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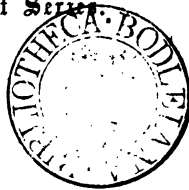
SERMONS

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BY THE

REV. SAMUEL D. WADDY, D.D.

First Series



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JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years ago I tried in vain to persuade my father to write something which might be an enduring memorial of him when God should be pleased to call him away. Failing to overcome his antipathy to writing, I secured without his knowledge a shorthand note of nearly 150 of his Sermons. I afterwards gave all the transcripts to him, and he promised to go through them with a view to publication. This he was never able to accomplish. He wrote out most of the Sermons which appear in this volume, but never really prepared them for the press. It was my intention to do this to the best of my power, but fortunately the task was undertaken by my friend Dr. Williams. I think it is impossible to speak too highly of the patient care and loving thoroughness with which Dr. Williams has done his work, and I gratefully record my own personal obligations to him.

I propose to publish in another volume a Memoir of my father, and in a third I shall give some of his sessional Charges to his pupils and other Sermons.

It will depend on the public whether I publish more than these three volumes.

I say nothing of my father's history, ability, or worth. I am afraid that the intense devotion with which his children loved and admired him will unfit us all for writing his life, or pretending to analyse his character. At all events, while we are yet stunned by the blow which bereaved us ten days ago, we can do nothing but mourn. We must leave it to others, who knew him well,—and who, under God, owed him much,—to sound those praises which at present fall very sadly though gratefully on our ears.

S. D. WADDY.

Temple, 17th Nov. 1876.

PREFACE.

THE following volume is designed to form a memorial of the ministry of a beloved and honoured servant of the Lord Jesus, who, after having been laid aside for a few years from active labour, has just passed to his heavenly rest. His vigorous, instructive, and earnest preaching is remembered by many with deep interest; and it is hoped that this volume may serve vividly to recall some of these occasions of more than ordinary spiritual power, and to perpetuate impressions which were then received. It is hoped, also, that it may convey to those who did not know Dr. Waddy some idea of a ministry which, for a lengthened period, exercised a powerful influence, and contributed to form the character of many who now occupy important positions in the Church and in the world.

In preparing for the pulpit, Dr. Waddy was accustomed to write the general outline and leading thoughts of his discourses, agreeably to the advice which he often gave to young Ministers: but he

never attempted to adhere to the language in which he had clothed his thoughts, and only took into the pulpit a few brief memoranda on half a page of note-paper. At the earnest solicitation, however, of some members of his family he consented, a few years since, to write at length a few of his sermons,—nine of which are contained in the present volume, though even these had not the advantage of his own careful revision with a view to their publication. To these are added one which appeared in a small periodical, entitled ‘The Yorkshire Pulpit,’ in the year 1860, apparently with his sanction, two Sermons which he himself published, and the two Charges which he delivered at the London Conference of 1860, at the close of his Presidential year.

The ministry of Dr. Waddy was distinguished by a firm grasp of great principles, and by clear and powerful argument. He did not seek to embellish his discourses with varied illustrations, and still less to dazzle his hearers by a highly ornamented style. He *‘reasoned out of the Scriptures.’* His whole manner showed that he himself held the truths which he set forth as a matter of profound conviction, and that he was intensely anxious to impress them on the intellect, and heart, and conscience of his hearers. It was scarcely possible to listen to him without having one’s interest awakened;

and his earnest appeals, often involving genuine pathos, and always calculated to rouse the conscience to healthy action, left a deep impression on the mind.

The Discourses comprehended in this volume will show that the ministry of Dr. Waddy was marked by comprehensiveness of thought, and occasionally embraced topics which are not frequently introduced into pulpit-addresses. But, perhaps, its most striking feature was the forcible manner in which he applied great truths to the circumstances and wants of his hearers. He had studied human nature, and knew the aspirations, the hopes, the conflicts, and the sorrows of the human spirit. His ministry was eminently practical, dealing with men in all the stages of their religious history, and all the phases of their spiritual feeling.

It is impossible to read several of the following Discourses without perceiving that the esteemed author held, and that justly, very high views of the value of union with the Church of God. Some passages bearing on this subject in Sermons VIII. and X. are well deserving of being carefully pondered. Nor should I omit to mention his thoughtful appreciation of the advantages of the Wesleyan-Methodist economy, and the distinct and emphatic manner in which he ever maintained that Methodism

is a Connexion of Christian *Churches*, possessing all that is essential to the Church of God, according to the principles of the New Testament.

It may be permitted to me to add, that while, for many years, I had respected and esteemed Dr. Waddy, and had, on several occasions, listened to his powerful preaching with deep interest, my happy association with him for several weeks at the Hull Conference of 1869, in the hospitable home of the late Mr. Dawber, caused that respect and esteem to be combined with warm and strong attachment. When, therefore, it was proposed to me that I should edit this volume, I at once and cheerfully consented. In doing so, I have endeavoured simply to make such verbal corrections as Dr. Waddy would, in all probability, have made, had he been able himself to prepare his MSS. for the press.

During the greater portion of the time in which this work was passing through the press my venerable friend still lingered on earth: but just before its completion, He who 'hath the keys of the unseen world and of death' called him from the seclusion and languor of his sick chamber to the joys of His immediate presence.

H. W. WILLIAMS.

Yonge Park, London :
November 13, 1876.

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SERMONS.

I.

THE CHARGE OF GOD TO ABRAHAM.

AND WHEN ABRAM WAS NINETY YEARS OLD AND NINE, THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAM, AND SAID UNTO HIM, I AM THE ALMIGHTY GOD; WALK BEFORE ME, AND BE THOU PERFECT.—GENESIS xvii. 1.

THE extreme precision with which the age of Abraham is given to us at the time of this event is doubtless designed to impress upon us the fact, that it had some relation to an important circumstance in his life which happened *before* he had attained to this age. There are many things in the private character of Abraham well worthy of our admiration. He had obeyed the command of God, and, leaving the profitable idolatry of his fathers, had gone forth to a land which he knew not, trusting to the providence and the grace of the Most High. He had shown his disinterestedness by giving up to his nephew Lot the best and richest pasture land, while he took for himself that which was less productive and valuable. True it is that in this, as in many instances, virtue brought its own reward. The

cattle of Lot were destroyed in the overthrow of the cities of the plain, while the cattle of Abraham were preserved ; but he did not foresee this, when he willingly gave up what he might have justly claimed. It is not, however, with the personal character of Abraham, good as it was, that we have so much to do as with his representative character as the father of the faithful in every age. The one fact on which the interpretation of this text rests is, that before Abraham was ninety years old and nine he had 'believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' The command was therefore addressed to him in his Christian character,—in his justified relation to God. It is no anachronism to call Abraham a Christian : he is claimed by our Lord Himself. 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day ; and he saw it, and was glad.' And it is worthy of remark, that, when the Apostle would give an example and illustration of true Christian faith, he did not refer to any of his fellow-Apostles, nor to any of the holy men or women who were so well known, and some of whom had given such evidence of their faith in their devoted lives and their patient sufferings ; but he referred at once to Abraham ; as if it was not, in the nature of things, possible that there should be, after his day, any one whose faith should be so perfect and simple as his. When we describe the faith in Christ by which we are saved as a *simple* faith,—by which we mean that it is single and uncompounded, unassociated,—we give a description which is correct to a certain extent : but it is not strictly and severely correct in our case, though it is in the case of Abra-

ham. Our faith looks back on that which is already accomplished. The faith of Abraham looked forward to that which was yet to come. Our faith is sustained, supported, countenanced by everything with which we are surrounded. The long period which has passed between the birth of Christ and our own days is bridged over, so to speak; and upon the arches of that bridge our faith is sustained, helped on, carried up to Christ. We look around us, and see everywhere evidence that multitudes of men, wise in their generation, have believed in Christ. Go into your courts of justice, and you hear that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land. Around you places of worship, distinguished by their size and costliness from the ordinary abodes of men, declare the fact, that men have thought it right to devote time and money to the erection of edifices whose only use is to preserve and promulgate the Christian faith. The shutting up of shops and the closing of places of business on the sacred day of God,—people leaving their homes to attend Christian ordinances from week to week, thus showing that they believe in the Lord Jesus, and that the grand doctrines of His religion are received by them as *truths*, that they are prepared to act upon them, and to abide by them,—these things countenance and encourage us. All of us here this day, and thousands who are engaged in similar acts of worship, are helped and sustained in our faith, in the moments when it would be wavering and uncertain, so that there is never, at any period, that entire singleness that there was in the case of Abraham. For a period as long before the

coming of Christ as that which has now transpired since his appearance. Abraham's faith reached forward and laid hold on Him. It would be a mere truism to say that no facts or institutions, no monuments or evidences existed, such as those by which *our* faith in Christ is upheld. All was blank, unmarked, unrelieved, unshapen; and yet the faith of Abraham stretched over that dark abyss and grasped Christ in His spiritual intentions and purposes, in His Divine nature, in His mediatorial character and office, realising the mystery of His incarnation and the atonement of His death. He 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' To Abraham, then, in his justified state, having peace with God through faith in Christ, these words were addressed; and to all who stand in a similar relation to God they are still addressed. 'And when Abram was ninety years old and nine,'—not before this great change had taken place in him,—'the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect.'

The three points to which I would call your attention are,—

I. The nature of the command:—'Walk before Me.'

II. The extent of it:—'Be thou perfect.'

III. The reasonableness and practicability of it:—'I am the Almighty God;' or, 'I am God all-sufficient.'

I. The *nature* of the command, 'Walk before Me,' teaches us the practical character of true re-

ligion,—that it does not consist merely and exclusively of any one of those things of which, taken unitedly and collectively, it does consist. Many of the errors and heresies which have troubled the Christian Church have arisen from the overweening importance attached to things, which are indeed essential as parts of the great system of Christianity, or as elements of religion, but of which it is wrong to imagine that they constitute the whole. I would not speak in disparagement of anything that properly belongs to Christian faith or worship, but urge even a more diligent attention to them all; always regarding, however, their practical tendency,—that they are useful only so far as they serve to fit us for obedience to the command to ‘walk before God.’ I need not give any explanation of the use of the word ‘walk’ in this place. We all understand it as referring to the whole course of a man’s life and conduct; so that when we are charged to ‘walk before God,’ the meaning is that the whole course of our life, all our thoughts, words, and actions, should be in accordance with God’s law, and should be constantly directed to His glory.

1. In the first place, true religion does not consist merely in Divine contemplation. This has been a very common and fearfully destructive error. Men have shut themselves up in the solitude of the hermit’s cell, or in the seclusion of monastic life, in the vain hope that by withdrawing from the world they could shut out sin, and shut themselves in with God. They have soon found that the worst possible company a man can long exclusively keep is himself. There is a reverberatory action in the human

mind: its evil thoughts and corruptions turn back upon themselves, with ever-increasing intensity and power; and, as the result of this process, the man sometimes becomes almost a fiend. Thus it is that the worst and most diabolical crimes which have disturbed kingdoms, and ruined families and individuals, have been planned and hatched in monasteries, by men who had professedly renounced the world and the devil. Christian virtues can only be maintained and strengthened in the practice of Christian duties; and when a man excludes himself from the relations, and sympathies, and duties of the Christian life, the light that is in him will become darkness, and the life will become extinct. Contemplation, however holy the subject, will be useless to us except as it leads to practical results. We may meditate upon God, as upon any other theme, idly and without devotion, the mind wandering and day-dreaming. Meditation upon God is then only valuable to us,—then only is it a part of religion, properly so called,—when it leads to our being ‘changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ If we meditate on ourselves, it should be that we may ‘keep our hearts with all diligence,’ for out of them are ‘the issues of life.’ Of such practical meditation we do not want less, but more. There is great danger lest the religious character of this country should become altogether public and official. We have found out that union is strength; that men can do more by combination than singly; that great and good enterprises must be accomplished by men in council and co-operation. We are run-

ning hither and thither to Committees and Boards of Management; we rush from one public duty to another; and there is great danger lest some who are thus serving their day and generation should so far forget themselves as to leave no time for the cultivation of their own spiritual life. There is something wrong, if we allow public business, however important, to rob us of the half-hour's serious meditation on God and the interests of our own souls, and of that private and silent communing with Him, without which we cannot attain to the knowledge of the deeper things of God, or realise the strengthening and sanctifying power of a high-toned piety. Nevertheless religion does not consist exclusively in Divine meditation.

2. Nor, secondly, does it consist in speculative religious opinions, however sound. I say nothing against these. I should be glad to say anything I could to impress on you the vast importance of knowing the truth, and of having correct views of Holy Scripture; so that you might not be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, but might ever feel that there is a firm ground on which you hold the things which you profess to believe, and might be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you. We want more of the earnest, patient, consecutive reading of the Holy Bible. This would keep us from becoming the easy dupes of men that lie in wait to deceive. It is to be feared that professing Christians of the present day, even those of good education and position, know less of the Bible than the godly men and women of former times. Books are so numerous and so cheap that there is a

constant temptation to spread our reading over a wide surface, rather than to read the same few books which made up the libraries of our forefathers again and again, until we have acquired the notions, and imbibed the spirit, of the profound and weighty writers. Sir Walter Scott has done irreparable injustice to those godly men, the Covenanters of his own country, and the Puritans of ours, by representing them as canting hypocrites because they spoke continually in the language of Holy Scripture. It mattered not what was the character or subject of the conversation, it was carried on in the quaint but forcible language of the Bible. This was nothing more nor less than we see around us every day. We all carry about with us, to some extent, the peculiar idioms and pronunciations of our respective associations; nay, even after long years of inter-communication, these peculiarities are yet so distinct that many men's speech bewrayeth them, and indicates the very county in which they were born. The style of thought and speech to which a man has been reared and trained is that which he will carry with him through life. So it was with these men. They had read the Bible and prayed over it, until its sentiments and its very language had tinged all their thoughts and conversation. There were doubtless hypocrites in those times, as there are now, and always will be. Wherever there is good coin in circulation, bad and unprincipled men will counterfeit it; but these men were not all hypocrites; they were mainly good men and true; and we owe all the civil and religious liberties of this country, under God, to the fact, that our great

principles and landmarks were laid down by men whose souls were steeped in the Word of God. It should be a matter of constant thankfulness to God, that the fixing and settling of our principles was not left to these days, in which men either believe anything or nothing, and in which nothing is firmly and devotedly held either in politics or religion. It would be well for us if in this, and many other respects, we more closely followed the example of our godly forefathers, and gave a portion of every day to the earnest and prayerful study of the Holy Scriptures. We should have a more established and intelligent faith, and should not see people in multitudes led away by the Ritualism, or Rationalism, or Plymouthism, which outrage alike common religion and common sense.

3. Again, religion does not consist exclusively in excited feelings. It will not be supposed that I am going to say anything against religious feeling. If I were disposed to do so, I should certainly not choose a Methodist Church and congregation for the purpose. It has been the reproach of the Methodists from the beginning, that they lay so much stress upon feeling and experience. Let us rest assured, that whatever is the reproach of a Christian Church should be looked at with great care. There lurks beneath it some grand principle, some great privilege, some glorious mystery. The reproach of Christ was His cross. Some attribute the permanence and spread of Methodism to its doctrines or its economy; but the real secret of its success is its experience. The worst day that could come to us would be that in which we should cease to cultivate

religious experience. There is feeling, joyous feeling, necessarily connected with the operations of the Holy Ghost. I do not question that there are times when the people of God are in heaviness through manifold temptations, and that there are deep and solemn lessons to be learned in adversity and sorrow. But I know that 'the joy of the Lord is your strength,'—strength for religious enterprise, strength for holy and successful resistance to temptation, strength which overcomes and drives away the devil, the world, and sin. Yes, there is joyous feeling of necessity connected with the operations of the Holy Ghost. All the representations of that blessed Spirit given in Scripture are representations of energy. He lives, and moves, and actuates; the notion of a latent or dormant God is a blasphemous contradiction. He comes sometimes as a mighty rushing wind; sometimes as a still small voice; but it is a voice distinct and intelligible in its utterances, heard, even in its stillness, by him to whom it conveys its message of warning or instruction, and breathing with every communication happiness and joy. Wesley speaks as philosophically as poetically when he talks about the 'mystic joys of penitence.' Repentance is not joyous in itself. It is humiliating and distressing to have our good opinion of ourselves and our deeds destroyed, and our confidence displaced by a painful sense of the Divine displeasure, and a dread of the righteous judgment of God. But when true repentance has been wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost,—the repentance which is 'unto life,'—God graciously sustains the penitent, and

cheers him with occasional gleams of joyousness and hope,—hope that He will, by and by, somehow and somewhere, be merciful to him, relieve him of his load, and give him pardon and peace. And is there not joy in pardon? O yes! ‘more than in the time when’ your ‘corn and wine increased.’ When you knelt before God a broken-hearted sinner, not daring to lift so much as your eyes to heaven,—afraid to look up, lest you should see the face of God furrowed with frowns,—afraid to hear His voice, lest He should speak to you in His sore displeasure, and thunder forth the sentence of your condemnation,—and when, in mere helplessness and desperation, you cast your soul on the atonement of Christ, and heard Him speak, not in anger, but in love, not in tones of terror, but in tones more sweet than angels use, and say, ‘My son,’ then you needed none to teach you what was the appropriate answer to this new address. The instinct of a new relationship and a new nature spoke forth in the power of a new affection. ‘The Spirit of the Son’ was sent ‘into your heart,’ and you cried, ‘Abba, Father,’ ‘O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thy anger is turned away and now Thou comfortest me.’ O, there was joy in that hour,—joy unspeakable and full of glory. So, too, when in the exercises of private devotion we draw nigh to God, there is joy in the communion of the Spirit. The trials, sufferings, and troubles of the world all seem to be very far beneath our feet; they are estimated at a low rate, regarded as very secondary matters. We breathe a purer atmosphere; we feel the influence of a more hallowed worship. God

'gives our ravished souls a taste,
 And makes us for some moments feast
 With Jesu's priests and kings.'

It has been thought by some that this state of holy joy is not compatible with earnest attention to the ordinary affairs and duties of life. I have yet to be taught, and shall take a great deal of teaching, that anything which eminently fits a man for heaven fits him less for earth. Some of the best men of business I have ever known, and whose judgment I should be most inclined to follow, have been men devoted to the service of God, men of deep and eminent piety. I am quite sure of this, that these seasons of holy rapture and enjoyment with God might be much more frequent, more prolonged in their duration, and more glorious in their character and results, if we were anxious to live up to the full privileges of our high and holy calling. Religion does not, however, consist exclusively in excited and happy feeling. It consists in 'walking before God,'—bringing into practical effect, in the engagements of every day, those sacred principles of subordination to God and willing service to Him which are embodied in His holy law, and maintaining a constant and practical recognition of His omniscience.

II. If we look at the *extent* of the command, it will enable us to go a little further in the explanation of this matter:—'Walk before Me, and be thou perfect.'

I have already stated, perhaps at sufficient length, that this verse is to be interpreted in the light of the New Testament, the command having been given to Abraham in his character of a justi-

fied Christian. Without referring, therefore, to the various meanings of the term 'perfect' as it is found in the Old Testament, I shall confine myself to its evangelical senses. The use of the word at all is objected to by many who wish to conceal cherished sin under the excuse of general frailty and imperfection. We are not bound to defend the word, and we certainly have no authority to reject it. We find it in Scripture; and even if no rational meaning could be given to it, it would still be our duty to receive it, and humbly refer it to that period when what we now know not shall be made plain. The word, however, is not only defensible, but intelligible; and, when taken in its proper meaning, it is the only word fully descriptive of that state in reference to which it is used. If the very unfair mode of arguing by which this term has been rejected were applied to the other doctrines of Scripture, all the foundations of our faith would be destroyed. It is first taken for granted, that man can only arrive at a very limited degree of holiness, a degree far below the gospel standard; it is then argued that the word must be understood in a very limited sense; and, lastly, that some other word of less extensive meaning should be substituted for it. Now we shall be able to show, that the word is strictly applicable to the experience and character attainable by believers; and I trust, by the help of God, to excite in you an earnest desire for the possession of the blessing. The term 'perfect' is used in two senses in the New Testament: that is to say, there are two words in the original both of which are translated 'perfect,' although they differ slightly in

their meaning. The first literally expresses soundness and maturity; the second completeness and harmony. The former alludes to the individual graces of the Christian character; the latter, to the Christian character as a whole. It is not very difficult to be perfect in the former of these senses; and it would be better for some men themselves, and for the Church to which they belong, if they were somewhat less perfect in this sense than they are. Their perfection is a devotion to certain religious purposes and duties, which are in accordance with their natural dispositions and tastes, without any attempt to control and harmonise them. The man who, before his conversion to God, was impetuous, bold, speculating, comes into the Church of God, and brings these peculiar dispositions with him. He thinks that everybody else is dead or asleep, that they all need converting over again, and he would drive all before him. Here you have zeal; but it is zeal without knowledge. Other men, naturally careful, prudent, cautious, suspicious, bring their temper with them into the Church, without seeking to be warmed and quickened into a glow of holy, hopeful, confiding energy. These become dead weights on all your enterprises. There is no liberality, no co-operation, no faith, no trust in the future history and prosperity of the Church. Here you have knowledge without zeal. So we might go on, describing many such cases, in which the Church loses the advantage of intelligent and pious co-operation, and the world loses the benefit of a good and consistent example. Instead of deriving help from such men, we have to be constantly apologising for their in-

consistencies, and trying to persuade people to overlook their defects and eccentricities, for the sake of the excellencies which they do unquestionably possess. There is not much benefit to mankind, then, to be derived from this one-sided sort of perfection; and as to God, it is an attempt at compromise. There is often a latent hope, that remarkable zeal in one particular form of service will make up for defects in all other points.

The real perfection which we should seek consists not merely in the completeness or maturity of some individual graces, but in the harmony and consistency of the whole character. The Apostle illustrates this very forcibly by a reference to the human body. Its perfection does not consist in the growth of one limb to a giant's size and strength, while all the rest of the body is shrivelled up into uselessness and deformity; or in the development of some one organ or faculty, to the absorption or extinction of every other; but in the well-balanced order and harmony and subordination of the whole. 'If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body' (1 Cor. xii. 17—19)? 'That we may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love' (Ephes. iv. 15, 16). We

should try to repress what is redundant or excessive, and to stimulate and strengthen what is weak. God gives nothing which may not be lessened or lost by idleness, and which may not be improved and increased by proper use and exercise. Muscular strength may be increased; the memory and other faculties of the mind may be improved by diligent exercise; and so with every grace of the Christian character. We may work in 'the work of faith,' until we are 'strong in faith, giving glory to God;' and labour in 'the labour of love,' until our 'love abounds yet more and more.' It is upon this principle that the Apostle says, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men' (Acts xxiv. 16). He refers to the exercise of the soldier on the parade. If we were totally ignorant of soldiering, and were to see, for the first time in our lives, a number of men running here and there, putting themselves into postures of defence, when no enemy was visible, fighting as though they were beating the air, we should regard it all as mere child's play: but we look upon it with great seriousness, as an important business, because we have been taught that upon the soldier's agility and success in this mimic warfare may depend whether he shall come out alive or dead from the real contest,—nay, the fate of nations may be determined by the frequency and completeness of such training. Let us not say that self-denial and the constant cultivation of the graces of the Christian character are unnecessary; that it will be time enough to fast when our table is less liberally spread, and to use Christian graces

when the season of trial and difficulty may arrive. Unless we deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, and constantly accustom ourselves to holy exercises, we shall be found unprepared when temptation and necessity arise, and we shall fall by the hand of our enemy. In this harmony and completeness of the Christian character, to which we are called, no inconsistency, no eccentricity, as men sometimes mildly call it, is to be allowed. We must walk before God and 'be perfect.' Every thing and every deed must be hallowed to the service of Christ. 'Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. x. 31). That is a wonderful speech of the Apostle's! He does not refer only to sacred duties, such as preaching and praying:—to do these always to the glory of God, to be free from worldly thoughts, and influences, and motives, to be always spiritual, and pure, and sincere, is no small thing. But to eat and drink are not religious or even intellectual occupations, but merely bodily acts; and yet these may be so done as to be rendered holy and acceptable to God. The exhortation of St Paul to the Colossians, 'And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ' (Col. iii. 23, 24), was given primarily to menial servants, so as to relate to the most ordinary and servile works, which had no necessary connection with religion, but which might yet be so done as to form part of their service to the Lord Jesus.

But how are we to obtain this perfection? The

first answer to this question is, Pray for it. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift' comes from God; and, therefore, if any man 'lack wisdom,' he must 'ask of God;' or if he lack any other good gift, he must, first of all, seek it from God. But while we pray for this great blessing, we must do so with sincerity, humility, earnestness, and especially with faith,—believing that it can be obtained, that God is able and willing to accomplish this great work in us. Do not let us be so fearfully inconsistent as to offer our prayers to God in seeming earnestness, while in our hearts we scarcely believe that it is in His power to grant our petitions. While we pray, let us expect to receive the things which we ask.

The second answer to the question is, Aim at it, strive and labour for it. I have already anticipated in part what I have to say on this point, by referring you to the Apostle's exhortation, 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.'

A difficulty, if not an objection, will sometimes be presented in some such form as this. A man will say, I believe in this doctrine of Christian perfection, not merely as I am a Methodist and a believer in the doctrines of Methodism, but because I find it plainly taught and enforced in Holy Scripture; and when, under the plain and powerful preaching of the doctrine, or by any other means, the necessity of this great blessing is pressed upon me with more than usual weight, I determine, by the help of God, no longer to rest without it. I humbly resolve that I will henceforth live wholly and entirely to God. I get up in the morning, and, kneeling down at my bed-side, I consecrate my

whole life to Him, and go forth determined that I will live this day without sin. For a time the solemn vow is faithfully kept; but by and by I am thrown off my guard, some little matter occurs to annoy or disturb me, and I speak unadvisedly with my lips, or act in some way inconsistent with my holy determination. I come back at night to the place where I made my morning-vows, and self-examination brings me to the conviction, that I have not lived this day according to my views of entire holiness. Still further, when I consider that I know so little of myself, and that my heart is ever partial in its judgment of me, and that my notions of holiness are, at the best, but very limited and imperfect, I come to this conclusion,—If my own heart, which knows so little, condemns me, how must God condemn me, who is ‘greater than my heart, and knoweth all things’? and if my views of holiness, humble and imperfect as they are, have not been carried out in my life and conduct, how must I appear before God, in whose eyes the heavens themselves are not pure, and who could charge even His angels with folly? Then comes the question, What am I to do? Am I still to call Him ‘Father,’ and address Him with all the confidence of an accepted son? And if I do so, when I am conscious that I do not deserve that position, am I not in danger of lowering my moral sense? On the other hand, if I take it for granted that I have lost the favour of God, am I not in danger of needlessly casting away my ‘confidence, which hath great recompense of reward,’ and bringing myself into sorrow and condemnation, by grieving the Spirit of God and doubt-

ing His mercy? What am I to do? Well, I say in a single sentence, God will bear with a great deal in us, so long as we will not bear with it in ourselves. Let us refer again to the case just supposed, briefly retracing it. Let the man consecrate himself to God with all his heart, and seek Divine grace to help him, and then let him go forth, with all watchfulness and care, to the duties and trials of the day. He comes back at night with the painful conviction that he has not done all that is right. Now if it be to him a matter of sincere humiliation and sorrow before God, that he has so far failed, and if he determine to set out afresh, imploring forgiveness for his negligence and sin, God will give that man strength and grace. He will not withdraw His favour or His smile; He will continue to him the privilege and the consciousness of his adoption; to-morrow will not be as this day, but one of greater power; and he will be strengthened to 'fight the good fight of faith,' and to gain conquest after conquest, until he shall have obtained perfect and entire victory. But, on the other hand, let a man who feels that he has not succeeded in his attempts to attain to this state of entire conformity to the will of God rest satisfied with the conviction, that he is in much the same state as all other Christian people; that it is of no use for him to distress himself about it, and that it will all come right in the end; just let him take his religion for granted, go on in its ordinary duties, but know nothing of this holy striving, this hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and not trouble himself at all about his ordinary deficiencies, and not much about occasions of more

than ordinary unwatchfulness and forgetfulness of God; and what then? He will soon be startled by the gloom and misery of the withdrawal of God's favour, or by finding that all power of resistance to sin is gone, that he is 'led captive by the devil at his will,' and that he has become the slave of depravity and vice. Or else,—what is a thousand times worse than either,—he may be left to live on in calmness and self-satisfaction, imagining that all is right, until at length, when there is no possibility of remedy, he is overwhelmed with the discovery that all is wrong,—that, without being violently dashed against it, he has quietly settled down upon the rock where he has made shipwreck of his faith, and a good conscience. Ah! how many will at last find themselves remedilessly in these awful circumstances! A conscientious daily striving against sin, with greater or less success, is within the power of every Christian, however feeble.

III. The *reasonableness* and *practicability* of the command are founded on the all-sufficiency of God:—'I am the Almighty God;' or, 'I am God all-sufficient; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.'

God is all-sufficient for human happiness. He is man's all-sufficient portion. He requires that we should love and serve Him, and all we know of His attributes and works is calculated to awaken and confirm our love to Him; and if we 'delight ourselves in the Lord' He 'will give us the desire of our hearts.' He will give us Himself. But the declaration of God's all-sufficiency is especially adapted to meet the objection which is commonly raised

against the doctrine of Christian perfection,—namely, its impracticability. Men do not object to the thing itself: they avowedly admire it, and say, that the man would be a fool who did not desire to attain to a state of such happiness and holiness, but that, unfortunately, the thing is impossible, it cannot be reached. Now I do not pretend to give all the arguments in favour of this great doctrine. They would occupy more time than can be allowed to a single discourse; and I will, therefore, confine myself to the one which is suggested to us in the text. The all-sufficiency of God constitutes the grand argument—an argument which cannot be overthrown or set aside—in proof of the possibility of our walking before God and being perfect. You never have in Scripture any command or exhortation to attain to these higher walks of Christian practice and enjoyment, which does not stand immediately, or not very remotely, connected with some declaration of the Divine omnipotence. Look at the first and great commandment:—‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.’ Perfectly impossible to man in his own strength: but read further, and you will find the promise, ‘The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul,’—that thou mayest be able to do that which thou couldst not otherwise do. Look again at that wonderful prayer of the Apostle for the Ephesians, ‘that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ

which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.' This is utterly impossible to man in his own strength, as impossible as to pluck the sun from the heavens; but hear what follows:—'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.' So in the text, we do not read simply, that when Abraham was ninety years old and nine, God said to him, 'Walk before Me, and be thou perfect;' but these are the words, 'When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, *I am God all-sufficient*; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.' If we could suppose Abraham inclined, for a moment, to interrupt this solemn communication, it could only have been to say, Lord, let me know and feel that Thou art all-sufficient, and I can do whatever is commanded, I can endure whatever is imposed.

The doctrine of Christian perfection is one of those to which the Methodist Church has been raised up to bear witness. A witnessing Church will be a lively Church. God will preserve and invigorate it, so long as it is faithful to its trust, and maintains its witness with clearness and fidelity. And our Church will be upheld in life and power, so long as we remain witnesses that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,'—that the Holy Ghost has power to cleanse and sanctify the believer in the present life, and to enable him to 'perfect holiness in the fear of God.' And we must not expect to be allowed to bear this witness without reproach, not

only from sinners, but also from members of other Churches. It is not uncommon for us to be assailed after this fashion:—You Methodists are a sanctified people: *we* do not profess anything like that; *we* are satisfied to have some faint hope of heaven; but you are holy, you are perfect. Now, if such a sarcastic reference to our doctrine is designed to convey the idea that we, as Methodists, are naturally and essentially better than other people, that we are free from the taint and weakness of universal depravity in any sense or degree, the idea is ridiculous and unfair. I know of no Church in Christendom in the formularies of which the doctrine of original sin, in its two great points,—(1) that man is totally fallen, and (2) that this is the case with all men,—is more clearly set forth than it is in our own. We believe that in us, in our natural state, ‘there dwelleth no good thing,’ that man is totally and entirely fallen. We preach this in our sermons; we sing it in our hymns; we affirm that we cannot speak a good word, or feel a good desire, but as it is wrought in us by the grace of God. If the question be asked, whether I have any power to sanctify you, or you to sanctify me, or if the question be raised as to our own holiness, or our own goodness, as compared with other Churches or other people, it is simply ridiculous. We never claimed any innate or independent holiness; and all objections and sarcasms founded upon this supposition are unjust and unfair. But if the objector means to say, that God cannot sanctify us, then we are bound to join issue with him: our allegiance to Christ demands it of us. We dare not, lest we should be found mocking God,

call Him omnipotent, and join with the Apostle in praying Him to 'sanctify us wholly,' throughout 'body, soul, and spirit,' if we do not believe that He has the power to fulfil His own word and promise. I take the historical argument. It is one of the first principles of our early teaching, that whatever has been once done may by possibility be done again. I learn from this Book, that God did once make man in His own image and likeness; that He took of the dust of the earth, and moulded the body of man into a form of perfect symmetry and beauty; and there it lay, the inanimate model of majesty and grandeur. But God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives,'—the breath of animal life, of intellectual life, of spiritual life,—and man rose up in the image of God: and lest we should suppose that this image consisted in the erect form and commanding step, the glance of his eye, the sovereignty which sat on his majestic brow, or the power of his voice, we are plainly told that it consisted in righteousness and true holiness. Well, then, here is the great historical fact. God did make man in righteousness and true holiness, and looked upon him and declared him to be very good, and held converse with him, as a man with his friend. God did that. Can He do it now? The objector says, He cannot. I ask, When did this unchangeable Being change? When did He lose the power He once possessed of creating a being in His own moral image,—the grandest power ever possessed even by God Himself? He may renew the face of the earth in verdure, and adorn it with flowers; He may reproduce animal life in its endless varieties of form; He may

perpetuate man in his fallen and degraded nature; but He who once made a handful of earth into His own moral and glorious image shall never do it again; He shall never take a clod of living earth, inspire it with His own Holy Spirit, deck it in the beauty of holiness, and make it a fit companion for Himself. That power, you imply, is for ever lost. How and when did He lose it? Who robbed Him of this brightest glory of His own omnipotence? I know when it was *not* lost. It was not lost when He said, 'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,'—not children according to the flesh, but children of faithful Abraham,—his children according to the Faith, who should believe in God, and it should be counted to them for righteousness, who should walk before God and be perfect. 'The things impossible to men are possible to God;' and while God is all-sufficient all things are possible to him that believeth in Him.

Did you ever try to bring the all-sufficiency of God to bear upon your own case? If I were to ask you individually, Why are you not sanctified? each of you would give me a reason which you believe to be the true one; but it would not be so. The reason you would give would refer to something external to yourselves, and not something arising from within. One man would say, I could be holy if I could change my present circumstances. I live with an ungodly family: I have an irreligious and unreasonable master, and trifling and profane associates; anywhere else than where I am I could be holy. Is not God all-sufficient,—all-sufficient for your circumstances? Does He not know how

and where you are? Did He not place you there by His own Providence? I am increasingly convinced that God has placed us all in the circumstances most favourable to our salvation. We can see this in the case of others, but not in our own. Would it have been possible for Daniel and the three faithful Hebrews to have been as holy anywhere else as in the court of the king of Babylon?

Another man would say, If it were not for my temper, I should be sanctified. Do you think that God does not know your temper? Does He not know the features of your intellectual being, as well as the features of your countenance? There is a great deal of pride in all this. It amounts just to this:—You ordinary people may be sanctified by ordinary means, but there is something peculiar in my case. If religion is to exert its influence fully upon my mind, there must be some pains taken with one so marked and distinguished as myself. The Lord have mercy upon our conceit and ignorance! If the Holy Ghost should come down upon us, and rest upon us as He did on the men assembled on the day of Pentecost, He would sweep away all these distinctions, and fancies of peculiarity. *They* were as different as *we* are,—as different as men could be, in nation, disposition, and creed. But the Holy Ghost rested upon them all, imparting the same holy fear, the same renewing and sanctifying power; and it would be the same with us. We should all be sufficiently alike for these hallowing influences. God would live in us, and move in us; God all-sufficient for all occasions of duty or temptation,—to regulate the

activity of health,—to support the depression of sickness,—to enable us to bear persecution with resignation and meekness,—and in all circumstances to perfect holiness in His fear!

You do not know how soon an interest in the all-sufficiency of God may be all that is left to you. Have you begun to walk before God? Have you got as far as Abraham had, when God spoke to him in the words of the text? Have you gone forth at His command from the scenes of your idolatrous or sinful associations? Have you sought God? Have you believed in Him and is it counted to you for righteousness? If not, hear God speaking to you in these words, calling you, exhorting you, inviting you, to give yourselves to Him. I say, we know not how soon there may be nothing left for us but God all-sufficient. Times of difficulty and calamity will sooner or later come upon every one of us. Days of darkness may succeed these days of light: days of sorrow, of bereavement, of storm and distress, may follow these days of comparative comfort and enjoyment. But if God is to be all-sufficient to us, when the world can do nothing for us, we must turn to His all-sufficiency now, when the world can do something for us. It seems, perhaps, to some of you, that the world can do as much for you now as you at present want. While you are still young; while the blood dances through the veins, and mere existence is a luxury; you seem to want nothing but the world and its pleasures. But if we would have God to be all-sufficient to us when age and sickness have dulled our appetite for pleasure, and the world itself recedes and dis-

appears, He must be all-sufficient to us *now*. We must say, in the spirit of holy consecration and sacrifice,

‘Give me Thyself: from every boast,
From every wish, set free;
Let all I am in Thee be lost;
But give Thyself to me.’

Then He will be with us in the dark days and hours, when, if all the crowns and sceptres that ambition ever sighed or fought for were heaped in confusion around your bed, you would not stretch out your fevered hand to grasp the gaudiest of them. Then, when all the things in which you have most delighted shall have lost their power to please; when the wife of your youth and the children of your love can no longer accompany and cheer you in the last dark stage of the journey of life; when of the houses you have built and the gardens you have planted, there shall be nothing left but the cypress to bend over your tomb; then, when your heart and your flesh are failing, He will breathe into your heart, and say, ‘I am God all-sufficient.’ And you shall say, ‘Thou *art* God all-sufficient.’ It will be the last expression of expiring agony; it will be the first expression of triumphant joy. God will be all-sufficient to sustain you in that last and severest struggle,—all-sufficient for the glory of eternity, and for the Sabbath of everlasting rest. May He thus be with you, now and when you need Him most, for His Name’s sake!

II.

FORMAL WORSHIP, AND GOD'S
JUDGMENT UPON IT.

WHEREFORE THE LORD SAID, FORASMUCH AS THIS PEOPLE DRAW NEAR ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND WITH THEIR LIPS DO HONOUR ME, BUT HAVE REMOVED THEIR HEART FAR FROM ME, AND THEIR FEAR TOWARD ME IS TAUGHT BY THE PRECEPT OF MEN: THEREFORE, BEHOLD, I WILL PROCEED TO DO A MARVELLOUS WORK AMONG THIS PEOPLE, EVEN A MARVELLOUS WORK AND A WONDER: FOR THE WISDOM OF THEIR WISE MEN SHALL PERISH, AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR PRUDENT MEN SHALL BE HID.
—ISAIAH xxix. 13, 14.

THESE words were quoted by our Lord when He was reasoning with the Scribes and Pharisees on the evil effect of their comments upon the law, by which they had weakened, or even set aside, its commands, not only as regards man's general duty to his fellow-man, but also as to the peculiar obligations which he owes to the members of his own family. 'Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' (Matt. xv. 7—9). The slight variation from the words of Isaiah in this quotation is merely verbal,

and does not affect the sense or the force of the passage. ~~In both places the~~ representation is of those who outwardly draw near to God while their hearts are estranged from Him ; and the formal and explicit denunciation of the Prophet is fully sanctioned and implied in the condemnation pronounced by our Lord. The text gives us,

I. A description of the character of the merely formal worshipper.

II. A threatening of his fearful doom.

I. It is important to observe, that this passage does not refer to the open and avowed enemies of God, but to those who pretend to be His friends, and yet follow Him with indecision, want of purpose, and inconsistency. This indecision, in the affairs of ordinary life, renders a man useless and contemptible ; it neutralizes his talents, and is fatal to his enterprises. However wisely his schemes may be planned, and however capable he may otherwise be of carrying them into effect, a want of decision will render them abortive and vain. And certainly nothing is more fatal to the cultivation and spread of true religion. With vice in all its forms we can successfully contend. Its hatefulness may be painted in vivid colours ; its injurious tendency may be traced from the first wrong-doer, through all who come within its influence ; its consequences may be shown as they extend through time into eternity ; and the awful picture may be held up before the astonished and trembling sinner, until he cries out, in the bitterness of his soul, ' What shall I do to be saved ? ' So, also, ignorance may be removed by patient in-

struction; erroneous views will gradually recede from the mind of him who is sincerely anxious to know the way of God more perfectly; but how shall we deal with those who are not ignorant and yet are out of the way, who agree to everything we say, who profess to believe all the truths of Holy Scripture, and who so far give evidence of the sincerity of their profession as to conform to many of the external requirements of religion?

1. First, they abstain from outward violations of the law of God,—from open profaneness and sin. Nor are they to be called hypocrites. There has been, in most instances, a real work of grace in the soul, and there is still an abiding conviction of the desirableness and even necessity of religion. Their submission to religious restraints, and conformity to religious observances, are not the deliberate putting on of a false character, for the purpose of deception; but are rather an imperfect, halting, heartless obedience to received and admitted principles. Their service to God wants the fulness and completeness which can only have place when the heart is engaged. Thus while they attend the outward ordinances of worship, they ‘draw near with their mouth’ only. They assent, indeed, to the truths of Divine revelation, and sometimes display considerable skill in criticising the language, doctrine, and manner of the preacher; but they do not enter into the spirituality of the service. ‘Their heart is far from God.’

2. But, secondly, while diligent in the observance of these public religious duties, to which, perhaps, they attach so much importance, that no amount

of persuasion would induce them to give them up, they either totally neglect family and private devotion, or destroy their real character and intention by the lifeless mode of their performance. If the heart be withdrawn from God in those services which are more open and formal, it is not likely that they will enter into the spirit of those exercises which especially demand a hearty consecration, and the offering of the soul and affections to God.

3. Thirdly, they generally avoid being closely associated with the Church of Christ in its more intimate membership and communion. 'Their fear is taught by the precepts of men,' principles of worldly wisdom and prudence; and these suggest prudential reasons which induce them to stand aloof from the open confession of the Saviour. Thus they avoid sharing the reproach of Christ; and they avoid, also, much of the cost and expense in which a closer union with the interests and enterprises of the Church would involve them. They elude the necessity for that loosening of their grasp on the pleasures and business of the world, and that tightening of their hold on the things of eternity, which an entire consecration to God's service would require.

4. Fourthly, they love the traditions of men rather than the commandments of God. They delight most in those religious services which have in them the most of human intellect, and the least of Divine power. They say, 'Prophecy unto us smooth things.' They listen with interest to fanciful speculations, or mere literary efforts. That sermon is to them the best which can, with the

greatest propriety, be termed an intellectual feast ; in which there is nothing to alarm the conscience or arouse the fears, in which the beautiful description or poetic figure, flowing in measured feet and periods neatly rounded, falls gently on the ear. If a mild reproof be occasionally administered, it must be in tones so subdued and soft as not to disturb their calm but fatal repose. The gospel is no gospel to them unless, in strains as sweet as angels use, it 'whispers peace.' They are always offended at plain truths.

In arguing for a plain and positive declaration of the truth, as we find it in the Word of God, I would not be supposed to speak in defence of mere vulgarity, or the introduction into the pulpit of sentiments and modes of expression, which it is impossible for a thoughtful person to listen to without feeling that they are violations at once of taste and propriety, and are far more likely to disgust than to convince. I would never contend for a licence which I dare not use. But still, when some persons are offended at a plain declaration of 'the whole counsel of God,' it is some satisfaction to know that it has been so in every age ; and that it forms no reason why we should adopt that exceedingly calm, quiet, and courteous mode of dealing with the Word of God which leaves men unawakened and unconcerned. There are terms in God's Book which you cannot modify ; representations which you dare not, at your peril, dilute or soften down. Any alteration in the peculiar idioms of speech in which God has described the bitter pains of eternal death would take away the proper notion of Divine punishment. Representa-

tions of sin which take from it its exceeding sinfulness, and lead men to think that, after all, it is not so serious, and grave, and bad a thing to transgress the laws of God, encourage and comfort men in a course of sin, and deceive them as to their own solemn and awful responsibility, and the terrible nature of the judgment which awaits them.

