—Æonian bears its full significance as the only human term for a changeless state, then the popular notion of an extinction which awaits the wicked has no support. The advocates of this

innovation prefer, as you know, the negative aspect of their new doctrine. Immortality is conditional life in Christ, continuous existence through union with Him; death is the penalty of being out of Christ, and only the withdrawal of existence. I recommend you to take your Greek-Testament Concordance and track these words through all their uses. The result will show that neither is life in Christ mere existence, nor death out of Christ annihilation. The existing soul, the substratum of the man, has or receives eternal life if he has or receives the Son; while "he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." This is in the present world, when the human spirit either obtains a superadded life or abides in a superadded death. St. Paul gives the expression for the continuity of this life or death into eternity: it is "life unto life," or the present eternal life reaching its consummation; it is "death unto death," or the present death in trespasses and sins resulting in its consummation: "ye shall die in your sins," "shall be in danger of eternal sin," or "guilt," or "condemnation." It appears to me that these questions are solved by our Lord's own words concerning the two historical processes of His mission. He spoke of the hour that had already struck, when those that hear His voice are quickened and live: receiving the life that Christ hath in Himself but not for Himself alone. He also spoke of another and final hour, omitting the *now is*, when all shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: "they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and

they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation" or "of judgment." Were the words of Daniel, "some to shame and everlasting contempt," in His thoughts, and did He intend to soften them by limiting the resurrection to the resurrection of judgment? It may be granted, as we have been so vehemently told, that the word damnation, with its modern conventional sense, is not the exact equivalent of condemnation. The plain fact is that it is only too feeble in its earliest and etymological meaning, which is that of the great LOSS or perdition of all that is man's true life. But what does our Lord signify by the resurrection of judgment? As the resurrection of life is the rising of those not really dead—for they "never die" who believe in Him—to the perfection of that life; so the resurrection of judgment is the rising of those who still live to hear His voice unto the perfection of that death. The Saviour never uses the word condemnation for anything but the sentence upon one who lives to bear it. "For judgment I am come unto the world, that they which see might be made blind." "He will reprove of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." "Now is the judgment of this world." His last word on this subject was: "I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be": to every man in justice whether good or evil. Here would have been the place for any tender retractation: "if it were not so I would have told you." When the Lover of souls first uttered the explicit declaration quoted above, He for a moment spoke out the feeling of His humanity and said:

"I can of My own self do nothing; as I hear I judge; and My judgment is just." But here at the last He has no other word than that which we heard from the beginning: "Blessed are they that enter in through the gates into the city." "Without are dogs . . . and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." But I am not sending you a controversial pamphlet.

You have often heard that the doctrine of an eternal penalty of sin rests upon a rigorous interpretation put upon some isolated passages. To this assertion you must close your ears. Though it is made by eloquent preachers, and in high places, believe it not. It is simply not true. However severe individual texts are, and however impossible it is to escape from their force by any artifice of exposition, they do not alone support the tremendous doctrine. It pervades the whole system of Gospel truth, which, whether spoken by the Author of all Gospel to man or by His accredited Apostles, assumes everywhere a great alternative issue of probation. Life is the day of a possible salvation, during which therefore one thing is needful, and all else as it were superfluous. At the great day every man will receive "the things done in the body": this most striking phrase, which occurs again and again, and is indeed the formula linking time with eternity, the season of reaping with the season of sowing, seems to me to determine this dread question. Everywhere we have broad antitheses and counterparts. The most comprehensive of these of course is that of "eternal life" and "eternal punishment" on our Lord's lips: if the former signifies a perfect Pantheistic absorption into God, then the latter signifies

a perfect return to nonentity; if the former signifies an unchanging and consummate life in God, then the latter signifies an unchanging and consummate separation from that Source of life. Throughout the Scriptures there are only those within and those without. It would occupy pages to trace these counterparts. The more carefully they are traced the more clear will be the result, that while the race of man is saved, individuals of mankind, like individual evil spirits, will be unsaved for ever.