But the persons of whom we speak are offended not only with the doctrines of God plainly preached, but also with the zeal of hearty worshippers,—with anything, indeed, which brings their own defective and heartless service into contrast with true vital godliness; and if they do not openly oppose, at least they will not aid, any attempts which are made to diffuse a religion more effective than their own.

To have the heart far from God is the natural state of every unregenerate man. He needs no conversion to fit him to commit sin. There is in his corrupt, depraved mind an exact accordance with outward temptation. While he is led 'captive' by the devil 'at his will,' he also follows the devices and desires of his own heart. But it requires conversion to fit a man for God, and bring him near to Him. The influences of Divine grace are in most cases small at the beginning. It is not the ordinary course of Divine action, that men should be startled, confounded, alarmed, by the first visitations of the Holy Spirit. These more powerful and violent impressions come on at a later stage, if the earlier and milder have been disregarded. It is scarcely possible for us to conceive anything more gentle than the mode of God's first dealing with the hearts of children. The impressions which He pro-

duces are not impressions of terror and alarm. There is a softening, hallowing feeling, a desire to love God, a fear of offending Him, a fear which is tolerable, not dreadful or alarming. These are the early movements of the grace of God upon the soul of man ; and if they are cherished they will lead on to deeper conviction, to true repentance, and an earnest seeking of salvation. Then the penitent must present himself to God laden with infirmity and iniquity ; he must cast himself on the mercy of God by faith in Jesus Christ ; and thus he will obtain the pardon of his sins, the assurance of the Divine favour, the witness of the Holy Spirit that he is a child of God, and all the influences of that blessed Spirit that are needful for his sanctification, consolation, strength, and guidance. Thus is the heart brought to God. The penitent sinner brings his broken heart to God for healing and peace ; the man who is accepted and justified delights to bring his now renewed heart to God and consecrate to Him his sacred happiness. It is this drawing of the heart continually to God which is the very essence of experimental religion, and the source of abiding comfort. But if these early gracious influences are rejected, there is an end of the benefit of them, even as there will be, to a very great extent, although not entirely, an end to their existence. The heart, instead of being yielded to God, is withdrawn from Him. The service of God is with the mouth only, while the heart is far from Him.

There are three descriptions of these formalists. The first are those who, having been brought under these early gracious influences,

have rested satisfied without pressing on to the possession of conscious pardon. How many have we lost in this stage! If we were to look into our class-books and other records of the Methodist Church, we should find the names of hundreds, nay of thousands, of whose solemn calling to the service of God no doubt could be entertained, in whose hearts the work of grace had unquestionably been begun,—persons who occasionally felt sincerely, and perhaps deeply, the need of religion, and determined to give their hearts to God, but who delayed it, and, as the result, the strength and earnestness of their feelings abated and declined. It is in the nature of all impressions upon the mind to become less vivid and powerful unless constantly renewed and deepened. And it is a merciful provision of God that it is so. If successive impressions of joy were all to produce their full effect without abatement, man would be driven into the ecstasy of madness; and if successive impressions of grief under bereavement or distress were to come down on the soul with their overwhelming power, without mitigation or relief, man would be weighed down to the earth, and energy, and intellect, and life would fail: but we are so constituted that the mere lapse of time allays the intensity of our feelings, and one excitement passes away before we are called to bear the pressure of another.

Religious feelings form no exception to this general law. They will fade and die out unless they are constantly renewed. The daily use of the means of grace is urged upon this principle, and our hearts should be drawn to God in every act of worship for

the deepening of these holy impressions. Multitudes have ~~sunk down into~~ habitual formalism, because they have suffered the sentiments and feelings which should have been cherished and increased, to become fainter and fainter, until they are now almost, if not altogether, lost.

Again, there are those who, having once tasted that the Lord is gracious, and felt the power of the inward, spiritual life, have in a dark and cloudy day allowed Satan to gain an advantage over them, and have made shipwreck of their faith and a good conscience. They ran well for a time, but Satan hindered them. They still cling to the form, but they have lost the power, of godliness.

Still further, there are many who take lower views of the purpose of the atonement of Christ than the Scriptures warrant, who do not seek that entire conformity to the image of God which it is our privilege and duty to attain. These rest in that whereunto they have attained, because they think that they may safely do so; and their hearts imperceptibly become more and more estranged from God. This state of mind is often found connected with increasing zeal for the mere formalities of religion. There is not the sense of comfort and satisfaction in religion, but instead of it a sense of want,—a feeling that something more is necessary; and it is a very common thing both for individuals and Churches to try to supply the place of what they have lost in spirituality and power by increased attention to outward forms. Thus, so far from our taking it for granted that increased zeal in formalism is a manifestation of increased piety, we must almost always

regard it as an indication of the direct contrary. Love for the traditions of men, an over-weening attention to matters of human arrangement, is too often an evidence that the heart is far from God.

II. The text brings before us the *fearful consequences* of the state described.

1. In the first place, indeed, we may anticipate that there will be renewed and increased effort on the part of God to save us from this state. He will try all means of merciful severity to rouse us to diligence in the path we have been so languidly pursuing. He will not easily relinquish the soul which He has redeemed, and which He is anxious to save. He will visit the body with heavier strokes of more painful and obstinate disease. He will fill the mind with more awful horrors. If the world stands in our way, He will embitter it to us, by destroying our pleasures and blighting our prospects. If our hearts are exclusively occupied by natural affection, He will take away 'the desire of our eyes' at a stroke, and reduce the world to a blank, a wilderness, before us. But all this is merciful. Anything is merciful which is done to save our souls from 'the bitter pains of eternal death.'

2. The second consequence is widely different in its nature and far more awful. They who have lived in hardness and impenitence shall be left in that state, and the means so long neglected shall be at last withdrawn. 'Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the under-

standing of their prudent men shall be hid.' It is a wonderful and fearful thing to be left in hardness of heart, and to be deprived of the religious advantages which we have enjoyed. There is not a more awful state on this side hell than the one that is here threatened. God's voice is silent; His Spirit is withdrawn. The man is filling up the measure of his iniquities, and going forward to eternal ruin; and yet he is at ease, nay more, satisfied with himself. He is under the impression that he is safe, that there need be no alarm, and that these poor heartless services of his will be found to have been pleasing to God, and will be regarded as meritorious by Him. To see such a one hastening to his grave, no longer warned, no longer under the influence of solemn teaching,—'the wisdom of wise men' being hidden from him,—is a lamentable and fearful sight. Who shall arouse such a one? Who can save those whom God hath given up to the hardness of their hearts?

Awful examples of this desertion by God have occurred not only among individuals, but also in Churches. God will take away His gifts, if those gifts are not cherished and improved. If we bring forth no fruit unto righteousness, we shall become as the tree cursed with barrenness, which speedily withered away. This was the case with some of the seven Churches of Asia. The light was first dimmed, then allowed to go out; and then the candlestick was removed out of its place. Follow in a westerly direction the progress of the gospel in the track of the Roman conquests. For a time religion flourished in its purity and power; but, after a while,

vital religion was disregarded, then the precepts of men in pompous ceremonies, and the traditions of men in endless fables and fancies, were followed;—then ‘the wisdom of the wise’ was hid, the word of God actually forbidden, and all Scriptural teaching withheld. Look at your own country a century ago. In the churches once occupied by the pious Reformers, an unconverted and idle clergy delivered their sleepy and commonplace homilies to half-a-dozen listless hearers;—while in the chapels, once the scenes of the labours of the spiritual and painstaking Nonconformists, men were preaching a Christless gospel, ‘denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves’ and their hearers ‘swift destruction.’ It is possible that, as a Church, we may become formal, and worldly, and lifeless. Some of you are so already; and nothing but constant watchfulness, self-denial, and prayer will prevent others from falling into the same evil. Then there will be an end of Methodism as a great and Divinely appointed instrument for the conversion of sinners. Your ministers will be silenced; your chapels empty, hung round with cobwebs, and the windows darkened with accumulated dust,—the horrid silence of death reigning in the place which had often resounded with the praises of God, and the high grass grown up round your neglected gravestones, while a degenerate posterity never turn aside to read the almost obliterated memorials of the piety and virtues of their fathers. Quench not the light of Israel! May God defend Methodism to the latest ages of the world! Some of you say, Amen! Then guard against

formality, and seek more of the life and power of godliness.

The final destiny of these formalists is bitter damnation. 'That servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes;' and these are among the number. Some can speak correctly and critically of the Word of God, and therefore cannot plead ignorance. This formal worship will have had its effect. 'The letter that killeth' has been heard in the absence of the Spirit that 'giveth life.' The gospel has been refused as 'a savour of life unto life,' and cannot now be resisted as 'a savour of death unto death.' They who have kept their hearts far from God will be filled with their own ways, and He will make their voluntary separation remediless and eternal by His sentence, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' May God preserve us from this awful fate!

III.

THE TRAVAIL OF THE REDEEMER'S
SOUL, AND ITS REWARD.

HE SHALL SEE OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL, AND SHALL BE SATISFIED: BY HIS KNOWLEDGE SHALL MY RIGHTEOUS SERVANT JUSTIFY MANY; FOR HE SHALL BEAR THEIR INIQUITIES.—ISAIAH liii. 11.

WERE there no other evidence of the true Divinity of our Lord than that which may be gathered from a comparison of this chapter with the account of His life, sufferings, and death as furnished by the four evangelists, it ought to be abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind. The Prophet Isaiah was of royal lineage, nearly allied to the reigning houses of Israel and Judah, to whom he addressed his prophecies. All his own tastes and feelings were in favour of the common opinions and prejudices concerning the coming Messiah. He would have been glad to interweave his lordly verse with those representations of imperial pomp and power which filled the dreams of his abject countrymen, and led them, in the midst of their bondage, to anticipate the advent of Him who should restore Jerusalem to a condition of wealth and splendour surpassing that of the days of Solomon, and give the

conquered Jews the victory over all their enemies. But Isaiah was carried forward by an irresistible inspiration, and describes the Messiah not as a mighty temporal Prince, but as the 'Man of Sorrows,' and One 'acquainted with grief.' So far from being attracted by the pomp and circumstance of human greatness, 'we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.' There was no such 'beauty that we should desire Him:' 'He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.' Instead of regarding Him as specially favoured of Heaven, we looked upon Him as specially cursed, 'stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.' But He who was thus announced as the suffering Messiah, was also spoken of as THE SON; and the true Divinity of Christ is the grand fundamental doctrine of the Christian system. It matters not how complimentary the terms in which Christ may be represented as less than God; the slightest diminution of His true and proper Godhead overthrows the entire system.

Now, while Scripture is most positive and frequent in its declarations of this great doctrine, there is no passage or word, rightly understood, which favours a contrary opinion. We say *rightly understood*; for there are words and expressions in Scripture which have been *unfairly* used against the truth for which we contend. Our text contains one of them,—the term 'Servant;'—'By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many.' Christ is also elsewhere called the 'Elect' of God, and the 'Sent' of God. It is freely admitted that these terms imply delegation; but we deny that this delegation implies inferiority. A very specious argument, but a very superficial

one, has been founded on the use of these terms in Scripture. It has been said, that if there be a servant, there must of necessity be a master; and the master is greater than the servant, and the servant inferior to the master, and consequently Christ is inferior to the Father;—that he who sends is greater than he who is sent, and that Christ, as the sent of God, is therefore inferior to the Father who sends Him, and so on. Now we deny that the use of these terms implies any such inferiority. We wish, indeed, to be distinctly understood as making no pretension to give a full and accurate description of the mode of the Divine existence, or to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. How Three are One, and One is Three, how these are distinct yet undivided, such knowledge is too high for us,—we cannot attain to it. It is higher than heaven, — what can we do? deeper than hell, — what can we know? If any man should pretend to explain these mysteries to you, believe him not: they are beyond the grasp either of human or angelic minds. It may be asked: If you do not pretend to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, what do you pretend to do? I answer, Merely to show that the use of terms expressive of delegation does not necessarily imply inferiority. It is one thing to give a full and complete view of the doctrine of the Trinity, which, as we have said, no man can do; and another thing to show that a certain argument against that doctrine is a fallacy, which may easily be done with thought and attention. It would be well if we were constantly to bring to the interpretation of Scripture the plain common sense which we

apply to ordinary things; for this would save us from many errors. In the common affairs of every day, we are familiar with the use of these terms of delegation without any notion of inferiority. We choose a man to represent us in the legislature of the country. He is elected—sent—by us, and becomes our servant. At stated periods he gives an account of his doings: if we approve him, we re-elect him; if not, we dismiss him, and appoint another in his place. But no man supposes that this election is a proof of his inferiority: on the contrary, it is a proof of his superiority. He is elected on the very ground of some superiority, real or supposed, personal or accidental; something in his talents, position, family, wealth, or influence, which points him out for the selection of his constituents. He becomes their servant, but at the same time he becomes their master; he is invested with power and authority to make laws which they are bound, at their peril, to obey; and you may call him either 'servant or master with equal propriety. Again, we are familiar with the passing of one mighty kingdom into the power of a number of persons. Alexander left his kingdom to his four principal generals; Herod the Great left his to his four sons, though three only of them appear to have succeeded to the rule. Suppose a mighty kingdom coming into the possession of three equal and co-ordinate rulers,—the sons, if you please, of the former king,—all absolutely equal in power and dignity; and suppose that, for the purposes of government, they should agree to divide and appropriate the several branches of administration,—that one should

take command of the armies, another preside over the legislation, and another over the fiscal or monetary affairs. Do we not see that, from the moment of the commencement of such an arrangement, any one might be called either the master or the servant of the others with equal propriety,—the master as having exclusive authority in his own department, or the servant as exercising his authority by the delegation of others? Now, though I again say that I do not pretend to give a correct view of the doctrine of the Trinity, yet I would not use, for the mere purpose of argument, an illustration which I did not believe to have some analogy to it. You do find in Scripture the works which are in general terms ascribed to Deity, in more particular terms ascribed to one or other of the Persons of the Trinity distinctively. So as to creation. The great scheme was devised in the bosom of the Father; the Spirit moved upon the face of the vast abyss, and made it pregnant and instinct with life and energy; and the Son, the Former of all things, by whom 'all things were made,' and 'without whom was not any thing made that was made,' by whom, also, 'all things consist,' gave form, and order, and distinctness, and classification to this mass of life. So, also, in the economy of grace. The Father devises the plan of human salvation, and declares the decree, as shadowed forth in prophecy, to guide and encourage the expectation of the world. To the Son belongs the exclusive office of suffering, and atonement, and judgment. To Him 'all power is given in heaven and in earth.' Henceforth 'the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all

judgment unto the Son.' To the Holy Ghost belong the offices of convincing, enlightening, comforting, and sanctifying men. When our Lord first informed His disciples that He was about to leave them, they were distressed, as well they might be: but He said to them, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.' It is difficult for us at first to understand the necessity for His coming, as far as the qualifications of the disciples were concerned. They had enjoyed the privilege of our Lord's public ministry and private teaching. They had received His solemn commission, and even 'the devils were subject unto them through His Name.' And yet He teaches them, that they were to receive something from the Holy Ghost which He had not imparted to them. 'He shall guide you into all truth.' 'He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' Thus you have the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son sending the Holy Spirit; and none inferior to the others.

But if a firm belief in the true Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ is necessary, a proper notion of His real humanity is not less so. In fact, in many instances, heresy as to His Divinity may be traced to heresy respecting His humanity. The true doctrine is, that He possessed both a human body and a reasonable soul, not a body merely and His Divinity the soul which animated it. The doctrine of atonement requires a distinct conviction of the true and proper humanity of our Lord. As the Representative and Substitute of our race, He was

to suffer and die for us. But Deity cannot suffer. And then, the proof of the practicability of the law afforded by our Lord's example would be lost if we did not realize the fact that He was perfectly man. But now the perfect obedience of our Lord encourages us to hope that God will perfect His work in you and me. 'Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' Now the Lord Jesus suffered in His whole human nature. He was 'put to death in the flesh;' He suffered in body, that our bodies might be made clean; and His soul made an offering for sin, that, our souls being redeemed and purified, we might 'glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.' We shall, however, in this discourse, confine ourselves to the consideration of our Lord's sufferings of soul; because generally attention is directed rather to His sufferings of body, and because the text speaks expressly of 'the travail of His soul.'

I. 1. Our Lord had a *travail of soul*, arising, first, from an anxious desire to be engaged in His great work.

We know something of this feeling. When we are anticipating an advance to a higher, or more lucrative, or more honourable employment, our ordinary occupations become irksome, and we do not like to be engaged in anything which has not some connection with what we regard as the *great* object of our lives. If this is the case with us when we are only contemplating a change from one worldly position to another, how strong must this feeling have been in the soul of Christ when He

compared the trifling nature of His employments during the years of His private life, with the great object of His mission, the redemption of the world. How soon this master-passion took entire possession of Him we do not know, but it certainly had done so when He was twelve years of age.

Having accompanied Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, to attend the feast of the passover, He tarried behind in the temple, talking with the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. His mother, not finding Him in the company, returned, with Joseph, to seek Him, and chided Him for the anxiety He had given them. But she should have understood Him better. Mary had kept all His sayings in her heart, and had pondered the sayings and doings of her wondrous Child; and He was astonished that she had not yet apprehended His motives and His object. 'Wist ye not,' said He, 'that I must be about my Father's business?' As He advanced in life, and drew nearer to the accomplishment of His mighty purpose, this feeling rose to the grandeur and intensity of agony. 'I have a baptism to be baptized with,' He once exclaimed, 'and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!'

2. He had a travail of soul arising, secondly, from the temptations of the devil.

These were sometimes presented through the unconscious agency of others. He saw the power which was working in the multitude, and sometimes even in His disciples, when they knew not what spirit they were of. On one occasion, when He was warning them of His approaching death, Peter

began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee.' But He turned, and said unto Peter, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.' And thus, though He spoke to Peter, He seemed to look beyond Peter, and to address Himself to the fiend by whom he was unconsciously influenced. But His severest temptations were suggested by Satan in his own person in the wilderness. The full extent of our Lord's sufferings from this source is known only to Himself; though, perhaps, the angels who ministered to Him might be able, in some degree, to appreciate them. The subjects only of these temptations are given to us; but we may be assured, that all the subtlety of the great serpent, and all the malignant energy of the fiend, would be employed to corrupt the only human nature which was ever free from sin since the fall of man, and to poison the fountain from which the healing and sanctifying streams of life were about to flow forth to all the world. Jesus had been baptized by John in Jordan; and immediately he was 'led by the Spirit into the wilderness.' He retired to take one last and complete view of the whole work before Him. He retired to strengthen the principles and piety of His human nature, by fasts unnaturally prolonged, and by prayers of unwonted continuance and energy, as well as to engage in this personal and terrible conflict with the powers of darkness. When He was faint, and weary, and hungry, Satan addressed Him: 'If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' And

why should He not? He needed bread; bread was not a luxury; and He was fainting for want of it. Why should He not? Because He would not desecrate the miraculous powers which He possessed, and which were hallowed to the proof of His Divinity, the illustration of His doctrines, and the establishment of His kingdom, to the mere purpose of supplying His personal wants. No; it was reserved for other men, in other times, to use spiritual offices and gifts for the sordid purpose of making bread. We cannot dwell on all these temptations: but take one more. 'Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Some say that they were not his to give. If so, it was no temptation. It is essential to the nature of a temptation, that the tempted party should believe in the ability of the tempter to fulfil his promise. But were they not his to give? By whom have they been given from the beginning? Is there a throne upon earth which has not been gained and held by war, assassination, intrigue, and all the arts of the devil? What is history, but a continued record how 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,' he whom our Lord calls 'the Prince of this world,' has disposed of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them? But some say, Christ does not want them. He does; and He will have them. True, that now His flock is a little flock. True, that for the present He 'has chosen the poor of this

world, rich in faith and heirs of His kingdom ;' while, as yet, 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' But it will not be always so. Kings and queens will yet become nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the Church. The wealth of nations will yet be poured into her ample treasuries ; and while whatever things are lovely and of good report shall adorn her inner life, whatever is commanding in intellect, whatever is brilliant in imagination, whatever is gorgeous in magnificence, whatever is powerful in authority, shall all be consecrated to her service and devoutly laid at her feet, until that shall be fulfilled which Christ has taught us, whenever we pray, to say, 'Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.' What was this temptation, then ? It was a temptation to which all nations have yielded in every period of their history. It was a temptation to which all Churches have yielded, more or less, at one time or another. And it was a temptation to which each of us has often yielded,—the temptation to do a great and acknowledged good by questionable means, to do a little wrong in order to effect a great right, to do evil that good may come. In the case before us it amounted to this :—'Thou art come to win back to Thyself the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, which are now in my power : only worship me, and all shall be Thine. I will stand out of the way. Thy word shall have free course. I will not darken and mystify Thy doctrines with miserable heresies. I will not soak the fairest spots of the world with the blood of Thy holiest confessors. I

will not devise mimicries and superstitions to lead men away from the simplicity and purity of Thy gospel. I will not shut up the ablest of Thy Apostles and preachers in the solitude of the jail, or silence them with the rack and the stake.' And when Christ saw before Him the labour, and suffering, and death, which lay between Him and the accomplishment of His work, the long and weary struggle with principalities and powers, I say that to the human nature of Christ it was a horrible temptation.

3. Thirdly, He had a travail of soul arising from sorrow at men's impenitence and hardness.

He 'marvelled at their unbelief.' He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. Poor, houseless, and despised, He wandered through the streets of Jerusalem. A pagan idolater sat upon the throne of David, and the prince of darkness ruled in the hearts of His people; impure and degrading rites were performed in the city of His solemnities, and His Father's house was become a den of thieves. 'He came to His own' with full credentials of His Divinity and right, and 'His own received Him not;' and in the bitterness of His sorrow He exclaimed, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' They who should have rejoiced at His advent, and espoused His cause, were the men who blasphemed His name, pronounced His sentence, and shed His blood.

4. He had a travail of soul arising, fourthly, from fear in the immediate anticipation of His agony.

Some say that Christ could not fear anything: but is it not plainly said that 'in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that he feared'? If words mean anything, no stronger terms can be used to indicate mental suffering—travail of soul—than those which are employed to describe the fearful apprehension of our Lord as He drew near to the cross. Matthew says that 'He began to be sorrowful and very heavy.' Mark states that 'He began to be sore amazed and very heavy,' and said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' 'Sore amazed!' The bewilderment which comes upon a man in the immediate presence of an overwhelming and inevitable calamity, when he knows not which way to turn, or where to look. 'Very heavy!' The stupor which forbids collected thought and action, which benumbs the sensibilities, and beclouds the mind.

Follow the history as given by the Evangelists. They tell us that there was a garden called Gethsemane, to which Jesus was accustomed to resort after the labours of the day. Its solitude and darkness were its recommendations. Here He could escape, for a time, from the opposition and malignity of His foes, spend whole nights in prayer, maintain close and intimate communion with Heaven, and thus prepare Himself for the toils and conflicts of another day. To this garden He now came, but not alone. A man about to endure some great pain or calamity shrinks from entire solitude. His friend may not be able positively to ease his sufferings; but if he can hear

his voice and feel the kindly pressure of his hand, it seems to be a relief. Thus Jesus took with Him Peter, and James, and John. He was anxious to have them as near to Him as might at all consist with the privacy and earnestness of His devotions; He went from them a little way, only a little, and fell on the ground and prayed, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' With the natural solicitude of suffering, He came to them and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy with sorrow: nature sinks even under the weight of suffering into momentary repose. He knew their state and did not reprove them: he rather found an excuse for them, and addressed them as a suppliant rather than as a master, 'Could ye not watch with Me one hour? The spirit truly is willing,'—ye would if ye could,—'but the flesh is weak.' Then He left them again, and prayed, using the same words. When a man is at ease, he can vary his forms of expression, and say the same thing in slightly altered words: but when the mind is overburdened with some mighty and absorbing sorrow, the inventiveness of variety is gone, and utterance is given to the feelings in the fewest, simplest words which will express its trouble. He 'prayed,' using 'the same words:' but although the words were the same, yet was there deeper anguish, for 'He prayed yet more earnestly,' and in His agony 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' No unfriendly hand was laid upon Him: it is true they were coming with swords and staves to take Him like a thief; but they had not yet

come; no one was actually present with Him but His beloved and trusted disciples. It was not bodily suffering, but travail of soul, which drew from Him these groans and tears.

5. He had travail of soul, lastly, from a sense of Divine desertion.

Throughout His earthly course He had been sustained by the consciousness of the presence and love of the Father. The words which He spoke were the words of the Father. The works which He did were the works of the Father. He could truly say, 'I and the Father are one;' but now this presence was to be withdrawn, and He was to 'tread the wine-press alone.' He suffered in body. 'He was bruised for our iniquities,' and 'with His stripes we are healed.' The crown of thorns, the smiting reed, the lacerating scourges, and the piercing nails, were so many forms of torture which He had to endure. But as all the pain inflicted by human cruelty was as nothing compared to the inflictions of His Father's hand, when 'it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief,' so all His sufferings and travail of soul were as nothing compared with that sensation of utter loneliness and destitution which wrung from Him that exceeding great and bitter cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

II. We have, in the second place, to inquire, What were the *results* of all this travail of soul and agony of body?

We must answer this question, first, in reference to man. The result to every one who receives Him is

Justification. 'By His knowledge,' or rather by the knowledge of Him; 'shall My righteous Servant justify many.' The knowledge here referred to is not such as may be obtained by reading the Book, or by reflection on the character and works of Christ, but experimental and saving knowledge. 'This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' It implies a living faith in the Saviour; and then, 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

What were the results in reference to our Lord Himself? One word expresses them. 'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be *satisfied*.' Satisfied with what?

1. First, with its effects upon individuals, leading them from the depths of sin to the heights of holiness. He shall see that His sufferings and death are indeed calculated fully to restore our fallen nature; not only to refine the mind, to give a purer and keener edge to intellectual enjoyment, and a kindlier glow to natural affection; not only, still further, to elevate the man who was outwardly moral and cultivated philosophy and science, but to cleanse the foulest of the foul—David, Manasseh, Magdalene, the thief on the cross.

2. Secondly, satisfied with its efficacy for all mankind. It is true that 'the world lieth in wickedness,' and that a very small portion of it is under the influence of true Christianity; but it is equally true that it all has been, at one time or another, under its influence. If we turn our attention eastward, where Mohammedanism and Paganism

riot in their licentiousness, there the seven Churches of Asia once flourished in the beauty of holiness,—there, in Palestine, were the first triumphs of the Cross. Where the Mosque of Omar rears its minarets, the temple of Solomon once stood, in which Jesus Christ Himself preached, and wrought His miracles of healing. Look to the west, where now Popery prevails with its damnable heresies, and cruelty, and blood, there the gospel won its widest way, and the pure water of life flowed in its broadest and deepest streams. Look at Africa in her present degradation; but remember that some of the Fathers of the Church were from among her swarthy sons, and had hair as curly and skins as black as the modern Negro or Hottentot. Remember that the world once went to school to the continent of Africa, that Africans were the first to stem the tide of Roman conquest, and to turn back their conquering legions. Wherever we turn our eyes, whether to the extreme north, where men are pinched and dwarfed with the frost, or to the south, where man grows into the full stature of physical and mental development, all have felt the effects of the Word of God. The next great thing is for them all to feel it together, and may the Lord hasten it in His time!

3. Again, the Saviour is satisfied with the fulfilment of the Divine engagement, to save every believing penitent. You and I may give way to unbelief; it is our weakness and sin; but Christ never doubts the fulfilment of the promises of the Father. He sits in the calm dignity of undoubting confidence, expecting 'until His enemies be made His footstool.'

If it had ever occurred in the history of Christianity, that one poor guilty sinner had come in the way of God's appointment, and had pleaded for mercy in the name and for the merits of Jesus Christ, and had been rejected, Christ could not have been satisfied. He might have said, 'Why was My travail, and agony, and death, if My merits are not available at the mercy-seat? Why have I believed, and caused My people to believe, in promises which are not to be fulfilled, in an oath and covenant which are not to be kept?' But no such case has ever occurred; no such case ever will occur. He is sure and satisfied of their accomplishment, and therefore freely invites us all. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'

'Come, all the world; come, sinner, thou;
All things in Christ are ready now.'

4. Fourthly, the salvation of sinners is Christ's satisfaction. There is inspiration in this verse. Man would have made the satisfaction of Christ to consist in the glory of angelic worship, or in the splendours of the eternal city: but it is not so. It consists in our salvation. 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;' and this joy is strongest in those who most fully participate in the benevolence of Christ, and feel the deepest sympathy with His purposes of mercy and salvation. But there is a heart elevated with a joy which no angel can feel, even the heart that was pierced, and agonized, and broken, for you and me. Christ is satisfied: He does not regret

His mediatorial undertaking, His reproach, and suffering, and death. He knows what our salvation has cost Him, and is satisfied.

But I am bound to tell you that He may 'see of the travail of his soul' and *not* 'be satisfied.' He is not satisfied when the backslider crucifies Him afresh and puts Him to an open shame. He is not satisfied when the open sinner tramples Him, the Son of God, 'under foot,' and counts 'the blood of the covenant a common thing.' It is a sin to waste the ordinary blessings and provisions of every day; but, oh! the sin, the folly, of wasting the blood of Christ, and 'doing despite to the Spirit of grace!'

Lastly, we have all, I trust, given some satisfaction to Christ: but which of us has done so fully? How many defects and imperfections have marred our *best* services! We have given Christ dissatisfaction enough. 'Our iniquities have gone over our heads,' and who is there among us who would dare to say, You behold in me a perfect specimen of inward and outward religion,—Christ looks down upon me from the light of the eternal throne, and sees nothing with which He is not satisfied, in thought, word, or deed; all is in perfect harmony with His law and will? If we should tremble, and shrink from such a declaration, let us determine to use 'all diligence to make our calling and election sure.' Let it be the constant breathing of our hearts, 'Then shall I be satisfied,' and never till then, 'when I awake with Thy likeness.' Oh that Christ may see in us of the travail of His soul, and be *fully* satisfied!

IV.

THE GLORIFICATION OF THE SON
OF MAN.

AND JESUS ANSWERED THEM, SAYING, THE HOUR IS COME,
THAT THE SON OF MAN SHOULD BE GLORIFIED.—JOHN
xii. 23.

In order to the interpretation of this text, and its profitable application to ourselves, it is necessary that we should bear in mind a few of the leading facts in man's religious history,—facts with which we are sufficiently familiar, but which it is necessary that we should view in connection with each other. In the first place, we are taught that man was created 'in the image' and 'likeness' 'of God,' that he might hold intercourse and communion with Him as a man with his friend; that he was to be God's representative on earth to all the inferior creatures, having embodied in him all that they could by possibility know of Divine intelligence and power. He was created in the image which, we are told, consisted in 'righteousness and true holiness.' He was to be the vocal and intelligent priest of nature, to present to God, the Creator of all things, the praise and honour due to Him. The object of Satan in his temptation of man,—a tempt-

ation which unhappily succeeded,—was to frustrate this intention of God, and to bring man into that fallen state in which all his powers, which should have been consecrated to God, should present to Him the greatest insult and offence, so that he should blaspheme the holy Name which he ought to have revered and adored, should violate the holy law which he ought to have himself observed, and which, too, he ought to have administered, and that he should, in fact, invert the whole order of things, and abuse the powers bestowed on him by his Maker. The object of the coming and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was to defeat and overthrow the design of the devil; and thus to establish the original intention of God. ‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.’ If you bear these three points in mind, you will at once perceive that you have before you the platform of a mighty contest. Man is at once the scene and the subject of this contest. The great question to be decided is, whether man shall be the servant of God, or the servant of the devil; whether he shall glorify God, or glorify the devil; whether God’s original and benignant purpose shall stand, or whether the evil and malignant purpose of the devil shall stand. The two great combatants in this contest are Christ, the Redeemer of the world, and Satan, ‘the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.’ The Apostle recognises the warlike character of our Lord’s mission, when he calls Him ‘the Captain of our salvation,’ and he speaks also of Satan as ‘the god of

this world'—a statement which is awfully true of the present period of the world's history, as well as of the past. This great contention, then, is before us, with the object and purpose on one side and on the other; and we see the importance of the issue. It is evident that in this, as in all wars, glory would belong to that side which should achieve the victory. If Christ should be victorious, then He would be glorified; if Satan should be victorious, then *he* would be glorified. It will be further evident that, if there were any period in this great contest in which a decisive blow was about to be struck, something which should for ever determine the victory on one side or the other, whatever might be the subsequent fortunes of this changing war, whatever the alternations of failure and success in different ages and in various places,—*that* would be the period in which one or other of these contending parties would be glorified. Such an event was about to take place when our Lord uttered the words of the text:—'The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified.'

It is interesting for us to know that, whenever the Captain of our salvation has come into what may be called personal collision with Satan, He has always been victorious, although the circumstances under which these contests have taken place have appeared to be unfavourable to such a result. This was the case with our Lord's temptation. He had been baptized by John in Jordan, and had been led by the Spirit into the wilderness, that He might take a solemn view of the whole scheme and matter before Him, and that He might prepare Himself,

by fasts and prayers of unusual length and intensity, by religious exercises and devotions of more than ordinary solemnity, for the scenes through which He had to pass, the lessons which He had to teach, and the example which He was about to set. When faint and hungry with these exhausting exercises of body and mind, Satan came upon Him and tempted Him to make one of the stones before Him into bread, and tempted Him further to seek by other means than those Divinely appointed the accomplishment of His great purpose. The immediate effect of this temptation was painful to Christ. He was sustained by angelic help; but the result was glorious to Him, enabling Him to say to His people, with a perfect understanding of all that is contained in the comprehensive promise, 'In every temptation I will make a way for your escape.' The circumstances under which the words we are considering were spoken were, according to human judgment, more disastrous than those connected with our Lord's temptation, and less likely than they to result in His triumph and glory. If we had been endowed with the gift of prophecy, and could have looked forward to the events which were then about to take place in rapid succession, what should we have seen? We should have beheld treason introduced into that sacred family of which Jesus Christ was the Head and the Apostles were the members,—a family in which all the relations and affections of ordinary consanguinity were lost in the great relations of sonship to the one God, and obedience to the one Lord. 'He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My mother, and

sister, and brother.' We should have seen treason introduced into *that* family; we should have seen Judas, the disciple trusted by his Master and his fellow-disciples, the keeper of that twice-blessed treasure which had been given, in the first instance, to Christ by those who heard Him and believed in Him, and part of which was to be given a second time, with Christ's special blessing, to the relief of the wants and distresses of the poor,—we should have seen Judas prepared to betray Him into the hands of His enemies; and we should have seen the common people at last turned against Him. They had hitherto defended Him; they had heard Him gladly, and had appreciated the holiness of His character, and the benevolence of His purposes when they had been impugned by those who occupied positions of trust and power; but we should have seen these people, who had triumphantly carried Him into Jerusalem and declared Him a King, now become the instruments in the hands of those whom they had formerly restrained by their affection and devotion to Him. Yes; we should have seen them prepared, after having shouted 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' to shout as loudly, 'Away with Him; crucify Him.' We should have seen Christ submitting to all this. He who had previously conveyed Himself silently and quietly away, when the opposition of His enemies was likely to be too strong, He who had wrought miracles in the accomplishment of His great purposes, was about to yield Himself up into the hands of men, to be buffeted, reproached, spit upon, reviled, persecuted, crucified. We might have followed Him to the grave, might have seen

the stone closed upon the sepulchre, and sealed with the seal of the Roman Governor. But if we had seen all this coming on, we should have said, The hour is come, that the Son of man shall be degraded: we must look elsewhere for some new candidate for the Messiahship, for all the pretensions of this man have terminated, as all similar pretensions have terminated before, in helpless and hopeless defeat. Jesus Christ saw it more clearly before it came to pass than we can see it now, even when it has come to pass. All the circumstances were open to His view who sees the end from the beginning, and yet He said, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.'

I. He was 'glorified,' in the first place, by the public attestation given to Him by *the voice from heaven*.

There were three occasions, during our Lord's earthly course, in which a voice was heard from heaven; and these three occasions so exactly accord with His entrance upon the three great offices which He came to assume, that I think they must be regarded as three separate inductions into these offices respectively. The first occasion on which a voice was heard from heaven, was when He was entering upon His priestly office, on the occasion of His baptism. At that time He presented Himself with the multitudes who were being baptized by John in Jordan. John, as soon as he recognised Him, would have declined the office of baptizing Him, and would rather have submitted himself to the baptism of Christ; but Jesus said to him, 'Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all

righteousness.' Then he suffered Him; and straightway, on His baptism, the Holy Ghost descended and rested on Him, in a visible and bodily form; and there came a voice from heaven saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

Our Lord, we say, was now entering upon His priestly office. It is true that He did not at once perform the distinctive work of a priest, which is the offering of sacrifice; this He could not do, as He came to offer one only sacrifice, and that sacrifice was to be Himself. It was of necessity, therefore, that the offering of this sacrifice should be the last act of His life; but immediately after His temptation in the wilderness, He returned to Nazareth, not as a hearer, but as a teacher, and entered, in one sense, upon His priestly office. Standing up in the synagogue of that town, He took the book of Isaiah from the hands of the minister, and read the portion of his prophecy where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' Then, closing the book, He returned it to the minister, and said, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears,' thus claiming to be He of whom the prophet spoke, and went on to teach them their moral and religious duties as they had not been accustomed to learn them from the scribes.

The second occasion on which a voice was heard from heaven, was when He was entering upon His

prophetic office. He had taught His disciples the great change which must take place in the souls of men, to fit them for the possession of eternal glory. What change must take place in the bodies of men, they had yet to learn ; and He took with Him Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a high mountain apart, and was 'transfigured' before them. There appeared, too, Moses and Elias talking with Him ; His countenance exceeded the sun in brightness, and His raiment was white as snow ; and Peter, ever the first to speak, said, 'Lord, it is good to be here ; let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. This,' says the sacred historian, 'he spoke, not knowing what he said,' and it is in vain for us to try to give a meaning to what is spoken by a man who knows not what he says. But then came there a voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye Him.' Whether this, 'Hear ye Him,' was designed to reprove the loquacity of Peter or not, we cannot tell ; but this, at all events, is certain, that this charge was designed to direct special attention to the words which Christ should hereafter speak, to the very important things which from that time He should begin to utter. If you look at the teaching of our Lord, you will perceive that, up to that time, He had confined Himself, not exclusively, but mainly, to expositions of the moral law, and explanations of those things which had already been taught to them by Moses or the prophets. True, He had intimated, on more than one occasion, that He had something more to tell them, which they could not then bear,

but He had limited Himself chiefly to moral lessons and teaching by parables. But now He began to speak frequently of His coming rejection and death, and of the glory which should follow. Henceforth the attention of His disciples was often directed to these future and important events; their own approaching sufferings and labours; the conflicts and ultimate triumph of the Church; the solemn words which should be the guide and encouragement of future ages, and the fulfilment of which, to the fullest extent, should only be seen in the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven.

The third occasion on which a voice was heard from heaven was the day in which the Saviour uttered the words of the text, when, if our theory be correct, He was entering upon that which was distinctively His kingly office, was about to do that which should for ever set the crown upon His head, and establish Him upon His throne, and which, whatever the temporary condition of His kingdom might be, should place it beyond all doubt that the victory would ultimately be His. He was about to take to Himself His great power. 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' Whatever that might mean, it certainly meant something beneficial, something desirable, something which should be to His honour and dignity, and therefore something which was rather to be desired than dreaded by Him. But almost immediately He added, 'Now is my soul troubled.' He was perfectly aware of the sufferings which He was about to endure; and He never spoke of those sufferings but in the gravest and most serious language. He knew

the weight of the Divine displeasure against the sins of men, the terrible nature and extent of that penalty of sin which, as our Representative, He was about to bear; and in the contemplation of this He was 'sore amazed,' and declared, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' Even now He said, 'Now is My soul troubled.' But He strengthened His own purpose by a reference to those principles by which He and His followers were to be sustained in patient and holy suffering: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' The grain of wheat is small in itself, so small as to be practically valueless, too small to stay the hunger of man or beast; but if you throw it away, cast it into the ground, little though it is in the first instance, that very act which seems to the eye of man to destroy it altogether may make it, in its succession, the mother of fruitful harvests, and it may become a valuable possession. That particular grain of wheat may die and be no more seen, but others shall spring up in greater power and richer abundance, and thus, 'if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' Even so that which appears hopeless is not really and necessarily so. Our Lord next refers to the fact, that it is possible for a man so to love his life that he may lose it. Extreme care may defeat its own object, and destroy the life it was intended to save; or a man may keep his life longer than it is worth keeping, until honour, and health, and usefulness, are all gone, and it would be better for himself and for others that he should cease to live; while he who,

for the glory of God and the benefit of his fellow-men, is willing to expose or even to sacrifice his life, shall by this very means preserve it, and if it be not preserved in this world, 'shall keep it unto life eternal.' He then says, 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour. Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? but for this came I unto this hour.' As if He had said, When I have attempted to strengthen your minds, by a reference to these principles of sanctified suffering, shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour?' When I have commanded you to follow Me, shall I be the first to lead you in the path of desertion and disgrace, merely because this is the hour of darkness and trouble? No! I will not say, 'Father, save Me from this hour:' but, 'Father, glorify Thy name;' go on to the accomplishment of Thy great purpose at whatever sacrifice: I am prepared for the cost and the tribulation: behold Thy ready victim! 'Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.' I have twice glorified it. I have attested to Thy two former offices. I will glorify it again. I will attest also to this. 'The people therefore that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.' He did not want it. Even the Apostle Paul, who was a mere man, could say, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.' There have been philosophers and great men in every age of the

world who have been able to comprehend how utterly valueless are popular applause and popular blame; and He who had been alternately at the very pinnacle of human praise, and then had sunk to the very depth of human censure, knew how to estimate both the one and the other. The inward satisfaction of the Divine approval in the mind of Christ was abundantly sufficient without any outward attestation. 'This voice came not because of Me: I did not need it: but it came 'for your sakes,' because 'the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified;' not merely that He should be glorious,—that He always was,—but that He should 'be glorified,' declared to be glorious, manifested and acknowledged to be so. 'Now is the judgment of this world,' the κρίσις, the crisis,—a word we have adopted into our language with no alteration of the spelling, and only a slight alteration of the pronunciation,—now is the hour of decision; 'now shall the prince of this world be cast out.' 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.' The Jews had a great horror of crucifixion: it was a punishment never inflicted by themselves, even for the worst crimes; but it was often inflicted upon them by the Romans, as it was written in their law, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' They appear to have attached the notion of a special and undefined curse to it beyond the mere pain and ignominy of its infliction. They never, therefore, used the term 'crucifixion,' but whenever they had to refer to it, used some periphrasis; and it seems that 'being

lifted up from the earth ' was the phrase now in use for this purpose. It was a mode of expression understood by the common people, and employed by them ; our Lord wished to be understood, and He therefore adopted it, when He spoke of His approaching death, and declared the result, ' I will draw all men unto Me.' ' The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever ; and how sayest Thou, the Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ? ' I must direct your attention to one or two points in reference to this matter.

In the first place, you must bear in mind the deep legal pollution which was contracted by the Jew who touched the dead body of a man, especially that of a malefactor. So strong was the fear of the Jews of contracting pollution that many of them would not go into the hall of Pilate for fear of being defiled. To be defiled, indeed, was a very serious inconvenience, and a great evil. A man thus rendered unclean was shut out from his family, could not assemble with the people, could not join the congregation, however high his position. Even if he were a priest, it did not avail to exempt him from the penalty ; he must be unclean for a certain length of time, and until certain ablutions had been performed, and certain sacrifices offered, in order to his readmission to the society of the clean. Whenever crucifixion took place, or any other capital punishment, all possible guards and precautions were taken, lest they should inadvertently come in contact with that which would involve them in this legal pollution. The body was

taken down at the close of the day, when the sun began to go down; for there is no twilight, or scarcely any, in those Eastern countries. The interval between the broad day and the dark night is not long and gradual, as it is here; and therefore, before the setting of the sun, and while still there was broad daylight, the body of the crucified person was taken down and buried on the spot. If death had not yet taken place, the legs were broken, and the chest beaten with a club, or some other violence used, to hasten death. Our Lord was already dead when His sacred body was taken down from the cross;—not killed by the crucifixion, but when He had endured the pain and shame He said, ‘It is finished, and bowed His head and gave up the ghost.’ He had already declared, ‘No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again;’ and thus He, as the great High Priest of our profession, ‘through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.’ The argument of Satan and his servants was this:—It is very desirable to get rid of Christ by any means; but if He could be so got rid of that His name and memory should be disgraced, and men made afraid to speak His name or refer to His sufferings, that would be a perfect triumph over Him. This is only one example out of very many to prove that Satan does not possess the attributes of Deity. He has, indeed, extensive knowledge through His great and long acquaintance with the weaknesses and sins of men; and His influence is almost universally diffused through His agents, the myriads of fallen angels,

‘ Who throng the air
And crowd the nether skies.’

But he does not possess the attributes of omniscience and omnipresence. Some things he cannot see before him. That which God hides from our sight He can hide from the eyes of Satan; and in many instances, and notably in this, ‘the wise’ was taken in his ‘own craftiness,’ and ‘the counsel of the froward was carried headlong.’ The object was, to fix upon Christ an accusation, a stain of guilt, to get rid of Him so that it would be ignominy and disgrace to mention Him. But our Lord said, ‘Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.’ They shall succeed in the first object at which they are aiming; and they shall as signally fail in their ultimate purpose. I will be ‘lifted up from the earth.’ I will be crucified, and die according to their wish, but after I am so lifted up, ‘I will draw all men unto Me.’ Instead of being a point of repulsion, instead of men going a long way round, lest they should come into contact with Me, I will become a point of attraction, I will draw all men unto Me. So far from touching Me making a man unclean, and unfit for the congregation of the faithful, all who are sprinkled with My blood shall thereby be cleansed from all things from which they could not be cleansed by the law of Moses, and shall be admitted into the company of the sanctified on earth and the glorified in heaven. The enemies of Christ relied upon the effect ordinarily produced, when a man has involved himself in a violation of the law of his country, and has suffered in consequence capital punishment.

In the company of his relatives, it would be a monstrous breach of good manners, it would be downright cruelty, to make any allusion to his relationship, or his fate. It was the hope of Satan and his followers, that the followers of the Lord Jesus would never speak of Him. 'Don't let us hear of the malefactor. Remember that He was condemned, crucified, "lifted up from the earth," a spectacle to men and angels: on that matter it becomes us to be for ever silent.' How utterly were they to be disappointed! The doctrine of the cross has been the glory, the power, and the rejoicing of the Church in all ages. There has been nothing which has more frequently occupied the attention of men than the fact, that the preaching of Christ and Him crucified should accomplish important purposes, which, according to human reasoning, would be more likely to be accomplished by other means. You want to enlighten ignorant men. The right way would appear to be to instruct them, to give them some knowledge of philosophy and natural science, and then afterwards some knowledge of theology; and to superinduce upon that a knowledge of spiritual things. Human reason would urge this mode of addressing sinful men in order to their salvation, in preference to preaching the gospel of Christ; but it is the preaching of Christ and Him crucified that enlightens the understanding, affects the heart, and brings penitent sinners to the footstool of God's mercy to seek and obtain forgiveness. How is it? The sufferings of Christ were part of a great covenant sealed and secured in heaven. It was 'because He emptied Himself,

taking upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that *therefore* God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' He '*for the joy that was set before Him* endured the cross, despising the shame.' The joy set before Him was the salvation of men, involving His victory over Satan, and the triumph of His universal government. And on this consideration, He went through all His suffering and shame. The death of the cross was, indeed, a profound humiliation; but as He appeared with His face marred more than any man's, swelled with blows, 'besmeared with dust, and sweat, and blood,' treated with the utmost reproach and contempt that man could inflict, He was fulfilling the conditions of a covenant. The argument is this:—Wherever Christ's humiliation is proclaimed, there Christ's glory must be established. Go forth, then, tell it in the ears of reviling men, tell it in the ears of boasting devils, that Christ endured death, even the death of the cross,—that He endured this at the hands of men, men whom He had created and whom He came to save. It is in the covenant, it is of absolute necessity, that where Christ's humiliation is proclaimed, there Christ's glory shall also be proclaimed. The devils who hear it must be defeated; the sinners who hear it may be saved. Dark savages, men who as yet know nothing of

that system of religion with which the cross stands connected, must have this gospel preached unto them, and be brought in true repentance to the footstool of His throne,—a result which all your moralizing and philosophy could never produce. Jesus, by His death, laid the foundations of ‘a kingdom which cannot be moved,’ and of a triumph which shall go on increasing until there shall be ‘glory to God in the highest,’ and all the kingdoms of this world shall be subdued unto Him.

II. The hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified in *the fulfilment of prophecy*.

I cannot tell you how many of these prophecies which waited before on Jesus Christ received their accomplishment in connection with His crucifixion. He was not buried on the spot of His crucifixion; but Joseph of Arimathæa begged His body of Pilate, and laid it in his own tomb: thus, though ‘numbered with the transgressors,’ yet He was ‘with the rich in His death,’ buried with all the rites of honourable sepulture. Not a bone of Him was broken, as He was found to have expired when they came to break the legs of those who were crucified with Him. His side was pierced with the spear of the soldier, and there came thereout blood and water; a fountain was opened for sin and uncleanness.

III. The hour was come when the Son of man should be glorified by *the testing of His power*.

We have seen how fair is the theory of the atonement; but would the death of Jesus answer its purpose? Could Christ really do that

which He came professedly to do? Would His death save the souls of men, and reconcile the sinner to God? Look at this question as it applies to individuals. Look at the case of the centurion. If I were asked to describe a man little likely to be influenced by religious feelings, I would say, let him be born a Roman, and bred a soldier; let him rise to the rank of centurion in the decay of military discipline which characterised the later years of the Roman power; let him be thought a proper man to have the command of the tower of Antonia at a Jewish festival, and to superintend such an execution as that of our Lord. Here, surely, you have a man not likely to be influenced by sympathy, human or Divine; and yet that centurion smote upon his breast and said, 'Truly this was a righteous man,' 'truly this was the Son of God.' Look at the case of the thief upon the cross. He confessed that he was guilty, and that he only received the due reward of his deeds. Barabbas was a robber, a rebel, and a murderer; and yet it was thought safer to let loose Barabbas again upon society than this man. There was but half a step between him and death. The sentence of the law had been pronounced and was being executed upon him; he was actually dying by the slow and gradual torture of crucifixion, when he appealed to Christ, and when Christ, then in the depth of His humiliation and suffering, said, 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' That man was saved from the very jaws of death; the lawful captive was delivered. Time would fail to tell of Magdalene, and Saul, and Peter. But let us look at masses of men. Our Lord's dis-

ciples may be taken as fair representatives of the Jewish nation. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast : the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee,—in some sense a countryman of their own,—‘ and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew ; and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified ;’ glorified in the accession of these Greeks to the Jewish Church, or rather in the accession of both to that universal Church in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but all are ‘ one in Christ Jesus.’ We meet with these Greeks again in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as the nucleus of that Eastern Church which, during the early period of its history, ran a race of honourable equality with the Western Church.

IV. The hour was come when the Son of man should be glorified in *the proof of His innocence*.

We have generally been led to look upon the halting of Christ to the judgment-halls of Caiaphas and Pilate as simply wanton and gratuitous aggravations of His suffering. Let us view them in a far more serious and important light. We follow Him first, then, to the hall of the high priest. Two high priests occupied the seat of judgment. The high priest could only retain his office twenty-five years, and then had to give way to his successor, who was always his son, or, as in this case, his son-in-law. The acting high priest was accustomed, in any

case of importance, to avail himself of the wisdom and experience of his predecessor: you have in this case, therefore, Annas and Caiaphas both engaged in this trial; and what do we see? The last two legally appointed high priests, with whom that office was to end, examining the Lamb of God to see if He were really without spot, fit to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The theory of the doctrine of justification by faith is that the suffering of an innocent victim shall be taken in stead of the punishment of the actual transgressor, but it is a necessary element of that doctrine that the victim should be really innocent; and it was most important to prove that Christ was free from sin, that 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.' The high priests found no fault in Him, except that they charged Him with blasphemy in calling Himself the Son of God; and how soon and how completely He was about to vindicate that claim we all know. Having tried Him in their ecclesiastical court, they hurried Him away to the hall of Pilate, to be tried by their criminal law, to see whether He who had been true to God could have been false to His king. No political offence was charged against Him; and Pilate washed his hands before them, and pronounced Him innocent. — 'Was He declared to be a fitting sacrifice, offered without spot to God?'

In concluding these remarks, I would remind you that the victory of Christ shall be complete, and His ultimate triumph is certain, and placed beyond all possibility of doubt. In the moments of

our discouragement let us remember that the Lord Jesus, having ~~w. led captivity captive,~~ is seated at the right hand of the Father; calmly, in His own dignity, waiting until 'His enemies be made His footstool,' in the certain confidence of the truth of that promise, 'I will give Thee the heathen for Thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.' The words of the text may be taken as a motto in which you have a great principle condensed into a few words. I wish this motto were written over the doors of our offices, shops, and dwelling-houses. Every hour that a man lives he should be prepared to say, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' In the hour of our prosperity and enjoyment, He should be glorified in our gratitude to God for the blessings which He bestows, and our moderation in their use,—for we are to use and not abuse them. In the time of our adversity, the Son of man should be glorified in the patience, and resignation, and humility with which we suffer. Let us say, 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' In all times of public or private worship we may well say, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' This is the first great object of all worship. Lose sight of this, and your worship is good for nothing. Glorify Christ in your confession of sin, in magnifying His atonement, in the exercise of a lively faith. In all religious enterprises the Son of man should be glorified. When we meet at Boards of Management, professedly for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, we must not seek our own glory. The question must not be, How

can I get my own way? but, How can I best promote the glory of Christ? We must have a single object in view. 'The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' An intensity and power would be given to religious purposes and efforts if they were thus influenced and thus inspired. Then in the hour of death we shall be able to say, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.'

'In age and weariness extreme
 Who shall a helpless worm redeem?
 Jesus! my only Hope Thou art,
 Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
 O, could I catch one smile from Thee,
 And drop into Eternity!'

'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.' We think too much about our death, and too little about our life; we may safely trust our latest moments in the hands of Him who has promised that 'an entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into' His 'everlasting kingdom.' In the day of judgment it will be true that 'the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' All human merit, all great and good things that we have done, will be lost sight of in that day. The Lord Jesus will 'come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.' Can we think of anything *then* but the glory of Him before whose face the heavens and the earth are fleeing away,—then, when it will be our highest joy to feel that we have some remote and unworthy, but still some saving, connection with Him, who is 'God over all, blessed for ever,' and who has thus appeared that He might take us to Himself, to be glorified, body and spirit, with Him for ever?

V.

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP.

AND HE SPAKE THIS PARABLE UNTO THEM, SAYING, WHAT MAN OF YOU, HAVING AN HUNDRED SHEEP, IF HE LOSE ONE OF THEM, DOTH NOT LEAVE THE NINETY AND NINE IN THE WILDERNESS, AND GO AFTER THAT WHICH IS LOST, UNTIL HE FIND IT? AND WHEN HE HATH FOUND IT, HE LAYETH IT ON HIS SHOULDERS, REJOICING. AND WHEN HE COMETH HOME, HE CALLETH TOGETHER HIS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS, SAYING UNTO THEM, REJOICE WITH ME; FOR I HAVE FOUND MY SHEEP WHICH WAS LOST. I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT LIKEWISE JOY SHALL BE IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH, MORE THAN OVER NINETY AND NINE JUST PERSONS, WHICH NEED NO REPENTANCE.—LUKE xv. 3—7.

MUCH has been said of the excellence of parables; and their almost universal adoption, to convey political, moral, and religious truths, through all ages and by all nations, may be taken as a general acknowledgment of their importance. There is, however, one view of Scripture parables to which sufficient attention has not been paid; and that is, that there are parables in Scripture which prove that religion is designed for man in all his affections and feelings, in all his duties, obligations, and circumstances. The fact, that religious truths are not only capable of illustration by a reference to

man's ordinary pursuits and duties, but that they may be best and most forcibly illustrated by these means, goes at once to disprove that objection to Christianity which some have taken, that it is a sort of mystical system, an unreasonable abstraction, well enough for men to theorize upon, but not applicable to the feelings and practices of every day life. If this were so, it would, of course, shut out its obligations from influencing our character, and set aside the authority of God over our conduct. If religion were this unreasonable abstraction, then it would follow, of necessity, that it must have its own language, its own technical terms, which could not be applied to the purposes of ordinary life, peculiar expressions which only the initiated would be able to understand. But it is not so: nay, the very opposite is the case. We all know what is meant by a King, a Friend, a Father. There is no difficulty, no mystery, in apprehending, if not all the meaning which critical ingenuity might discover, at least the great broad truths designed to be conveyed to us, that our holy religion was made for man, in the feelings of his heart, in the daily walks of life, in all positions in which he may be placed.

There are two general ideas suggested by this view. The first is,—that Jesus Christ is the brightest example of the lawful relations and duties of life. It is essential to the position He occupies, that He should be Head over *all* things; and when He assumes any title, He assumes it in its highest style, its most excellent form. If He is a Physician, He is the *good* Physician; if a Shepherd, 'the *good* Shepherd;' if a Brother, a Brother 'made for ad-

versity;’ if a Friend, ‘a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’ Whatever He is, He is in the highest style. Although there are many men in the world who present points of excellence that we should do well to admire and to imitate, yet we can only safely follow them, even in their most amiable qualities, ‘as they follow Christ.’ Far ahead of all human excellence, as found in mere man, is the grand excellence of that Divine humanity found in Christ. He is the brightest and most glorious example of ‘whatever things are lovely and of good report.’ The second thought is, that if Christ be the brightest example for men in all moral excellence, the highest style of morality can only be attained by our being brought under the influence of His religion. If you would walk as Christ also walked, there is but one way in which it can be done. That ‘mind’ must ‘be in you’ which was also in Him. If you would be followers of Him with anything like persistency and perfection, you must be followers of Him ‘as dear children,’ ‘putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man’ in all the beauty of holiness. These remarks are applicable to all Scriptural parables, as such,—as they are attempts to illustrate the principles and practices of religion by a reference to the duties, relations, and offices of ordinary life.

The parables contained in this chapter are three in number, and are familiarly known as the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Silver, and the Prodigal Son. They are all the same in their purpose and intention, although differing in their machinery and circumstances. They are all designed

to impress upon us the grand and encouraging truth, that God looks with peculiar sympathy and regard on the most worthless of the human race, whether the supposed insignificance arises from smallness of number or value, as one sheep against a hundred, or one piece of silver against ten; or whether it arises from inferiority of character and quality, as a prodigal son against a good one. Whatever be the mode of estimation, these parables are designed to teach us, that there is no member of the human family beneath the Divine attention and regard; none so worthless that God holds him in no estimation. It may be said, perhaps, What need have we to pursue this investigation? We are not among the lowest of mankind. There is enough to find fault with in us, God knows, and our own souls know, when we think properly and humbly of ourselves. But still it is not saying much of ourselves to say, that we are not taken from that lowest stratum of humanity, in which all vice and misery appear to be deposited and settled. We are not from among the savages of the African forests, or the ragged, and wretched, and blaspheming people who crowd the courts and alleys of large towns. We do not belong to this very lowest portion of society. We are here on the Lord's day, engaged in the solemnities of His worship; we have been offering to Him our supplications and prayers, recognising His authority, at least so far as outward appearance is concerned. Of what use is it, then, to direct our attention to those who are so far below us, who belong to that reprobate class of mankind, as some outspokenly and improperly call them, for

whom there is no care either of God or of man? Well, there is this reason for pursuing the investigation. I do not question your respectability of character and position, as compared with that of the unfortunate class to whom I have referred. I do not question that you are better than your neighbours; you ought to be, or you have made most miserable use of your circumstances and advantages. I take it for granted that you *are* better. But the ground of hope for the mercy and goodness of God on which we can securely rest is not our excellence as compared with our neighbours, but the same ground on which the mercy and goodness of God are offered to the vilest of the vile. Suppose such a reprobated and neglected portion of the human race to exist, then the state of the best of this reprobate class would differ so little from the worst of the class immediately above it, not included in that fearful reprobation, that no man could draw the line, and none could truly say where the reprobate and hopeless class commenced. The shades of difference would not be so clearly and definitely marked as to enable us to discern the distinction: we should be left in utter doubt, and while in some moments of self-righteousness we should place ourselves in the more favoured class, in moments of depression and remorse we should place ourselves in the lower and less happy class.

The objection we are combating may be stated in some such form as this. 'I do not object,' our opponent might say, 'to the existence of God, or to His exercise of control, and His providential and gracious rule over the world. I do not deny that He

exercises this rule over great masses of men, that nations rise and fall at His command. I do not deny that He exercises it even over individual men, supposing that, from their position, they exert an influence over great masses of society; I believe that by Him 'kings reign and princes decree justice'; nor do I deny that this special favour may be extended to individual men who, though they are not in important positions, are yet objects of God's favour, and whom, in consequence of their obedience to His laws, He regards with delight. All I contend for, he might say, 'is that there are some of the mere riff-raff of society, utter outcasts among men, about whom God cares nothing.' Well now, look for a moment at that. This objection, however guarded, is founded upon fallacies,—fallacies in reference to man and to God. First, in reference to man, it goes upon the principle, that you can fix man's place in the scale of creation, and that he can be regarded as *positively* an insignificant being. He is not at the top of the scale of creation: angels and archangels rise above him. He is not the lowest, because he is surrounded by creatures of vastly inferior order and capacity, in which nevertheless there are abounding evidences of wisdom and harmony; so that man stands very high up in the scale of being. Man is, therefore, a great being, or an insignificant one, relatively, according to the comparison you institute. The Sacred Scripture gives us two distinct classes of comparisons, according to the lesson which God designs to teach. Suppose a man struts forth in his pride and says, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for my glory?'

or, 'The world was made for Cæsar,' or utters other words into which he may try to condense his vanity and ostentation, then Scripture points him to a comparison which makes him feel his insignificance. 'When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?' Every man who reflects must see and feel that he is but one of a vastly multiplied race: millions have lived before him, millions now live, and millions will live after him; and he is but one individual among these. So, too, this earth itself, on which these millions live, is but one out of myriads of worlds that glitter in the arch of night, and in no sense a primary one among the worlds which are above and around us. The thoughtful man must be convinced of his own insignificance, and will shrink into nothing before Him who can take up the mountains as dust, and the ocean as a drop of a bucket. Often will he exclaim, 'Lord, what am I?' But suppose a man should be tempted to think that he is positively an insignificant creature, and to say that God regardeth him not, that He has mightier work to do than looking after his concerns or regarding his destiny, then the same Scripture sets up another sort of comparison;—'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Ye are of more value than many sparrows.' 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory

was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? When man compares himself with the beasts and vegetables by which he is surrounded, he perceives that he is a great and magnificent being. Take the most degraded man you can find; look at him in rags and wretchedness; but remember his intelligence, his affections, his immortality, and you will feel that he is more valuable than the flowers of the field or the birds of the air; and if God takes care of them, surely His regard, that extends so far below the position of that poor wretched man, extends to *him*. The greater includes the less in this as in other things. If you could prove that there is any man below the Divine regard, then you would destroy the notion of God's moral government as far as that man is concerned. It is perfectly impossible to separate the one from the other. You may try to do it in words; you cannot do it in fact, or in feeling. If you persuade a man that God does not care about his welfare, you cannot persuade him that He cares about his conduct or character. If He cares nothing whether I am well or ill, in happiness or in misery, alive or dead, He cannot care whether my breath is profaned with unhallowed words, or goes forth in expressions of adoration and prayer, whether my thoughts are holy or unholy. The moral government of God, therefore, stands or falls with the notion of His providential care.

But we have said that the objection in question is based also upon fallacies in reference to

God. I care not how complimentary may be the terms in which God is relieved from the care necessarily involved in the universal oversight of His creatures. There may be in the very courtesy of the terms employed a deeper insult than if the power of God were absolutely denied. The idea is that God, being engaged about other matters, cannot pay attention to those poor and wretched people about whom we are speaking. All this implies limitation, and therefore imperfection. The ideas of God taught to us at our mother's knee are, that He is omniscient and omnipotent, that He knows all things, and can do all things. God's glory does not consist in the fact, that He can do some things wondrously well, but that He doeth *all things* well. God's omniscience does not merely imply that He knows a great many things more than men or angels know, but that He knows all things. I shall not be misunderstood if I say that God, in this great teaching of Himself, this attempt to impress us with the doctrine of His infinity, cannot afford that there should be a thought in my heart or a word in my mouth which He does not know, or that anything should be done without either His agency or His permission. Let there be one thing,—I do not care what it is,—let there be, in the mind of some one of those degraded and lost men, something that God does not know, however trifling or unimportant it may be, and you take away the notion of His omniscience, you place a limit to His knowledge. He may yet know *many* things, but He does not know *all* things. And so of His power. If there is one thing He cannot do, the true notion of His

omnipotence is gone ; the proper idea of Divinity is lost. But when we believe and acknowledge that all things are known to Him, when we can say from our heart, 'There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo ! O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether,' 'Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased,' we embrace the full and proper notion of the Deity. But it may be said that it is unreasonable that the great God should be occupied with these little matters. He is engaged in the government of the world ; bringing about the seasons in their succession, guiding the stars in their mazy dance, upholding and controlling the order of all things, so as to establish the everlasting kingdom of His Son. It is not reasonable that He should attend to the sighing of the contrite heart, the whispering of the prayer of penitence. Is it ? Dr Chalmers puts this matter very forcibly in one of his sermons: 'Suppose the world had ever possessed a king whose wisdom should enlighten and direct his counsels, whose prowess should give victory to his arms, and who should extend the limits of his dominion, and increase his prosperity, by his wise and wonderful arrangements; and suppose that this king, great as a king, should find time and opportunity to visit the widow and the fatherless, and listen with compassion to the long and weary story of suffering and distress. Would it have been derogatory to the fame of that king ? Would it not have been remembered with gratitude long after the wisdom of his counsels and the glory of his victories had been swept into that oblivion which sooner or later blots out the record of the mightiest deeds ?

The recollection of these private sympathies and virtues would have lived and been regarded with delight by each succeeding age. The world presents no such king. But there is One who ever looks upon us, and who delights to listen to our cry, and who has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee; yea, before thou callest I will hear thee." God, in the magnificence of His Divinity, is an object to us of awe and terror: we look upon Him, and behold the majesty and righteousness, before which our wickedness appears and trembles. But when He cheers the broken-hearted, speaks to us in words of tenderness, and mercy, and reconciliation, and says to us, 'Fear not: I am thy Father: thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee,' He comes home to our affections and our hearts. We see, adore, and love.

It may perhaps be said, that this affection that God is represented as bearing to the lost portion of mankind is unreasonable. I am not going to give you a logical definition of the term reasonable or unreasonable. I do not care about it; but I take it in its popular sense. This system of religion is designed to lay hold of the hearts and affections of mankind. We sometimes forget that man was created in the image of God; that, defaced and spoiled as that image is, it is yet the image of God; the qualities and affections of the human spirit can be sanctified, and hallowed, and raised; and if man be like God, it is no profanation to say that in the grander and better features of human nature God is like man. We find the reflection of the feelings of the Deity in the better feelings of the human soul; and when we can

get rid for a moment of our selfishness, sordidness, and worldliness, man rises to somewhat of his original grandeur. The affections that live in him are the affections of the heart of God: they find similar expression, for they are similar in character and influence. Then we say that it is reasonable that there should be this affection. We do not say that God loves the sinner in the full and proper sense of that term. 'He is angry with the wicked every day,' and only loves those in whose hearts are implanted the faith without which it is impossible to please Him, and the love which is 'shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us;' and He loves these in proportion to their loveliness, and their conformity to His nature and image. Nor do we say, as some have unwisely said, that the open and notorious sinner is more pleasing in the sight of God than the merely moral man. Monstrous and dangerous doctrine! Better that there should be some formal morality than none at all. Mere morality is a good thing. It is better to keep God's laws and the laws of man, than to violate them: resisting evil, in any case, is better than yielding to it. Mere morality, indeed, will never bring salvation, and never fit us for heaven; but it is good as far as it goes. We do not say, therefore, that God loves this wretched class of persons in the sense in which the term is truly and properly used in reference to His children who are conformed to Himself: but we do say that there is towards them in the mind of God a feeling of compassion, intense, deep compassion, peculiar in its character, which He does not feel towards the godly and the good. 'Well,' you

will perhaps say, 'this is unreasonable.' I answer, It is natural. Which of you having a hundred sheep, if you lost one, would not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, or fold, and go after that which was lost until you found it? That sheep, perhaps, has been lost a day or two, and when it is found is lean, and out of condition, and hungry, is not worth so much as when you first lost it; but the first moment you catch sight of it, you know that it is yours, and the sight of it gives you more happiness—and you cannot help yourself, in spite of your philosophy—than you derived from looking over the fold, and seeing the ninety-nine which were safe. A caviller might say, You ought to be a hundred times as glad to see the others in safety as you are to see this one ragged and hunger-bitten sheep: but you would push him aside with all his nonsense, and say, 'This my sheep was lost, and is found;' and you would feel that all *is* nonsense which runs counter to the tide of nature and feeling. Or 'what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one,' does not 'sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?' and the moment she sees it glittering in the corner, she experiences more joy than she felt from the recollection that the other nine pieces were safe in her purse. How? You may say, that she ought to be enraptured with the possession of the other nine, if this one piece gives her so much joy. But it had been lost and is found. Or suppose that you have two sons, one of whom has been an example of propriety and good conduct, has always behaved himself well, has gone backward and forward in his business with regularity, so that your

property has been safe in his hands. His reputation and value have gone on increasing ; but perhaps you have never thought of encouraging him by any suitable reward. O, how intensely human was the human nature of Christ ! You have never given your son a kid, that he might make merry with his friends. It is not good policy ; it is not justice that you have never done so. ‘ But it is not convenient. I cannot put up with the noise and confusion.’ Then you had better turn out and let the young people have the house to themselves for a day : it will be better for them and for you in the long run. But to return to your son who has never caused you any uneasiness ;—you habitually feel that he is a good son, about whose excellence there can be no question in your own mind. But you have another son, as bad as his brother is good, who has been a trouble and grief to you almost ever since he was born, who has gone astray in all his acts, has spent what of your property he could lay his hands on, has made sport, with his drunken companions, of your admonitions and reproofs, and, when he has done you all the harm he could, has scraped together what fragments he could find, and has gone away into a far country,—to waste what was left in riotous living. Perhaps he is dead, you often think, perhaps he is alive ; you don’t know ; but many a solitary and aching hour you spend about him : and where he is, and what he is doing, you know not. But, by and by, this poor wretched lad comes home to you in poverty and misery. He has spent all ; has not a farthing in the world ; character is lost ; everything lost ; all he has are the rags and tatters

that hang upon his lean and hungry limbs; but he comes and falls down upon his knees at your feet, and says in accents, broken by his sighs and tears, 'Father, I have sinned before heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' The last time you heard that voice it was in accents of defiance; he would take his own course, and you might take yours; and he turned away with contempt and ingratitude, and away he went, and you heard that voice no more. You now listen to it in the accents of supplication and prayer; and the moment the poor boy kneels before you, and pleads in terms of penitence and sorrow, it gives you more joy than seeing your good son going backward and forward in his regular duties for many years. Let some man come and tell you, 'This is a very bad son, and the other is a very good one:' you would say, 'Do I not know it? Has not my pillow been wet with my tears many an anxious night about it? Are not furrows too deeply worn in my cheeks with watchfulness and care?' Yes; these tell better than this intruder all about your son; but 'he was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And in the gush of your affection there is no mistaking your own mind, and no miscalculation: you don't esteem his conduct and character better than those of his wise and good brother; but he was lost and is found. So the heart and affection of the Father—God, the best Father, the great Father of all—the heart and affection of the Father glory over the lost, and now the found, the returning, son. 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and

nine just persons that need no repentance.' And yet there is no miscalculation—shall I say in the arithmetic of God and of heaven?—such as the calculation of earth might suggest, that ninety-nine men are more than one man, that ninety-nine good men are better than one bad man. As to this there is no mistake; but the heart and affection of God go out in search of these lost, and fallen, and wretched ones. There is not in the entire world, among the multitudes of men, one who may not return, repent, and live. There is not one to whom God is not ready to say, 'Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' God looks upon you with a heart that can feel for you, and God will say of every truly penitent and returning prodigal, 'This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'

I have directed your attention to the parables in this chapter, and to the general principles which they are intended to illustrate and prove. I now beg to make a few plain remarks, suggested by this particular parable.

I. In the first place we observe that we are *all* the sheep of God.

The saints are the sheep *in* the fold; the sinners the sheep *out* of the fold, or, as they are here represented, 'the lost sheep,' wanderers from God. 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' We are all, then, the sheep of Christ, either in the fold or out of the fold. There is no compact, no com-

promise, between Christ and Satan. 'What communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial?' It is not to be imagined, that a portion of the human race is handed over remedilessly to the devil. The language of Scripture is, on the contrary, altogether at variance with any such notion. It represents Satan, indeed, as the spirit ruling in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and leading them away captive at his will: but this is always spoken of as a usurpation, a robbery, and not as a right. It is not the less a robbery because, while led captive by the devil at his will, we are also following the devices and desires of *our own hearts*, and are, by a strange perverseness, conspirators against God and our own peace. This does not alter the fact, that it *is* a conspiracy, and that Satan's authority is unrecognised and usurped. There is nothing in Scripture about such a contract having been amicably settled and arranged. The representation is, that Satan shall at last be conquered, beaten down, trodden under foot; that he first is to receive, at the great day, his condemnation, as the leading sinner, the father of lies, the murderer from the beginning, and the author of all the sins that have ever been committed by the race of man, and be cast into the lake of fire. All mankind belong to Christ: they have been redeemed with His precious blood. He 'gave Himself' for them, 'that He might redeem' them 'from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' This is a great encouragement to Christian labour, whether carried on by missionaries abroad, or ministers at home. Go where

you will, however defaced may be the image of God, however deeply the sinner may have sunk into depravity, so long as he bears evidence that he is a man, you have this encouragement in your attempts to save him, that he is one of the sheep of Christ,—a sheep out of the fold, a lost sheep, but still a sheep.

He is lost, in the first place, to the defence of the enclosure; lost to the sanctity and grace of holy discipline. We are called to 'give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' and when we consider the dangers by which we are surrounded, we must be convinced that it does need all diligence, in the arrangements of God's providence, in the ordinances of His religion, and in that sacred jealousy with which the members of the Church of Christ should watch over each other in love, endeavouring to warn the unruly, to lift up the fallen, to confirm and establish the feeble, to comfort and relieve the faint-hearted, and to protect them from the enemy, who is ever prowling about the fold of Christ, seeking whom he may devour. They who form a proper opinion of the value of such defences will not very hastily dissolve their connection with any portion of the Christian Church. It is very evident from the carelessness with which some men leave our Society, and go back into the world, that they do it without thought; that they entertain notions altogether loose and unscriptural about the character and obligations of the Christian Church, and the sacred nature of its ordinances. It is not a slight matter to dissolve our connection with the Church even for a moment, and to exclude ourselves from the prayers

and sympathies of those whom God has brought together in His house of prayer. The sinners, then, are lost to the defence of the enclosure; and they are lost, secondly, to the exhilarating effect of numbers. Union, it is said, is strength: two are better than one, the Sacred Scripture tells us, and the experience of every day tells us. Two are not only stronger than one, because they are twice as many as one, but stronger from their union than two acting separately. They can do not only twice as much, but more, because of the combination, and the vigour and concentration of their efforts; and this is especially so in moral and religious works. It is more true, if possible, in regard to these, than in its application to merely mechanical efforts. How often have we found out this in our own experience! How easy to be good, when we are surrounded by those who are good and whose conversation is godly,—when those with whom we are associated are prepared to think and act with us, and the tendency of their talk is spiritual and connected with our salvation! How difficult, on the other hand, is it to maintain our integrity and propriety, when alone as to our great profession,—when they who are associated with us in temporal companionship are not with us in religious matters, and have no sympathy with our enjoyments and hopes! It is very difficult to maintain, against the disposition of those by whom we are surrounded, a right state of thought and a proper course of action. We feel the exhilarating effect of union when we are bound together in principle and sympathy. ‘A threefold cord is not easily broken;’ and thus

they who are united with others in holy feeling and effort are strengthened and sustained. It is worthy of observation, that our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth His disciples two and two. The number of these disciples was scanty. It appeared to be important that they should be as widely diffused and spread as possible. 'The harvest truly' was 'great, and the labourers' were 'few,' and as two men could not be speaking in the same place at the same time, it would have seemed better that they should have gone singly, and to different places at the same time. But He who knew what was necessary provided more for the success of the message, the stability of the conduct of the disciples, and the permanent establishment of His religion, in thus sending them forth in union, two and two, than in solitude and isolation. They are lost, thirdly, to the pasture, that spiritual provision which God makes for the souls of men, and which, though it may be somewhat more difficult to describe, is not less real in its character, and not less suitable in its application, than the provision which He makes for their bodies. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Man needs for his body that which supplies nutriment, and furnishes strength and invigoration; and when supplied with these, the Scripture tells him that he should be therewith content, that he should take no further anxious thought as to the body. But there is the soul of man, and unless this be fed and nourished, it will languish and die; its operations and powers will be gradually benumbed, until mere emptiness will take the place of what

previously was intelligence and energy. There is food for the soul as well as food for the body. Man has an intellectual being, which must be supplied. The eyes must bring before him new objects for contemplation. The ears must make him acquainted with outward sounds and communications. By these means the memory and judgment are strengthened and invigorated; and by them the mind of man is fed from day to day. But we would especially speak of the spirit of man. There are numerous expressions in Scripture which describe the soul as eating and drinking such provisions as are made for it in the mysterious wisdom of God. 'My flesh,' said the Lord Jesus, 'is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.' When the Jews were astonished at this saying, He proceeded still further to urge on them, that He was the true bread which came down from heaven, and that unless they were nourished by Him personally, it was impossible that their souls could live. In the sure provisions of God, then, they must 'go in and out and find pasture,' must be led in green pastures and beside the still waters, and derive nourishment and support from them. The Word of God may come in word only, or it may be the Word of God with power. In the one case it will not edify or strengthen: in the other, it will enable us to go forward with stronger and clearer appreciation of our duties, and make us more fit for the performance of whatever is demanded of us. As giants refreshed with new wine, 'we shall run, and not be weary: we shall walk, and not faint.'

When partaking of the outward emblems of the body and blood of Christ, we are to feed upon Him by faith. There is no need that we should adopt the doctrine of transubstantiation, to have the real presence of Christ. There is no transformation of the materials. The bread is bread *after* as *before* the consecration, and the wine remains wine unaltered; but the faith of the real worshipper discerns the Lord's body, and in the personal enjoyment of the Divine presence, says, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread.' All else in the shape of pasture and food, which man seeks for his soul, if not directly and absolutely poison, is imperfect and unsatisfactory. He spends his labour for 'that which is not bread,' and endeavours to quench his thirst out of 'broken cisterns.' The man who neglects Christ 'walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain;' and, while thus following the devices of his own heart, or the teachings of men, he is turning away from the pasture in which he might have found food for his soul, all that he wants for spiritual life and health.

II. The text teaches us that the great Shepherd of souls *seeks* these lost sheep.

We are not to understand the word 'seek' in its ordinary sense. When we say that a man is seeking anything, we mean that he is trying to find out where it is. In this sense Jesus Christ never seeks for the sinner: He is never ignorant where he is. He saw us when we first looked beyond the enclosure of His fold, the fold into which we were introduced by baptism, the flock of which

we were lambs even in our childhood, until we broke away from the restraints of Christ and His Church. He saw us when we first felt a desire for that unhallowed license which sets at nought the restraints of God and our godly parentage; He saw the first hesitating departure from Him, or perhaps the first bold dash which we made into sin; and He has followed us in every turn and lane of life. When we have thought ourselves alone, and when we have been alone as far as human observation is concerned, we have not been alone; the eye of God has been upon us. We have never uttered a rash or ungodly speech that He has not heard; we have never done a bad or mean thing which He has not seen. 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.' He has followed you and watched you, has known where you were, and He knows where you are now; in what relation you stand to Him, and how far you have wandered from Him. When it is said that Jesus Christ seeks lost sheep, we are to understand, that He makes use of all those means which shall induce them to be willing to be brought back. I do not say to come back,—they cannot do that: they have strength enough to run away, but they have not strength enough to run back to Him. When you run away from Christ, you run with all the evil influences in favour of the course you are pursuing. The world, the flesh, and the devil,—all these are urging you forward and urging you away from Christ; but when in time you see the folly of your course, and are determined to stop and go back to Him, you find that you have to go against the tide, and that you are utterly incap-

able of it. This resistance of good is abundantly strong enough to impede your progress in the right direction, and to give to your downward course a rapid descent; but when you turn and wish to go back to Christ, all this opposition is to be overcome, and, feeling your helplessness, you are compelled to say, 'When I would do good evil is present with me,' 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' The tyranny of Satan is over you, 'and you are led captive by him at his will.' It is not until the sinner is brought into a state of true conviction, that he is made willing to be brought back to Christ. And when it is said that Christ seeks him, we are to understand that He attempts to hinder him from going any further in this downward road, and that He uses all the means of His gracious providence to make him willing to be brought back. That is a remarkable passage of Scripture, often misapplied, which has reference to these Divine proceedings, 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.' The representation is, that God stands with the rod of His chastisement over His rebellious and wayward son, and smites him here and there, until He at last says, 'Where shall I smite thee any more? there is no sound place for another stroke, all is one bruise, one wound, one putrifying sore.' So in another place, after the solemn declaration had been uttered, 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone,' God is represented as yet saying, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?' And when the Divine severity is seen in

some final and apparently unexpected measure, and that last expedient succeeds, and the sinner desires to come back, we see the lost sheep willing, nay, anxious to return, tired of feeding upon the weeds and husks of the wilderness, instead of the rich pastures which he had left. But there he lies, weary, faint, and helpless, far away from the fold of Christ, willing to be brought back, but not able to go back. Well, the good Shepherd will not drive you away. He will carry you back. He did not carry you there, you ran away from Him yourselves, but you cannot run back to Him. You are altogether to blame; but He will take upon Himself the responsibility of bringing you back. He will lay you on His shoulders rejoicing, and when He brings back this lost and wandering sheep He does not bring him back in disgrace and humiliation, He does not put him down in some out-of-the-way place and say,—There, you are brought back, but do not show yourself; always remember that you are a disgrace to Me, and to My cause, and to My Church. No such thing as this. He ‘calls together His friends and neighbours,’ that they may rejoice with Him over His sheep which He had lost,—that they may give to this returned sheep a reception which will cheer his heart. There is in the exercise of mercy, on the part of man, in many instances, a littleness which takes away the beauty and gracefulness of the act, and disturbs that unchecked flow of kindness which we find only in God. Man, finding his lost sheep, would drive it back. Man, seeking his fellow man under these circumstances, would be apt to say to him, You have come thus far for your own plea-

sure, I will make you go back for mine. But there is nothing of this kind with Christ. He will bring us back when He has found us; He will 'lay us on His shoulders rejoicing.'

And there should be joy in the Church of God over one sinner that repenteth. For 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God' over such a one, 'more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.' We do not know much of the angels. The Sacred Scripture is a revelation of God to man: God is the great subject of it. It is not a revelation about angels. If it were, if whole chapters were occupied in giving us a description of the nature, qualities, and occupations of angels, we should find men speculating upon these things when they ought to be studying the ten commandments. The things which are practical and experimental, which have reference to the changing and renewing of our own souls, and to the duties we owe to those with whom we are associated, which really are the matters affecting this life, and the life which is to come—these are the points to which our attention should be directed: but we run away from them to the study of other things, because we see the defects in our conduct, which we have not the honesty or the determination to remedy. Therefore we have very little told us about the angels, or the mysteries of a future state. Religion is to be cultivated here, and its duties are to be performed in this present life. Still it is impossible that these angels should exist, as they do, in more or less intimate connection with God, without our catching occasional glimpses of them as they pass to and fro across the stage on

which the great scheme of human redemption is being wrought. ~~but.~~ We catch glimpses of them in the earlier revelation. We listen to them in their conversations with Abraham, with Lot, with Joshua, and with others. We hear the chorus of their song of triumph when the Lord Jesus Christ, in mingled glory and humiliation, was ushered into the world: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' We catch glimpses of them as they become the first preachers of His resurrection, when the keepers who had been set to guard His tomb became as dead men, and they triumphantly said to the disciples, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' 'He is not here, for He is risen: come, see the place where the Lord lay.' The angels were also the first preachers of the ascension. The disciples who were present when He ascended on high were still looking up where the cloud had received Him out of their sight, expecting that it would open and give them one more glimpse of Him, but the two angels addressed them, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus that is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' We are taught that these angels are ministering spirits: 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?' Our Lord said on one occasion, 'It were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.' The word 'offend' in this case, in our Lord's sermon on the mount, and

in numerous other places in the New Testament, really means to scandalize, or cause to offend; thus, 'If thine eye offend thee,' that is, if it be a cause of offence to thee, 'pluck it out and cast it from thee.' His declaration, then, is, that it were better for a man that a millstone were hung round his neck, and that he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to offend. Why? 'Because in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.' I believe in the special designation and appointment of some of these angelic beings to care for and watch over every individual of the human race. There is, in many instances, a grand broad truth lying at the foundation of the ancient heathen superstitions; and the superstitions in question are not original notions of the human mind, but perversions of these grand truths. We may smile at the notion of a man's good or bad angel, as these views are presented to us in the fables or romances of ancient or modern times; but don't let us give up the truth as it is taught us in the Holy Scriptures, that man holds communion with the angelic world, that these spirits surrounded us as closely and intimately as we are surrounded by evil spirits. We are apt to give the notion of omnipresence to the devil; but the diffusion of his influence is so only by the multiplicity of his agents. We must not give any attribute of Deity to a created being. No individual angel, fallen or unfallen, is omnipresent. There may be a rapidity of movement, of which we can form no correct idea, and of which even the rapid communication of our messages by the inven-

tions of human genius can only give us a very imperfect conception; but there must be a removal from place to place. Satan himself, in his solemn and awful might and authority, is but in one place; the myriads of his fiends give him a sort of ubiquity because they act according to his will; and we have all found out, a thousand times, that they are always at hand, for the suggestion of evil and the promotion of sin. Is there a less adequate provision of good angels to counteract these evil influences, to lead the souls of men to right and holy sentiments and feelings? Has God, in this remarkable instance, failed in that complete and entire provision for the counteraction of evil of which we have such ample evidence in other instances? No. Then why should we not offend one of these little ones, sport with their passions and tempers, teach them little vices, laugh at them when we put them out of temper, or when we lead them to say or do that which is wrong? *Why* should we not do this? Because 'their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.' And these angels will bring home to God those whom they have in charge, if they have fair play; but if those things which ought to be for good are bent to the purposes of evil, it is not in the power of angels themselves to counteract them. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' But reverse the course, train up a child in the way he should not go, strengthen the tide of evil influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil, by parental example and authority, and what will be the result? Angels

rejoice to bring home the objects of their solicitude and care; and if they fail in this purpose, they will give an account why they have failed, and it will be an awful thing, in the day of judgment, if these angels assign as the reason of their failure your opposition, your counteracting influence:—‘I should have brought home my charge but for the example and encouragement of his parents.’ If you are determined to seek death in the error of your ways, do so; but I protest against your frustrating the salvation of your children.