Meanwhile, let me here observe that the controversy now running its course on this question will, if you are wise, turn to the great advantage of your preaching. You will be led to study very diligently the way in which our Lord Himself and His Apostles after Him announced it; and you will be most solicitous to conform the delivery of your dreadful message to their example: in its spirit and tone, in its severity and tenderness, in its unutterable pathos, and, above all, in its clear and careful discrimination. The persistent assertions you are obliged to hear, that the Scriptures do not make final retribution their argument, but depend upon the display of the love of God, you will perceive to be utterly untrue. The Sanction and the Promise almost invariably go together. This is simply matter for evidence; and I must ask you, if you need it, to examine our Saviour's discourses and parables from the Mount to Gethsemane, and mark that almost in every case where the eternal blessedness of His service is promised the dark counterpart is at hand. Nor is it strictly true that the New Testament introduces the

extremest threatenings only when reprobates are referred to, or such as contradict and blaspheme. On the contrary, the most solemn words are those of our Lord when commencing and when ending His ministry amongst His own disciples, and in the most perfect tranquillity.

On the other hand, it is undeniably true that there is a style of preaching this "hard saying" which gives it a superfluous harshness. Our Saviour Himself used figures to impress the realities of perdition, even as He used figures to describe the joys of heaven, which we must be careful how we dilate upon: the caution is equally necessary on both sides of the alternative. It must be remembered also that He never spoke of the eternal ruin of man as man, that is as the inheritor of the sin of the race, but of the penalty of those whose "sin remaineth" because they finally and persistently reject Himself. This is the blasphemy "which hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal guilt." The rejection of the Son of God incarnate and atoning for sin is also by the Apostles represented as the consummate guilt which forfeits at once the possibility of forgiveness and the possibility of being renewed unto repentance. Moreover our Lord—we in this matter instinctively cling to Him, for He hath also the words of eternal death—repeatedly and habitually alleviates His doctrine by predicting a graduated doom, shading down to "few stripes," and "little required." All are not in the same sense partakers with the devil and his angels. While it is most plain that there is a holy indignation in His meek spirit, passing from the deep

Sigh to the most terrible Woe, against His persistent enemies, we must not fail to mark the Redeemer's tears also: His sighs and His tears should distil into our preaching rather than His woes. Finally, we must never forget that anarchy, rebellion, and eternal blasphemy are all inconsistent with the supremacy of Him who will put all enemies under His feet. The eternal misery of a hopeless separation from God must be the nerve of our appeals; and concerning that we may boldly say that the permanence of such a separation is by no means more revolting to reason than the commencement of it. Both are unfathomable mysteries. But the origin and continuance of evil, which we have seen, renders it easier to conceive its eternity, which we have not seen: which, thank God, we need never see.

Another lesson we may learn from the present controversy is this: not to erect into doctrine, and formulate in dogma, and preach as truth, certain hints of Scripture about the true meaning of which exposition is undecided. In this brief letter I cannot enlarge on all that is suggested by this remark. But it is of very great importance in the present connection. Take one instance of what is meant. It seems to some of the best and most orthodox expositors undeniable that the Blessed Conqueror went into the under-world and proclaimed Himself to the spirits in prison, when the Gospel was preached to them that are dead. This revelation thus interpreted gives a most wonderful glimpse into the abyss of the under-world. The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour to the vast region of departed genera-

tions is supposed to have been an announcement which quickened some in the spirit. There the revelation seems to them to end; and there their doctrine ends. Keeping such a saying as this in their heart, they bless God for the consolation. They ask themselves, but in deep silence, what preparations for the Desire of all the peoples known only to Himself were vivified into conscious faith by His advent, which was, to that world, His first advent? They go further and ask, again in deep silence, what may be the like effect of His second coming on those to whom that also will be virtually His first coming, and who will say "When saw we Thee?" But when others with unauthorised charity expand this into a second probation, and a continuous Missionary energy of the Church in the intermediate world, the light goes out upon their speculations and becomes as darkness. The teaching of our Lord descended into Hades before He Himself descended. But, though we hear the "Son, remember!" the gulf is already fixed: He who "received in his lifetime his good things is tormented; he who received evil things is comforted." This seems much like the rehearsal of St. Paul's most solemn account of the righteous judgment which will assign rest to the persecuted when they who were the persecutors shall "receive vengeance" and "give satisfaction," according to the Apostle's literal words. In short, for my space is fast diminishing, you must be profoundly cautious, especially as preachers, of projecting before the minds of men an imaginary probation which never once—I speak advisedly—enters into the substance of Apostolical preaching.