‘There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.’ When the wanderer sheds the tears of penitence, and heaves the sighs of a contrite heart, the angels, filled with holy sympathy and love, rejoice together: not merely the one who has the charge of this returning penitent, but all the others rejoice with him in his success. And there is a representation frequently given to us of something like impatience, on the part of these angelic guides, to come out of their invisibility, and make themselves manifest to, and heard by, those with whom they have been travelling, watching them in all circumstances, aiding them in all acts of devotion, when they see their work nearly accomplished. They seem wishful to intrude themselves upon the vision of the man who is just entering on the world to come; and, though the ear is becoming increasingly deaf to the words which the human voice may utter, it is strung to greater attention and quickness as to this angelic voice, which you cannot hear. So, too, while the eye is becoming dim to the objects which are earthly

and material, there have been some who have said, like Stephen, 'I see Jesus standing at the right hand of God;' 'I see the heavens opening, the whole chamber filled with heavenly visitors;' 'Angels beckon me away, and Jesus bids me come.'

'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;'—joy, most of all, in the heart of Him who gave Himself for us, and whose intense desire for the salvation of the souls of men is beyond that of which any human or angelic mind is capable. And there should be joy in the Church of God. There should be an earnest love for the souls of men. 'This my joy is fulfilled,' said John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming forth in His mediatorial character: we should say so when we see Christ manifesting His power in the salvation of men. This is the great purpose for which all religious institutions and services were ordained. We may be delighted, at times, that there is a prospect of enlarged and increased usefulness; but far above all other things which may be regarded as evidence of the prosperity of the Church and the success of the gospel, and far beyond all matters of mere form and ceremony, we should esteem the return of these poor wandering sinners to God. God is my witness this night, that I would rather, a thousand times, that some poor sinner was brought to God, than that you should give for religious purposes all the money you possess. The salvation of the souls of men creates joy in heaven among the angels of God, and joy upon earth among those who expect soon to be admitted to the companionship of angels. Man is not regarded by them as

an inferior being; they take a deep interest in us and find joy in our happiness. May God, in His infinite mercy, grant that there may be joy in heaven over you and me! Amen.

VI.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

FOR THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU, AND TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND TO ALL THAT ARE AFAR OFF, EVEN AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALL.—ACTS ii. 39.

THE Apostle describes the remarkable events recorded in this chapter as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel ii. 28—32 : ‘ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions : and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered : for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.’ And the verse immediately preceding the text declares, that the promise here referred to is the promise of the Holy Ghost, under whose gracious influence men were enabled to speak, in languages which they had never

learned, the wonderful works of God. The enemies of the gospel affirmed that the men who thus spoke were drunk with new wine. This accusation the Apostle denies as absurd, seeing that it was but the third hour of the day, nine o'clock in the morning, too early for men to be engaged in eating or drinking to excess, and he describes the fact in question as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel; from which, if we take out the allusions to the political events which always accompanied the remarkable visitations of spiritual influence, we learn that the promise referred to was that of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It should be observed, that every dispensation has had its present duties and privileges; it has had also its peculiar promise; and according to the vividness of men's apprehension of this promise and these privileges, has been the ardour of their devotion, and the definiteness of their work and purpose. In the patriarchal dispensation men enjoyed the privilege of presenting to God an accepted service, and living under His special guidance and protection. But their *promise* was that the seed of Jacob should inherit the land of Canaan, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.' After the chosen people had been miraculously brought into their promised possession, and were dignified and blessed with all the arrangements and privileges of the Mosaic code, sitting under their own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make them afraid, God gave them the promise of the Messiah. 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto Him ye shall hearken.' It was the present privilege of the

Israelite, to take part in the worship of God, to lift up his hands and heart to God, with the feeling and in the attitude of holy expectation, while the incense was ascending on high, that he might obtain the answer of peace, and that his soul might be filled with the assurance, that God accepted the sacrifice for sin, and turned aside the fierceness of His wrath. To the promise of the Messiah, however, they continually looked forward, and they were taught that the duties and privileges of their dispensation were rich in exact proportion as they could connect them with His coming and work, could go beyond the ordinances of the then present day and apprehend the purposes of the Divine mind. True there were costly sacrifices and a well-ordered priesthood; true there was, in connection with all these things when properly understood, a present and immediate influence. A man who could discern the priesthood and prevailing intercession of the Messiah, in the echoes softly falling upon his ear from the holiest place, and in the supplications which were offered for him before God, would perceive in all these things the shadowing forth of Him who, in the end of the times, was to be the great sacrifice for sin. We are taught by our Lord, that 'the least in the kingdom of God,' that is, in the dispensation which He came into the world to introduce, was greater than John the Baptist, while *he* was greater than the prophets who had lived before him. The enjoyments, privileges, and duties of the Christian dispensation are vastly superior to those of the Mosaic; because under it there is more of spirituality and power; and especially because Christ is come, who,

while He was only the Object of expectation to the Jew, is made known to the Christian as his God and Saviour. The Lord Jesus has risen indeed, and manifests Himself to His people in the plenitude of His power and mercy. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; He, too, has 'ascended on high,' and 'led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.' The great duty of the Christian is to live in accordance with those gospel instructions in which Christ has confirmed and enlarged the Mosaic covenant; to live in the enjoyment, and under the influence, of that Christian worship which is so vastly superior to the service of the Jews in their temple. But our Lord taught His disciples that there was *the promise* of their dispensation; that there was something to which they were to look forward, as much grander and better than His own personal presence, as that was grander and better than the ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation. This was, emphatically, *the Promise*; and just as the success of the Jewish worshipper depended upon his realising the Messiah in all his approaches to God, so our success depends upon our realising the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit, '*the promise of the Father.*' Many are the reasons which might be urged to show that we are living in the *last* times, and that after this there is to be no other dispensation of grace,—no advancement upon our dispensation, as ours is an advancement upon that of the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as that was an advancement upon the Mosaic economy. Perhaps the strongest argument is the absence of any promise except the promise of the

end. There is nothing in the future for which the prayers of the faithful can be addressed to God, but the accomplishment of His great purpose,—the final winding up of that great scene, when there shall be given to Christ a grand and redeemed world. The promise given to us, then, is the promise of the Holy Ghost, the promise contained in the prophecy of Joel, and repeated by St Peter in the words before us.

In addressing you on this promise I would notice, first, its *nature*, and, secondly, its *extent*.

I. As to its *nature*. The promise implies that the Holy Ghost should be given for the twofold preparation of the teacher and the hearer.

1. First, for the official qualification of the teacher. The words of the prediction suggest the exclusive right and power of Divine selection. ‘I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy.’ This selection includes teachers of different grades in society and of both sexes. And for their special qualification the influence of the Holy Ghost is absolutely necessary. This necessity is recognised in all evangelical Churches. I do not know any that do not make it a part of their ordination service, to ask the applicant, in these or similar words, Do you trust that you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministry? This is put before the candidate in one

or other mode of expression : and it is universally recognised, that whatever else a man may possess, personal influence, talent, power, wealth, or learning, he *must* possess this qualification of the Holy Ghost, or he is not fit for the great office which he seeks. This necessity was taught by our Lord to His disciples, more strongly than it could have been taught by any other. 'Tarry ye,' He said to them, 'in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.' According to human judgment there was every reason why they should *not* tarry. It appeared to be an unnecessary and an exceedingly undesirable delay. Unnecessary, because they had already had a considerable training for their work. They had been called of God with special reference to their natural qualifications and powers. For three years and a half they had been constantly in the company of Christ, and under His holy teaching and influence. They were instructed in all the doctrines of the gospel : they had had the privilege of hearing His own explanations of the parables which He addressed to the people ; for 'when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.' Their jealousy and striving for the mastery had been checked and restrained ; they were already invested with miraculous powers, to wage successful war against evil spirits, and to cure all human infirmities and diseases. They had witnessed the death of the Lord Jesus, had become ashamed of their temporary desertion of Him, and were now more firmly attached to Him than ever. They had been, during these forty mysterious days, in the solemnity of both worlds, and remembered the

power of them. Well, if the men themselves were thus qualified, as no human teaching could qualify them, there were other strong reasons why they should *not* tarry. There was a monstrous tale industriously circulated in opposition to the great fact of our Lord's resurrection; that His disciples had stolen the body away from the sepulchre while the soldiers slept. The multitudes who had been assembled at the Pentecost were going away; many of them had already gone, and carried these vague rumours into the remote parts of Judæa. It became of the utmost importance that the true statement should be declared, that there should be no unnecessary delay; and yet our Lord charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to 'wait for the promise of the Father.' They did so; for without it they would not have been properly qualified for the exercise of their ministry. The gifts which they were to receive in order to this qualification were such as could not be obtained from any other source.

The Spirit was to give them correct views of the truth. 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' These right views are necessary to preserve men from heresy. It has been said that heresy is not of much consequence, that a large amount of personal goodness may co-exist with a large amount of speculative error. True it is that when a man is sincerely desirous of serving God, the Judge of all the earth will deal mercifully and graciously with him: but we are now speaking of religious teachers, in reference to their fitness for carrying out the great purposes of Christ. Heresy is at once a cause and an effect of

religious decline. You have no revival of pure spiritual religion recorded in the history of the Christian Church, which is not connected with the revival of Scriptural truth. We might go back to Apostolic times, and follow the history of the Church, through the reformation in Germany and elsewhere, down to our own days. Luther found the Bible in the Library of Erfurth, and with its truth shook the throne and power of the Pope. Look at the revival in the times of Wesley and Whitfield, and the more recent ones in Scotland, Ireland, and America, and you will find that these revivals stand connected with faith in the revived truth of Holy Scripture. 'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.' The Word of God comes out with clearness and power; and heresy recedes before it. The truth of God is unbound, and allowed to go forth and win its way; and men are led more distinctly to see right from wrong, and to distinguish truth from error. The great doctrine of Justification by faith, and of the Sanctification of believers by the power of the Holy Ghost, drove away the figment of transubstantiation, and exposed the immorality of indulgences, and all the mass of Popish error.

Something more, however, is necessary than to be saved from heresy. The teacher must have spiritual views and feelings in relation to the Word of God; views and feelings such as those suggested by the expressions, 'the lively Word,' 'the lively Oracles,' 'the unction of the Holy One.' A man must not speak merely in a way free from inaccuracy and error; but his words must be clothed with energy and power,—power breathed by the Holy Ghost, so

that wherever they come they may communicate that power and influence by which they have been inspired. Then there is the qualification of the human affections; a yearning for souls, which will not let the preacher rest unless souls are brought to God. This does not come along with the office; it is not the result of human teaching or preparation. It is an earnest instinct of the soul of the spiritual teacher, inwrought, inbred; and where this feeling exists, the preacher cannot be thoroughly happy and at ease, unless men are saved. You may give him a quiet Church, and one which stands high in the world's estimation; but he feels that if good is not done, if souls are not saved, the great object of his mission is not accomplished. The influence of the Holy Ghost is necessary, too, for the resistance of secondary motives. No class of men in the world is so liable to the influence of these secondary motives as the Christian minister. The world, the devil, and even the Church, are everlastingly trying to poison his mind with these unworthy suggestions, to lead him to court popularity, and to indulge vanity and spiritual pride. It is difficult for a man possessed of any ability to be unconscious of it, and to resist the temptation to be vain on that account. Then bigotry is very difficult to avoid. If we have a deep conviction of the truth of our creed and system, it is difficult not to regard the men by whom our views are opposed with some want of charity, not to say with positive enmity. The Holy Ghost is necessary to guard us against these evils; as well as to supply those qualifications without which even the Apostles of our Lord, taught by Jesus Christ Himself, living

in His company, breathing the same atmosphere, would not have been fit for the Christian ministry; so that they were charged to wait, until they should be endued with this 'power from on high.'

2. Again, if there are operations to be performed in the case of the teacher, which only the Holy Ghost can perform, it is equally true that the great work which is to be effected in the heart of the hearer, in order that he should derive the full advantage of this spiritual teaching, can only be wrought by the Holy Ghost. 'When He' (the Holy Ghost) 'is come, he shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness,' or justification, 'and of judgment.' You may get a man to see and acknowledge that he is a sinner, as long as you will let him make the acknowledgment in company with the world of sinners; but conviction of sin, which separates a man from the rest of mankind, and leads him to feel that he is the chief of sinners, and is in danger of eternal damnation, is the work of the Holy Ghost, and can be wrought in the heart by no other power. Then look at all the rest. Who is it that bears witness to the fact of the sinner's pardon and adoption into the family of God? Who is it that, when the convicted sinner kneels before God the Father, and beholds in Him the angry Judge, and when he knows not how to pray or what to pray for,—who is it that 'makes intercession for him with groanings which cannot be uttered?' Who is it that inspires that faith, that almost dying hope? Who is it that sets Christ before him in His wondrous crucifixion, so as to enable him, for the first time, to see, in a man-

ner he never saw before, that Christ died for him? And who is it that gives him the power and energy of that faith which enables him to cast himself on the atonement? Who bears joyful testimony to him that his reconciliation with God has been effected? Who, but the Spirit that giveth life? God sends forth 'the Spirit of His Son into' our 'hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Look at the case of the blind man. This man is a sinner, said the Pharisees, or He would not have healed you on the Sabbath day. What did He do? Tell us. 'He made clay and anointed my eyes, and I see.' That which would have blinded a man who could see, was to rub clay on his eyes; but it was necessary that Christ should show that this healing was not the result of mere human agency, but of Divine power; and now the man could joyfully affirm, 'I was blind, and now I see.' We may be greatly in the dark as to the precise mode and process of the Spirit's operation; but the Spirit will not leave us in the dark in reference to the grand result. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.' There is the past:—what shall we do for the future? How shall we stem this evil of sin? The Spirit regenerates, cleanses the heart, while He washes away the guilt and stain of former sinfulness; He creates all things new, and carries on the great work of our sanctification to the entire extinction of sin. And this goes on from day to day, fitting us more fully for God, and making us more and more like Him. This progressive holiness, indeed, shall go on till we pass out of time into

eternity, and then we shall still advance in wisdom, love, conformity, and enjoyment, so long as God and eternity endure.

In addition to these direct influences of the Holy Ghost, there are two which may be called collateral,—Consolation and Guidance. The Spirit is spoken of as ‘the Comforter.’ He delights in this designation and in the exercise of this office. It is His ‘to bind up the broken-hearted,’ ‘to comfort all that mourn,’ pouring consolation into the wounded spirit, standing by us in the time of worldly loss, of mental anxiety, of bodily pain, and giving us peace, which is all the more precious, because it is unconnected with merely material things. Thus are we made to feel our association with a higher and holier power; and we hear the Master say in our deepest distress, ‘I will not leave you comfortless,’ ‘I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.’ Then as to Guidance. The Word of God is sufficiently plain and definite as to its principles, and sufficiently minute as to the details in which those principles are to be carried out, to direct us on all ordinary occasions; and where, indeed, the Scriptures are definite and intelligible, it is dangerous for us to seek any other direction. But there have been cases in the lives of some of us, and there may be in the lives of others, in which darkness and perplexity surround our path, in which, with the most sincere and earnest desire to know and do what is right, we cannot distinctly see our way,—such cases as the Apostle refers to when he says, ‘If in anything ye be otherwise minded’ (con-

trariwise minded) 'God shall reveal even this unto you.' The mind now thinks that *this* is right, now *that*; it is uncertain and vacillating. In these cases the principles of the Divine Word, and the minute application of those principles, have alike failed to give the precise information which the servant of God needs; then, 'if he lack wisdom, let him ask of God,' and the Spirit of truth 'shall guide him into all truth.' It is one of the grand instincts of our nature, and no mean argument for the immortality of the soul, that man thirsts for direct communication with the world of spirits. He has even imagined that he could obtain infallible direction, to guide his own conduct, and to foretell his own destiny, by some appeal to them; and for this purpose he has resorted to ceremonies, sometimes the most ridiculous, sometimes the most awful, which the mind of man can devise. He has anxiously watched the flight of birds; he has marked the curling smoke of his sacrifice; he has gazed upon the stars in their mazy dance, and listened till he almost heard the music of the spheres. Alas for all such devices and vain imaginations! Man has been deluded, but never directed, by them. The Holy Ghost is the only realisation of oracular guidance, and if we come to Him in our perplexity He will guide us. If 'in all our ways we acknowledge Him, He will direct our paths.'

II. We have to consider the *extent* of this promise. 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'

It is 'to you.' All piety is out of place, if it be not, first of all, practised at home. Your own salvation is more important to you than that of any one else. Suppose you should do much good and at last be lost; it would increase, not mitigate, your distress, to see from the depths of your own misery the blessed results of your labours. 'To you is the word of this salvation sent.' The man who gives himself no time to read, no time to pray, no time to cultivate his own soul, is not acting wisely. Your own personal salvation is the most important consideration. Next to yourselves, the promise is 'to your children,' and they should claim your next most earnest attention. The man who is constantly devoting himself to the salvation of others, and taking no notice of his own family, is inverting the order of things. I have known some persons get up early on the Sunday morning, and go on till late at night, with a constant succession of public duties and services, while their own children were utterly neglected, not a single half-hour being devoted to catechising and instructing them. This is a monstrous evil. Have you sought your own salvation? Are you yourselves made partakers of this promise? Then next look well to your children.

Then the promise is 'to them that are afar off,'—afar off in every sense of the word. There are those who are afar off morally, at a great moral distance, far from God and from righteousness. Yes; the promise is to them; take it to them, try to cheer and enlighten the dark and benighted. It may be said, They are hopeless and lost;

so perhaps our indolence would say; but, though they are far off, they are not lost. Many of them may be brought nigh to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The promise is to them who are afar off geographically, at the utmost bounds of the habitable world; at a great distance from God's Church and ordinances, far away in the wilderness. The voice of God's mercy and invitation has reached even unto them. This Holy Book is this day read in above one hundred and forty languages. The Lord hasten the time when there shall be no tongue in which one man can speak to his fellow, in which he cannot speak to him in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth! The promise is to them who are afar off chronologically. Twenty-six centuries have passed since it was proclaimed by Joel; and eighteen centuries since it was fulfilled, and re-proclaimed amidst the wonders of Pentecost; but yet it is free, gloriously free, to all, 'even to as many as the Lord our God shall call,' by any means, by His Word, His judgments, His Spirit. Where the call of God is, there is the power of God. I do not want to separate God's blessed election from His holy calling. I want to unite them. Many of you have been called a thousand times, and with every such call comes God's solemn election, and your solemn responsibility. O 'make your calling and election sure.' You may resist it; you may 'reject the counsel of God against yourselves;' but the Holy Spirit is there, even though you grieve Him, and strive against Him; He is there, in His invisible but mighty energy, to carry gracious influences to the consciences and

hearts of men. O pray for the fulfilment of this promise of the Father! Seek to bring yourselves, and your children, and even all that are afar off, more directly under the influence of this blessed Spirit, until He shall have accomplished in you 'all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power!'

VII.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED, THE POWER AND
THE WISDOM OF GOD.

FOR THE JEWS REQUIRE A SIGN, AND THE GREEKS SEEK AFTER WISDOM: BUT WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED, UNTO THE JEWS A STUMBLINGBLOCK, AND UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS; BUT UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALLED, BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS, CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD.—1 CORINTHIANS i. 22—24.

It has ever been acknowledged, even by those who reject Christianity as an evangelical and spiritual system, that it contains the best code of morals with which the world has ever been favoured, together with a pure and beautiful system of worship, infinitely superior to any of the superstitious forms, to which men have, at one period or another, devoted themselves. Hence, as a scheme of morals and of worship, Christianity occupies the very first place among the plans which have been propounded for improving and blessing mankind. We certainly should not reject this praise given to Christianity, and we should not ourselves be insensible to these views of its value and importance; but we should ever be upon our guard lest we should suppose its chief praise, its principal value, to be found in these considerations,—lest we should spend that admiration upon the beautifully-wrought casket which

pleasure, had been accompanied by miracles. Every department of nature, insects, reptiles, the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, things animate and inanimate, had all been compelled, under miraculous power, to bear their testimony to their universal subjection to the God of Israel. The rock had flowed out in a stream of water; the water had been made to stand up as a rock; all the laws of nature had been varied and subjected to His will, to show that He had power both in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath. It was not, therefore, astonishing, that they should desire these signs; and they were justified in doing so. But their fault was, not that they sought a sign simply, but that when Jesus Christ had wrought greater and more numerous miracles than Moses, or than all the prophets put together, they still continued to clamour for more. 'What sign showest Thou?' It would seem, also, that not only was a multitude of miracles sought by them, but that some peculiar description of miracle was required. They 'desired Him that He would show them a sign from heaven.' All the signs which Jesus Christ had yet shown them had been signs on earth. He had exerted His power upon men, and upon natural objects; He had multiplied the loaves and fishes; all these things had been done on earth, within the range of human vision; but they wanted a sign from heaven. He could have called for twelve legions of angels to appear in all the pomp and array of war; it would have been easy for Him to have made manifest the multitude who were in constant attendance on Him; as it was easy for the prophet to make evident to

himself and his servant the hosts of angels surrounding the city of Dothan. It was not possible, however, according to the plan and arrangement of Jesus Christ, that miracles of this merely ostentatious class should be performed. All the miracles of our Lord were of the nature of preaching; they were designed to give some information as to gospel truths, some illustration of gospel principles, some authentication of gospel authority: and they must all stand connected with His great purpose to save the souls of men. Everything was done which was calculated to promote the accomplishment of His great work; but nothing beyond that; nothing for mere show, or to satisfy idle and unreasonable curiosity. He came to fulfil all things which were written by the prophets concerning Him. The miracles of our Lord, if they are merely regarded as designed to alleviate human suffering, amount practically to nothing. They did not extend far enough in this way. They did not extend to the generations which preceded His coming, nor to the generations which followed Him. They were confined to a very limited space, and were very few as compared with the great mass of sufferers. There were ten lepers healed on one occasion; one blind man's eyes were opened here, and another's yonder; enough for the manifestation of His power; enough for the illustration of the great spiritual principles which He came into the world to establish. These miracles were shown to the Jews in sufficient number for these purposes, but they were not satisfied—not gratified, I should rather say—by the mere display of the gorgeous or wonderful.

The Greeks, too, complained that Christianity was not sustained by the evidence which they desired; but while the objections of both Jews and Greeks were substantially the same, the forms in which they were presented were essentially different. The Greeks despised miracles and the men who sought them. It was a common proverb among them, *θαύματα μώροις*, 'Wonders are for fools: 'let those who have no intellect be led by their eyes and ears, let them be taken by wonders and shows; we want wisdom. They had been accustomed to listen to the harangues of their philosophers. The various systems which they had been taught to adopt had been presented to them in the pomp and parade of human learning. They were proud of their intellect, and looked upon the Jews with contempt, because their political and religious institutions had been built up and sustained upon the evidence of miracles. *They* sought for wisdom: few of them, comparatively, would be the hearers of the Apostles, and they who did hear them went away calling the preachers babblers, and their preaching foolishness. Very few indeed of the Greeks believed; the great majority of them were not prepared to receive doctrines set before them without any of the usual accompaniments of human wisdom.

Again, both the Jews and the Greeks objected to Christianity on the ground of the poverty and suffering of its Founder. It was this poverty and suffering which formed the great scandal and reproach of our religion in the estimate of the Jews. When Jesus fed the multitudes and called Lazarus from the grave, the multitudes were anxious to

take Him by force and make Him a king; but when they saw Him buffeted and reproached, they forsook Him and fled. About one hundred years later Trypho the Jew, in arguing against Christ, asks his countrymen, Would you believe in a man who was crucified? Three hundred years after this time the same objection existed in the minds of the Jews, as Lactantius tells us: and the reproach first uttered by the enemies of Christ at the foot of the cross, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save,' continued, and to this day continues, to be the great bar to the faith and conversion of the Jews. The Greeks had the same objection to Christ. All their own deities, if we were to believe the fables of their poets, and the statements even of their philosophers, had exercised some authority and power, and had inflicted summary punishment on the despisers of their worship. Jupiter had his thunder; and even the besotted Bacchus had taken vengeance on those who had exposed and ridiculed his drunken riots. Was it to be supposed that they would set aside such deities to worship a despised Nazarene, who had submitted to be bound, and scourged, and crucified, without working a miracle in His own defence? It continued to be for centuries a common practice to introduce a Christian upon their stage, always of course representing him as an object of contempt and reproach. It was a standing joke, that these Christians believed in a crucified man. One of them says, that they who believe in a man who has been crucified, and in the infamous wood of the cross, rely upon that which they ought to hang upon. For they very soon con-

founded the worship of the cross and the Crucified ; —and it is difficult to say whether they were not encouraged to do this by the example of the Christians themselves, who had adopted the practice of worshipping the crucifix, until the wood of the cross was supposed to possess Divine power. Athanasius says, ‘The Greeks set up a broad laugh at us, because we esteem nothing more highly than Him who was crucified, and the cross on which He died.’ And from that day to this, the objection has been taken, that men should believe in and worship One who was crucified.

I stated, at the commencement of these remarks, that the objections *now* taken to Christianity are identical with those which were taken in earlier times. At the first, this statement may appear to be one which could be easily controverted: but it may be fully sustained. It is, indeed, very easy to establish the truth, that all who have not yet devoted themselves to the service of God are either Jews or Greeks,—that is to say, that the reasons why they have not embraced Christ, and given themselves to His service, are just the reasons which were urged by Jews and Greeks in ancient times. They try to convince themselves that there is not sufficient evidence, while, in fact, their lives have set the gospel *against them*. No man can succeed in doing this who will take the Sacred Scriptures and read the miracles of Christ performed in the presence of hundreds of people. No man who will study our Lord’s great miracle, the miracle of His own resurrection, can doubt that the Holy Scriptures present sufficient evidence of the truth of

Christianity. We may divide the unconverted members of this congregation into one or other of these classes. 'The Jews require a sign.' We have heard—some persons may say—of men who have had remarkable dreams or visions, who have been startled into a consideration of themselves and their position by some unusual manifestation, and have had some reasonable excuse for giving themselves to God, have had a reason for doing so which flattered their pride, and which justified them to themselves and their neighbours. If God would come to me in some of these modes in which He has come to other people, I could be convinced and saved; but being without any apparent reason or cause that I should do to-day what I did not do yesterday, this makes my turning to God a matter of difficulty. The Jews required a sign; and of them it was said, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' Well, then, the Greeks sought after wisdom. They were ready to say, and so are some now, We want a system set forth with a great deal of eloquence, human power, and varied learning, something which is attended with the parade and majesty of worldly dignity; we will run with the multitude, whether it be to do good or to do evil; but we are not prepared to receive this system of foolishness, to come down from our individual dignity and exaltation, to give up all idea of the possibility of salvation by our own wisdom and our own efforts, to acknowledge our entire dependence upon God, to receive Christ and Him crucified, though foolishness in the eyes of the wise men of this world, such foolishness

We are not, then, to regard the sufferings of Jesus Christ as a voluntary manifestation of unnecessary benevolence, as something which He did, but which He need not have done; as a mode by which He accomplished a great purpose, but which could have been accomplished in some other way. We must never entertain this idea. Nothing short of the death of the cross, endured by the Incarnate Son of God, could have made atonement for us.

3. Thirdly, the preaching of Christ and Him crucified implies the declaration of the *design* of His sufferings. Take the two ideas of holiness and heaven, revealed by Christ in connection with His suffering, and not previously so fully revealed even to the Jews. That life and immortality were known to exist, and were spoken of by the writers and prophets of the Old Testament, is beyond question. There is Job's magnificent speech which we have incorporated with our form of Christian burial; and many other passages might be quoted in which, with more or less distinctness, the great doctrine of immortality is revealed or evidently implied. But there was *darkness* over all; great mist, great uncertainty. The veil was only withdrawn by Christ. Life and immortality previously existed and were known to exist, but they were only brought to *light* by the gospel. The Jews were led to expect something of an earthly Canaan rather than the pure and spiritual enjoyment of the heaven of God. Then, as to holiness. This was a new revelation of the design of the sufferings of Christ. The idea of holiness is not found in the writings of either ancient or modern moralists. Their notion may be pre-

sented in this form: You must take man as he is; you will find him a strange being, compounded of appetites and passions, powerfully wrought upon by external, and in many instances by hidden and unknown, influences, affected by changes of atmosphere and of bodily health, tossed to and fro by many and varied causes. You must take this being as he is; there is a great mass of good in him, and no little evil. You must counteract the one by the other. Try to raise up that which is low, and to supply what is defective; try to repress that which is exuberant and excessive; try to make the best you can of him. That is the idea of heathen morality. But it is altogether a new idea that 'old things' should 'pass away, and all things become new;' that man should be 'born again,' being sanctified by 'the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' This is altogether a new idea. The design of Jesus Christ was not merely to put away sin, not merely to obtain pardon for the sinner, glorious and valuable as that blessing is, but it included the renewal and sanctification of his nature, the cleansing him from all sin, that he might rise in the image of God, and thus be made a partaker of the Divine nature. And if holiness was a new idea, so was heaven also. Immortality implies continued existence in a state of happiness. The idea of a heaven of *holiness*, where the soul should bask in the blaze of God's power and the effulgence of His glory, uncontaminated, unalloyed, where there should be no want, no jealousy, no passions of a depraved and degraded nature, was a new notion. Heaven, as described to us in the gospel, where

men shall praise God in pure and unalloyed worship, where they shall have the companionship of angels, and be admitted to intimate fellowship with God, is an idea revealed to us only in the gospel, and is worthy of the life and death of Christ. It was worth while for Him to become incarnate, to be reproached and trampled upon, for the design was mighty; and he who preaches Christ and Him crucified should not only preach the great fact, but should follow the Saviour in His humiliation, and see Him in the darkness and sufferings of His agony; and then see man renewed in the image of God, and ultimately admitted to the heaven of eternal rest.

III. Although this preaching of Christ and Him crucified did not meet the taste of the fastidious Greeks, by such a display of wisdom as they required; and although it did not meet the expectations of the wonder-loving Jews, by such displays of power as they sought; yet nevertheless it afforded *the brightest displays of the attributes of God*, and especially of those two attributes, in which it was supposed to be deficient. It was deficient in wisdom, in the estimation of the Greeks; deficient in power, in the estimation of the Jews. And yet the doctrine of Christ crucified is pre-eminently *the wisdom of God and the power of God* 'unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks.'

This calling does not refer to any peculiar and special election; but the term is to be understood as it is used by the Apostle in the earlier part of this chapter, where he addresses those 'that are sancti-

fied in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.' We are called by the admonitions which are given to us in the Word of God, by the influence of His grace resting upon our hearts, by the afflictions with which, from time to time, we are visited, and by the numerous blessings which, in His gracious providence, He bestows upon us. These blessings and admonitions indicate His Divine goodness toward us, His yearnings that we may be saved, and the exercise of His power in order to our salvation. Wherever His word is spoken, wherever the children of men listen to it, or wherever they are impressed with the design of any of these dispensations of mercy, there is the wisdom and the power of God. It is difficult for us to make comparisons between the various exercises of omnipotent power. We cannot understand how one thing should be easier than another to God, who possesses all power, and can accomplish all His purposes, by the word of His mouth, or the mere volition of His will. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. There does not appear to be any reason why it should call forth a mightier exercise of Divine power to create a greater than it does to create a lesser creature to move upon the face of the earth, or even the brightest of the spiritual intelligences which throned the gate of heaven. These all were called into existence by a power which knows no weariness, a power which cannot be overtaxed by the magnitude of its undertaking, or the difficulty of the work performed. All things are done with the majesty of the

Divine power ; with the repose, and self-confidence, and dignity which peculiarly belong to God. We cannot, therefore, make a comparison with anything like accuracy, because the limits of the power actually put forth cannot be accurately defined. I do think, however, that it is possible for us to perceive, that there is a wide difference between the exercise of power put forth upon an unyielding material, and a power put forth where no opposition previously existed. The command of God which launched forth into space this world of ours met with no opposing force. The morning stars rejoiced in the work of His hands, and sang together for joy ; and man, the chief of the works of God, so soon as he became conscious of his own existence, and felt the full tide of his bliss, fully concurred in the wisdom and beneficence of the whole arrangement. But look upon man as a fallen creature, when he had sinned against God. Then the whole stress of Satanic agency had to be met and counteracted ; and the work of the Spirit in his renewal and salvation had to be put forth upon materials the most obstinate and resisting. It had to encounter the opposition and enmity of the carnal mind against God ; the law in our members ' warring against the law of the mind,' and leading us, as far as our own power is concerned, to act in direct opposition to the will of God. Thus we see that there is a mightier effort put forth in the redemption of man than in his creation. It is a far easier thing to build monuments of human labour and skill than it is to change the principles of the human mind, and to alter the current and bias of the tastes and affec-

tions of men. And if there is this difference, which we can easily discern, which makes action upon perishable matter easier than upon the mind of man, so we see that the display of Divine power exerted on the soul of man, for its redemption and regeneration, is greater than that manifested in the creation of a world.

‘Twas great to speak a world from nought,
’Twas greater to redeem.’

But if this system of salvation is manifestly and pre-eminently the *power* of God, so also is it the brightest display of His *wisdom*. If the power put forth herein was greater than any other display of power, so this manifestation of the wisdom of God is greater than all other evidences of His wisdom which the world has yet witnessed. Wisdom has been described as the knowledge of the best end to be secured, and of the best means by which that end is to be accomplished. This definition may not be perfectly full and correct; but it is quite sufficient for our present purpose. Looking then at man, what is the great end which wisdom would suggest to us to seek? Look at him in his wants, his necessities, his dangers; look at him as a fallen and corrupt being; look at him as certainly hastening to death, and as certainly hastening to the judgment-seat, where the final sentence will be pronounced, from which there is no appeal; look at him as an heir of immortality, and that, an immortality of certain happiness or misery;—what is the great end to be pursued in reference to such a being? Would you say that it is the attainment of honour, or the

accumulation of wealth? Is he the wisest man who devotes himself studiously to pleasure, who grasps the passing moment as it flies, and attempts to crowd into it as much gratification as it will possibly admit? The one simple answer to all this is,—This meets only a very small part of the case: very limited, indeed, will be your success, even if you should succeed to the fullest possible extent, as far as this world is concerned. Threescore years and ten, or at best fourscore years, will bring you to an end of this joy, and what will you do for the unmeasured ages which have yet to come? All these worldly schemes will have failed. Earthly wealth is perishable; in many instances, it takes to itself wings and flies away; but if it should remain with its possessor until his decease, the obvious but forcible declaration of Scripture, that ‘we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out,’ shows that there must then be a separation between the man and his possessions, except as he has used them to the glory of God, and thus ‘laid up treasure in heaven.’ Anything, then, which is connected with the present life, and the present life *only*, fails in its claim to be considered as the best end at which man should aim. This life is but a speck in man’s being, a shadow that declineth, ‘a dream when one awaketh.’ The great end which true wisdom would suggest to us to aim at, is that which will give us the largest amount of happiness, the most free from dross, from contamination, and alloy. All this points beyond the grave; for a thousand things in this world interfere with the purest earthly enjoyments. The

happiness of this world is very changing, and our lives themselves are soon brought to a termination. We are hastening to the grave in which there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device. The happiness of eternity is realised in that world, 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' That endless duration, in comparison with which our present life is even as a span long, is before us, and to secure happiness in this is the great end of human existence. The chief object which we should propose to ourselves is to obtain salvation,—to have the sense of the Divine displeasure taken away, and to obtain in its stead the assurance of the Divine acceptance and favour, so as to be enabled to pass through this world, looking forward with calm confidence and delight to the heavenly inheritance which 'the Lord, the righteous Judge,' shall give in that day to 'all them that love His appearing.' Wisdom points out, secondly, the best means by which this end can be secured. The preaching of Christ and Him crucified is not only the best, but the only, means by which this great purpose can be accomplished. Among the mysteries which have impressed the minds of men in connection with the gospel, one which has perhaps produced as much perplexity as any other, is the mystery, that for four thousand years of the world's existence this gospel was not proclaimed. How was it, it is sometimes asked, that the world was left in this uncertainty so long? The answer to this represents, upon a much larger scale, the history of religion in the case of an individual. In the case of every man you will find, that there is no disposition to receive Christ, to

yield to His teaching, to be saved by His method of salvation, till he has tried some of his own schemes; that the experience of others is of but little service to him, and that it is only when he finds that he cannot accomplish his own salvation by his good works, by such renunciation of sin, in its glaring and obtrusive forms, as he may be capable of,—it is only when a man discovers his utter weakness, and that he has no way of escape, that he is willing to yield himself to God, and to be saved in the way which God points out. The feeling expressed by the haughty Syrian, ‘Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel? May not I wash in them, and be clean?’ indicates the self-sufficiency of man and his reluctance to accept the Divine plan. So we are told that Christ came ‘in the fulness of time.’ What may be the full meaning of this phrase we have no time to inquire; but doubtless one sentiment which it suggests is, that it was necessary that the world should be permitted to try all its varied schemes, and that the utter futility of these schemes should be established beyond all possibility of doubt, before men would be willing to receive that wisdom and that salvation which were to be offered to them in Christ. Thus not only was there the fulness of time in the filling up of the measure of iniquity, in the completion of some enumeration of years, but especially in this, that there had been the full trial of that worldly experiment, in which the human mind had been permitted to exhaust all its schemes of securing rest and attaining virtue, and was at last brought to the conviction, that all

its attempts to save itself were thoroughly useless and hopeless. www.libtool.com.cn

It is instructive for us to remember that, before the coming of Christ, everything in its turn had been the object of idolatrous worship. The sun, the moon, the stars, and fire, had been adored; from these men had gone down to the worship of human beings, deified heroes, and thence to the worship of four-footed beasts and creeping things, the very leeks and onions in their gardens, and lower still to the worship of demons, devils instead of God. These varied systems had been made the symbols of political government. They had had every possible opportunity furnished to them of universal acceptance. They had been taught in systems of philosophy, and adopted by political governors. Kings with high priests followed these systems of idolatrous worship. And so in every age. Whatever may have been the difficulties of Christianity in securing the sanction of the great and learned, so that 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,' have stood forth as the adherents of this pure and simple system, there never has been great difficulty in allying and associating political dignity, great wealth, and great power, with idolatry, and in using unscrupulous means to patronise and diffuse it. But all these systems were worldly and false. They were tried, and the result of the trial was, that they utterly failed. Not one of them ever succeeded in acquiring the firm belief and confidence of the human heart; not one of them could bring about this reconciliation of the sinner to God. Looking on all

these effete and exploded schemes, the Apostle triumphantly asks, 'Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For *after* that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.'

After that, not *before*. It would not have accomplished its purpose had it been *before*. It required to be *after* the trial and failure of every imagination of the human mind, of everything which man could devise, separate from and in opposition to the simple doctrine of Christ and Him crucified. It was wisdom, then, to devise this great scheme, and to bring it out at the time at which it was brought out; and wisdom infinitely beyond our power to understand or describe. And if this great doctrine is the power of God and the wisdom of God, so the preaching of it is the *grand means* of bringing men to the knowledge and the acceptance of the truth. In the first place, because it shows the true nature of sin, more fearfully and solemnly than it can be shown by any judgment which God can inflict upon the individual sinner. The Sacred Scriptures record the destruction of the old world, the lamentable overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and many instances of God's fearful infliction of wrath upon individuals, families, and nations; but nowhere do we learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin so fully as at the cross of Christ. It was not a light thing which could arm Divine Justice against the Son of the Father's love, which could require the death of Christ, with all the suffering and reproach

that it involved. 'O My Father,' he prayed in Gethsemane, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' It was not possible: the great purpose could not be accomplished without it; and He drank the cup, drank it to the very dregs, and rejoiced when this great suffering was at an end, when He had accomplished the work to which He had so mercifully pledged Himself.

The death of Jesus Christ upon the cross teaches us the great doctrine that God is reconcilable to us. This is a question which must be satisfactorily settled in the human mind, before the second question as to the *mode* of such reconciliation can be fairly entertained. On this question no satisfaction at all was given, or could be given, until the declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ gave us the assurance, that 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,' would 'with Him also freely give us all things.' Men have generally begun with the discussion of the second question, utterly losing sight of the first, How shall we worship God? Will He be pleased with sacrifices or sorrow? The question whether He would be reconciled at all, whether He would accept us on any terms, is a question which the world never settled, but it is settled by the great fact, that He has given His Son for us, and confirmed by the question of the Apostle, 'How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' Upon what principle, when He has given us this brightest evidence of His goodness, can we doubt His design and willingness to give us the less important? The great fact is, that God is reconcilable, there is

some means by which we can draw nigh to Him acceptably, and receive His favour and forgiveness.

As Christ, viewed as the Crucified One, is the brightest evidence of the power and the wisdom of God, so also the death of Jesus furnishes to us a most moving display of His love, and that of the Father, to us. All other manifestations of the love of God are little as compared with this. We do not think enough of the common and ordinary blessings of God; we are not sufficiently impressed with their value, nor with our obligations to Him on account of them. But still, if we could estimate them at their highest value, what are they in comparison with the blessings of redemption? For the Saviour to give us bread to eat, and to redeem us with His own blood, are very different things. To speak an all-creating word, to command deliverance and blessing in any time of need or of distress, and on the other hand to groan, and agonize, and die, are very different things. No comparison can be established between the one and the other. Look upon all the temporal blessings which have ever been conferred upon you; and then look upon the scene in the garden of Gethsemane in which Christ, in His agony, sweat 'great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Look at His suffering on the cross, and ask, Was ever love like His?

Christ the Crucified supplies us with a perfect pattern for our imitation. The world was previously at a loss for a perfect system, and also for a perfect example, of morals. There were two grand defects in the ancient ethical systems; first, that they contained within them no principle of

power; and, secondly, that they had no authority. There was no case of a perfect example, no case in which the principles, imperfect as they were, had ever been carried out. There was no one living man, in whom all the virtues were found, free from the vices which were acknowledged to be defects or imperfections in any character. But Jesus Christ gives us a perfect law, and a perfect example which has the force of a law. Then, these ethical systems had no authority. They were of various forms. Sometimes perfect virtue was set forth as exemplified in the history of one eminent man, as in the *Cyropædia* of Xenophon; sometimes it was embodied in the notion of a perfect commonwealth, as in the *Utopia* of Moore; sometimes it was inculcated in distinct essays or treatises, as in the *Morals* of Seneca: but while we read these valuable and highly-wrought productions, we are constantly met with the question, Who gave these men authority to impose their laws upon me? It is in vain to say that they are more talented than I am, and that their systems are better than any I could make for myself. If the teacher makes no pretensions to Divine authority, and gives no miraculous evidence of its possession, I am responsible for following the convictions of my own mind, imperfect as they may be, rather than the more elaborate theories of another man.