These are not the only difficulties which perhaps press upon your thoughts. It was my intention to advert to some few others; but I abstain. Once more let me ask you to suffer the word of exhortation. Read the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul, which contain his final prophecies of coming errors, errors perpetually "to come;" which contain also his final protest, in the ever recurring "faithful saying;" and which send you to your only safeguard, "keep thyself pure." Remember the words of the Master of Paul, who has promised to "manifest Himself" to the man who loves Him and keeps His sayings: which is, being interpreted, to make Himself, the Truth, plain to his understanding and his heart. It was only another form of saying: "He that willeth to do My will, shall know Me and My doctrine."

This brings to my remembrance St. Paul's most wonderful prayer that the Colossians might be blessed with the "full assurance of understanding." It is true the Apostle limits it to the "mystery of God which is Christ;" but the confidence in the Person of the Saviour which has left all doubt behind must needs be a firm persuasion at least of all vital truth connected with Him and His revelation. Perpetually of late this impressive promise has been suggested to my mind. After all, what does it mean? Is it a declamatory effusion, taking the form of prayer; or an ideal of enthusiasm set up in the language of aspiration, always and avowedly unlimited; or is it a mere sigh of the wearied teacher, sent up to God, such as you and I often are obliged to heave in these times of unrest? No, it is none of these. It is the

voice of the Holy Ghost in St. Paul, helping his infirmities, telling him what to pray for in behalf of his converts harassed by sceptics: namely, for that same intellectual repose in Christ, the Sum and to faith the Solution of all mysteries, which he himself had reached. I ask myself, May I—may the young man I write to—attain this cloudless rest in Him who is the Truth? May we have all that is meant by that elect word of the Apostle, *PLEROPHORIA*? May I, who profess to teach, attain it? As to yourself the Apostle's word should be a great encouragement: "they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Jesus Christ."

But speaking of this deep rest St. Paul might have said, as if inverting his honest boast: "At a great price obtained I this liberty; I was not free born." Neither Christ, nor anything that is His, becomes a personal possession without a heavy sacrifice. We must *GIVE ALL FOR ALL*. If you are to be free, and expatiate in the region where the clouds of doubt only make the light more beautiful, then every thought must be brought into captivity: if your thoughts must be free and unrestrained, then you must be in bondage yourself. I see this truth written in "great letters" throughout the revelation of God; I have found its truth in all my experience; you will find it also, are finding it I trust, in yours. The full surrender of the mind to Christ who is its everlasting and only Light has been spoken of already. But as in religion there is the daily cross after the denial of self, so in the pursuit of truth there is the daily sacrifice of

intellectual curiosity. You must be on your guard as to the measure in which you allow yourself liberty to read the speculations of the busy thinkers of the day. Use not your liberty so as to give the carnal mind its occasion or opportunity. Of course I am far from denying that you must be familiar with current error: it is the burden, the holy burden, of your office that you are, like St. Paul, "set for the defence of the Gospel." To defend that Gospel you must know how and by whom it is assailed. But there is no part of your duty which demands so much prudence and prayerful solicitude as this. You must on your allegiance read the "oppositions of science," theological and other, in the full armour of a loyal bond-slave of Jesus Christ and His words.

But there is another and less safe style of dealing with current speculation. It is possible, without intending it, and indeed almost unconsciously, to take up in the spirit of sympathy certain theories which have a fair show of relieving a hard pressure; and to surrender at the very outset what is to them a great advantage, the secret desire of your heart. There are some flexible and easy natures which receive too readily the influence of the last plausible argument, whatever it may be, and let it more or less colour all their thoughts until another equally fascinating displaces it. I hope yours is not one of those facile and impressionable natures. If you have reason to suspect yourself of having some affinity with them, let me urge you to protect yourself against your own weakness. Let your self-denial exercise itself in that direction. Read nothing that you are not prepared fairly to grapple

with. Read nothing at all that is obviously written in the spirit of irreverence, or lightheartedness, or experiment on truth : the sacred mysteries of the Faith deserve this at least at your hands. I feel here that what I say may be misunderstood as hinting at the safety there is in flight. But I feel also that I am right. Experience has long taught me the inexpressible satisfaction of being entrenched within the city of God of which I may say, for He hath said: the enemy "shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there. For I will defend this city."

I must not conclude these miscellaneous observations without some reference, however brief, to your general work as a Methodist Pastor and Preacher.