In conclusion, I wish to guard you against entertaining feelings in reference to Christ and Him crucified, which, although they may seem proper to the occasion, yet regard Him merely as a human sufferer; feelings of sympathy, partisanship, indig-

nation, which identify us with His sufferings and distresses, feelings which ought not to be entertained when we contemplate the death of Christ. If I could present to you the death of Christ with graphic power, if I could draw such a picture of His sufferings as should awaken in your minds the deepest interest and most solemn feeling, there would be great danger lest that feeling should be of the improper kind to which I have referred. Look at the cross ; you see the multitudes there, and hear them shout ; and, in a moment, you hear the distant voices of the chief priests, and you ask, What is all this ? And I tell you it is only a poor Galilæan, whom they are torturing to death. You will ask, Why ? What has He done amiss ? and I answer, O, He has done no harm : on the contrary, He was a man of universal benevolence ; He ' went about doing good ; ' He had a tender affection for all sorts of men, especially the Jews ; He healed the sick, He succoured the poor, and, when the ordinary means of help failed, He put forth Divine and miraculous powers to meet the case ; never, in any instance, did He violate law, human or Divine ; and yet they are clamouring for His blood. Your indignation would rise at this representation. But if I could go on, and tell you that this poor and despised Galilæan was your Brother, that He was your Friend, that He had done for you more than had ever been done by any other human being, that your obligations to Him were beyond anything you could imagine, you would be prepared, not only to express feelings of disapprobation, but, if it were possible, to resist so fearful an outrage. There

is a feeling of this kind abroad in Christian congregations against the clamouring Jews, and against the Roman soldiers, who conducted the crucifixion of Christ. 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers,' said the Pharisees, 'we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' So you may say, We would have done something to repress that unseemly shout, something to rebuke the madness of the rebels witnessing the death of their Saviour and their God. This is very much to be questioned. But, even supposing all this, Christ does not want your sympathy; He does not want your pity nor your help; it is too late to attempt to undo the great fact of Christ's crucifixion, to abate the agony, or the shame. The feelings with which we should regard Him should be not pity to Him, but pity to ourselves; not condemnation of those who were actually engaged in that fearful tragedy, but condemnation of ourselves. It is true, He is your Brother and your Friend; but it is just as true, that you have crucified Him. Your voice was not heard in that shout; but your rebellion since has gone to justify those who did crucify Christ, and by your opposition to His Divine law you are His murderers. Every sinner against Christ has placed upon His head that crown of thorns. Your sins have brought down this great necessity for the world's atonement. The guilt of sin is upon mankind at large, and upon you as much as upon those who lived in the time of the incarnation, and who were personally engaged in the death of Christ. That death was endured for us, undertaken on our behalf, that we might come to

God, and obtain pardon and peace. Have pity, then, not on the Saviour, but on yourselves; weep for your own wretched and miserable souls, that required so great a sacrifice, and that could only be redeemed at such a price. If we reject this salvation, there remaineth nothing for us, but 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.' And if Christ the Crucified is pre-eminently 'the power of God, and the wisdom of God,' is it not folly for us to seek, and trust in, any other method of salvation? If we reject this, 'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins;' and if we are not saved by a scheme which is the power and wisdom of God, is it not folly to suppose that a scheme in which there would be less power and less wisdom would meet our case,—that weakness and folly could effect that which power and wisdom could not do? To you is the word of this salvation sent. And there is not one of us here who, if he would sincerely and earnestly give his heart to God, would not find in Christ and Him crucified all he needs of the power and wisdom of God, for his soul's salvation, for the conformity of his nature to the law of God, and for the spiritual preparation which shall fit him for eternity.

VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN TEMPLE.

YE ARE BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER-STONE; IN WHOM ALL THE BUILDING FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER GROWETH UNTO AN HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD: IN WHOM YE ALSO ARE BUILDED TOGETHER FOR AN HABITATION OF GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT.—EPHESIANS ii. 20—22.

God is the source and centre of happiness. Our happiness is in proportion to our nearness to God: in His *immediate* presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore. Distance from Him is misery, and the perfection of misery is in the perfection of that distance; and even the torments of the damned are described as consisting in banishment from His presence, and from the glory of His power. The Apostle describes the state of the unconverted Ephesians as a state of misery, because it was a state of distance from God. 'At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' He describes their present state as one of happiness, because it was a state of nearness and of union with Christ. He represents that the

middle wall of partition is broken down. So long as it existed, it presented an impassable barrier to their union with Him. But now they were 'no more strangers and foreigners.' 'Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh,'—made partakers of the same benefits as fellow-citizens. 'No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens,'—brought nearer still as members of the same family, —'but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' Paul describes them, in the words of the text, as brought into the closest possible contact, as corresponding stones in the same spiritual structure of which Jesus Christ is the foundation and essential corner-stone; and upon Him, and in Him, they are represented as being built. In directing our attention to any building of importance, the first point which engages our notice is the foundation, upon which all the rest depends. Secondly, we watch with interest its progress in beauty and size. Thirdly, we ask what is the purpose for which it is to be built? Who is to occupy it, and what transactions are to take place in it? So, in contemplating the Christian Church, the Apostle presents it to us under the figure of a building,—doubtless with allusion to the temple at Jerusalem. We have, in the first instance, *the firmness and stability of its foundation*. 'Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.' Then *its progressive growth, in the beauty of its parts, and in size and strength*. 'In whom the whole building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.' Then we have *the purpose of its erection,*

—*the glory of its ultimate design.* ‘In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God, through the Spirit.’

I. We have to consider *the firmness and stability of the foundation of this building.* We ‘are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets;’ that is, upon the foundation upon which they built.

We are taught that the faith of the Christian has for its firm and immovable basis, not the opinion of any man, however strongly expressed, or however authoritative, but the concurrent testimony of the Apostles and Prophets; not as mere men, but as inspired men, holy men, who wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Spirit of God; whose united and concurrent testimony is Christ, the theme of prophetic and apostolic teaching, who is the essential foundation—the corner-stone at the foundation. On Him the great stress and strength of the building lie. He unites in Himself, like a corner-stone, the two walls of the building,—the two great national distinctions of mankind, the Jews and the Gentiles, of whom this Church is to be built. He unites in Himself the ministerial offices of the two dispensations, the Prophet and High Priest of the Old Testament, and the Messiah and Apostle of the New. He unites in Himself the moral and religious obligations of the two dispensations: of the law and the prophets, which He came not to destroy; and of His gospel, which was to perpetuate and to fulfil them. The truth contained in this first part of the text is this: that if

you take away Christ, who is the foundation-stone of the great spiritual edifice,—the great Christian system, of which the Christian Church is but the embodiment,—if you take away Christ, you produce upon that system much the same effect as you would produce upon any great building if you were to take away its foundation and corner-stone. It matters not how skilfully you had built it, nor how beautiful its design and its ‘order,’ the whole would crumble into a mass of undistinguishable, dangerous, and useless ruins. And when I say, if you take away Christ, I mean if you take Him away in that view in which He is presented to us in the Sacred Scriptures, and as He is held to be presented by all the orthodox Churches; not merely as a Teacher sent from God, but in His true and essential Divinity, in His mediatorial purpose, in His great atonement, in His converting and sanctifying power. Not as the Administrator of a mere system,—He is that; not merely so, but in His character as truly God. It matters not how complimentary are the terms in which Jesus Christ is presented to us, if He is affirmed to be anything less than the Most High. There is something, indeed, peculiarly offensive in the complimentary character of the terms in which some men would represent Christ as something less than Divine. Of all betrayals of the Son of man, the most abominable and fearful is the betrayal with a kiss, under the colour of friendship, to take away His dignity and proper Godhead. When we say, if you take away Christ, we mean if you take Him away in that grand, Divine, evangelical, atoning sense,—that sense which is entertained by the orthodox Christian,—the whole

system of Christianity falls into ruin. There is no longer any religious life. If I were asked what is meant by religion, I think I should give a sufficiently accurate idea of the term if I replied,—that religion consists, primarily, in the acceptance of a certain set of doctrines which men are called upon to believe, and which constitute what they call their creed—doctrines in reference to spiritual and eternal things. Religion consists, secondly, of a certain set of moral obligations which men are called upon to observe, and by which they regulate their daily conduct and walk in the world. Religion consists, in the third place, of a certain set of feelings and affections,—delightful, remorseful, thankful, serious, reverential,—which are indicated in their doctrines, which are implanted within them by the Spirit who dwells and rules in their hearts, and which they are bound to cultivate and improve. This definition of religion is sufficiently correct for our purpose. I say, therefore, if you take away Jesus Christ as the great foundation of the Christian system, you arrive at this result: neither doctrine, nor morals, nor experience, is left.

1. First, *If you take away Christ from the Christian temple, you remove the foundation, and all falls into ruin, for you leave no doctrines.* Christ is the key of all Scriptural interpretation. You have no interpretation of *prophecy* without Christ. A broad division of prophecy may be made,—into that which specially and plainly refers to Him in His own Person and offices, and that which does not seem so plainly and specially to refer to Him. Take away Christ, and you have no interpretation of the *pro-*

phesies which refer to the Messiah. There never yet has appeared in the world a claimant for the Messiahship, who has been able to command anything like *general* respect. I know there have been false Christs and false Gods many, down even to recent times. Every now and then some new prophet has started up, and drawn, perhaps, thousands of foolish people after him; but there has never been anything like a national world-wide acknowledgment of any claim to the Messiahship, but that of our Lord. We may lament that 'blindness in part is happened to Israel,' who at this time are looking out for the Messiah, who, they say, has not yet appeared; but while we lament this, we cannot shut our eyes to the great argument involved in this fact. The Jews, who must be admitted to be correct interpreters of the mere word of their prophecies, learned men, and laborious students of the Sacred Writings,—these tell you He has not yet come, that they are still looking for Him. But you prove that certain events have taken place, which were not to take place till after He came. 'The sceptre' has departed 'from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet.' The Messiah must have come before that time; His coming after that time would not fulfil these prophecies; they would all be falsified if a Christ should appear now. The order of chronology was as important a part of the prophecy as the words themselves. You have this, then: that no one has ever put forth claims to the Messiahship worthy at all to compare, upon any interpretation of prophecy, or any Scriptural ground whatever, with *the* Christ that we put forth, and whom we worship according

to the faith of our fathers. Take Him away, and there does not remain any being in whom these prophecies are even pretended to be fulfilled. Well, then, as to the prophecies which do not seem to refer to Christ on the first view, but which on examination are proved to have—not so directly, but not less certainly—a reference to the Messiah. One of the greatest follies, which leads us into a thousand errors, is the attributing to second causes a place and an influence which should be assigned only to first causes. We see great national, social, and political events taking place, and we attribute to them, as primary causes, great effects which are to be worked out and accomplished in the world. And in this we imagine that the whole result has been secured. But there is a mightier Power before all these, and behind all these; and there are aims and ends which are far beyond all these, to be accomplished. Jesus Christ is the God of providence, the God of grace, to whom all things are committed, by whom all these things are to be regulated and arranged; and if you take Him away, you take away from prophecy the only power by which it can be fulfilled. You take Him away who is ‘the way, the truth, and the life;’ and the bringing in of whose kingdom, and the establishing of whose righteousness, is the great end to be accomplished by all those events which are passing in the world.

As you have no interpretation of prophecy without Christ, so, if you take away Christ, *you have no interpretation of the law.* We are familiar with the circumstances and institution of sacrifice, because we have been accustomed to hear them and read them

from the time we were taught at our mother's knee. But if you take away Christ, you reduce all that law to an aimless and unintelligible mass. A man commits a transgression, what does he do? He goes to the lambs of his flock and takes away a male of the first year, without spot or blemish, in perfect health, in the very spring-time of its life. It has done no harm, and yet he sheds the blood of that lamb, and pours it out like water. He does not even eat it; for in the case of the sacrifices for the heavier transgressions, the whole body was burnt upon the altar, and all ascended in smoke and flame. A mere act of cruelty and of waste, as far as we can understand and interpret it, in the absence of Christ. But admit the great principle that man has sinned against God, and that every sin deserves the penalty of death, that 'the soul that sinneth'—without specifying the quality of the sin—'the soul that sinneth it shall die,' and that 'death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;'—admit, also, that grand and mysterious arrangement of the mercy of God, that the death of One, not the actual transgressor, would be accepted, in God's condescension and mercy, in the stead of the death of him by whom the sin was committed, and still the great principle of the inflexibility of the Divine law be retained, that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin;—admit the principle (and there is not one more important in the whole Scripture of truth), that under every dispensation, every act of acceptable worship—whether in the momentary and silent prayer lifted up to God, or the more lengthened form of the sanctuary worship—that every success-

ful approach to God must recognise the atonement of Christ, under the law of Moses by the constantly repeated sacrifice, under the Christian dispensation by that faith without which it is impossible to please God, and which constantly recognises Christ as newly slain for us;—admit this, I say, and all is plain: take Him away, and all is confused, all is in disorder; and there remains nothing but an intolerable burden, as the Apostle says, ‘which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.’

Need I say anything about the theology of the New Testament? Take away Christ, and you leave absolutely nothing. What did the four Evangelists write about? Take away from them the Saviour, and what do you leave? Nothing. Take Him away from the Epistles, and what remains? Or from that grand Revelation in which He is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and what is left? Some few years ago the Socinians published what they called a ‘New and Improved Version of the New Testament.’ I was distressed to see the entire omission of the passages which spoke to the Divinity of our blessed Lord. The feeling in my mind was one of disgust and regret, to see that offered as a translation which had no right, upon any principle of grammar or language, to be so called. But that feeling of regret was not unmixed, for I own I was inclined to rejoice that this great fact was made patent to the world by their own confession,—that if you are to have a New Testament in which that Saviour is not to be recognised in His highest character, you must make a fresh one, for this one will not answer your purpose.

Any man who sits down to read and interpret this New Testament, must take as his leading principle that Jesus Christ is the Atonement—the Saviour of the world. Take Him away, and this New Testament is indefinite and unintelligible.

2. Secondly, We come to *the moral aspect of Christianity*. Jesus Christ is the foundation of New Testament morality. You must have something more than mere moral precepts. You have these without Christ. I do not mean to say, that any system of ethics framed by ancient or modern writers is to be compared with this great system; but I mean to say, that very decent and very reputable systems have been presented to the world, and they have all failed in mending the world's morals: they have produced no moral effect whatever. The Apostle says: 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain.' That is to say, if Christ be not God; taking the resurrection of Christ as the great evidence of His Divinity. It may have been said in his day: 'Although I do not believe that Christ is truly God, though I do not admit this resurrection that you affirm, yet your preaching is not in vain. It has tamed the ferocity of our laws, and done something for our commercial interests.' But the Apostle spoke by inspiration when he said this, and he knew what he said. There is an order in the Divine arrangements which man cannot invert. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' If you reject Christ as a Saviour, and His system of religious faith in its claim to be a great saving Christian system, then these second-

any things will not be secured unto you. But, leaving this, we still say, if you take away Jesus Christ you leave no morals. 'What do you want for morals?' it may be said. We want a perfect law. 'But,' an objector may say, 'we have that in the New Testament.' Yes, but we want a perfect example, to have the force of law, and a perfect illustration of its practicability. 'Well, but we have that without the Divinity of Jesus Christ,' may be the reply. Then what more do we want? Why, we want the 'power;' without which, although we may admire all the wisdom and Divinity of the New Testament, it is as impracticable as would be the efforts of a man to drag the sun from the heavens. The Apostle has expressed this when he says, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me, for I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It is not because men do not perceive the truth, and perceive it to be good, that they do not follow it. Now what do you want for these morals? Do you want more wisdom, because you think if men were wiser than they are, they would be less vicious? I could find you some of the most detestable specimens of humanity among your most learned men;—men who are wise in counsel, high in rank, profoundly learned in this world's lore. What, then, do we want? We want the 'power.' A man cannot walk as Christ walked, unless there be in him the mind which was in Christ.

‘Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.’ Men do not go to impure fountains for pure water. They admit this principle in ordinary affairs; they must also admit it in spiritual matters. If a man would be a follower of Jesus Christ, he must walk in the way of His commandments. He must do all things through Christ, who ‘strengtheneth’ him; or, in other words, he must be conformed to the image of Christ. The evil nature which dwells within him, and rules and tyrannises over him, and crushes every good sentiment, must be cast out and destroyed. The soul being renewed in righteousness,—the man having been brought by repentance to seek the mercy of God, and by faith to cast himself upon the great atonement, and upon the grace of God, for his present and future salvation,—he then walks in accordance with the precepts and example of Christ.

3. As to the third point, that *if you take away Christ there is no experience*, I shall find no difficulty in proving it in the Methodist Church. Men may understand the theory of religion, but without Christ they can never *feel* it. In your class-meetings and love-feasts you have great variety as to the mode of conversion;—some men have been brought into its enjoyment by a verse of Scripture, some by the advice of a friend, some by a verse of a hymn. But there has always been this invariable attendant on all conversions, that at the moment of conversion there was some manifestation to the believer’s sight or feeling, in some way or other, more clear and vivid than it had ever been before, of Christ and Him crucified, giving to him complete pardon of his

sins. In the thousands of Churches of Christendom, —I care not what their creed is, all are alike to me for this argument,—no man experiences the pardon of his sins without a vivid manifestation of Christ and Him crucified. ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.’ Leave Christ out,—go and praise God, adore Him, magnify Him, speak largely of Him in poetry and in song, look upon the works of His creation, fill your minds as you will with all notions of beauty and grandeur in connection with Him,—it matters nothing, if you exclude Christ in this approach to Him; for you will find all is barred against you. ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.’ There are Churches (so called) that do not recognise the Divine atonement, but they have no life. There are amongst them capital moral preachers; capital lectures they will give you from a scrap of the *Times*, or a bit of a song, or anything else: capital things of that sort,—if anything can be called good which is substituted for that which is Divine. There is everything of religion but the *feeling* of it, and that cannot be got without Christ. So it is as to spiritual experiences in subsequent periods of your Christian history. Comfort, joy, peace! Where do you get these in their richest measure? When you come to Christ with your largest contributions, when you do the greatest things for Him? Your souls know that you have most of the feeling of religion, when you can most fully grasp and comprehend Christ,—when you draw aside the veil of outward things, and *gasp* in Him to live. If there are times when Christ is more precious to you than at others,

those moments are the richest to you. Take away Christ, and you have no experience, and no religion. He is the great foundation, without whom you have no Church, no Christianity.

II. We have now to reflect on *the progressive increase of this building.*

This is to be regarded in two views. There is the increase, in the first place, of *the beauty and compactness of its parts.* 'In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.' If we were to do away with this figurative language, we should read thus :—'Beside this, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.' This is growing in beauty. In Him all the building becomes more fitly framed. This is a very distinct thing from *increase in size*; and yet these two are coincident in the Divine work. I do not mean to say there is no process of edification going on without increase, or increase without the process of edification; but I mean to say that one of these processes does not go on long, successfully and permanently, without the other. Again: I do not mean to say that there are no instances in which God, in His wondrous sovereignty, is found of them who seek Him not, and that He often makes the wilderness to blossom as the rose; that there are no instances in which the times of refreshing come, that produce the greatest results, without any human instrumentality. We do not know, in such

cases, how it is that He sends down the Spirit ; but the spirit of seriousness, of devotion, and revival, is manifest. We ought to thank God for these visitations, when they do come, and pray that they may be abundantly increased. But leaving this out of the question, the ordinary process is that these two things go on concurrently, the beautifying and enlarging of the Church.

I can easily believe that some people, especially if they have been much knocked about in the world, may be very anxious to get into the quiet of peace and rest. I can easily sympathise with that feeling, and understand why there should be a wish to retire into some holy and edifying Church, where the sanctuary-services should be orderly, the means of grace edifying and rich,—where there may be no disturbance, no people coming in and making a noise. I say, I can comprehend why there should be this desire. But it cannot be. The Church of Christ exists for two purposes: it exists for the edification of believers, and for the conversion and gathering in of sinners. You must take it for those two purposes, or you cannot have it for one. It would else be but an ill-formed Church. But, thank God, the attempt has never been made, in any of our Churches, to prevent this. The most orderly of *our* Churches would not be startled from its propriety by the sighing of the penitent, or the groaning of the man who should roar by reason of the disquietude of his soul ; there would soon be an end to all spiritual edification, if we did not let in anxious inquirers, even if such should disturb for a time the order of our services. The Church's or-

dinary process is this :—it becomes languid, members die, some backslide, others remove, the seats are unoccupied, and the deficiencies are not filled up in the class-book. Then some half-dozen earnest people set themselves to pray for a revival of the work of God, and an increase of the members. They pray for a time, as they think, without an answer,—without an answer in form or in kind. But they do not pray without a conviction that their prayer is heard. Let me impress upon you this distinction, that the conviction that your prayer is heard is a different thing to the answer of your prayer. That may be reserved for other times. God may have reason not to answer it just then ; but He will give to you always an unmistakable evidence that your prayer is heard, and you are led to know that your prayer has reached the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. They have that evidence ; yet no answer is given to their prayer. But what is going on in the mean time ? These people are becoming less worldly,—more devoted to God, more deeply impressed with the value of immortal souls ; and they are prepared at last to feel that, however coarse, however noisy, or however rough the exterior of the men brought into the Church of Christ, they are ready to receive them, if they are but true penitents. The Pharisaic feeling which would have kept them from enjoying heaven, if harlots and publicans were to be there, is all gone. They are prepared—for what ? For the preaching of the Word, for the diffusion of religion ; prepared to hear the scorn which will be drawn upon them by the conduct of those who shall come in hastily,

and go out as hastily. You have no right to expect it otherwise. You have read in the *Times*, and other newspapers, about these Irish revivals,* and the wonderful absurdities, and trickeries, and hypocrisies said to attend them. I do not believe them all; I believe there is a great amount of exaggeration in many of these cases; but I believe they are in some instances true. But I say this, If you think a Christian Church is to be built up and enlarged, and that the devil will keep perfectly quiet; that you are to enter the house of the strong man armed, and take away the goods which he has been keeping hitherto, and that there will be no corresponding effort of resistance on his part, you are greatly mistaken on the whole matter. It was not so in the days of Christ. When He called the young man, we read that, while he attempted to obey the Saviour's voice, even while he was coming, 'the devil tare him.' It was so then; it shall be so again; and wherever there is a great work of the Spirit going on, there will be a great work, or attempt at work, on the part of Satan. The Church is prepared for this, and it strengthens its faith, and increases its experience. To 'follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth' becomes the one desire of His people; and they are able, by His grace, to do so. They are anxious above all things that, at the last, they should be found to be accepted in Him. Thus the whole building grows,—increases in its extent and in its beauty, and 'groweth unto a

* This sermon was published in the year 1860; and the reference is to the remarkable revivals of religion which were then taking place in Ireland.—EDITOR.

holy temple in the Lord ;' and it shall go on till the top stone shall be brought on with shouting, ' Grace, grace unto it ! '

III. We have now to dwell on *the glory of its ultimate design.*

What is this building for ? ' For a habitation of God, through the Spirit.' The temple to which a reference is made, as I have said, had its material value. There was so much marble, so much costly wood and stone, and so on ; and then, in addition, it had a value arising from the purpose for which it was designed. It was not the marble which was its great glory, but it was because it was the dwelling-place of God. The glory of the mysterious light which shone in the dark chamber behind the veil—dark it was not, but it would have been but for this light, for the light of the sun was not admitted ; if it had been, it would have been turned into shade by that brighter and more glorious light—indicated the presence of God. There was a time when the gold and silver still remained, but when the glory had departed from it. The morality of a Christian man is beautiful ; it is beautiful to see a man who loves the Father go in and out in perfect acceptance before Him ; but it is the association with God which renders that man truly glorious. We have shown that you cannot have morality except upon the basis of Christianity. Suppose you could say, ' There is my man under the influence of worldly morality ; ' and another would say, ' There is my man—he is a Christian ; ' and the first said, ' But my man is as good as yours.' Where is the

difference between them? One would be human nature glorified; the other, human nature in association with God. One would say, 'I am strong in the principles of honour;' while the other would say, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. The life that I live is a life of faith in the Son of God.' There is a passage in which you may find this represented very strongly, showing that man is a trustee of himself for God. 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's.' That is a strong passage; but the one to which I now refer is still stronger, to my mind:—'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.' It may be said, 'Why may I not do as I like, at all events with myself?' You are not your own. True, you have your worldly purposes; true, you are called to spin this cotton, or to manufacture that article; true, you are called to provide things honest before all men, to labour diligently in your vocation; but this is not your highest vocation. God will bless you and reward you in these secondary and subordinate things, but your great purpose is to be temples of the Holy Ghost. 'Know ye not'—as if it were an undisputed fact, something which they only needed to be reminded of—'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.' You hold yourselves in trust for Him; there is sacrilege in every transgression. That is the view you should take of it; to have your hearts, according to the plain and strong language of Scripture, swept and

garnished with all the beauty of holiness,—made fit habitations of God, sanctuaries of holiness. Mind how you enter there. You have no right to go into that holiest place, and hang it round, as the chamber of your imagery, with thoughts of folly, recollections of transgression, or anticipations of evil. You have no right to defile the temple of God, by taking all this trumpery thought, and worse than mere trash, into the holiest place of all. You are ‘temples of the Holy Ghost;’ and ‘if a man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.’ You are built—for what? With holy, intellectual, immortal powers, you are built ‘for a habitation of God through the Spirit,’ ‘in whom ye also are builded together.’ Do you say, ‘I belong to no Christian Church on the face of the earth?’ Some of you I know do. Do you all? Or are you content to go out with that feeling about you, which I declare I would not go out with for all the wealth of the world? I would not go out into the business and trials of the world with this feeling—‘I am not upon the record of any Christian Church. I have no interest in its prayers, and no right to its privileges.’ Yet this is the case with some here. I do not say that you cannot be saved unless you belong to *this* Church. I do not believe that. I believe you may derive the blessings of Christianity from any evangelical Church, if you fully, simply, and heartily avail yourself of its privileges. I believe the Methodist Church to be the best in the world; therefore I belong to it. But I believe men entertain this view with respect to other Churches. I am quite satisfied that it is the best Church for me, that it is the best for my children. My firm con-

viction is, that it is the best in the world for you; but I would not speak bigotedly upon the matter. I would rather say, If you cannot connect yourself with us, connect yourself with some evangelical Church. Life is too short for this perpetual indecision. Suppose you and I were to go into a field near which they were building a beautiful mansion, in order to look at it more completely, and in doing so should kick our feet against a stone, and when we looked at it, should find it most beautifully carved, a triumph of the sculptor's art, we should say, What a pity it is that this stone is not in the building, adding something to its beauty; it is of no use here; it is a rock of offence; it is a stumbling-block, and cannot show forth its beauty or usefulness here.

Is it not so with some of you? You have many points of amiability and virtue, but no union with God's people, no participation in these promises. I do most earnestly and solemnly desire to apply the words of the Apostle to you: 'In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.' You have never yet been able to give yourselves to any Church. Be determined to-night. Give yourselves first to God, and then to His Church for God's sake. The Church of Christ upon earth is to grow, simply that it may be fitted. As in the case of the temple at Jerusalem, no sound of the hammer or any tool was to be heard in God's holy mountain. It was all to be prepared in the wilderness. If any stone was not of the right shape or pattern when it was brought to the house, it was too late to mend it, or change it, then. So we are

hastening to the grave, where there is neither work, nor knowledge, nor device. Therefore, *what thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.* The Apostles knew nothing of purgatory,—that diabolical invention did not arise in the Church for centuries,—and they did not believe that they had the power to set that right in the world to come, which had been done wrong here. They urged upon those whom they taught, as I would urge upon you, ‘What your hand findeth to do, do it with your might.’ You cannot mend matters after death. This is the time of probation; this is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. We sometimes wonder that God should remove from the Church below some polished stone, one that seems to add so much to the beauty and usefulness of the whole. The plain fact is, that which is the fittest for earth is the fittest for heaven. The righteous are taken away from the evil to come. When the purpose of the great Architect is fulfilled, then it is taken away. We fancy sometimes that the gap which is left can never be filled up; and we see a rough stone brought there, and we say: ‘This can never occupy the place as it was occupied before.’ But, by and by, worldly bereavements, defeated ambition, anxiety, trial, come down upon that man, and we see that the roughnesses are rubbed off and the corners smoothed. There are the means of grace, the hallowing influences of the Spirit of God, the charities of His holy religion, the sanctifying power of His grace, the sprinkling and re-sprinkling again and again with the blood of the blessed Saviour; and after awhile we look with wonder and see that that man is polished ‘after the

similitude of a palace ;' and we exclaim, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

Ye are 'God's building,' God's 'workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' It matters not how unsightly or unlikely they may be whom He takes into His hand. He can work all things according to the excellency of His will; transforming, and renewing, and sanctifying; and He can raise up of these stones children unto Abraham. 'In whom ye also are builded together.'

IX.

THE PRAYER OF ST PAUL FOR THE
EPHESIAN CHURCH.

FOR THIS CAUSE I BOW MY KNEES UNTO THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, OF WHOM THE WHOLE FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH IS NAMED, 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; THAT YE, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS WHAT IS THE BREADTH, AND LENGTH, AND DEPTH, AND HEIGHT; AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE, THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD. NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.—EPHESIANS iii. 14—21.

PRAYER is represented to us in Scripture both as a duty and a privilege. It is a great privilege that we are permitted to 'cast all our care' upon Him who 'careth for us;' to bring His omnipotence to help our weakness, His omniscience to guide and direct our ignorance,—in fact, all the attributes of Deity to help our infirmities. But prayer is not

only a privilege, it is also a duty,—a duty which we owe to God, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves. It is a duty that we owe to God, as the legitimate expression of our subordination and allegiance to Him, as well as of our constant dependence upon Him. It is the mode in which He has appointed us to recognise the attributes of His glorious nature, and it forms the most important and acceptable part of religious worship. 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.' 'In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.' 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths.' It is a duty which we owe to our fellow-men. 'I exhort, therefore,' says the Apostle, 'that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.' We may have no access to the councils of kings, and, if we had, our advice might be of very little value; but by prayer the weakest and most ignorant of us may reach the arm of Him by whom 'kings reign and princes decree justice,' and bring down blessings upon the nation, without presuming to dictate the precise nature of the blessings themselves or the mode in which they shall be conferred. Prayer is the best expression of our love to man that we can give; it is, in many instances, the only means we have of benefiting him; it is, in all instances, when sincerely and earnestly used, the best. We find the Apostle, although at this time a prisoner at Rome, yet benefiting the Church at Ephesus by presenting

these earnest supplications to God on their behalf, and bringing down upon them the gracious and hallowing influences for which he prayed. Prayer is a duty that we owe to ourselves. No man has performed his duty to himself fully and completely, until he has presented himself and his concerns in humble supplication to God. He may rise early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness; he may look diligently after his affairs; he may keep his books with accuracy, and attend to his business with prudence and punctuality; but unless he seeks the blessing of God, who is the God of providence as well as the God of grace, he has but laboured in vain. His efforts may be followed by this world's success, but 'the prosperity of fools shall destroy' him, his gains will be made a snare to him. It is the blessing of God only which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow. No right-thinking man will trust himself to go forth to the cares, anxieties, and dangers of the day, until he has solemnly sought the defence and direction of Him before whom all things are open, who sees the end from the beginning, and who alone knows what a day or an hour may bring forth.

If prayer be so great a privilege and so great a duty, it is of importance to us to know, how the privilege may be the most extensively secured, and the duty most effectually performed, especially since we are taught that we may not only 'have not because we ask not,' but also because we 'ask amiss.' We learn, then, from the words of the text, and from other places in Scripture, that the posture of the body is not to be regarded as a matter of indifference. There have been occasions, in the lives of

some of us, and will probably be in the lives of all, when the postures of our bodies will be no longer under our own control, when we cannot lift our hands, and scarcely even our eyes, to heaven, when we must be content to remain in the posture in which the kindness of our friends or attendants may have placed us; and then it is our privilege to present our supplications to God in any posture. And the prayer which we are commanded to offer always and without ceasing, in moments of sudden danger or difficulty, when we are walking on the road, or exposed to sudden temptation, does not depend at all on attitude. There does also occur a posture in which prayer is sometimes offered, which can hardly be said to be assumed, where a man is weighed down with the intensity of his calamities and distress, literally weighed down to the earth, so that he falls prostrate before God. In such an attitude Christ was found in the garden of Gethsemane: in such attitudes men have been found who were oppressed by their grief and want, which left them no choice as to the style and form of their approach to God. There appear to be, however, for the purposes of regular, formal, and appropriate prayer, only two postures recognised in the Sacred Scriptures, and so recognised because both are at once symbolical, and promotive of certain states of thought and feeling. Habitual reverence of posture and manner will both indicate and promote reverential feeling; just as familiarity of address and style will, of necessity, sooner or later, produce contempt. These attitudes are standing and kneeling. 'When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught

against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.' The publican, 'standing afar off, smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' This is the attitude of subordination and servitude. The servant stands in the presence of his master, to receive his commands, and that he may go away at once and do his bidding. The second posture is that of kneeling. 'For this cause I bow my knees,' says the Apostle. Daniel three times a day 'knelt upon his knees,' his window being open towards Jerusalem, and prayed. This is the attitude of supplication, in which the criminal pleads for mercy, and implores the mitigation or setting aside of his sentence: it is the attitude, too, in which man earnestly pleads with God for the blessing which he has never merited, which he is unable to purchase, and which he has no right of his own to claim. There is an appropriateness in both of these attitudes; but sitting, lounging, placing ourselves in prayer in a posture in which it is evident that we are more anxious to make ourselves comfortable than to appear with propriety before God, are discouraged in Scripture. There is ordinarily no spiritual advantage, no great blessing, obtained by prayers which men make in comfortable attitudes.

If the posture of the body be of some importance in the exercise of prayer, the posture of the soul is of still greater importance. We must bend the knees of our souls before God; we must approach Him with profound humility, with a solemn sense of our dependence and worthlessness, and worship Him 'with reverence and godly fear.' But when we are

convinced of the vast importance of this duty, and of the great value of this privilege; when, too, we have placed ourselves in a proper and devotional attitude of body, and have sought that God would give to us that attitude of spirit which is befitting our circumstances; then comes the question, What should we pray for? 'Lord, teach us to pray,' said the disciples; and our Lord, in answering this request, did not confine Himself to some general directions as to the mode of prayer, but gave them the form which we have ever since known as the Lord's Prayer. There has been great controversy as to the use of forms of prayer in public worship,—and this controversy has been carried to extremes, both on the one side and on the other. Some have attempted to show that certain forms of prayer are of equal authority with the Word of God, and some have regarded their use with fear and abhorrence. Whenever there is an attempt to bring any human performance up to a level with the Word of God, a reaction is sure to take place; and men will be led to regard with less of authority and solemnity than really belongs to them the things which other men have attempted to raise so far above the position which they ought to occupy. Great confusion has arisen as to the meaning of the word *Inspiration*. There is a sense in which a poet, a painter, or a sculptor may be said to be inspired. Any man who has a grand idea, whether it relates to matters of art or matters of utility, is inspired; and there are moments when he is conscious of this inspiration, and, acting under it, feels possessed and elevated by its power. Some of the brightest works of human

genius which we possess are attributable to this inspiration. There is a still higher kind of inspiration which comes down upon good men in their acts of devotion. This is Divine inspiration : it comes from God, it leads them to more intimate communion and fellowship with Him, it gives greater fervency and breadth to their prayers, it imparts an ardour and energy to their acts of devotion which they do not always possess ; and if such holy and earnest supplications are written down and recorded, they may be useful at another time to refresh their recollections, and bring back their hallowed feelings, while others who are in similar circumstances may find them to accord with their own state and wants, and to suggest to them suitable and proper modes of address to God. But the high sense in which the word *Inspiration* is used exclusively in the Holy Scriptures is, that the Holy Ghost inspires a man, not so much in reference to his own personal advantage, as in reference to the advantage of others ; gives him that which is to be regarded more in the light of a message to others, than as a personal benefit and blessing to himself ; gives him words by which the world will one day be judged, words against which there will be no appeal, words which cannot be altered and modified according to the various circumstances of men in different ages, but which, having been once pronounced and once recorded, are to remain unaltered, as the Word of God. Now to place upon a level with that Word of God any human compositions, although they may have been inspired in that secondary sense of the term to which I have alluded, and although they

may breathe the spirit of holiness and true devotion,—to place these, to place anything, on a level with the Word of God, the one complete canon of Holy Scripture, will have a tendency, in the minds of those who will admit this exaltation of human work, first to lower, and in the end to supersede altogether, the Scriptures by the traditions of men; or else it will have the effect, which we see in our own country, of leading men to look with suspicion and jealousy on all forms of prayer, upon anything which has been, in the first instance, unwarrantably exalted. There is an advantage in forms of prayer of which the Church may undoubtedly avail itself; varying them, according to circumstances, in their wording or order, and omitting, from time to time, what is inappropriate or too long. When we use our forms of prayer in that way, we take them as the prayers of the Church of God, not of the Church of England, which has no exclusive claim to them, nor right in them. Many of them were composed years before the Church of England was in existence, and we claim them as the common property of the Church of Christ. Wherever human wants have been expressed with great propriety and fervour, we are at liberty to avail ourselves of such expressions, and to correct the discursiveness of extemporary prayer by these forms of sound words, so long as we are not bound to their use by the tyranny of the rubric. But if there is danger of formality in public prayer, there is even more danger of it in private prayer. We may easily slide into the use of one set of phrases, until we pronounce them mechanically, while some other train of

thought is occupying the mind. It would be well for us occasionally to employ in secret some of those beautiful forms of prayer which abound in holy books; it would vary our modes of expression, suggest new ideas, and keep our thoughts attentive and alive. But whatever may be the opinions of men as to the forms of prayer which can only claim inspiration in that secondary and modified sense in which we have used the term, yet there can be no doubt as to the use of those forms of prayer which are found in the Book of God, and which enable us to present our desires and petitions in a way which must be acceptable to Him, indeed in the very words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

This prayer, presented by the Apostle for the Ephesians, is a prayer for spiritual influence. No temporal blessing is asked. Not that the Apostle disregarded temporal blessings; not that he did not think them proper subjects for prayer; but because at this time he was most deeply and intensely interested in the spiritual welfare of the believers to whom he was writing. None of the forms of prayer in Scripture are perfect, in the sense of comprehension. They are all short, except that comprehensive and magnificent prayer which was offered by Solomon at the dedication of the temple, and which appears to include all the possible wants and dangers of those on whose behalf it was presented. They are generally confined to one or two subjects. This particular prayer is a prayer for spiritual strength. 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that

He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.' This is a prayer for the communication of the Spirit of power, not for that increase of it which is the result of holy and godly exercise. God has given us nothing, physical, intellectual, or spiritual, which we cannot improve by constant, vigorous, and diligent exercise; as, on the other hand, our strength will become weakened and lost by neglect or carelessness. It is possible for us to believe in Him until our faith becomes more established. It is possible for us to exercise ourselves in this duty of prayer until we become 'strong in faith,' and mighty in supplication, until we can wrestle with God and prevail. Still the prayer of the Apostle is for an increase, by immediate Divine gift, of this principle of energy and power. God maintains and exercises the sovereignty of His grace. He not only sends down His showers upon the mown grass, seconds with His blessing the means which are ordinarily connected with gracious influences, but sometimes, in the majesty of His power and grace, is 'found of them who sought Him not,' pours 'floods upon the dry ground,' and makes even the wilderness and solitary place to bud and blossom as the rose. It is for this increase of power and strength that the Apostle prays:—'that He would grant you, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit,' or that He would mightily strengthen you by His Spirit, 'in the inner man,' by giving you a larger measure of His grace, by imparting to you a more powerful manifestation of the Spirit's energy, 'according to the

riches of His glory.' It is a remarkable thing that the Apostle uses the term 'riches' as his superlative expression. We often meet with such expressions as 'the riches of His grace,' 'the riches of His glory;' and in one passage we find him exclaiming, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.' There never was a man who had a more perfect contempt for this world's pelf than the Apostle Paul. He speaks of it in terms of loathing; he comes down from the dignity and beauty of his ordinary style, to designate it 'dung' and 'dross;' and yet when he wants to set anything forth in its superlative character he talks about riches. O! the Apostle had seen riches; he had been caught up into the third heavens, had beheld the glory of God, had looked upon the magnificence of that Divine abode in which God dwells, surrounded by angels and archangels, and 'the spirits of just men made perfect;' and to a man who has seen the glory of that world all the wealth and splendour of earth sink into mere tinsel, candle-light adornment, a vain attempt at grandeur and display. But why do we talk at all of the style of Paul or Peter, of Isaiah or Amos? Does not this go to invalidate the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture? Not by any means. God is ever free to use His own gifts; and when He seeks a man to employ him in His work, He seeks him for some quality which He has previously given to him, and which constitutes his peculiar fitness. He does not proceed at once to alter, or deface, these distinguishing peculiarities. He does not take a son of thunder and soften him down into a son of consola-

tion ; nor does He take a son of consolation and harden him into a son of thunder ; but He sends them forth with their own peculiarities, to speak to men of their own cast of mind. It is God who inspires, and speaks in and through, each and all of them, conveying one great system of truth, but leaving them unfettered as to modes of expression. Thus He has not only given the Scriptures to all men, but to every man. Some representations and illustrations of truth which are not very striking or powerful to one man will be so to another ; and if we read the Scriptures diligently, we shall each of us find some place in which the truth is not only told to us, but told in a form just suited to our type of mind.

‘That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.’ This refers to the great evangelical privilege of the Christian dispensation, indicated in the prophecy in which Christ was foretold, ‘And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us.’ The grand distinction between the pure and certainly Divine worship of the Jews, and the equally pure and Divine worship of true Christians, is the *indwelling* of Christ. ‘Christ in you :’— ‘that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith :’— ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory.’ The object of Jewish worship was always *external*. The object of Christian worship is always *internal* to the worshipper. The Jew had to go out to some particular place in order that there he might find God and offer an acceptable worship. ‘Arise and go up to Bethel.’ Abraham had to go three days’ journey to the mount that God would show him as the mount

of sacrifice. Three times a-year all the males of the Israelites were to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem. 'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there shalt thou offer thy burnt-offerings, and there shalt thou do all that I command thee.' Samuel and Saul, also, were directed to particular places. The idea was, that God was external to them, to be found in some particular spot. This idea was perpetuated in the Jewish assembly. Not only was there the temple in the Holy City upon Mount Zion; but within the consecrated limits there was a spot of peculiar sanctity, the holy of holies, which was never to be entered but by the High Priest, and by him only on the great day of atonement. The great privilege of the Christian dispensation is, that we can have God *within* us:—'Christ *in* you, the hope of glory.' It is always difficult to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, especially in its application to ourselves; but under the Christian dispensation God the Father is represented as enthroned in the human heart, God the Holy Ghost is represented as there, breathing holy desires, feelings, and affections, and 'making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;' and God the Son is represented as dwelling there, an embodiment of holy example, the pure exemplification of His own Law, the living perfection for His people to admire and imitate. Thus 'the whole Trinity descends into our faithful hearts.' This was the doctrine taught by our Lord to the woman of Samaria:—'Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh

when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' Christ had brought in the new dispensation ; and from that time it had become the privilege of His people to carry about within them a present God. The revived controversy about holy places is two thousand years out of date: it was terminated in our Lord's conversation at the well of Samaria. We have no need now to say, ' Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring Christ down from above,) or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)' ' The word is nigh ' us, in our mouth, and in our heart, even the word of faith which by the Gospel is preached unto us, that ' if we shall confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in our hearts that God hath raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved.' This is the great principle of the world's consecration. The Gothic building, with its fretted roof, is not necessary to a pure and spiritual worship ; but wherever we take God with us (and we shall not find Him anywhere unless we do take Him with us), there it is our privilege to offer our worship in spirit and in truth. It may be under the open expanse of heaven ; it may be on the bosom of the boundless sea ; or it may be in some humble sanctuary of modern construction. Wherever we choose to kneel, there is God's consecrated altar ; there is our ministering and interceding Priest ; there is the holiest place of that living temple in which God delights to dwell, more than in

all temples made with hands; there is a present Deity; there is an acceptable service in spirit and in truth.

‘That ye, being rooted and grounded in love.’ This is an agricultural metaphor. We all know something about gardening; but if we could imagine a man, perfectly ignorant on this subject, looking at one transplanting a tree, he might say, when he saw the leaves fading and the twigs drooping, You have killed that tree. And if the gardener were disposed to avail himself of this incident for the purpose of a religious lesson, he might refer to that passage, ‘Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,’ and say, I have transplanted this tree from an uncongenial soil to a better and more friendly one: these fading leaves and drooping twigs will soon revive, and as the tree gets more deeply rooted and more firmly grounded, its leaves will be more verdant, its blossoms more beauteous, its fruit more abundant. Even so, the fruit of the living believer shall be ‘unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.’

‘That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.’ These terms of measurement are not given to us that we may be able to calculate these magnitudes; but to show us how impossible it is to measure the infinite and immeasurable. Some holy and gifted men have attempted it, but all have failed. We meet with such phrases and expressions as, ‘Wide as the world;’ ‘Vast as Infinity;’ ‘Deeper than Hell it plucked me thence, deeper than inbred sin;’

'High above all height we rise, and claim the everlasting crown.' These are all beautiful expressions, but they add nothing to our definite comprehension of these magnitudes.

'That ye may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.' This is one of the passages of Scripture (of which there are many) which go to prove that the Bible is not a *cunningly* devised fable. If a devised fable at all, it is certainly very uncunningly devised. Suppose two cunning men sitting down to write such a book; if one of them had suggested the words before us, had talked of knowing the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, he would have been at once rebuked by his fellow, who would have said, That will never do: if we do not write that which is truth, we must write that which is truth-like. To know that which passeth knowledge is a contradiction in terms, which nobody can be expected to believe; and their cunning would have altered it accordingly. The Inspired Writers, on the other hand, had received their message from God: they felt that they were only responsible for delivering the message as they had received it, and, careless of the cavils of men, they went boldly forward in the declaration of the truth, whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear, and left the word to vindicate its own authority in spite of a thousand little objections. There is a great truth contained in this text, and contained in the only words in which it could have been appropriately set forth:—'That ye may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.' Some would interpret the word 'passeth' in the sense of the

modern word *surpasseth*; as if the meaning were, However great or excellent the knowledge of other things, the knowledge of the love of Christ surpasses it, is more excellent. This is a great truth; but it does not come up to the idea of the text. Some explain it by the word *exceeds*, and understand the Apostle to mean, When you have attained the knowledge of human science and learning, there is something in the knowledge of the love of Christ which is beyond, over and above all this. This also is a great truth; but it is not *the* truth of the text. I do not know any words which could convey this to our minds so fully and clearly as those before us; and we must be prepared to encounter the ridicule of those who would say, Do you know that which passeth knowledge? If I say, Thank God, I do; and if you do not, you have your most important lesson in religion yet to learn;—our objectors may say, If a man deliberately tells us, that he knows that which passeth knowledge, we must decline any further communication with the holder of so preposterous a position. Well, there is no help for it; we must let them go. But if there are any humble and sincere seekers of salvation here, who are not startled by the idea of a contradiction in terms, bear with me while I attempt to show what there is in religion which may be known, and which does *not* pass knowledge; and what there is which may be known, and which does pass knowledge. As to the former of these: What is there to be known in Christianity which does not pass knowledge? I say, All that a man with ordinary intellect and ordinary diligence may acquire; and which any one such man may

acquire as well as another. We may know all of this great system which is fairly within the limits of knowledge. We may know, for instance, all the history of Jesus Christ, all that He is said by the Evangelists ever to have done or taught. We could copy out of this book, and learn by heart, all the facts and incidents of His history: they are very few and very brief; most of them are reiterated, and if we collect them they are found to lie in an exceedingly small compass. We could go on, and take the general platform and principles of the Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and as explained in the Apostolical Epistles. And taking this continuation of the account of the Evangelists, we could say, This is the theory of the Christian religion. We might know this, and it does *not* pass knowledge. We could study it as we could study any system which has its records in books, and the doctrines, and formularies, and discipline of which are open to men's reading and understanding; this is all within the range of every man of ordinary ability and diligence. And if any man said, What is Christianity? we should be prepared to give him, if he would listen to it, all that the Bible tells us about Christianity, that does not pass knowledge. There is no great mystery in all that. We could go further even than this. Supposing a man, in pursuing these investigations (and such a case, thank God, has often occurred), while sitting down to examine God's holy Word, and to make himself acquainted with the great facts and incidents of our common Christianity, feels his heart influenced, as well as his understanding, and there is awakened within him a

desire to be made a partaker of the salvation of which all this teaching, this whole system of the gospel, treats, so that he inquires, What must I do to be saved? We could answer him in the words of infallible truth, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Here you have a plain, intelligible question, and an equally plain and intelligible answer. So far all is easy, and it does not pass knowledge. But you have got to the limit of such things. Go one hair's breadth beyond this point, and you get into that region of which the Apostle here speaks,—those things which must be known in order to our salvation, and which nevertheless pass knowledge. Let us go on a step beyond this. Let a man who has asked, What must I do to be saved? and who has been told, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' turn round to you and say, What is believing? That moment you feel that your footing is gone from under you. The certain knowledge which has enabled you to answer his previous questions is gone. You may try to explain; you may tell him that believing is taking God at His word; that it is a trusting of the soul to the merits of Christ, and taking Christ to be your Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, that it is, in point of fact, believing. You started at this point, and to this point you must come back; and when you have given him all these illustrations and instructions, you will find that you have not led him to a clearer apprehension of the subject than was in the first instance conveyed to him by the simple answer, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' You

have got into the region of mystery ; into the things which pass knowledge.

I can easily imagine that an objection might here be started. A man might say, If I study any natural science, and bring a difficulty to my teacher, he explains it, and I can go on until I meet with some other difficulty to be similarly treated ; but when I bring a religious difficulty to my religious teacher, he says, O, this is a mystery, and thus shields his ignorance of the subject on which he ought to be perfectly informed. I am not here to apologise for the ignorance of religious teachers, nor to admit that it exists. If there were any necessity to vindicate the qualifications of the Christian ministry of this age and country, it would not be at all difficult to do so : it would not be difficult to prove, that as large an amount of intelligence, of learning, of talent, of deep, conscientious, persevering investigation into the great subject with which they have to deal, is to be found in the ranks of the ministry, as in any other learned profession in the land. There are men spending their days and nights in labour and anxiety, to prepare for the exposition of the truth of God to the congregations to which they have to minister. On the other hand, I am not inclined to say, that there are not many instances of a slipshod mode of dealing with God's truth, the result of idleness and carelessness on the part of those who should better prepare themselves and their discourses for the ears and hearts of the people. But I am anxious to impress upon your minds, that all mysteries of religious knowledge are not to be attributed to the defects of the teacher. It is not

to be supposed that these matters do not in themselves contain mysteries which it is impossible for any man either fully to comprehend or explain. Take it, if you will, that there is a general ignorance, on the part of ministers, of the deep things of God. I could bring before you a Teacher of whose skill, and wisdom, and conscientiousness no man ever entertained a doubt, a Teacher intimately, profoundly acquainted with the subject, who, in addition to His human qualifications as a Teacher sent from God, possessed the infinite, eternal, incomprehensible wisdom of the Almighty ; and in connection with that Teacher I could bring before you a scholar most anxious to be instructed in the things about which he came to inquire,—a man of mature age, who had devoted his life to studies eminently calculated to fit him for the comprehension of the great truth which had long been weighing upon his own mind, and had been the subject of his anxious thoughts. Such an inquirer comes to the Great Teacher, not in the midst of the crowd who followed Him to see His miracles, or to propose their questions, but in the solitude of the silent night, and asks Him, ‘ How can these things be ? ’ And that Teacher is compelled to say to him, ‘ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.’ *Every one* ; not a few of the specially ignorant and stupid merely, but *every one*, young or old, learned or unlearned. As Christ could not explain to Nicodemus how these things could be, how a man could be born again, so

we must be content to know some things which pass our knowledge. ibtool.com.cn

But let us look a little farther into this matter. What can the Church do in the salvation of the sinner? In one sense, a great deal; in another, very little, or nothing. It can do a great deal as 'the pillar and ground of the truth,' by the careful preservation of the Holy Scriptures, keeping them free from corruptions and alterations, and by preaching the truth which they set forth with earnestness and zeal; and any Church that fulfils this twofold duty will be made instrumental by God in the conviction of sinners. But when the sinner is thus convinced, what can the Church do further towards his conversion? We say, Nothing. The Church of Rome, and the Popish part of the Church of England, say, Let him confess to a Priest, and he will give him absolution and reconcile him to God. It is not in the power of any man, or any Church, to absolve the sinner from his sins. The awful and presumptuous impiety of those, whether Churches or individuals, who pretend to have this power, is one of those sins which will be most awfully and severely punished in the great day; when He who alone can forgive sins will call to a severe account those who have assailed His throne, usurped His authority, and aped the exercise of His solemn rights. We talk of the perfection of ecclesiastical institutions. We think our own very perfect, possessing many excellencies and a few defects. We look upon other ecclesiastical institutions, and we find that they who are more intimately connected with them regard them with the affection

and reverence with which we regard ours. Well, be it so; the more perfect they can be made, the better; if any improvement can be made in our own, I wish it were made. But when you have got any ecclesiastical system as perfect as you can make it; when all your formularies, all your articles of faith, all your acts of worship, and all your rules of discipline, have been brought as near to perfection as earth can ever get to heaven, all that you can do, by your ministers and by your agency of every sort, is, to bring sinners to the footstool of the mercy-seat of God: and that is the best Church, whether it be our own or any other, which brings the largest number of sinners the straightest, shortest way to God, and then stands still to see the salvation of God, looks on with astonishment and wonder while God performs that work which only He can perform. The reconciliation of the sinner to God must of necessity be God's own work. The heart-felt confession of every awakened and penitent man is, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight,' and he feels that he must hear his acceptance from the mouth of Him whom he has offended. As there is an exclusive and Divine excellency in the power which created man, so there is also in his re-creation and renewal. It is not in any ecclesiastical system to regenerate the souls of men, any more than it is to raise the dead and to give life to man's inanimate body. The work of reconciliation is exclusively committed to Christ; and as He 'trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none' with Him, so this great privilege of reconciling the sinner to God is His

alone. 'No man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him;' and if the Church asks, Cannot we do this work and reconcile this sinner to God? the answer is, and must be, No! Men are permitted to be helpful, even as angels are 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' They may kneel down, and pray with, and for, the supplicating penitent, and thus be helpful to his faith; but this is all that they can do. The act of pardon is the work of Christ. There always must be something mysterious in the sinner's connection with God through Christ; something which we may know, and which yet passeth knowledge. It is 'the white stone' with 'a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.' It is easy to ask, Why cannot I read the name on the stone given to you, and you that on the stone given to me? but the only answer would be, that the union between the pardoned sinner and God is a personal and individual union, something which belongs specially and peculiarly to every believer as such. There is communion with the Church of God, and a blessed thing it is; but there is a higher communion with the Father and the Son through the Holy Ghost, a golden chain which links and attaches the believer to the throne of God, invisible to all but himself; through which the sentiments and feelings of hallowed affection come direct from God to him, and return direct from him to God, without the intervention of any of those formalities which might interfere with this close and individual fellowship. The servant of God is conscious of this blessing;

he knows it; but it passeth knowledge. He cannot tell you how this great work was accomplished, cannot lead you through its distinct processes; and to describe this mystery, this bond of union, this sacred and holy attachment, I know no other mode of expression than that which is contained in the text: 'to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' We cannot fully and properly set forth spiritual things in earthly language; we must have new sentiments, new ideas, new words. There is no language in which we shall be enabled to communicate these thoughts, until we enter heaven: we must die to know the language of another kingdom and another glory, where the Babel which has confounded the ideas and sentiments of this world shall be forgotten in the harmony and purity of eternity, when we shall be one with Christ and one with God.

'To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God,'—emptied of self, and earth, and sin, and filled with God. This is sanctification. Our Lord describes the heart as swept and garnished, cleared of all rubbish and defilement, and filled unutterably full of glory and of God. 'That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.' How glorious and complete is this representation! This sanctification is the bond of union subsisting between us and the Church in heaven, and will constitute our happiness and glory hereafter.

'Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be

glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.' Infinitely desirable as it is to be filled with all the fulness of God, and utterly impossible as it is by our own strength or goodness, it is rendered perfectly practicable and easy by the power of God. You never find any exhortations to the higher walks of Christian practice and enjoyment, which are not more or less immediately connected with some declaration of the Divine omnipotence. 'I am the Almighty God: walk before Me, and be thou perfect;' 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.' Such a declaration of God's infinite resources, and of the ample provisions of the covenant of grace, you have in the words of the text. Indeed, I know not of any passage in secular writing, nor of any in Holy Scripture, so strong as this. Some have supposed that the Apostle, in writing these words, had his mind filled with that Titanic notion of the ancients of heaping Ossa upon Pelion, piling up one mountain upon another. The words here used are strong and powerful words; and they are heaped one upon another, until they seem to take away one's breath by the accumulation of intense power. 'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' Let us look for a moment at these words, for the strengthening and encouragement of our faith. He 'is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask.' Now we can ask a great deal. I could open the

Bible before me, and take this very passage of Scripture, and repeat these very words. I could bow my knees before God; I could do this with a solemn sense of the Fatherhood of God and of the privilege of my filial relation to Him, and of my consequent relation to the Church on earth and in heaven. I could feel that I was strengthened and sustained in the exercise of this holy devotion by my union with 'the whole family in heaven and earth;' united to the Church on earth by sacramental ties and the bond of a common brotherhood, and to those who have passed into the skies, the Church of former generations, by the privileges of heaven; that one Father is the Father of us all, that

'One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath.'

Claiming this privilege of Divine adoption, I could go on, and pray that God would grant unto me 'to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in my heart by faith, that I, being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that I might be filled with all the fulness of God.' I could ask all this: the words are plainly written down before me. But when I had asked all that I could ask, I could think more than I could ask. There are thoughts which defy the trammels of language, and soar away upon imagination's wing into the unexpressed glories of the future. We see the morning spread upon the mountains; the bounds of the everlasting hills tinged and gilded with the

glories of a future bliss ; thought gazes upward, with its eagle eye, upon the splendours which surround the Eternal Throne. Yes ; you can think more than you can ask ; but when imagination is wearied in its flight, you come back to the plain words of the text. Ask all you can ask, and then think all you can think ; and the Apostle tells you that ' God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' But where is this great grace to be obtained ? ' Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.' You have in the holy ordinances and provisions of your own Church, in your preaching, class-meetings, prayer-meetings, and love-feasts, all that is necessary, if properly and faithfully used, to raise you to the height of this great privilege, ' according to the power that worketh in us,' the transforming, sanctifying energy of God. Don't suppose that it is necessary for you to seek some other Communion for a power and influence which you cannot find here. Give yourselves heartily and believingly to God, that He may work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure ; and then,

' Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His Eternal Son,'

you will go on to ' perfect holiness ' in His fear.

X.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE DESIGNED
TO BRING MEN INTO FELLOWSHIP
WITH GOD.

THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING, WHICH WE HAVE HEARD, WHICH WE HAVE SEEN WITH OUR EYES, WHICH WE HAVE LOOKED UPON, AND OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED, OF THE WORD OF LIFE; (FOR THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED, AND WE HAVE SEEN IT, AND BEAR WITNESS, AND SHOW UNTO YOU THAT ETERNAL LIFE, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, AND WAS MANIFESTED UNTO US;) THAT WHICH WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD DECLARE WE UNTO YOU, THAT YE ALSO MAY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US: AND TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.—1 JOHN i. 1—3.

GREAT interest attaches to this Epistle from the time when it was written, and the circumstances which called it forth. The date assigned to it in the margin of your Bibles is A.D. 90, and that is, no doubt, sufficiently accurate. It appears, therefore, to have been written about 60 years after the crucifixion of our Lord. Almost a century had passed away since He appeared as a babe in Bethlehem, and more than half a century since He sealed His doctrine with His blood, and entered into the heavens. Before this Epistle was written, most of our Lord's Apostles had followed Him, through lives of labour

and deaths of martyrdom, to eternal glory; and John only appears to have remained, in extreme old age, banished to the Isle of Patmos, driven away from his Church, to which he wrote this Epistle, containing the advices and exhortations which, but for his banishment, he would have given to them by his living voice. From this half century many of the heresies which have afflicted the Christian Church date their commencement. There is nothing new in the devices of Satan: he made haste to bring all forms of opposition to bear upon the gospel; they were all manifested at a very early period, and only modified and enlarged in subsequent ages according to circumstances. You can trace in these early times the seeds and rudiments of all the heresies which, during the middle ages, spread the night of darkness, and the pall of death, over the Churches of the West. John saw all these evils existing in his own time; and he had also the very honourable, but often very distressing, gift of prophecy. He beheld the evils of the present increased and aggravated by those of the future, until the abominations of Popery, as he describes them in the Book of Revelation, should deluge the Church with impurity and blood. Were it not for this consideration, we should perhaps be led to wonder why these latest Epistles are taken up with the simplest and plainest statements of the first principles of the gospel of Christ. We might have expected that these few later pages of the Book of God would have been employed in explaining some things which had been ambiguous or indistinct; or in strengthening by additional evidence some things which might require firmer sup-

port,—that they would form, in fact, a sort of appendix to the general teaching of our Lord and His Apostles. Instead of that, we find in this Epistle, written more than fifty years after our Lord's ascension, the first rudiments of gospel truth laid down with earnest simplicity and plainness.

There were two principal divisions of the sect of the Gnostics. The first held the doctrine of Divine emanations in a form very similar to that of Plato, and in their lives were moral and exemplary. The second division, while agreeing more or less with the first in their theories of the Divine existence, differed totally from them in the immorality of their lives. Simon Magus, after attempting to purchase the Holy Ghost with money, and after being solemnly rebuked by St Peter, became the greatest enemy of the cause with which he would have been glad to associate himself, if he might have done so on his own terms. He joined the looser division of the sect of the Gnostics, and set himself to pervert and demoralise the Church. For this purpose he availed himself with fatal dexterity of a great truth, which he distorted and misapplied. The heresies which have, in all ages, exerted the most fearful influence, are those which have been based upon some grand cardinal truth. Unmixed falsehood, though often very destructive at first, seldom does much permanent harm: truth sooner or later follows, and overthrows it all. But where a great and important truth can be so perverted as to constitute an error; where that which is really and essentially true can be made, by a certain application, to be fearfully and practically false; the heresies thus originated are

not only destructive, but permanent in their influence. The grand truth which Simon Magus seized on and abused for his unholy purpose was, that God delights in the happiness of His creatures. This is a doctrine full of comfort to the people of God, in its proper and legitimate use; but Simon so applied it as to turn aside from truth and holiness many who were suffering severe persecution on account of their religion. In effect he reasoned thus:—‘God delights in the happiness of His creatures, and consequently does not delight in anything which makes them unhappy. It cannot, therefore, be pleasing to Him that you should submit to persecution, to the spoiling of your goods, to torture and imprisonment, and even to death itself: all these are miserable things, and He who delights in your happiness cannot wish you to maintain the integrity of your faith, or the purity of your practice, at such a price.’ One step more, and this wretched sophistry was complete:—‘God delights in the happiness of His creatures, and therefore delights in whatever makes them happy. Worldly pursuits, sensual gratifications, or whatever else ministers to your enjoyment, must be pleasing in His sight.’ As may be readily believed, many were the converts to so easy a system: the floodgates of iniquity were thrown open, and vices scarcely known among the heathen deluged the Christian Church. John saw all this, and therefore he, as with his dying breath, preaches and urges the great principles of the gospel of Christ. The text directs our attention to these two subjects:—

I. What was the Apostle’s doctrine?

II. What were his reasons for preaching it? 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.'

I. In treating of the Apostle's *doctrine*, we shall first consider the general description which he gives of it, and then refer to the separate articles of our faith contained in it.

The general description embraces two points;—first, the Divine authority of the doctrine, and secondly, its palpable, experimental, and real nature. 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.' The Apostle disclaims all right to teach anything as *of* God which he had not received *from* God. If any man ever had authority to do this, certainly that man would have been the Apostle John. He was our Lord's beloved disciple; he leaned upon his Master's breast at the Last Supper, and asked Him questions which others durst not ask. He was with Him, not only when all the other disciples were present, but also on the more solemn and special occasions when most of them were absent. He was with Him when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; he was with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and beheld His glory, and listened to His mysterious converse with Moses and Elias. He was with Him in the garden of Gethsemane, and witnessed the agony, and heard the groans and prayers, of his Lord at that great crisis of His history. He alone stood at the foot of His cross, when all the other disciples had forsaken Him and fled, and to him was committed the charge

of Christ's weeping and widowed mother. He had been the favoured disciple, and was now the only survivor of those who had seen our Lord in the flesh, and received the commission of the Apostleship personally from Him. Might not he, therefore, have assumed authority to affirm certain doctrines, or enjoin certain observances, as necessary to salvation, although not received directly from God? No! only that which he had seen and heard might he so declare. No man that ever lived, however high his titles or eminent his gifts,—no number of men, no convocation, however solemn,—has any authority to declare as necessary to salvation anything which is not contained in the Book of God. 'That which we have seen and heard,' and that only, may 'we declare unto you.'

It is an allowable and useful thing for wise and pious men to meet together, to make institutions, arrangements, and appointments, which they believe will be for the promotion of godly order, and which they therefore exhort others to observe. No wise and thoughtful man would wantonly interfere with such rules, or break up combinations which are the result of man's best wisdom and experience, disturbing the public peace, prejudicing his own usefulness, and hindering that of others; but would rather 'submit to' these 'ordinances of man for the Lord's sake.' But they are *ordinances of man* nevertheless, and should ever be regarded by us as essentially different from *ordinances of God*. It is wise and becoming of us to respect these human institutions, and to avail ourselves of them for our own edification and that of others; but it is a mon-

strous impertinence, it is a presumption of which this aged and sanctified Apostle knew nothing, to represent them as essential to man's salvation, as necessary to his finding favour with God. For this we need only the counsel—the *whole* counsel—of God.

Then the Apostle describes the religion which he taught as practical and experimental; not a mere theory floating in the minds of men, but something which can be rendered palpable. 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.' Christianity presents to us great and stupendous facts; and all who truly receive the Lord Jesus find in their union with Him that which can be enjoyed and felt, and which will manifest its power in a course of holy service.

Having given us this general description of his teaching, the Apostle goes on to present to us the doctrines themselves which he affirmed. This chapter is a very short one, containing only ten verses; and yet we have within this small compass a grand summary of the Christian religion.

1. The first doctrine which is declared is *the Eternity and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 'For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' It had been insisted on by Simon Magus, that Jesus Christ was *merely* a teacher sent from God, such a teacher as Simon professed himself to

be; and that therefore his words and the words of Christ were to be considered of equal authority in the abstract, and were alike to be submitted to the test of human judgment, and to be obeyed or disregarded as they might recommend themselves to the understandings of men. This is a point to which our attention should be carefully directed; as the very same attempts are being made, in our own day, to place Christ on the same level with merely human teachers, and to submit His doctrines to the same intellectual tests as are properly applied to theirs. Jesus Christ is a Teacher sent from God; and His words are pre-eminently words of wisdom and sound philosophy. 'In Him,' indeed, 'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;' and even if we knew nothing of the words of Christ but what is evident on the surface of them,—if we were ignorant of their hidden meaning, of that grand spiritual philosophy which is, after all, but partially explained to us,—we might safely leave them to be compared with the words of the wisest of men, and on this ground alone establish their vast superiority, and their right to challenge universal belief. But our obligation to believe the words of Christ does not depend solely, nor even mainly, on the excellence of the words themselves, but on the authority of Him who speaks them. Ordinarily, when a message is sent to us, we have to do with the message *only*; the character of him who brings it is a matter of very little importance. Sometimes we have to do with a man whom we have found generally to speak with wisdom, and always with fidelity and truth; in such a case we do not stop to examine the quality

of his statement, but we take it as true, because of the ascertained character of him who brings it. Still it is not with the character of the messenger, but with the character of the message, that we have to do. A man may tell you that your house is on fire; or that you are exposed to great danger; or that some good and desirable thing has happened to you; it does not matter to you whether he is a good or a bad man, it is with the message that you have to deal. But it is not so with the words of Jesus Christ. True Christian faith is not a belief in the words of the Lord Jesus, because we have examined them and found them true, but a belief in them because Christ has spoken them. It is a faith in Jesus Christ *personally*, in His Divinity, and therefore, necessarily, in His truth. 'Thus saith the Lord,' is the solemn argument which establishes at once the truth and the importance of the declarations of Holy Scripture. The faith with which we are to receive Christ's teaching, His commands, and His appointments, is, therefore, altogether at variance with the notion which would put Him on a level with ordinary human teachers, and leave men to receive or reject His message as it might agree or disagree with their own sentiments. He taught men as 'One having authority.' The Apostle describes Jesus Christ as truly God by specially mentioning His Eternity, and affirming that He is the Author and Giver of life. He speaks of Him as 'that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' He is 'the Life,' as the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and as the Preserver and Upholder of all things. He Him-

self declared, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' He is the source of spiritual life, the life of God in the soul of man; and thus of eternal life, the life of heaven; for 'this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

2. The second doctrine of the Apostle is *the righteousness and perfection of God*. 'This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.'

'God is Light.' Light is wisdom, as opposed to the darkness of ignorance. Thus St Paul speaks, in one place, of 'the eyes of the understanding' of believers 'being enlightened,' so that they might have a clear and vivid apprehension of spiritual truth. Light 'maketh manifest;' and thus a man walking in light stumbleth not, he sees what is before him, and knows the dangers to which he is exposed. Light is wisdom; God, therefore, is wisdom.

Light, in the second place, is holiness as contrasted with wickedness. Deeds of sin are 'the unfruitful works of darkness;' 'things of dishonesty' are 'hidden' things. The ungodly 'love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;' while they who love God and keep His commandments are 'the children of the light.' Satan is the prince of 'darkness,' 'the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;' and salvation from sin to holiness is a translation 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

Again, light is happiness, as opposed to misery.

‘Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.’ What a beautiful figure that is! Generally, when we walk, our path is illumined by the light of the sun shining around us, or by some artificial light cast upon it; but the path of the righteous is represented as sown broadcast with the seeds of light, and at every footfall it sparkles up with gems of brilliant glory, diffusing happiness, security, and peace. For ‘the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’

‘God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.’ Of many men it can be said, ‘Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;’ but it cannot be said of any man who is light, that ‘in him there is no darkness.’ We have obtained light in some degree, in all the senses of wisdom, holiness, and happiness; but can it be said of any of us, that in us there is no darkness at all? Is our wisdom obscured by no ignorance, by no doubt? Is our holiness obscured by no imperfection, no temptation, shrouding the soul in its pall of heaviness and night? Does no cloud arise ‘to darken the skies, and hide for a moment our Lord from our eyes?’ We are, many of us, ‘light in the Lord,’ as regards the possession of happiness in religious services, and especially the enjoyment of conscious pardon and vital communion with God. But have we no darkness? Do not bodily pains, and mental anxieties, and even spiritual trials and difficulties, often interrupt our happiness, and darken our path with the gloom of the shadow of death? But ‘God is Light, and in Him

is no darkness at all.' And that which is essentially the nature of God must also, of necessity, be the nature of His religion. That, too, is light, and in it there is no darkness. There is often darkness mingled with it, but it does not belong to it. The religion of God may be counteracted and clouded by the darkness of the world and the devil; but its principles are all pure, happy, and holy; and any system, calling itself a religion, which cherishes the ignorance of its votaries, which promotes immorality and sin, and which makes its victims miserable, is not of God: it is earthly, sensual, devilish. Such a system can never fit men for that glorious abode which is the home of angels and of God; for there is no night there, that City has 'no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' The saints walk in light of that City, and live in wisdom, holiness, and joy.

3. The next doctrine is that of *original sin*. 'If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Some represent the soul of man, when he comes into the world, as being perfectly clear, like a sheet of white paper, or an unscratched or unengraved tablet, so that you may write what you please upon it;—you may write lessons of holiness and wisdom, and the man will grow up holy and wise, or you may write characters of sin and folly, and the man will grow up depraved and foolish. They speak of man as being altogether the creature of circumstances, and affirm that he is capable of being trained and moulded into what you will. So far from denying that man is greatly in-

fluenced by circumstances, the Scriptures tell us, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' This is true as a proverb; that is, in the great majority of cases it will be so: but Scripture itself abounds with exceptions to this rule. Cain and Abel in the first family, and the elder and younger brothers in our Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son, may be taken as examples, that training in the same family and under the same circumstances may produce very different results. This notion, that you may educate men to what you wish, loses sight of man's depravity and the consequent necessity of conversion and regeneration; and it contradicts the facts and experience of every day. It is not true that, if you enlighten a man, and teach him what is right, he will do it. The Apostle says, 'For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do;' 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me;' and after referring to his approval and esteem of the Divine law, he adds, 'But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Thus it is a solemn fact that man comes into the world with sin; and 'if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.'

4. The next doctrine relates to *our personal and actual transgressions*. 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.' These words are more severe than those in which the preceding doctrine is expressed. It is, in effect, said, that a man might possibly deny the

doctrine of original sin in error, and thus deceive himself; but that any one who looks back upon his past life, and says that he has not sinned, has not broken the law of God in any instance, directly and openly contradicts God. For God has declared that 'all have sinned and come short of His glory;' and if any man says that he has not sinned, he puts his own affirmation point-blank against the declaration of God, and thus 'makes Him a liar.'

5. The next doctrine is that of *the efficacy of the Atonement of Jesus Christ for justification and sanctification*. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is a wonderful passage of Scripture. If it had been said, 'He is faithful and merciful,' we should have understood it at once; but what has the *justice* of God to do with forgiveness? Exactly as much as His mercy. This is the broad ground of the doctrine of Justification by faith. The ordinary notion which men entertain of the doctrine of the Atonement is very confused. It is, perhaps, somewhat of this kind:—There is God, the Great and Holy; there is man, the guilty sinner; and there is Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man. God, on His part, is supposed to abate, in some degree, the penalty, and to soften the rigour, of His holy law; Jesus Christ does something by His death; and man does something by his repentance and amendment; and so by this mutual but ill-defined arrangement between the three parties the difference is reconciled and made up. There is not a word in Scripture to justify this vague and confused theory. The representations therein

contained of the doctrine of the Atonement are plain, definite, and clear. This vital and important truth is not left darkened with clouds and mist. God makes no compromise of the holiness of His nature or of His law. That law is 'holy, just, and good,' and abates nothing of its righteous demands. Sin is a transgression of the law, and must either be punished in the person of the offender, or atoned for to the fullest extent. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is not something done *towards* the salvation of man; but a 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' It meets the full penalty pronounced on human sin,—all that the law demands, and all that justice can exact. Man can do nothing to add to the value of that atonement. True, he must confess his sin, he must repent and believe the gospel; but this is no addition to the price paid for our redemption; it is but coming in a proper spirit to ask and receive the pardon so dearly purchased and so freely offered. When the penitent sinner believes on Jesus Christ, he fulfils the prescribed condition on which God has promised pardon,—promised to Christ, in His great covenant with Him, that He would give it for His sake to every one who thus repents and thus believes, and promised to the sinner whom He thus invites to the footstool of His throne; and the justice of God, as well as His mercy, demands the fulfilment of the promise. Some may object that the man is a sinner, and has therefore forfeited all his rights. Let us consider this more carefully. The sinner stands before us; there is no question as to his guilt; he acknowledges it himself; the Holy Ghost, the Spirit

of truth, has convinced him of his sins; and he humbly confesses them in his supplications and prayers to God. There is no doubt of his being a sinner; there is no attempt to hide it. But our doctrine is, that the sinner has his rights, secured to him by the covenant and justice of God. Look at the man who stands before a human tribunal. There is no doubt of his guilt, for he has pleaded 'guilty' to the charge laid against him. You inflict upon him the prescribed punishment; you fine or imprison him to the fullest extent of his legal sentence. Well; he has paid the last farthing of the penalty; he has been imprisoned to the last moment of his term. Who does not see that to inflict another stroke upon him, to exact another farthing, to extend his imprisonment even for a day, is more than the law demands, and would be an act of fearful injustice? He has paid the full penalty, all that your law required; and he stands before you claiming, as a *right*, that he shall now be set at liberty, and be free from further claim from the law which he had violated. This is just the position in which we stand; only it is not through our own suffering, but through that of Him on whom was 'the chastisement of our peace,' and by whose 'stripes we are healed.' We have not ourselves borne the penalty of the violated law, but Jesus Christ has borne it for us. God 'hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;' and the justice of God requires that the penitent sinner who believes in Christ, and thus appropriates His suffering and death, shall be pardoned and set free.

The atonement of the Lord Jesus has procured for us Sanctification as well as Justification. 'He is faithful and just' not only 'to forgive us our sins,' but also 'to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Why do we stop short in the middle of this sentence, and thus deprive God of His glory in the fulfilment of His grand design, and ourselves of our greatest happiness and dignity in a full and complete salvation? We 'stagger at the promise of God through unbelief;' we hesitate to claim the best and richest portion of our privilege; and, after having received the pardon of sin by believing with the heart on the Saviour, we do not press forward to 'be filled with all the fulness of God.'

II. This was the Apostle's doctrine. What were *his reasons for preaching it?*

Let us reflect, for a moment, that it had entailed on those who had embraced it outward disasters. Everybody that had anything to do with it had suffered by it. The Founder and Author of Christianity, notwithstanding His unexampled wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, had drawn down upon Himself the hatred and calumny of His countrymen generally. The few who had believed in Him, and had avowed that belief, had done so at the risk of the loss of all things; their names were cast out as evil, and they were persecuted, afflicted, tormented. John himself, at this time an old man, not far short of ninety years of age, worn down with labours, sufferings, and infirmities, and needing all the support and comfort which affection could render, was torn from his family and his Church, and

banished to the desolate island of Patmos. What could have induced him to preach this doctrine? Was it a morbid wish to see others involved in the suffering which had overtaken himself? No: for he says, 'These things write we unto you that your joy may be full.' Could it be the desire of worldly wealth or honour? No: he had sacrificed all these. What, then, was the reason? He himself tells us:— 'That ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.' He was anxious that they to whom he wrote should be partakers of 'like precious faith' with himself, should enjoy the privilege of holy communion, and realise the covenanted blessings which God has promised to His Church, and which He actually bestows on all who come to Christ and stand forth to avow His Name. These privileges, notwithstanding the persecutions often connected with them, are to be esteemed far more highly than anything which the world can bestow.

Now this desire that others should become partakers of the religious blessings which we ourselves enjoy is the highest kind of charity, and necessarily exists wherever there is true religion. It was this which led Moses to say to his father-in-law, 'Come thou with us and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.' It was this feeling which influenced Philip, who, when he had found the Messiah, did not at once follow Him, to enjoy the presence of Him whom he had so long looked for, but sought a companion in his joy. He went to Nathanael and said, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.' It

was this feeling which induced the Apostle Paul when Agrippa had exclaimed, 'Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian,' to reply, 'I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.' He did not wish that they were Jewish prisoners before a Roman judge; but he felt that he had a happiness within him which raised him far above the trembling king, before whom he stood.

And thus it must ever be; because this is the feeling of religion, the feeling of heaven. The Spirit says, 'Come;' and the bride, the Church, will therefore say, 'Come;' and every one that heareth to any purpose will say, 'Come,' until all shall come and 'take the water of life freely.' This fellowship with the saints is a great privilege. What is the value of it? What is the value of being recognised as one of God's people, as a member of His visible Church? I cannot pretend to tell you exactly; but I would not part with it for all the wealth of this world. I would not, for the world, rise from my bed to-morrow morning with the consciousness, I am not a member of any Christian Church on the face of the earth; I have no association with God's people; I am not included in the fellowship of His saints; I have no right to claim the blessings which He has promised to His Church collectively; I am not meant or mentioned in the prayers which are continually put up *by* the Church of God *for* the Church of God, from one end of the world to the other. How much of Providential protection and blessing,—how much of preventing and assisting

grace,—how much of the Divine presence and the comforts of religion, we owe to this fellowship, we shall know only in eternity.

But whatever are the advantages of our fellowship with the saints, they are small as compared with the advantages of fellowship with God. 'Truly,' says the Apostle, 'our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.' What does this fellowship imply? It implies in the first place, real union. 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' Man enters the world in a state of sin, under the dominion of the carnal mind, which is 'enmity against God,' which 'is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;' and 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' Our 'iniquities have separated between us and our God,' and driven us far from Him and from righteousness. Now, before we can have fellowship with Him, we must be reconciled to Him, by repenting of our sins, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with an humble, submissive, obedient faith: and when we do thus penitently believe, we, 'who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ;' we are even adopted into the family of God, and made one with Him. The terms used in Holy Scripture to describe our union with Christ show that it is a real, and not a merely figurative, union. It is the union of the branch with the tree: of the members with the body: of the wife with the husband. Thus being made one with Christ, we are brought into intimate union with the Eternal Father, according to that mysterious prayer of His, 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they

also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' This union being established, not only does enmity cease, but love and friendship begin. 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God.' God has no empty titles: as soon as He calls Abraham His friend, He acknowledges his right to His confidence, and says, 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?' Without mutual confidence and reciprocal communion friendship cannot be maintained. In the case of an earthly friendship, if you begin to withhold your secrets from your friend, your friendship will soon cease; and thus, in this Divine friendship, if you would have it continue and increase, you must make God acquainted with all your thoughts, and cares, and fears. Accustom yourselves to tell Him, in the simplest language, all about your bodies and souls, your families and concerns, all things, however trifling or however important, that affect your interests in time and eternity. This is private prayer, not the formal and studied address to God which you offer in public, but the breathing out your soul to Him in all the simplicity of confidence, and all the earnestness of intense affection. You may say, Why need I tell Him? He knows all about me and my concerns, better than I do myself. Yes; but He has said, 'I will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' Your Divine Friend does know all that you can tell Him, and more; but He likes to hear it from your own lips, He likes you to show that you

put confidence in Him. And when you do thus draw near to Him, He will reveal Himself to you, will shed light on His providential arrangements, will disclose the secrets of His Word to you in many a rich and holy thought, and the secrets of His grace in purifying and comforting influences, till you joyfully exclaim, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.'

But fellowship with God makes us like God. All fellowship has this conforming tendency. 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' The stronger mind dominates over the weaker, and, to some extent, stamps on it its own image; and the weaker mind insensibly acquires the ideas and modes of expression of the stronger. If this be the case with two *men*, who, whatever may be the difference in their mental power, are yet, in many things, on a level, how much more must it be so where the stronger mind is that of God and the weaker mind is that of man! And then, too, in this fellowship, there is no wish, on the part of man, to hinder, but an intense desire to promote, this conformity. The admiration of the Divine character is not weakened by the discovery of imperfections, as is often the case in our intercourse with our earthly friends, but rises into loftier and purer adoration and worship; and to realise this conformity in its full extent becomes the daily prayer and labour of the Christian's life. As we reverently meditate on the Lord Jesus, we 'see the Father;' and thus 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of

the Lord,' until we see all things in the light of God, and our thoughts and sentiments are not our own, but breathed by His Spirit. Then we can truly say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:' 'Our life is hid with Christ in God.' We constantly strive to retire out of ourselves into Him and say:—

'Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory, mind, and will;
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know, and all I feel;
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart:—but make it new!'

Thus we walk and talk with God, even as Enoch did of old, until there was entire conformity, and 'he was not; for God took him.'

But if we would keep the company of God, we must avoid that of sinners. Christ can have no 'concord' with Belial; light no 'communion' with darkness. If we have chosen God's fellowship, we must consult His will in all things, and abide by our choice at any sacrifice.

XI.*

THE IMPORTANCE AND OBLIGATION OF
EARLY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

AND THAT FROM A CHILD THOU HAST KNOWN THE HOLY
SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE THEE WISE UNTO
SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.—
2 TIM. iii. 15.

THE Apostle Paul was exceedingly anxious that the pure gospel of Christ should continue to be taught after his decease, in those Churches which he had been instrumental in planting. He was also anxious that Timothy should be one of its most distinguished and successful ministers; and to this end, he furnishes him with those directions which were necessary, not only for the regulation of his own personal conduct, but also for the efficient performance of his ministe-

* This Sermon was preached in the Oxford Road Chapel, Manchester, on behalf of the Wesleyan Sunday, Day, and Infant Schools, and was published soon after its delivery. In a prefatory note, dated Sheffield, April 30, 1838, Dr Waddy says, 'This Sermon was preached, and is now printed, at the request of the MANCHESTER WESLEYAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE.—The Author hopes that its publication may render some service to the cause in which the gentlemen of that Committee are so laudably interested, and tend to disseminate those views on this great subject, which he is happy to know he holds in common with themselves.'

rial duty, and forewarns him of the perilous times which should come upon the Church in the last days, and the opposition which would be made to the truth by men of impure minds. 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves,—covetous, boast-ers, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, un-thankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' In the directions which he gives for counteracting the destructive operations of these men, he teaches Timothy that the Scriptures are the only antidote to their poisonous errors, and urges him to the con-tinued personal belief, and the wide and industrious dissemination, of the truths which had already 'made him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus,' and which were 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruc-tion in righteousness.'

The whole of this advice is applicable to the present times ; for the great principles of evil are identical in every age and nation. The differences of climate, education, manners, and policy, may make some alterations in the modes of development, and give something like a distinctive character to the vices of different ages ; but they are essentially the same, and can only be successfully encountered by the same means.

In fact, the Apostle's description of the men with whom Timothy had to contend, is singularly accurate

as applied to those who, in every former age, and even in modern times, have been the opponents of religion and order, and the special adversaries of the Holy Scriptures. In their personal character, they are 'lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud:' in their relative character, they are 'disobedient to parents, and without natural affection:' in their civil character, they are 'traitors, truce-breakers, false accusers:' in their religious character, they are formalists and hypocrites, 'having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:' and the Christian Church of this day is called to apply the same antidote to the evil influence of such principles in the government, literature, and habits of our nation, as was prescribed for similar errors and evils in the days of the Apostles,—by instructing her children in the 'Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

I. The Scriptures are *holy* in their *origin*; not as the productions of holy men, but 'because holy men of old wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'—because the Scriptures are really and truly inspired by God, and are invested with an authority altogether extrinsic, and independent of the advantage to be derived from obeying them. Whether the very words of Scripture were originally dictated by the Holy Spirit, or the matter only conveyed, is a question still in dispute, but it is one which does not affect the broad doctrine of their inspiration and Divine authority; and the fact that there are different styles of writing in the different

parts of Scripture will only prove that God made a selection of His instruments, and revealed to each of the inspired penmen that distinct portion of His will which the peculiar talents and style of the writer rendered *him* most fitted to convey to mankind.

The Scriptures are holy in their *precepts*, containing the purest system of morals ever offered to the world, the natural effect of which is the suppression of vice and the promotion of purity;—containing indeed the *only* perfect system of morals, for not one of the systems of the old moralists can be so considered, nor would it be possible to compile one from the writings of them all together. In the Scriptures only are the great principles of moral virtue distinctly declared, and their application carried out to all the duties and relations of active life. But the great excellency of the Scriptures consists in their ability to make us ‘wise unto *salvation* ;’ and there never was a period in the history of the Church, when it was more important to give prominence to this view than at present, and to state and enforce the great maxim of our persecuted forefathers, that ‘The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.’ It contains all the truths and doctrines the knowledge of which is necessary to our salvation, and is the only sufficient rule of faith and practice. Every man’s opinion on religious matters must be brought to this test, and no ecclesiastical dignity, no learned reputation, should lead us to receive a doctrine which does not accord with this Sacred Book. ‘To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them;’ and if ‘an angel from heaven

should preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.'

Two very different, but equally fatal, views of the authority of the Book of God have led to its extensive rejection as the only authoritative rule of faith. The first is the opinion of those who hold that the Sacred Writings are to be regarded with all possible reverence, and that they are the last and supreme court of appeal in all matters of religious controversy; but that they are only to be understood as interpreted by the Fathers of the Church, and that these interpretations are equally inspired, and of equal authority with the Scriptures themselves. Wherever this opinion prevails, it soon leads to the entire neglect of the Scriptures, and the exaltation of writings which were at first considered only explanatory and subordinate into the position which the Scriptures alone should occupy. It was thus with the Jews, who first exalted their traditions, and the writings of their elders, to an equality with the Old Testament, and then soon made the law utterly void by these traditions. It is thus with the Papists, who have openly avowed, for centuries, that it is not only unnecessary to salvation that the people should possess and read the Scriptures, but that their salvation will be really endangered by such a practice, and that all they can safely know is to be learned from the writings of the Fathers, and the teachings of the priesthood. It will be, and in some measure already is, the case with the Oxford Tractarians, who, although of only recent origination, and as yet only in their transition state, have already adopted the fatal doctrine that

the writings of the Fathers of the Church are to be considered as revelation, and of equal authority with the Scriptures; and while they retain this opinion, nothing can stop them in their downward course. We say nothing against the use of the Fathers as commentators: some even of the later ones are worthy of a careful perusal, and those who wrote before the Council of Nice are probably the best interpreters of Scripture, as nearest to the fountain of truth, and some of them as enjoying the advantage of personal communication with the Apostles or their immediate successors. They should, however, be regarded only as witnesses that certain doctrines were held in their days, and as valuable helps to the understanding of the Scriptures. In these respects they deserve great attention and study; but they possess no authority whatever, certainly not the authority of inspiration, nor are any of their opinions, as such, binding upon the Church: and when the party, whose doctrines are now before us, recommend in their organ * the conduct of those who, feeling strongly the inadequacy of their own intellects to guide them to religious truth, are prepared to throw themselves unreservedly on *revelation, wherever found, in Scripture or antiquity*, they avow a principle which ever has led, and will again lead, to the entire rejection of Scripture, and the substitution of merely human productions, falsely invested with Divine authority.