There are some distractions incident to our times which you would do well to guard against. The kingdom in which you serve is not of this world; and you, in common with all its servants, must be careful not to dissipate your energies, which are consecrated energies, upon objects which are of very doubtful relation to the Supreme One. Be on your guard against the danger of enlarging unduly the range of things "pertaining to the kingdom of God." I know that it is very difficult to define where the interests of the Redeemer's Gospel cease. It is very possible to mark off for rejection many an engagement which indirectly subserves those interests. I would not be, nor would I advise you to be, a purist or over-scrupulous here. You may advance the truth by your writing, your lecturing, your contributions to general science, and your co-operation with many schemes for the elevation of society. As to all this you must

be quick to hear the Saviour's voice : whether He say, "What is that to thee?" or "Occupy, till I come." But abstain from politics, especially exasperating politics. Keep your hands from attacking institutions which you were not called to overthrow, or which you might rather mend by your good example and sobriety ; shrink not from any enterprise in which your Brethren generally join ; be jealous of any which divides any number of them against you. Above all, set your face—I hardly need enforce this upon you—against all confederations the aim of which is to render the truths of religion more acceptable to men by relaxing the bonds of the Confession of Faith.

Those who read with spiritual eyes the signs of the times see that there are manifest tokens of the advent of a large effusion of the Holy Spirit. Those whose ears are quick hear the sound of abundance of rain. The blessing, like the judgment, begins at the house of God ; and among Our People—to use the good old phrase—there is in every direction the stirring of a mighty pulse of desire after holiness. A Conference on Sanctification will in any part of the land attract thousands who ask with a blessed variation on the Pentecostal cry : "Men and Brethren, What must we do to be sanctified? How shall we reach the perfect love of God and man? Who will lead us into the land of uprightness"? I appeal to your own experience. Is there a Society under your charge which would not hail with deep joy a summons to meet for conversation and prayer on this subject? Then, how great is your responsibility ! With what solemn earnestness should you prepare

your heart for your own part and lot in this matter ! Let it be your anxiety to remove from your affections and aims, from your practice and conversation, from your pursuits and engagements, from the secret and sacred recesses of your soul, everything that might cause Him to withhold His utmost strength from your inner man. Let Him see that, using His prevenient grace, you have made straight the way of the Lord, and He will enter with the fulness of His grace, fill you with His heavenly influence as you have never yet been filled, and make you such an organ of His power as you have perhaps hitherto in vain desired to be.

While you are yourself yet young, care very diligently for the young of your flock. In this department also of ministerial service there are tokens that the Saviour's joy is being fulfilled in us. There never was a time when so much attention was paid to our Catechumens, our Biblé'Classes, our Select Sunday Schools, our Teachers' preparations, and the care of the Children generally. The Pastoral Oversight of the Young has been gently but irresistibly brought before the mind of Conference; and the result is already felt. Let me affectionately urge you to take your full share in this movement. It has an obvious claim upon you; you are supposed "naturally" to care for young people. They will repay your toil and assiduous love. And He Who so loves them that we may vary His well-known title, and call Him "the Friend of children," will take note that you feed His lambs. You will never be nearer to Him, nor will He ever

be nearer to you, than when you are devising the most liberal things possible on their behalf. You know where to find them. There are many homes whose little ones would very soon learn to hang on your looks and words as they hang on no other. Do your best to make your visits felt in the Sunday School, where in my judgment you ought to be the Permanent Catechist. And forget not the Day School. So far as in you lies, abolish the wall of partition, imaginary or otherwise, between your function and that of the Primary Teacher. Show that you sympathise with the secular training of our Schools, and let the Teacher know that your heart is with his. His concentrated, never-varying taskwork would be refreshed by the occasional solace of your visits; he will be very glad to have his religious instruction confirmed and supplemented by yours; and will amply repay such service as you may render him. Moreover, the future occupants of our pews will thus become better prepared for our ministry.

But I am wandering too far, and must go no further. Receive what has been most humbly written in the presence of the Lord as in some sense His message. If any word has not interpreted His mind, may it be forgiven to me, and rendered harmless to you. With much more love than I have permitted myself to express, I commend your soul to His blessing; and, praying that His peace may flow into your life and ministry throughout this new year,

I am, my Dear Brother,

Yours in our Common Lord,

W. B. POPE.

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