The other erroneous view of the authority of the Book of God, against which we should equally guard, is that which, while it considers the Scriptures only

* THE BRITISH CRITIC, No. 48, page 224.

as properly inspired, and rejects the *dictation* of antiquity as an inspired interpreter, still allows itself in a licentious indulgence of the right of private interpretation; and instead of confining itself to the evidences, expressions, and analogies of Scripture truth, proceeds to question its facts, or assign them to agencies other than those which Scripture has itself avowed: hence has arisen the neology of Germany, and not a little of the scepticism and infidelity of England. And when we have once allowed ourselves to take liberties with the Book of God to a certain extent, it is for ever disqualified to be the authoritative dictator of the subjects of our faith, or the inflexible and unaccommodating regulator of our lives and conduct.

When it is said, however, that the Scriptures are able to make us wise to salvation, it is also specifically added, that it is '*through faith which is in Christ Jesus*:' by which we are to understand, that the great importance of the Scriptures does not consist in those particulars which have sometimes been represented as constituting their highest, if not their only, praise.

It is certainly true, that the Bible is a most valuable book, considered merely as a book of science and taste. Our common English translation presents the scope and elegance of our language, it contains every style of writing, and beauties in each which were never equalled in the fictions of either ancient or modern times. No history can compete with that of the Jews, as given by Moses, either in the importance of its incidents or the clearness of its narration. No art has yet been able to equal the

pathos and interest of the life of Joseph. The Psalms and Prophecies abound in the noblest flights of poetry; and the moral law excels, in its solemn and comprehensive simplicity, all the codes of ancient or modern legislators. But it is not on any or all of these grounds that the Scriptures recommend themselves most strongly to our attention. It is that they reveal the benevolent, the grand, the mysterious operations of Divine mercy; that they show us 'God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,'—how condemned and sinful man may obtain pardon through the atonement of Christ,—how fallen and depraved man may be restored to the image of his Maker. It is that 'life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel;' that man may have his path through the wilderness of this life cheered by the light of God's reconciled countenance, be guided safely and triumphantly through the valley of the shadow of death, and ultimately put into possession of all the glories of the eternal world.

The faith in Christ Jesus, through which the Scriptures make us wise unto salvation, implies, first, then, that the great doctrine of the atonement should be received by us as the basis of our religious opinions,—the prime article in our creed. It also implies that we secure an application of all the blessings of the atonement to our souls, by the exercise of a personal trust and reliance on Christ, receiving and reposing on Him for salvation according to the Scriptures.

II. Our text teaches us, that all this *is attainable*

by children. 'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' This point is worthy of our very serious consideration; and it is necessary that it should be very distinctly stated, that we may guard against any misunderstanding of what may appear to some a rather startling proposition. Our statement, in brief, is this: that a child is capable of the knowledge and experience of those truths which stand necessarily connected with our salvation, and that the period of childhood is even more favourable for their reception than that of mature age.

It must be remembered that the truths in question are revealed to us as articles of our faith, and that whenever received by us at all, they must be received in *this* sense. The mode and process of the real or relative changes to which they refer, are hidden alike from the understanding of the child and the adult; and when man sits down to reason on them, with his strongest intellect and most anxious inquiry, he can only arrive at the conclusion, that as 'the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Our acceptance with God is mercifully made to depend, not on an accurate understanding of the mysteries of redemption, which would puzzle and confound the sage, but on an humble, implicit, and practical reception of them, of which even the child is capable, and for which he is favourably circumstanced by the simplicity and dependence of his mind, and the absence of those

things which, in after-life, form powerful obstacles to the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus. Although born under the influence of the carnal mind, and possessing a fallen and depraved nature, he is not confirmed in actual transgression, he has formed no unconquerable habits, he is engaged in no gainful speculations, he has not to break off a numerous connection of companions, to whom he has been attached by a congeniality of vicious feelings and practices; but his tender mind is open to the influence of those truths which have often been hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes.

There is, indeed, an important sense in which a man must become a child before he can be saved:— ‘Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ ‘Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.’ A man must unlearn the maxims of the world, break off the habits he has contracted, give up the prejudices he has formed, abandon the pursuits in which he has delighted, come out from among his ungodly associates, lay aside the wisdom in which he boasted, and become humble, teachable, and obedient, or he can never be saved. These considerations are important, not only as justifying the establishment and support of Sunday Schools, and other institutions, for the religious education of the young, but also as urging upon parents a more careful religious training of their very young children, and warranting them to expect not merely some equivocal or uncertain advantage, but their real conversion to God, at a much earlier period than they have been accus-

tomed to suppose it possible. The cases of Samuel, Josiah, Timothy, and others, should be regarded not as prodigies, but as examples.

The two great objections which have been raised against placing the whole Bible in the hands of a child are,—the difficulty of his understanding its mysteries, and the impropriety of making him acquainted with some of its details. We might summarily dismiss both these objections by affirming, in the language of a living author (whose name we should be happy to acknowledge if it had not escaped our memory), that ‘The Book, which the God of infinite wisdom has given, as *it* is, to man, as *he* is, cannot be improper for him at any period of life, or under any circumstances.’ We prefer, however, to consider them rather more at large.

The mysteries of Scripture are of three distinct classes:—1. Those connected with the doctrine of the atonement, and the process of a sinner’s conversion, of which we have already spoken. 2. The mysteries of unaccomplished prophecy. Most of these are equally obscure to the child and the adult. They can only be explained by their own fulfilment; and if their obscurity be any valid objection to their being read by the child, it is not less so to their being read by the adult. 3. The third class of mysteries, the class to which alone the objection properly belongs, comprises those which, although not intelligible to the child or the unlearned, are nevertheless easily understood when the judgment is matured, or are easily explained by Biblical criticism. They who object to early Scripture reading on this ground should, on the same principle, object

to early instruction on any subject. Our first ideas are always more or less imperfect; but the seed, the germ of knowledge, is cast into the mind, to expand and grow with the expansion of the intellect, and to attain correctness and maturity under the advantages of progressive culture; and it is worth while to remember, that the great majority of those who have subsequently become eminent for their Biblical knowledge have not only owed, but acknowledged their obligation to an early acquaintance with the Sacred Scriptures.

The objection to placing the Scriptures in the hands of a child on account of the alleged impropriety of making him acquainted with some of their details, is a very grave and serious one, as it is designed by implication to compromise the character of the Bible itself; and as, by the indelicacy with which it has been sometimes urged, it is calculated to inflict the moral injury which it professes to deprecate. We should not, however, be prevented, by a mistaken fastidiousness, from giving this matter the consideration which it deserves. The objection, of course, refers to those parts of Scripture which contain accounts of some of the most humiliating instances of depravity by which human nature has ever been disgraced, and those portions of the law in which the judgments of God are denounced against the licentious.

We wish to be understood as asserting, most fearlessly and distinctly, that these passages may be read for the first time in childhood, not only as safely, but even more safely, than at a more advanced age. They who object to the reading of the

Scriptures by children on this ground, are conscious of the impurity of their own thoughts and feelings, and suppose the same to exist in the mind of the child,—which is not the case; on the contrary, it is of the utmost importance that he should learn the warning lessons taught by these narratives, while he is physically incapable of those sensations which would tend to neutralize their moral influence; that he should see vice ever accompanied by the frown and disapprobation of God,—ever followed by awful punishment; and that a deep and powerful impression of its detestable character, and dreadfully ruinous consequences, should be firmly fixed within him, before his feelings place him under the influence of its actual temptations. ‘Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word.’ Put the Bible, whole and un mutilated, into the hands of your child; let him read it where he likes, and as often as he likes;—it will do him good, and not evil, all the days of his life.

III. What is *the duty of the Church* in this matter? It seems to have been *practically* considered by us, that we have performed our duty when we have established and supported Sunday Schools for educating the children of the poor. We would not attempt to depreciate these institutions; nor would we deny that they have been productive of very beneficial results in their general moral influence, and have furnished many examples of personal conversion and consistent piety; but we are, nevertheless, assured that they have in no case *fully* answered

the expectations of their supporters, or shown a return of good at all proportionate to the amount of agency employed, or the multitudes upon whom it has been brought to bear. They have availed themselves of the authority of Scripture, without recognising the great principle which it inculcates. The principle which lies at the basis of all the responsibility of the Church, in reference to children, is the principle of *membership*, into which relation they were introduced under the Jewish dispensation, by the rite of circumcision, and into which they are now introduced under the Christian dispensation by the ordinance of baptism, by which they are received into the visible Church, elected into the covenant of grace, and become as fully entitled to all the services, discipline, and privileges of the Church which are suitable to *their* tender years, as the oldest member is entitled to those offices of the Church which are suitable to *his* age and spiritual necessities. It is upon this principle that they are specially mentioned in the promises of God: 'The seed of the righteous shall be blessed in the earth.' It is upon this principle that they are specially included in God's covenants with His people: 'You, your wives, and your *little ones*,' is the mode of expression adopted on those solemn occasions. The attention of the religious public ought to be particularly directed to this subject, now that the new Registration Act has rendered baptism unnecessary as a civil or statistical obligation. Great and manifold indeed ought to be the advantages arising from a measure, which will infallibly leave one-third of our population in a state of virtual heathenism,

without any recognised connection with the Christian Church. www.libtool.com.cn

Admitting, then, that membership is the principle of the obligation under which the Church is laid to her children, it will be evident that her duty is purely religious, such in principle as the Church owes to her members generally,—that in all her provisions and instructions she is bound to seek their spiritual welfare; that anything which interferes with this, or does not fairly belong to it, cannot be expected from her. It will also be evident that she is under precisely the same obligation to *all* her children, and that a capital error has been committed in separating the children of the rich and the poor.

The great principles to which we are now directing our attention do not depend, in their application, on a man's possessing fifty pounds, or fifty thousand: they are applicable in both cases, or in neither. The only allowable difference is one of expense. The Church should furnish to the poor the pecuniary means of religious instruction, while the rich should provide these for themselves; but the nature and extent of this instruction should be the same in both instances. We have no right to enter the house of the poor man, and inquire about the religious state of his family, and the instruction of his children, which we do not also possess in reference to the rich; and although such an interference might be opposed by a few persons moving in the higher circles of society, we feel persuaded that such opposition would be of rare occurrence, and would soon cease when the principles of this religious

supervision were explained, and its advantages became generally manifest.

Although the design of these remarks is rather to induce the serious and extensive consideration of this subject, with a hope of eliciting some method of comprehensive and effectual religious training, than to lay down a determinate plan for it, yet the following suggestions are submitted as containing an outline of what appears necessary to the accomplishment of the object:—

1. Sunday Schools should be strictly confined to religious teaching. So much only of rudimental education should be introduced as is absolutely requisite to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, and the understanding of the instructions to be given, from time to time, on spiritual subjects. Of course writing should be universally excluded: the Church is under no obligation to teach her members to write, and cannot do it on the Lord's day without profanation.

2. The children of our Day and Sunday Schools should be united with the children of our members and congregations *generally*, for the purpose of religious instruction, as their parents, rich and poor, meet together for the same purpose.

3. This instruction should be made properly the children's service, and invested with all the solemnities of Divine worship: it should, therefore, be held in the house of God, on the Sabbath, and conducted by the ministers of religion.

We attach great importance to each of these three particulars. First, as to the *place* in which such meetings should be held. It may be objected that

truth is the same wherever and by whomsoever conveyed, and that good advice is likely to be quite as beneficial when given to a child in a school-room as in a church or a chapel. This is specious, but not correct. There are views and impressions connected with the house of God, of which it is most desirable to avail ourselves; and should the school-room be even better adapted, as to convenience of arrangement, for accommodating the youthful auditory, it would still be advisable to remove them to the sanctuary for religious instruction and worship. We are no advocates for the Romish superstition about local sanctity; but we cannot shut our eyes to the existence of sentiments, both in children and adults, strongly in favour of the house of God as the place for public religious services. In the house of God we should also have the company of adults on these occasions, the parents and friends of the children, and others interested in them. This would more properly constitute a congregation, and more obviously connect this infant duty with the Church in her regular and more formal ordinances. It would also be training the children to attend the house of God, which is itself an important duty,—one which they would never learn to observe by going to school, but one which some Sunday Schools have an awful faculty for teaching them to forget.

Secondly, this religious instruction should be given *on the Sabbath*. We would not discountenance its communication at every fitting opportunity on other days, any more than we would have public instruction to supersede the private and domestic visitation, to which we have already referred;

but we insist on the Sabbath for our public meeting for two reasons,—first, on the principle of mental association above alluded to: we could not make it so *religious* a service on any other day; and, secondly, on the Sabbath only could the great mass of our children be assembled.

Thirdly, this religious instruction should be given either by *the minister* himself, or in his presence, and under his superintendence. Nothing is further from our minds than a wish to place ourselves in invidious comparison with the Sunday School Teacher, or to represent him as unqualified for the right performance of his duties; but we must be allowed to state that the child regards his minister in a light widely different from that in which the teacher is regarded, and a light which gives him a decided advantage in the communication of religious instruction. It must also be remembered that a part only of the children of the Church are placed under the care of the Sunday School: and, lastly, that if the obligation exists on which this argument is based, the minister is responsible for its fulfilment, and cannot innocently delegate it to another. 'To his own Master he standeth or falleth,' and his own proper work he must do *himself*, to the best of his ability; and this would not be a work of great difficulty, if our own Catechisms were made, as they ought to be, the basis of our instructions.

The careful arrangement and diligent pursuit of some such plan as the one suggested would save us from the anomaly which is now too frequently presented to the world. A child is brought to the

ordinance of Christian baptism : the Church receives and recognises him as a member, but is utterly regardless of the responsibility connected with the relationship. No systematic course of religious training is provided. He is taken away by his parents, and utterly lost sight of until, some twenty or thirty years afterwards, he is known as the despiser and persecutor of the cause which he might have been taught to support and defend. We have trusted more for the increase of the Church to remarkable interpositions of God's grace, in reference to individuals or multitudes, than to the use of the regular means which He has appointed for perpetuating the praise of His name 'from one generation to another.'

The consideration of this subject is important in a national view. We can only *permanently* influence society by acting upon the young. A number of men may be collected, and addressed upon some exciting subject with all the force of popular oratory : they may seem, at the time, to assent to the opinions of the speaker ; but he will soon find that he has produced no *lasting* effect, that these men are already formed intellectually and morally, and that, while he has succeeded only in obtaining one or two real converts, the thousands are gone back to their old sentiments and practices, almost before they had lost the echo of his voice. The enemies of Scriptural education are aware of this, and the friends of Scriptural education ought to be aware of it too. The preservation of our national character, not only the support, but the very existence, of our institutions, and the stability and security of our civil rights, all de-

pend upon the Church arousing herself for the religious education of her children ; and happy will it be if she should be fully awakened to a sense of her duty, even by the fearful attempts which have been made to wrest this privilege out of her hands.

It is important to the peace and prosperity of our families. During the days of childhood, parental authority may be physically enforced. The father may, by the exertion of muscular power, compel an obedience to his commands, and punish a resistance of his will ; but this mode of government cannot always last. He is gradually sinking into debility, while his son is acquiring the strength and vigour of manhood ; and unless the rule of moral and religious principles has been established, there will be no rule at all. The idea of perpetuating coercion beyond a certain age is ridiculous ; and the family in which there is no parental control *must* be a scene of anarchy and misery.

It is important individually considered. It affects the interest of man not only in this world, but also in the next ; ‘ for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.’ The eternal happiness or misery of the majority of mankind is in reality decided in the first few years of their lives. The instances are comparatively rare in which they depart, in their old age, from the way in which they have been trained up in their childhood : and when this subject is viewed in the light of eternity, we must be convinced that, whatever may be said in favour of the very questionable practice of entrusting ungodly men with the scientific and literary education of youth,

their religious training should be committed to those only who are connected with, and responsible to, the Church of God, and who feel the vast weight of the charge entrusted to them. With these sentiments, we very earnestly recommend the subject to the serious consideration of the religious public, and to the blessing of that God with whose honour we believe it to be so closely connected.

XII.*

THE FUTURE BLESSEDNESS OF THE
RIGHTEOUS.

AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING UNTO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD, FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.—REV. xiv. 13.

THIS Book of Revelation is daily becoming more interesting and more important. Whatever mystery may hang about its prophecies, and prevent their accurate interpretation, it is unquestioned that the prophecies refer to the last times; that this Book contains the predictions of those events, connected with the Church and the world, which shall conclude our moral history, and usher in the realities of an eternal state. And there is little doubt that the marked and unmistakable fulfilment of these prophecies will be among the most important means of producing that general belief in the Word of God,

* This Sermon was preached in the City Road Chapel, London, on Sunday Evening, February 5th, 1854, on the occasion of the decease of Mrs Anne Mason, the wife of the Rev. John Mason, and was soon afterwards committed to the press for private circulation among her friends. The Biographical Sketch which followed it is omitted, as being scarcely suited to the object of the present volume.

and in His universal government, which will lead to the overthrow of error and idolatry, and to that universal subjugation of the nations of the world to Christ which is the great subject of this prophecy. Confessedly mysterious as are the prophecies of this Book, there is no mystery in its admonitions and instructions: these are remarkably plain and forcible. While the doctrine of future rewards and punishments is presented to us in more frequent and solemn declarations of its truth, and in more definite statement of its details, than in any other section of the Book of God, it is a part of the gospel by which 'life and immortality' are eminently 'brought to light.'

The subject of our contemplation is the future blessedness of the righteous: and to this I would particularly direct your attention, after briefly explaining some of the expressions in the text.

A verbal difficulty, and perhaps the only one, is found in the term 'henceforth.' 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, *from henceforth*: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.' Some have attempted to meet this difficulty by supposing, that the term 'henceforth' is to be applied only to a part of the declaration which is contained in the text. Some suppose it to have reference to the *testimony*; that the *testimony* is from *henceforth*,—from this time the Spirit so declares. We cannot imagine the term 'henceforth' to have reference to the general declarations of the text, in any sense which would imply that the righteous had not been blessed *until* that time. The blessedness of the righteous is one of the old doc-

trines of the Sacred Scriptures, and frequently repeated from their very commencement; a doctrine which our Lord had taught distinctly in the hearing of St John; and which St John, in connection with the other disciples, had been commissioned to preach, long before this Revelation had been given to him. We have, in the words of the text, one of those particular applications of a great general principle, of which numerous instances are found in the Sacred Scriptures. Although the general doctrine of the blessedness of the righteous had been previously taught, and therefore was not to be considered as a matter dating from that particular period; yet there was a peculiar appropriateness in the application of this doctrine to the times to which this term 'henceforth' refers.

The visions of this and of the former chapter doubtless refer to some period of very great and alarming persecution; to the last persecution (as it is generally supposed) previous to the overthrow of the spiritual Babylon, as announced in the context,—when Satan shall rage, 'having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' That St John refers to this persecution, I think, will be evident, if we consider the extreme straitness and difficulty in which he here represents the Christians as being placed. In the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 13th chapter, it is said,—'And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,

to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.' In the first place, they who had not this number of the beast, and had not devoted themselves to the service of this enemy of God and man, were either to be killed and destroyed, or to be excluded from all intercourse with social life, the ordinary intercourse even of commerce, to say nothing of the intercourse of friendship and of mutual joy. They were not to be permitted to buy or sell; they were to be thrust out from human society, and to live a life which, in many instances, is perhaps worse than death. On the other hand, we are taught in the 9th and following verses of the chapter from which our text is taken, that 'if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.' We are here taught that Christians should be put to this pass; that they should not be left to doubt what might be the result of a certain line of conduct; that they should have clearly set before them this fearful alternative—either the loss of their lives in this world, or such embittering of their lives, and such

exclusion from human society, as should render it a sort of living death; or, on the other hand, the fearful denunciation of God. St John may be understood as using the term 'henceforth' in the anticipation of that great suffering; as deeming them 'blessed' who shall have died, and shall have entered into rest, before these times of fearful persecution arise.

These times, however, should determine 'between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not'; should call forth and test the Christian's piety, fidelity, and devotedness. We hold it, then, that the term 'henceforth' teaches us that there shall be some special blessedness to those who shall be found faithful in this time of special trial and affliction.

But this immediate use of the doctrine is not at all designed to weaken its general and universal application to the dealings of God with His people. It is here declared, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;' and this declaration is given and confirmed by the highest authority. 'I heard a voice from heaven,'—the voice of God. Be it remembered that most of the declarations addressed to St John were conveyed to him by the instrumentality of an angel. St John, deceived by the magnificence and lustre of this glorious spirit, fell at his feet to worship him; but he said, 'See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.' In this instance, however, the solemn declaration is not communicated through the agency of an angel. It is made by 'a voice from heaven.' God Himself asserts, as He only

has authority to assert, *who they are that shall be blessed after death.* He who is the Judge of mankind, and by whom the final sentence shall be pronounced,—He alone can tell us the terms and conditions on which man shall be permanently happy. He alone has authority to state who shall be His companions and associates in that bliss which He condescendingly determines to share with His people.

The announcement of the text is not merely made; but it is made to be recorded for the consolation of the Church of God in all ages. ‘*Write!* Henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.’ How widely different from the wisdom of this world! The wisdom of this world would say, —‘Blessed are the living; blessed are the rich, the wise, the mighty, the noble. The living man has an opportunity of gratifying his desires, and appetites, and tastes. He has the excitement of business; he has the ambition of fame; and he has the means of intellectual pleasure. He has before him all that heart can wish.’ The wisdom of God says, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.’ The wisdom of the world sees nothing but that which is humiliating in death; man losing all the advantages of his existence here. The wisdom of God affirms, that they who die in the Lord possess advantages greater than any that this world can bestow; and that, so far from having lost their blessedness, they have entered into that state which can alone be truly termed ‘blessed.’

This declaration from heaven is represented as being confirmed and enlarged; or, if not enlarged, at least illustrated and established, by *the testimony*

of the Spirit. The voice from heaven says, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit.' That is the confirmation on the part of the Spirit. The Spirit then proceeds to furnish the reasons upon which that blessedness is founded:— 'Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' I have attempted to show that the words, although *peculiarly* applicable to some period of the Church's history, perhaps even yet distant from us, are by no means to be understood as *exclusively* applicable to that time.

So, also, as regards this confirmation by the Spirit: let me endeavour to impress upon you that this is no new thing in the dispensations of God. It is only one instance—a beautiful one, it is true—of that constant confirmation, and arguing out (if I may so say), by the Spirit, of the declarations of Heaven; pervading alike all creation, and all the dispensations of God in providence and in grace. It is a matter of great practical importance to us—when we would attempt to draw a line of distinction between a religion which consists merely in theory, however accurate that theory may be, and a religion which is found to consist, also, in corresponding influences on the heart—to mark this attendance of the Spirit's testimony and influence on the Word of God. See how this great principle pervades all the operations of God. In the first instance, God issued His almighty fiat, and bade creation rise. 'The Spirit moved on the face of the waters,' and made them instinct with life and being, giving form, and fashion, and individuality to the great sentiment and

command which had proceeded from the Father. God said, 'Let there be light;' and the Spirit spanned the arch of heaven with its radiant bow, and taught the world the history and theory of that vast illumination which God had created. God reveals the fact and principles of His physical government; the Spirit renews the face of the earth: He goes forth to expound and prove 'the invisible things' of God 'by the things which are seen,' 'even His eternal power and Godhead.'

If we turn for a moment to those truths which, by way of distinction, we call religious truths, the application of this principle is more clear and distinct; and, thank God, it will find an echo in the experience of many who are here. Whenever the Word is simply received and believed, the testimony of the Spirit immediately confirms the 'voice from heaven;' and it does not *only* confirm it. We may be called, in the first instance, to a simple belief in the truth which God the Father declares; but the Spirit, in confirming that truth, goes on to amplify and establish it, furnishing us with reasons by which our faith may be strengthened. Let us receive, with simple and sincere belief, the voice from heaven which teaches us God's purity and righteousness; and the Spirit saith, 'Yea.' The Spirit exerts His immediate influence on the heart, producing conviction and repentance. Let the declaration of God's mercy be simply and heartily believed, in that bright and glorious manifestation of it which is given in the death of Christ for the redemption of the world; and the Spirit 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' So

with the consolations of God's Word ; so with His promised aid at all times : wherever the ' voice from heaven ' is proclaimed, and wherever we find occasion for help, the Spirit saith, ' Yea,' and confirms the truth of God's Word in the heart of the believer ; and we look for the fulfilment of all the prophecies through the mighty and omnipotent energy of the responsive Spirit. We look for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ ; we look for the renovation of the world ; we look for the resurrection of the dead ; ' not by might, nor by power ; but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

The next expression of the text which we must explain, is,—' Blessed are the dead that die *in the Lord.*' The terms, ' in the Lord,' and ' in Christ Jesus,' which very frequently occur in the Sacred Scriptures, invariably refer to a state of conversion. They refer to the union subsisting between the believer and Christ, a union which is represented by illustrations most close and intimate. The believer is ' in Christ,' in the same sense in which the branches are in the vine, and the members in the body : ' I am the Vine ; ye are the branches.' ' Ye are members one of another ;' members of the body of which Christ is the Head. All the sympathies and feelings of the members are participated by the Head. ' He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.' God's watchful and wakeful care over His people is represented as a care arising out of this absolute union. If all these expressions of Scripture are illustrations designed to explain and enforce the great general truth, that the believer must be united to Christ, then it is evident that a

union far more close and intimate than that which satisfies a large portion even of the professing world is necessary in order to our salvation; that nothing less than our being 'translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son,' than our 'putting off the old man with his deeds,' and putting on 'the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,'—nothing less, in fact, than our being 'born again,'—will entitle us to this blessedness.

It implies, in the first instance, a removal of guilt: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' The whole practical application of this passage of Scripture, and the benefit which we are likely to derive from its consideration, depend upon our being enabled and disposed clearly to ascertain the position in which we stand. The words of the text tell us, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.' Are we 'in the Lord'? Do we furnish the evidences? Consider the one which is just now before us. Whoever is in Christ Jesus is free from guilt, because 'there is *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Do you feel condemnation? Do you feel that the wrath of God is resting upon you? Have you a painful apprehension of futurity, and of that judgment to which we are all most certainly hastening? If so, you are not in Christ Jesus. There may be some association and connection with His Church; but you are not 'in Christ Jesus,' in the sense in which the words are here used, and in which they who are pronounced 'blessed' are in Him.

It is further evident from Scripture, that he who is 'in Christ Jesus' loves God and dwells in love. 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' The natural and 'carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Is this enmity destroyed? Do we find that, instead of regarding God as our enemy, we look upon Him as our Friend, and love Him supremely?

There is still another evidence. He who is 'in Christ Jesus' obeys Him: for if He be in us, and we in Him, we shall walk 'as He also walked.' 'He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.' If we thus abide in Christ, and He abides in us, the natural result will be, that we shall bring forth 'the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.' To 'die in the Lord' implies that we should be found in this state at the time of our death. Men die as they live.

It is not for us to attempt to place limitations to the Divine mercy; or to say what may take place during that period—in many instances a very brief and mysterious one—which intervenes between the cessation of worldly consciousness (the cessation, at least, of the power to make any communications by voice or sign), and the removal of the spirit from its clay tenement. It is not for us to say in how short a time, and to how great an extent, the mercy of God may be manifested. This would be assuming a wisdom which is not ours; it would be attempting

to pronounce a decision in a case on which we can by no possibility form a judgment. Certain it is, however, that those instances of *death-bed repentance* in which, beyond the expectations of all the by-standers, the party at the very point of death has recovered, and been restored to health, and again mingled with the world, give very little encouragement to hope in cases in which some previous 'living in the Lord' does not furnish evidence of 'dying in the Lord.' The judgment of the last day is to have reference to 'the deeds done in the body.' Everything is to be brought to light,—all our words, all our thoughts, all our actions. It is very unsafe for us to suppose, that the Divine attention is specially and exclusively fixed upon a very limited portion of life, and that the Divine law is to be understood as applicable only to this portion; or that the state of mind in which a man may be found at some particular period, although that period may be just previous to death, is to be set against the state of mind in which he may have been found during the whole of life. There is very little certainty, I am persuaded, to be attached to expressions on which much stress is, in many instances, laid. It is a delightful and glorious thing to find, at the conclusion of life, that the testimony which is given is in accordance with the previous course; that the prospect brightens and becomes more distinct; and that eternal things stand out in their more blessed and vivid reality. But it is not very satisfactory to find, that the expressions of the concluding portion of life are in strange and direct opposition to the whole of its previous course. 'Let me die the death

of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' was the wish of an ungodly Prophet. But to live the life of the righteous, to live 'in the Lord,' is the Scriptural way to secure our 'dying in the Lord.' There are many instances, like that of our dear sister whose departure we have had recently to mourn, in which the servant of Christ *falls asleep* in Jesus; in which there appears to be no sentence uttered that can with propriety be classed among the 'last words,' in the ordinary sense applied to such terms; in which there is no vivid apprehension of immediate decease, nor any declaration on which special stress can be placed. Far more consolatory is it to those who are left behind to contemplate a consistent and holy life, to infer therefrom the certainty (which, thank God, we may!) of a holy and triumphant death, than merely to rest on expressions which have been used at the latest moment.

In what, then, does this *blessedness* consist? 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.'

In the first place, they rest from *pain*. Pain is a positive evil, notwithstanding all that may be said to the contrary, and all the attempts which may be made by our friends to soothe and mitigate our sufferings; and notwithstanding all the gracious aid and relief which God in His providence and His mercy may bestow. 'The wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest,' in that land of repose to which the children of God are hastening. They rest from their labours, as they rest from the troubles and anxieties which are mingled with all

the pursuits, and even pleasures, of the world.

And they rest from their labours; from their works, their duties, and religious observances. Great is the delight which the people of God enjoy in connection with the service of God. That delight, however, is not unmingled with painfulness and anxiety. The brighter and more glorious our views of a future state, the more intense will be our anxiety. It is said that God will 'wipe away all tears from our eyes.' This declaration implies, plainly and evidently, that there will be tears to wipe away. The people of God are represented as a suffering and a weeping people. There are moments of hallowed joy; moments when the griefs and distresses of the world are forgotten; when, in the invigorating influence of religious consolations, we feel that 'the joy of the Lord is our strength.' But such seasons are few and transitory. The general style and tenor of the feelings of God's people are chastened with sorrow.

There is a rest from *watchfulness*. The glorified are no longer in the enemy's country; no longer exposed to danger, difficulty, and temptation. They are free from the inducements to evil, free from the danger of sin; separated from Satan by that great gulf which he cannot pass; separated from this poor evil world, with all its allurements, anxieties, and troubles. There is a rest from the necessity of watchfulness. The fight is terminated, the conquest is secured; the crown of glory and the robe of eternal happiness sit lightly on the limbs and on the head which have been tortured with anxiety and wearied with the toils and conflicts of a Chris-

tian life. They 'rest from their labours.' Prayer is lost in praise. There is no desire unfulfilled; nothing remains to be wished for; faith is lost in sight. God still dwells in light, but that light is no longer inaccessible. We shall be permitted to behold Him, and we 'shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'

'Their works do follow them;' or, as the word is, 'Their works *accompany* them.' It makes very little difference which of these terms is taken. What are these 'works' which follow or accompany them? We are so very cautious and careful lest we should seem to be preaching salvation by works, that we are in some danger of forgetting that, according to the system of Scriptural theology which we ourselves profess and endeavour faithfully to preach, there is a certain rewardableness in the works of the people of God. There is a sense in which God rewards them *for* their works, and *according to* their works. It is one thing to represent these works as a substitute for the atonement and the righteousness of Christ, and another thing to represent them as the fruit of the Spirit, and acceptable through Christ. All their acts of devotion, all their acts of religious worship, will follow them. It may be said sometimes, 'What benefit do we derive from the performance of certain acts of religious worship?' They are enjoined by God; and a conscientious obedience to what God commands, *because* He commands it, has never yet lost its reward, and will not lose it in that day in which respect to God's authority and commandments will constitute one of the elements of His judgment. If He commands

us not to forget 'the assembling of ourselves together;' if He directs us to associate with His people for the purposes of prayer, and reading and hearing His Holy Word, and holding intercourse and communion on matters of religious experience; if these injunctions are given to us, and if we obey them for God's sake, let us not suppose that we are to estimate the value of the services merely by the sentiments and feelings of the time, but *as done unto God*; and whatever has been done unto God, because He has commanded it, and with a desire to obey and to please Him, will be acceptable in His sight. All acts (for example) of charity to the poor: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' This is the meaning of our so using 'the unrighteous mammon' that we may make to ourselves 'friends' who shall hereafter 'receive us into everlasting habitations.' And while it is true, in the ordinary sense of the words, that, as 'we brought nothing into this world,' so 'we can carry nothing out;' it is also true that we may 'lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven,' by our acts of charity and kindness to the poor and distressed. Let it be observed that Christ makes human necessity the representative of Himself. There is not one of us here who would not say, 'If Christ were to present Himself to me, and to give evidence of His identity; if He were to enable me, as He enabled Thomas, to see the print of the nails in His hands, and the wound in His side; if I were certain that He was thus showing Himself to me,—I would give to Him whatever He should ask. Although my goodness cannot extend to Him, and if

He were hungry He would not tell me, for all things are His; yet, if it were possible that He should need anything, all I have should be given to Him.' Our Lord answers all these vain professions of what we would do to Him personally, by saying, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these My brethren, or done it not, ye have done it, or done it not, unto Me.' Christ is represented in the poverty and wretchedness of the poor. He chooses to be represented in the wants of mankind, so far as these can call forth the exercise of our benevolence and charity. The godly man will do what he does *as unto the Lord*. And even though there may not be, in the character or bearing of those who become the objects of our sympathy, anything which likens them to Christ,—though their very vice may be that which calls for the exercise of our charity and kindness,—there is a sense, intelligible and plain, in which whatever is done in Christ's name is taken as done to Himself. He that gives a cup of cold water in the name of Christ gives it to Christ.

All these works accompany or follow the saints of God. The admonition which is given, the warning, the attempt to turn the sinner from the error of his ways, the attempt to save a soul from death and to hide a multitude of sins,—all these works accompany them.

Then, again, all sufferings which are sustained in the spirit of Christ, and with resignation to Him, have in them the nature of works. St John's attention might have been directed to innumerable objects; but he was not to overlook that which was the great object of interest in heaven to an immortal

man. His guide said, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?' John said, 'Sir, thou knowest.' 'These are they,' said he, 'which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Hence 'they are before the throne of God;' and 'they walk with' Jesus 'in white, for they are worthy.' Trials, sufferings, and persecutions, endured for Christ, are regarded as works.

But the representation of the text is not only that there shall be a 'blessedness' to the righteous, but that this 'blessedness' shall be in proportion to the degree of their holiness, or shall represent the degree of their faith under suffering. It is our privilege, and in our power, not merely to determine the great general question whether we will be on the side of Christ or not,—whether we will be ultimately sharers of His glory, or stand in opposition to Him, and endure His sentence and His wrath; but what degree of glory we shall acquire, and whether we shall be near to His throne, rising high in His salvation. Nothing is unimportant in this world that stands connected with the Christian's life; because nothing is unimportant that stands connected with his eternal glory. We are taught that we may serve the Lord Christ in all things, however common or ordinary; so that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of Christ.

The words of the text would admit of two applications: an application, in the first instance, to ourselves; and, secondly, to our sister, as far as

they were illustrated in her life, and have received their glorious consummation in her death.

Let me press this matter very earnestly and seriously upon our own attention. In a very short time we shall have done with present opportunities, and with all the advantages which God has conferred upon us. My mind was powerfully impressed when I entered this pulpit to-night. It seems to me but as yesterday since I claimed the privilege of occupying a seat in this chapel, in association with other young people of my own age, privileged like myself as the sons of your Ministers. Many of them have passed away. I can scarcely recognise one face in this congregation on which I was accustomed at that time to look. And, in a time as short as that to which I have just referred, most, if not all, of us who are present to-night will have passed to our everlasting reward or our everlasting doom. You are busily engaged in this world. This London, with its trade and its energy, its enterprise and its causes of anxiety, makes far more than ordinary claims and demands on the attention of men. The very atmosphere seems to be inspired with earnestness and bustle. But these things cannot long detain you. You are passing hastily away. The very energy is probably telling on your lives. If this night your souls should 'be required of you,' would you 'die in the Lord'? Do not say, *you hope you would*. Do not say, after referring to those portions of Scripture in which the marks of our being in the Lord are so clearly and unmistakably given to us, that *you hope you would*. Let me ask, Are you living in the Lord? Are you

living to Christ? Are you living in reference to His judgment and final sentence? If so, blessed and happy are you. You may go on to serve your generation, being 'diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' You may go on in the performance of your duties, in the assurance that, when called to depart hence, you will 'depart in peace.' But 'there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' If the words of the text are clearly confirmed by the Spirit of God, 'Blessed are they who die in the Lord;' then the reverse is true, 'Cursed are they who die *not* in the Lord.'

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XIII.

A CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE;

DELIVERED AT

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE

HELD IN LONDON IN 1860.

OBEY THEM THAT HAVE THE RULE OVER YOU, AND SUBMIT YOURSELVES: FOR THEY WATCH FOR YOUR SOULS, AS THEY THAT MUST GIVE ACCOUNT, THAT THEY MAY DO IT WITH JOY, AND NOT WITH GRIEF: FOR THAT IS UNPROFITABLE FOR YOU.—HEB. xiii. 17.

I HAVE two Charges to deliver; one this morning, and one in connection with the Ordination Service on Wednesday next. As that must of necessity be addressed to the Clergy, I think it proper to address this to the People.

My present object is to show:—

I. That Methodism is a true Church.

II. The duties and obligations which the people owe to their Church.

I. That Methodism is a *true Church*.

God hides His own intentions from the instruments of His mightiest operations: the development of the whole plan would dazzle, confound, and overwhelm them. He fixes their exclusive attention on one thing, He fills their mighty souls with the absorbing apprehension of *one* great idea, inflames

them with the loftiest enthusiasm, and sends them forth to sacrifice and subordinate everything to its accomplishment. He works with them by His Providence, and only gradually unfolds before them His great design. It was thus with Paul, with Luther, and with Wesley.

The history of above a century has now proved beyond doubt that it was the intention of God to raise up a distinct Church by the agency of Wesley ; but had he early embraced this notion, he would have been engaged in laying out some complete scheme of Church-government, and endeavouring to make every part of his operations harmonise with every part of his rude and speculative machinery : he would have lost the simplicity of his purpose in the multitude of his objects, and would have weakened the force of his work by the complication and intricacy of his movements.

One simple object was presented to his mind in the commencement of his important career, which was 'to save souls.' This led him to visit the prisons of Oxford, and to undertake his mission to Georgia. And when, in consequence of the association of other persons with himself, it became necessary that they should have some defined and specified plan of operations, that they might act in concert, and aim at the same thing,—the principle was not altered, it was only enlarged. No new and second purpose was added to the first ; but he who went forth individually to save souls instructed his coadjutors that their only work was 'to spread Scriptural holiness through the land.' His strong and ardent attachment to the Church of England

made him deprecate the idea of separation; and very unwillingly, and one by one, as absolute necessity forced them upon him, did he adopt those measures which appeared to tend towards the foundings of a distinct Denomination.

In the mean time, every new step of Methodism was at once a step towards its perfect organisation and its entire distinctness, and an approximation to the true model of Scripture; until Wesley was excluded from the pulpits of the Establishment, and his people were driven from the table of the Lord. The doctrines of Methodism became more extensively propagated, her worship and discipline more fully defined and settled, until at length she appeared, according to the statement of Archdeacon Paley, one of the nearest approaches he could imagine to primitive Christianity.

In order to show you that Methodism is a true Church, I shall prove that we have a Scriptural creed and a godly discipline; that we have the Sacraments duly administered, and the Gospel faithfully preached, by a valid ministry; and that our means of grace are sanctioned by Scripture, and blessed by God to the edification of His saints.

1. As to the *Doctrines* of Methodism. These are derived from the Scriptures *only*. We hold that 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation;' or, as the Word of God teaches us, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is pro-

fitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). While Wesley held the Fathers in high esteem, especially those who wrote before the Council of Nice, he yet held that they were of no authority in matters of faith. 'For as all faith is founded upon Divine authority, so there is now no Divine authority but the Scriptures; and therefore no one can make that to be of Divine authority, which is not contained in them.'*

Methodism arose, as we are told by Mr Jackson in his excellent Centenary volume, at the most unevangelical period that had ever occurred in this country since the Reformation. Heresy prevailed both in and out of the Establishment.

Infidelity existed not in the forms of brutal ignorance in which it now appears, but supported by men of high and philosophical minds; while gross immorality pervaded both the literature and the manners of the people. The best and most talented of the Clergy seem to have thought conscientiously, but mistakenly, that the best method to eradicate and destroy the error and impurity which overshadowed the land, would be to preach a pure but cold morality; thus vainly attempting to gather from its dry and withered branches those fruits which God declares are the fruits of the Spirit, and which can only be produced by trees of His own right hand planting. No attempts were made to convince the sinner of his danger, or point out to him the mode of his escape. Methodism proclaimed

* Wesley's Works, vol. x. p. 91.

abroad the forgotten doctrines of original sin, repentance, justification by faith, the direct witness of the Spirit, and sanctification; and by the prominent and intelligible enunciation of these doctrines its preaching has ever been characterised, and to this its extensive spread is, under God, to be attributed. The same effects are produced in later as in former days. The thin and flimsy morality with which sinners would have covered the deformity of their sinfulness, is represented to them as 'a refuge of lies:' they are driven to the absolute necessity of repentance; not a mere alteration of some views and practices, but a deep inward sorrow and shame for sin, at once forsaking it and fleeing from it, and crying in the bitterness of their souls, 'What must I do to be saved?' Then the answer is given, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' The glorious doctrine of justification by faith,—that we are freely and fully pardoned by God for the alone sake of the merits and death of Jesus Christ the moment we believe on Him with the heart,—which Luther called *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ*, 'the doctrine of a standing or falling Church;' the doctrine which glorifies the mediatorial character and office of Christ, which places the sinner in the most humble and entire dependence on the Word and faithfulness of God; this glorious doctrine has led thousands of penitent sinners to the footstool of Divine mercy: They believed; they were saved.

The *knowledge* of the forgiveness of sins had not been taught as possible; it was not the subject of the expectations or prayers even of the more serious

part of the community ; and the sanctification of our nature was put off, as by common consent, until the hour of death. But Wesley had read and felt that ' the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God ; ' and because he had become a son, ' God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into ' his ' heart, crying, Abba, Father. ' He taught that this witness of adoption is the immediate and constant result of justifying faith ; ' Whosoever believeth hath the witness in himself : ' and that it is alike the privilege of all and every one who thus believes in Christ ; ' for as *many* as received Him, to them gave He power, ' or privilege, ' to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. ' Religion ceases to be a speculation in the mind, or an outward restraint, originating in views of the fitness of things, and forced unwillingly upon mankind. It is felt to be a dispensation of the Spirit ; it is felt to be spirit and life,—a matter of palpable reality and feeling. The soul is filled with new affections and delights ; ' old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new ; ' the believer rejoices in the forgiveness of the past and the anticipations of the future ; while God is now cleansing the thoughts of his heart by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, and giving him a heaven begun on earth in his preparation for its full and final enjoyment.

2. Our *Discipline* is, as near as can be understood, that of the Primitive Church. The admission or exclusion of members is the office of the Minister. The instruction of the Apostle to the Corinthian Church, in reference to the licentious member, that

when they were gathered together they should expel him from them, furnishes the prototype of that meeting of the godly Leaders, with their Pastor at their head, by whom the discipline of our Church is exercised.

Not only is this association of the laity with the Clergy in the administration of discipline sanctioned by Apostolic usage; but also the employment of laymen as occasional preachers. The Deacons, whose primary duty was to manage the secular affairs of the Church, were occasionally employed as preachers of the gospel; and one of them, after having laboured with signal fidelity and success, was permitted to be the first who should seal his doctrine with his blood, and acquire the glorious crown of Christian martyrdom.

3. The *Sacraments* we hold to be two, and two only,—Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is the initiatory sacrament, the formal symbol of our entrance into covenant with God. It was instituted by Christ, who alone has power to institute a proper sacrament, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, perpetually obligatory on all Christians; and it was instituted instead of circumcision, for, as that was a sign and seal of God's covenant, so is this.

The outward and visible sign in baptism is the application of water 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' The inward and spiritual grace signified by baptism is, our being cleansed from sin, and becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus. The *actual* privileges of baptized persons are these: they are made members of the

visible Church of Christ; their gracious relation to Him as the Second Adam, and as the Mediator of the New Covenant, is solemnly ratified by Divine appointment; and they are thereby recognised as having a claim to all those spiritual blessings of which they are the proper subjects.

The solemnity and importance of this sacrament should at all times be insisted on, especially since the Act for Registration of Births has divested it of all civil and political importance, and taken away an inducement to its observance which formerly brought to this sacrament those who were not influenced by any higher motive.

'The Lord's Supper' (according to the words of Mr Wesley) 'was ordained by God to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities. It was ordained for all who know and feel that they want the grace of God, either to restrain them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God. Inasmuch as we come to His table, not to give Him anything, but to receive whatsoever He sees best for us, there is no previous preparation indispensably necessary but a desire to receive whatsoever He pleases to give. No fitness is required at the time of our communicating but a sense of our state, of our utter sinfulness and helplessness; every one who knows he is fit for hell, being just fit to come to Christ in this, as well as all other ways of His appointment; '* and although the administration of this sacrament is confined to those who are regu-

* Wesley's Works, vol. i. p. 280.

larly ordained, and the most exact observance of the order of our service-book enjoined in its celebration, yet the spiritual benefit derived by the recipient is made to depend not on the qualifications of the dispenser, but only on the exercise, on his own part, of that faith without which it is impossible to please God.

4. Our *Public Worship* consists of five principal elements :—

Songs of *Praise* from the best Collection of Psalms and Hymns in the English language ; abounding in beautiful poetry, rich in evangelical sentiment, full of distinct and accurate theology, and pervaded throughout by the deepest and most hallowed experience.

Prayer, including, where the people are willing, a Liturgy from which those objectionable portions are expunged which the early Reformers could not, and which modern Reformers either dare not or will not, remove ; but whether a Liturgy be used or not, full scope is afforded for the most fervid devotion in the use of extempore prayer.

Preaching, in which the great truths of the gospel are set forth with plainness and energy.

Reading and exposition of the Scriptures.

Communion amongst the members of the Church, for mutual exhortation, counsel, consolation, or reproof.

These devotional acts are variously combined in our different forms of service, some of which are common to ourselves and other religious Denominations, while others are either peculiar to Wesleyan Methodism, or occupy in our ritual a more prominent position than is assigned to them elsewhere. Such are—

Prayer Meetings, held in connection with all our Societies, after the example and usage of the Apostles and Primitive Christians; in which the state of the Church, and the peculiar circumstances of individual Societies or persons, are made the subjects of devout and earnest supplication. These have ever been marked by the special answer and blessing of God.

Class Meetings. The Church has ever professed its belief in the communion of saints. That communion is now generally understood, by some portions of the Church, to involve no more than the collective participation of the Lord's Supper. Something more than this is, however, taught in Malachi iii. 16—18: 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.' As also in the Apostle's injunction (Heb. iii. 13), to 'exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' This Scriptural notion of communion is carried out in our Class Meetings. When any usage is represented as according to Scripture and primitive Christianity, it is not meant that it is so exactly and in every particular; but that it is a fair, proper, and legitimate

recognition of the principles, and observance of the duties, enjoined in Scripture, and observed in the practice of the early Church. No man would attempt to prove that the public services of any Church in Christendom are conducted exactly on the Apostolic model, or even that the Apostles themselves always pursued precisely the same course. The Papist would not insist that Peter said mass; nor the Episcopalian that the Apostles used a liturgy which at that time had no existence, the earliest part of which cannot be traced higher than within two hundred years of their time. But it is enough for us to know that in their public worship they sang hymns of praise to God, offered up fervent prayer, and read and expounded God's Holy Word, to justify us in describing the worship in which such exercises are found as Apostolical and primitive. So we make no pretensions to prove that the *exact* model of the Methodist Class Meeting may be found in Scripture, or in the primitive Church; but we maintain that such meetings are a fair and legitimate rendering of the Scriptural obligation of Christian communion, the best existing in any Church, and so eminently owned of God as to prove beyond doubt that they have the Divine sanction and approbation.

For the use of tickets as badges of membership, we have not only the warrant of caution and utility, but also of Scripture. The *σύμβολα* or *tesserae* of the ancients were used in somewhat analogous circumstances; and the *ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαί*, the 'commendatory letters' mentioned by the Apostle, were of precisely the same character: wherever the bearers of them came, they were acknowledged by their

brethren, and received with all cheerfulness; and they served as an outward and visible distinction between the godly and the profane, 'between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not.'

Our *Love-feasts* have by some been regarded as a modern invention, instead of what they really are, —a return to the practice of the Church in its earliest times. It is Godwin's opinion, as quoted by Jennings, that the *agapæ* or Love-feasts of the primitive Christians were derived from the *אָהֶבָה* or feasts upon the sacrifices, at which the Jews entertained their friends, and fed the poor. There were also feasts of much the same kind in use among the Greeks and Romans.

In imitation either of these Jewish or Gentile Love-feasts, or probably of both, the primitive Christians in each particular Church had likewise their Love-feasts, which were supplied by the contributions of the members according to their several abilities, and partaken of by all in common. And whether they were converts from among the Jews or Gentiles, they retained their old custom with very little alteration; and as their *ἀγάπαι* had been commonly annexed to their sacrifices, so they were now annexed to the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ at the Lord's Supper, and were therefore held on the Lord's day, before or after the celebration of that ordinance.

It is commonly supposed that, when St Jude mentions certain persons who were spots 'in the feasts of charity,' *ἐν ταῖς ἀγάπαις*, he alludes to the Christian Love-feasts.

The most circumstantial account of the mode in

which the ancient *agapæ* were celebrated, is given by Tertullian in his Apology, written in the second century. "Our supper," says he, "which you accuse of luxury, shows its reason in its very name; for it is called ἀγάπη, that is, "love." Whatever charge we are at, it is gain to be at expense on the account of piety; for we therewith relieve and refresh the poor; there is nothing vile or immodest committed in it. For we do not sit down until we have first offered up prayer to God. We eat only to satisfy hunger, and drink only so much as becomes modest persons. We fill ourselves in such a manner as that we remember still that we are to worship God by night; we discourse as in the presence of God, knowing that He hears us.'

Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Church at Smyrna, in the first century, mentions the *agapæ*, and gives some directions concerning them; and Lucian, the Epicurean, has also a passage which seems to refer to them; but the references in both instances are disputable. They are, however, distinctly mentioned by Pliny in his celebrated Epistle to Trajan. He calls them the *cibus promiscuus et innoxius*, 'the common and harmless meal' of the Christians, which they ate together after the celebration of the Eucharist.

This primitive practice, though under a simpler form and more expressly religious, is retained in modern times only by the Moravians and ourselves. Bread and water only are used, and the conversation is restricted to matters of religious experience.

5. I now direct your attention to your *Ministry*.
'And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but

he that is called of God as was Aaron.' This call involves something of which the candidate must himself be the only judge, and some things of which the Church must judge by outward evidences. That of which the candidate can be the only judge is, the deep inward impression of the duty to renounce the world, and take upon himself this office and ministry,—the ceaseless, restless conviction of imperative duty, 'Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.'

The things of which the Church must judge by outward evidences are, first, his sound conversion to God. For to the sinner God saith, 'What hast thou to do to take My name into thy lips?' Religion is not a mere science; no man can teach its truths and mysteries who has not experienced its influence; while for all the *pastoral* duties of the ministerial office the unconverted man is totally unfit. The exercise of a godly discipline, the settlement of cases of conscience, the advice and deliverance of those who are tempted by Satan, the spiritual consolation of the distressed, the leading forward and building up of the believer, are all matters which depend not less upon a right state of heart than a rightly informed mind; and no amount of mere human learning or ability can qualify a man successfully to undertake them. Moreover he must be of blameless life, having a good report of them that are without.

Another thing of which the Church must judge, is his gifts; whether he possesses that amount of clear Scriptural knowledge, that sound judgment with regard to Divine things, that amount of literary attainments, and that facility and impressiveness of

utterance, which are sufficient to justify the expectation, that he will be enabled to perform with acceptance the duties of so solemn and important a calling.

Another point which (thank God) is made imperative and indispensable among us, is, that he should have had fruit of his labours as a Local Preacher; that some sinners should have been brought to repentance, or that some believers should have received marked and special communications of the Divine blessing under his preaching. He is then recommended for examination by the vote of the laity of his Circuit, who can and *do* stop, at this stage, any candidate whom they think deficient in any of the preceding qualifications. He is closely examined by the Ministers of his District, and admitted on a four years' probation of his piety, zeal, diligence, talent, and usefulness. He is then solemnly ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.

We do not say that they who have been episcopally ordained are no Ministers; but we hold that if they were not previously called and qualified of God, neither episcopal nor any other ordination would have made them such. Instead, therefore, of making the will of God wait upon the appointment of man, we make, in our ordination, the appointment of man to wait upon the will of God.

The stationing of the Ministers in the places which are to be the scenes of their respective labours, is with the annual assembly of the Clergy alone in Conference. This, too, is according to the practice of the Primitive Church. 'Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain Prophets

and Teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away' (Acts xiii. 1—3).

This Scriptural mode of appointment is equally removed from individual patronage, under which presentations to the cure of souls are sure to become mere property, and be advertised, bequeathed, sold by auction, as it is this day,—a system which has no warrant in Scripture, and which no man pretends to trace beyond the period of the general corruption of Christianity,—and also from the Dissenting practice of popular election, the evils of which are scarcely, if at all, less than those of individual patronage. The people are, in many instances, the worst judges of the sort of ministry which is best suited to their present state. No man should fear to do his duty lest he should be dismissed by his turbulent congregation; nor should he be permitted to retain his position after he has become useless and objectionable. Our Church is the only one in which the true Scriptural principle of the appointment of the Ministers by the body of Ministers is fully recognised and acted upon.

Brief and hasty as this view of Methodism has been, I think it is sufficient to establish my first point:—that Wesleyan Methodism is a true Church; that we have a valid Ministry, a Scriptural creed, a

godly discipline ; that we have the gospel faithfully preached, the Sacraments duly administered ; and that our means of grace are sanctioned by Scripture, and blessed by God to the edification of His saints. I will now strive to show you what are,—

II. The *duties* and *obligations* which the people owe to their Church.

Respectful *recognition* of your Clergy,—regarding them in their proper character, as Divinely called and qualified, and duly ordained Ministers of Christ, and, as such, occupying a position in the Church which is essentially distinct from that occupied by any other class of men, although the latter may be employed as occasional Preachers or subordinate Pastors.

Be habitually careful, in speaking of your Ministers (especially before your children), to speak of them with respect. Avoid calling them by their Christian names : this sort of familiarity breeds contempt in those who use it, as well as in those who hear it. To listen to the freedom with which the characters and qualifications of your Ministers are sometimes canvassed, one would think that they were excluded from the benefit of that great law of charity, 'Speak evil of no man.' Young people generally form their opinion of a system from the character of those by whom it is taught and represented ; and anything which renders your Ministers ridiculous or contemptible lays the foundation for your children's apostasy and irreligion.

The respectful recognition of your Ministers im-

plies that you use our own ordinances of Baptism, Marriage, and Burial.

The decrease of *Baptisms* in some of our congregations shows a lamentable forgetfulness of the *religious* character of this solemn rite. The parents should present themselves and their child, to claim and unite with the prayers of the Church; who would sympathise with them in their joy, and receive this lamb into the flock of Christ. They should thus publicly and devoutly take upon themselves the vows and responsibilities of their new relation, as the guardians and trainers of an infant member of the Church of Christ. Instead of this, you send the nurse out with the child to some neighbouring Curate; or take advantage of a slight indisposition to have the child baptized in private. And, in either case, the interesting and responsible relation between your child and the Church, as represented by the Minister, is either not established or not recognised. The tendency of extreme opinions is to beget their opposites; and one great evil of the Tractarian doctrine of baptismal regeneration is, that its monstrous and obvious absurdity has driven men to an unscripturally low estimate of the solemn obligations and spiritual advantages of infant baptism. We would not confuse the great and simple notion, that preparation for heaven implies, in the case of every one who attains to years of responsibility, individual conversion; and that conversion implies such a 'repentance toward God,' and such a 'faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,' as a mere infant is incapable of. But still, we believe in

the entail of godliness, that the seed of the righteous shall be blessed; that 'the promise is unto you and your children;' and that by a prayerful and faithful observance of this rite, and a diligent attention to the consequent obligations and duties, you may effectually contribute to your children's salvation; not by superseding the necessity of conversion, but by securing for them those providential and gracious influences which shall lead to that great change.

Marriage.—We have already (if I am correctly informed) one or more chapels in every Circuit licensed for the celebration of marriages; and it is to be hoped that we shall soon have one in every town, and within every District of Registration. As the *civil* guarantees are equal in all cases, the only ground of preference for being married in the churches of the Establishment must be *religious*. This is a direct acknowledgment of the inferiority of your own Clergy; and they are compelled either to absent themselves from such marriages of their members, and thus lose an important opportunity of identifying their ministrations with the most interesting circumstances of personal history, and of hallowing such occasions by suitable religious exercises; or they must attend the ceremony in a subordinate character, and be made painfully to feel that they are there with their ministerial *status* unrecognised and superseded.

Burial.—The time when, of all others, the mind is most susceptible of serious impressions, and the admonitions and prayers of the Minister who has endeared himself to the survivors, by his religious attentions to the deceased, are most likely to be

favourably received and permanently retained, is the time of a funeral; a parenthesis in the hurry and business of the world, when eternal things press upon our attention with more than common weight. But some of our people have precluded the possibility of the last sad offices being performed by their own Minister, by purchasing graves and vaults in what is called consecrated ground, where, if your Minister attends, he can only do it in a private capacity, and must take no part in the service. This same figment of consecration is a foolish attempt to carry into the very grave the bigoted exclusiveness which has embittered the present life.

In pleading for the public recognition of the ministerial *status* of your Clergy, I am impressed with the conviction that its absence is a real evil, greatly increasing the difficulties of their position, and injuriously interfering with the edification of those to whom they minister. I have no wish to encourage a haughty bearing, or to establish priestly claims. I would have all our Ministers to be clothed with humility as with every other Christian grace, and not only in regard to other ministers, but to all Christian men, 'in lowliness of mind' to esteem others 'better than themselves;' but a forced humiliation leaves no room for the exercise of humility. Let the equality first be admitted, and then let every man by his own humility seek the lowest place, but not be thrust into it by the ignorance or injustice of others. Your Ministers are as true Ministers as those of any other Church. Their ordination conveys to them all that ordination, in any form, has ever conveyed to any man since the days of Christ's abode

on earth; and if they are not Apostles to others, doubtless they are to you.

Another point in which your Ministers require respectful recognition, is in avoiding the invitation of strangers, on every slight occasion, to supersede the regular Pastor; and thus by implication saying that he is not competent to that part of the work of his Circuit. I do not think it either desirable or possible, that the practice of inviting strangers for occasional services should entirely cease. Advantages may arise not only to the local charities especially interested, but also to the Circuits generally, from occasional and judicious visits; but these should be reserved for extraordinary cases. Our regular system of itinerancy renders other changes less necessary or desirable; and the effect of further change upon strangers, and upon the people generally, is an impression that their own Ministers must be helped on every little emergency by foreign aid.

Another point which I dare not pass over, and which I would endeavour to touch with great caution and delicacy, is the damage sometimes done to the position and usefulness of your Ministers by having recourse to what are technically called *revival* schemes and agencies.

Times of general expectation are times of special danger and temptation in this respect. As in early days our Lord warned those who were expecting His coming, against being led away by the cry, 'Lo, here is Christ,' or, 'Lo, He is there;' so in all times expectation produces impatience and suggests novelty: and, as occasions make men, these occasions call into existence and notoriety men who feed the

passion, and form themselves and their movements upon the model of these new fancies; and they are sent for here and there to conduct special services; and thus not only are your regular ordinances disparaged, but your own Pastors are set aside, your Class Meetings interrupted, the regular working of the Circuit deranged; nobody expects a blessing under the ministrations of the regular Ministers, or in the ordinary means of grace. It is, indeed, accounted foolishness to expect that the word preached should save them that believe; all the good is to be done in the subsequent Prayer Meeting. Such Prayer Meetings may be occasionally held with advantage; but to hold them too frequently destroys, of necessity, the old and valued institution of Society Meetings, which were never more needed in Methodism than they are at this moment. It destroys also the small, numerous Sunday evening Prayer Meetings in the cottages of the poor, by which we used to pervade the population with a holy influence; when, instead of employing four or five persons to conduct the large Prayer Meeting in the Chapel, we employed forty or fifty, who, while they were blessing others, were being trained for future usefulness as Leaders, Local Preachers, and Ministers. And as this diminution of your numerous and pervading agency in any given town is very inadequately and imperfectly supplied by the extraordinary labours and success of one or two persons, so the influence and success of a few persons throughout the Connexion are dearly purchased at the loss of that Scriptural expectation which is faith in exercise; and which regards *every* ordinance of religion as a

means of grace, and, recognising *all* our Ministers as called to be in the best sense Home Missionaries and Revivalists, looks upon them as competent to conduct efficiently not only the ordinary services, but also all such special services as, in the judgment of the united Pastorate of the Circuit, it may be deemed advisable, from time to time, to hold. Let our Leaders and others look out in the congregation for serious persons, and invite them to Class. Trust God with His own work; do not presume to affect greater love for souls than He who redeemed them, or better means for conversion than He gave to His Apostles. I dare not arraign the sovereignty of God's gifts: now, as in former times, He doubtless makes some sons of thunder, and some sons of consolation. I pronounce no opinion on individuals, whether recently or formerly employed as Revivalists; but, residing in a town where I have had the opportunity of watching such men and such measures, I am compelled to say that while some good has unquestionably been done, the whole result has been very unsatisfactory. It takes years, after these extraordinary agents and schemes have been employed, to overcome the deadness of the reaction. Good men are disheartened and discouraged by the disparagement of their labours, and the apathy and indifference of their congregations; and the wearisome stagnation of hope deferred maketh the heart sick.

You owe your Ministers *competent support*. In making this claim on behalf of your Ministers, I do not urge an extravagant or wealthy provision, although the dangers to a Minister's fidelity, piety,

and diligence, supposed to be necessarily connected with his possession of ample means, are in the main imaginary. The few men that we have had in our ranks who might be considered wealthy have not been behind the poorest of their brethren in their humble piety, their zeal for God, their diligent and conscientious performance of their duties, and their patient endurance of all the hardships of our itinerancy. The evils and dangers of an insufficient provision, on the other hand, are not imaginary, but painfully real. I deprecate for your Ministers that state of poverty in which every addition to the family, which ought to be received as a blessing, is regarded with anxiety,—in which no proper provision can be made for the education of children, and for setting them forth in life,—and in which there is the constant temptation to servility for pecuniary help. These evils were prevented in the design of Mr Wesley, in the idea of competent supply for every new want. The theory is excellent,—not salary, but supply. The single man receives his quarterage; when he marries, he receives quarterage for his wife, and so on for a servant, and for his children. If he fall sick, his medical attendant is provided; and, if he die, his funeral expenses are paid. This theory, I repeat, is excellent, and should be universally maintained; and the disposition manifested in some Circuits to compound for these items in a round sum should be resisted: as a *mode* of payment, the original plan cannot be amended. But these separate allowances should be adequate; and, in order that they should be so, they will require adjustment from time to time, according to the state and cir-

cumstances of society. They require such adjustment now. I do not hesitate to say that the payments to your married Ministers require advancing all through the Connexion, to the extent of at least £50 per annum. While everything has been advancing for a century, the payments to your Ministers have been almost stationary, and the regular contribution remains as Mr Wesley fixed it,—at a penny per week and a shilling per quarter. Six guineas is yet the fixed allowance for clothing and maintaining a child from one year up to twenty years of age, though this item has been increased in some of the Circuits. Eight guineas is the invariable sum allowed for a year's education of a daughter; * and the house has to be kept for a sum varying from fourteen shillings a week upwards, but very rarely exceeding a guinea. In some Circuits, this subject is engaging the earnest attention of our best and most intelligent laymen; in others, it is very improperly placed last in order among the schemes of improvement. All chapel-debts must be liquidated, new organs introduced, and all

* Since the delivery of this Charge, the sum allowed for the education of a Minister's daughter, during six years, has been raised from eight guineas to twelve pounds per annum. Schools of a superior character have also been established for the education of the daughters of Ministers; and District Sustentation Funds have been formed in many Districts, to assist the poorer Circuits to augment the allowances of their Ministers. In explanation of some of the remarks which follow, bearing on Dr Waddy's own position, it should be stated that, when he delivered this Charge, he was the Governor and Chaplain of Wesley College, Sheffield. —
EDITOR.

imaginable improvements effected, before the wants and claims of your Ministers are considered. I do not thus speak for myself,—I should not be benefited a penny by any advance in Circuit payments, for my income is derived from a source unaffected by Circuit arrangements ; but I feel that I am, on this account, more especially called to speak on this subject, and also from a conviction that it stands more closely connected with our general prosperity than many imagine. ‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’ Provide properly for the men who care for your souls,—who seek not yours, but you ; set their minds free from unnecessary anxiety ; and they will be able to serve you more efficiently, and God will give His blessing.

You owe your Ministers *heartly co-operation*. This is essential alike to the maintenance of your own piety, and to the extension of the work of God. He has given to every man his work ; and it is in the economy of God that we must diffuse what we would keep and enjoy. It is eminently true of spiritual things, that ‘there is that scattereth and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.’ Our Church makes ample provision for the employment of every talent, and no man can be idle within its limits without loss to himself and hindrance to the cause of God. I would gratefully acknowledge the untiring zeal and invaluable labours of many of our

people, and would anxiously guard against any misunderstanding or misapplication of the remarks I am about to make. I know that to some Societies they are almost entirely inapplicable, and that to many others they can only, with any fairness, be *very partially* applied. But when the most charitable exceptions have been made, it must be admitted that there is, in some and not a few of our Churches, an unwillingness on the part of the more educated and intelligent men to take office as Leaders, Local Preachers, or Sunday School Teachers. It would not be difficult to point out large and beautiful sanctuaries, which have been erected at a cost of thousands of pounds, and which are constantly attended by wealthy and intelligent congregations, but in which your ecclesiastical offices are left almost exclusively to those who are not the best adapted for their discharge either by their social position or their education. It is not that I despise the labours of *these* persons,—I gratefully appreciate and accept them; and it is due to them to say, that they perform their duties wonderfully well, considering the disadvantages under which they labour. We are bound to acknowledge thankfully how often the grace of God is shown in rendering humble and illiterate men wise in God's kingdom, and faithful in Church perplexities and trials. But I deplore, for their own sakes and for ours, the absence of the labours of others; that it is so much more easy to get rich and educated men to give their money, than to give themselves heartily to God and His work,—to get them to build chapels rather than to attend Prayer Meetings and Love-feasts, and lead

Classes. This attempt to compound with money for our personal devotedness to God is a fearful and fatal delusion. Your absence from these official positions weakens your legitimate influence in the Church, leaves your Ministers without the help and countenance of intelligent counsellors, and compels them either to carry out their measures in the face of unnecessary opposition, or to abandon them, because the men with whom they have to work have never been enabled, from their position in society, to take large and liberal views. And, when called to aid, and in some measure to control, the Minister in the exercise of discipline, they cannot bring an enlightened and independent judgment to bear upon the case, but act under impulse, and in parties. If the offender be in humble circumstances, they may either screen him because he is of their own rank, or visit him with severity because they are not afraid of him; on the other hand, if he be above them in his station in society, they may either fear to deal faithfully with him, or, which is quite as common, determine to pull him down more through jealousy of his elevation than abhorrence of his offence.

Efficient help should further be rendered in collecting subscriptions, not only for the building of schools and chapels, but also for the ordinary funds of the Connexion. All this should not be left, as it is almost universally, to the Minister: greatly interfering with the proper and spiritual character of his communications with the people at their own houses, and producing an impression often unfavourable to the success of his public ministrations. Un-

less he uses a sufficient amount of importunity to keep up and somewhat increase the amounts subscribed to the different funds, he feels that he is not faithful to that part of his trust; and, if he does this, there is danger lest he should be regarded as grasping and excessive in his solicitations for money; and the fact that it is not for himself, but for the cause of Christ, that he begs, does not always save him from the imputation of being mercenary. I hope the time is not far distant when some one or two laymen in each Circuit may be induced to undertake collecting the subscriptions for each of our funds; and thus a duty, which is laborious and objectionable when devolved upon the Minister alone, will become easy and unobjectionable when distributed among several persons.

Help, by seeking to complete and extend your Church; to do for it in England what Mr Wesley did in America and in Scotland, and what he would have done here also, as soon as the probability of our returning in a body within the pale of the National Establishment was at an end,—an event which he earnestly desired, but which can now never take place. Aim gradually to fill up the outline of Methodism, to carry out its full intentions, to remove any external badge of implied inferiority, and to invest its acts and services with becoming solemnity. This would exert a beneficial influence both on ourselves and others: it would remove the anomaly of our position. We should no longer be considered as Churchmen by some, and as Dissenters by others; but as Methodists,—a distinct, organised, and permanent Church.

This review of our ecclesiastical position calls for our *gratitude*, and reminds us of our *responsibility*.

The defects which time discovers, and which sometimes check the regular working of the machinery, show that it has been constructed by fallible instruments; but the beautiful order which has harmonised materials seemingly incongruous, and the glorious success which has crowned the use of means apparently inadequate, show that Divine Wisdom has planned our system, and that Divine Power has guided our history. Nor have this Power and Wisdom been evoked into purposeless energy. God never intended that machinery so wondrous in design, and so complete in minutest detail, should stand still to be admired in unprofitable perfection. He has called our Church into earnest and powerful life,—He has ordered its internal economy, and inspired its evangelical aggressiveness,—that it may promote His glory, and extend His kingdom. Need we ask for whose salvation has this provision been made? Most obviously for our own. Not ours *alone*, thank God; but ours *first*. Faith rejoices in the anticipation of a world-wide spread of Methodism, but gratitude recognises the present blessings which our affiliation to it entails. Among all our vast and countless causes of thankfulness, none has been more productive of present privilege and future felicity than the mercy shown in our being grafted upon this branch of Christ's Church.

Let me press upon you, lastly, your solemn *responsibility*, as Methodists, in reference to your own

salvation. Those who know most of the intricate and yet comprehensive working of Methodism, of that organisation which cares for the individual, and yet boldly embraces a world, are the most likely to rejoice in their identification with us. But we must not and cannot divest ourselves of the concurrent sense of responsibility: and, if finally unsaved, we shall be hopelessly without excuse. When there has been so much cultivation, the Owner of the vineyard has a right to expect proportionate fruit. Where much is given much will be required. You have all possible advantages for the cultivation of deep and eminent piety. You have the Word of God preached in its purity and power. You have access to our more private means of grace, and especially to our extended system of Christian communion, which is peculiarly favourable for making us acquainted with the work of the Spirit, and leading us to the enjoyment of experimental religion. We are accountable to God for these privileges,—for their diligent use by ourselves, and for their extensive spread among mankind. Let us attend to them punctually, and use them with all fidelity. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for us, if, amidst such advantages, we remain impenitent and unconverted.

XIV.

A CHARGE TO THE CLERGY;

DELIVERED AT

THE WESLEYAN-METHODIST CONFERENCE

HELD IN LONDON IN 1860.

TAKE HEED THEREFORE UNTO YOURSELVES, AND TO ALL THE FLOCK, OVER THE WHICH THE HOLY GHOST HATH MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO FEED THE CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.—ACTS xx. 28.

I CHARGE THEE THEREFORE BEFORE GOD, AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO SHALL JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD AT HIS APPEARING AND HIS KINGDOM; PREACH THE WORD; BE INSTANT IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON; REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT, WITH ALL LONGSUFFERING AND DOCTRINE.—2 TIM. iv. 1, 2.

I SHALL endeavour to arrange what I have to say under these three general heads:—

- I. The Divine institution of the Christian Ministry.
- II. Its qualifications.
- III. Its duties.

I. The Christian Ministry is a *Divine Institution*.

The appointment of a separate order of men for the official performance of religious worship is one of the oldest institutions of God, and has been universally adopted in every age, as necessary to the perpetuation and maintenance of any system of re-

ligion. It is to be clearly discerned as the most valued prerogative of the first-born in patriarchal days ; and the separation, appointment, and duties of the Jewish priesthood are largely declared in the Old Testament. Our Lord Himself named twelve men as Apostles, and gave them miraculous powers, to prove their authority, and to enable them to perform the duties of their office. And as, in the days of the Apostles, He qualified ' other seventy also, and sent them ' to preach and work wonders in His name, so He has provided for the perpetuation of ministerial and subordinate officers in His Church, until the great purposes of His Church shall be accomplished. ' And He gave some, Apostles ; and some, Prophets ; and some, Evangelists ; and some, Pastors and Teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ' (Eph. iv. 11—13).

The Christian Ministry is, therefore, to be regarded as truly and properly a Divine ordinance, not as a merely permitted institution ; but, while acknowledged by the Church, provided by God as the result of individual call, designation, and endowment.

Ordination, while it is the visible and intelligible distinction of the Ministry, does not, and cannot, convey either the qualification or the office. It is, first, a recognition, on the part of the Church, of the validity of claims to the pastoral office already deemed to have been proved and established ; and

it is, secondly, a formal admission of the ordained person to a participation in the rights and powers of the Ministry in that particular Church. The validity of ordination is not, therefore, affected by slight variations in its form. The holding up of the hands of the assembled Church,—or the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery,—or of the Bishop in their name, and as their representative,—would formally fulfil the conditions of the rite. By this solemn ceremony you have now been admitted into the Ministry of this Church; and while the Church of God is henceforth called upon to consider you as legitimately and Divinely sent, and to receive you as the ambassadors of Christ, you are called upon to consider yourselves the property of God and His Church, and to devote all your time, talents, and powers to the duties of your holy calling. And in order to this, I pray you diligently to consider, in the second place,—

II. The *Qualifications* for your office.

1. The first and every way the most important of these is personal holiness,—conversion to God. None should be sent to preach salvation from sin, and the necessity of a holy life, who are themselves strangers to this great change, and are still ‘in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity.’ And no man is admitted into this Ministry who does not profess to have ‘passed from death unto life.’ You have made this profession in all sincerity and truth, I doubt not: but you do not believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, and that a man who is once in grace must, of necessity, be

always in grace ; and you will find that personal holiness, to be maintained, will require constant and diligent cultivation, in the exercises of fervent private devotion,—in reading the Scriptures, not so much in the critical mode in which you are obliged to study them for your sermons, as for their present and immediate influence on your own souls,—engaging in religious meditation and prayer for your own personal edification, losing sight, for the moment, of your official character, and looking to your relation to God, as His adopted children, and the consequent duties and privileges of personal devotion. Thus you will be clear in your own Christian experience, and live in communion with God, richly imbued with the Spirit which leads into all truth, the Spirit of holiness and wisdom. This will give you a feeling of the importance and responsibility of your office. The solemn message with which you are charged will be the *burden* of the Lord, and you will ‘travail in birth’ for souls. The great Shepherd three times required a distinct answer to the question, ‘Lovest thou Me?’ when He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and His sheep ; and He will only be *with you* in His solemn sanction and blessing, so long as you are *with Him* in the faith and practice of a consistent piety.

2. Your natural endowments, as they are consecrated to God, must be diligently and conscientiously improved to His honour and glory. Strive to acquire all knowledge which can be rendered subservient to the more effective discharge of your various duties ; ‘give attendance to reading,’ and ‘study to show yourselves workmen that need not

to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'

3. Your Divine call must also be cultivated. God gives no gift, general or special,—physical, intellectual, or spiritual,—which may not be increased and strengthened by constant cultivation, or weakened and lost by carelessness and neglect. We do not believe in the indefeasibility of holy orders: we hold that as 'Judas by transgression fell' from his bishopric, so many a man Divinely called to the work of the Ministry has forfeited his call by personal unfaithfulness. Your general call of 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel,' may be weakened in its solemn force by any conduct which has a tendency to unfit you for the right performance of your duties. God sometimes gives a special call to some particular work, as Jonah was sent to Nineveh; and as He said to Philip, 'Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.' In all such cases you may lose the privilege and reward of a work for which this special call both indicates and constitutes a special fitness, by refusing to obey; and persistence in such refusal may lead to the barrenness of your own souls, and the uselessness of your labours in any other part of the vineyard; while, on the contrary, your prompt and willing obedience, your readiness to say at all times, and for any work thus Divinely indicated, 'Behold the servant of the Lord,' will fill your souls with cheerful confidence, increase the strength and vividness of your impressions, and constitute an element and assurance of success in your important duties.

III. Of these *duties* I proceed now, in the third place, to speak.

1. The first is to *preach the Word*.

There is a disposition to disparage and subordinate this great work, arising from very different causes, irrespective of that carelessness about religion, and consequent disparagement of all its ordinances, which exist in the minds of the ungodly and profane. The ordinance of preaching is disregarded by those who attach an undue importance to ceremonial services, and think to supply the lack of sound instruction in the doctrines and precepts of Holy Scripture by the choral music, the gorgeous decorations, and the unmeaning attitudes, of mediæval ignorance. It is vainly, and I think impiously, substituted by giving lectures instead of sermons. I do not say one word against lectures delivered on the week-day, in public and proper places, on any subject of interest or information; but I seriously deprecate lectures given on a Sunday in a place of worship, from a catch of a song, a scrap of a newspaper, or even a slang expression. If you are Ministers at all, you are Ministers of the Gospel. If you preach you must preach the *Word*; and 'if any man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God.' Preaching is also disparaged by some well-meaning but mistaken people among ourselves, who think it is better to keep young persons at the Sunday School than to bring them to the house of God; and that they are likely to profit more by the exhortations and prayers of the Teacher than by the regular services of the sanctuary. While it is impossible to speak too highly of Sunday Schools as an institution, and while the best results may be expected from them, when properly conducted and confined

to their proper business and intention, I have no faith in the ultimate success of these or any other human devices, in substitution for a Divine appointment. The wisdom of man may argue, and (to its own satisfaction) prove, that these devices are better than preaching; but such wisdom of man is foolishness with God. While man may reckon preaching foolishness, he is rebuked by the answer, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' The fallacy which is fatal to all these substitutions is the supposition that the success of any means will be in proportion to our views of its abstract and rational fitness: whereas the blessing of God will be given to reward our obedient trust in Him, and the humble submission of our judgments and wills to His direction. 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' But 'how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?' Your great work, then, is preaching; all power elsewhere is based upon power in the pulpit; your power in presiding over meetings, in influencing public business, and in your more private communications with your people, will depend upon your power in the pulpit. Aim, therefore, to be good and efficient Preachers; the influence of Methodism has been in its preaching. Our itinerancy affords us opportunities of revising and enriching our sermons with stores of ever-increasing knowledge; and with this great advantage we ought to be better preachers than they whose ministrations are confined, from year to year, to one congregation.

Let your preaching be Scriptural. If the world is ever to be saved, it will be by the sanctification of the Word: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.' A sermon is not necessarily Scriptural because it begins with a text on which it is professedly founded. Much that goes for preaching now-a-days is neither more nor less than an abuse and profanation of the house and day of God, without Christ, without gospel, without power; mere moral essays, or strings of anecdotes, or beautiful scraps of poetry, or dreams of German mystification; and the advocates of these fancies tell us, 'You must conform to the spirit of the age.' So I would, but not in their sense. I exhort you to keep pace with its advancement in science and learning, to read up to the times on all questions which can give breadth and comprehensiveness to your ministry, which will enlarge and furnish your own minds, and more eminently fit you to inform and lead the minds of others. Conform to the spirit of the age, as developed in great, earnest, and leading men. Strive to dive into the deeps, instead of catching at the froth which crests the top of the ocean-wave. But do not conform to the spirit of the age by changing the plain words in which our fathers talked about the work of God, and so well and intelligibly described every operation of the Holy Ghost, and every feeling of the penitent and believing soul, for what these modern triflers would call a more philosophical, an æsthetical terminology. Our phrases have been fixed and understood for a century; and a little more critical accuracy or musical euphony would be dearly pur-

chased by the removal of these ancient landmarks, and the attempt to teach your people another language. Do not conform to the times in the cultivation of a finical and effeminate style. The great truths and interests with which you have to deal are only rendered ridiculous by the trickery of tinsel ornamentation; gilding would only blunt the edge of the sword of the Spirit. If you would show the things of eternity, you must draw aside the veil, and let them appear in the simple grandeur of inspired truth, not weakened or obscured by human decoration. Do not attempt to conform the doctrines or morals of Scripture to the times. Set them forth in their clear and well-defined distinctness. On these subjects let your trumpet give no uncertain sound, or the blood of souls will be required at your hands.

In order that you may preach well, you must prepare well. Nothing is done by mere extemporising. The sacred impulse, the glowing thought, the telling illustration, which come down in the pulpit, come down not on the barren but the prepared mind. The rain descends upon the *mown* grass. Get clear perceptions of Divine truth by a diligent study of your subject, by a diligent reading of the Word of God, and of the works of the most learned and laborious divines, especially those of our own Church. Cultivate a good style,—simple, chaste, earnest. ‘Moreover, the Preacher sought out acceptable words.’ Write, but do not read, your sermons. Discountenance and repress vulgarity, nonsense, and irreverence. We must ‘serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.’ Avoid all mere clap-trap, and the remotest approach to

levity ; it is pitiful to court a smile when you should win a soul. There is no need to try to come down, as it is called, to the level of the capacities of your congregation. One of the greatest Preachers of the last century said, 'I never met with a congregation which could not understand what I could explain.' Combine all your studies with earnest prayer, that you may not only know, but feel, your subject. Divine knowledge differs from all other in requiring a preparation of the heart. An understanding heart is as necessary as an understanding head ; and if any man lack this heavenly wisdom, he must ask of God ; for 'the preparation of the heart,' and 'the answer of the tongue,' are alike from Him. Preach Christ in His Divinity and Atonement : give Him His own names and titles, as found in Scripture, and not as they have been modernly rendered into false poetry. Preach His suffering, His work, and His law. Answer in every sermon the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' Give distinct statement and peculiar prominence to the great doctrines of the gospel, 'avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called,' and 'endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying.' Paul 'taught publicly, and from house to house, testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'

If you consider the objects of your ministry, you will find them sufficiently definite ; and they will impress upon you the importance of that distinct statement of prominent truth which we are now urging.

First, you have to warn the sinner.

For this, you need the doctrines of original and actual sin, of a future judgment, and of the torments of the damned. 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord,' you are to 'persuade men.' Learn the deceitfulness of sin, to search Jerusalem as with a candle, to tear off the cloak of hypocrisy, to break open the whited sepulchre, and to unmask the fair-seeming Pharisee. Press these truths home by a close and powerful application to the consciences of individual sinners, to produce a thorough conviction, that they may be 'deep wounded by the Spirit's sword.' A want of this preaching diminishes both the number and the depth of convictions. The hurt is slight, and it is slightly healed. We lose hold of these slightly convicted persons entirely, unless we bring them to a speedy decision in a Prayer-meeting after the preaching; and we lose many of them, after all, on the first trifling occasion. If the arrow of the Almighty were sticking fast within them, they might be trusted to go mourning as with a sword in their bones, for a few days' solemn and serious consideration and earnest prayer; and conversions, the result of such conviction, would present a larger average of permanency than those we now often see. The number of our backsliders is to be attributed, in great measure, to the want of deep conviction, and subsequent sound conversion. They have received the seed with gladness, which presently springs up, but hath no depth of earth, and so endureth but for a while.

Secondly, you have to bring penitent sinners to Christ.

God is in all things to be glorified, and can only be glorified in His Son. You must have a clear perception of the doctrine of the atonement; there must be no indistinctness as to its nature, freeness, power, or as to the mode of its application. The nature and simplicity of faith,—the indispensable necessity, and the glorious privilege, of the direct witness of the Holy Spirit,—these were the great topics of early Methodist preaching; they were well understood and powerfully enforced by our fathers. They are the doctrines of a standing or falling Church. We cannot prosper, we cannot long exist, in the absence or weakening of these great truths.

Thirdly, you have to edify the Church.

To do this, you must know and explain the work of the Spirit, the devices of Satan, the influence of the world, the deceitfulness of the human heart. Get high and clear views of the doctrine of entire sanctification. I judge not other Churches; but among ourselves neither Churches nor individuals long retain a satisfactory state of Christian experience, who are not striving after this great blessing. If this doctrine were more definitely and Scripturally set forth, our people would apprehend it more clearly, and be led to seek it. Let us dwell upon its nature, its means, its blessedness. Let us ourselves believe and enter in,—‘allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.’ To edify the Church, you must warn the unruly; but remember that *public* offences *only* should be publicly rebuked. Avoid preaching *at* people: it is a clumsy and injurious method of saving ourselves the unpleasant duty of individual

admonition, and often evidences not only a very mistaken judgment, but also a very bad temper. Insist on social and domestic duties, that your hearers may be Christians at home and in the world as well as in the Church. Comfort and encourage the humble, the suffering, and the distressed, with warm and glowing representations of future glory. This will not only comfort, but also raise and purify, them; for 'every man that hath this hope in' Christ 'purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' Preach with all fidelity, but do not preach controversially. Keep back nothing that is profitable from the people; but confront infidelity with the truth. Lay the axe to the root, and not to the branches, of the corrupted tree: single errors and vices will fall with the fall of the tree on which they grew; and when the old man is put off, he is put off with his deeds, and the new man rises renewed in the image of Christ.

2. *Pastoral duties* stand next in importance to preaching the Gospel.

The performance of these duties is beneficial to ourselves; it does good to our own souls. Nothing is so well calculated to impress us with the vanity of earthly, and the value of heavenly, things,—that 'the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal,'—as to stand at the bed-side of the sick and dying, and catch a glimpse of both worlds, as they are seen by him who is just passing from one to the other. It purifies our motives, rebukes our worldliness, and sends us home to our studies sadder and better men. Pastoral duties are beneficial to ourselves, as teaching us more intimately the state of the people: 'I

know My sheep, and am known of Mine.' This knowledge would give point and power, variety and appropriateness, to our public discourses, and give us favour and acceptance in the eyes of the people. But pastoral duties are specially beneficial to our congregations and churches, and it is absolutely necessary that they be diligently and extensively performed. I know there is an unreasonable and extortionate demand for this sort of labour, made by some persons who unfairly contrast our doings in this way with those of the numerous Clergy of the Establishment, who are as more than ten to one of us, or with those of the Dissenting Minister, whose labours are confined to the members of one congregation, and who can devote to them the time which we are compelled to spend in travelling over an extensive Circuit, and attending to the varied business of our complicated organisation. But there is always a danger of our neglecting to do that which we cannot do as perfectly as we wish, and thus allowing our discouragement to paralyse us into entire inaction:—'If we cannot do the thing effectually, we will do nothing.' Against this feeling we should jealously and prayerfully guard, though our difficulties are confessedly great, and the demands of some persons so unreasonable, that it is utterly impossible for you by any amount of diligence ever to meet them. Yet it is possible for you, with all your engagements and hindrances, to do all that is really required to meet the necessity of the case, all that is required of you by the great 'Shepherd and Bishop of souls,' and all that is ever expected by your thinking and intelligent people. And this

must be done, or we shall lose our hold of the population. Families, whose relatives have been neglected by us in the time of sickness, will leave us to attend the ministrations of those who furnished to them, in our absence, the religious consolations which we should have supplied. The wavering, the lukewarm, and the discouraged, who might have been saved by a little timely and affectionate attention, will slip away from us into the world, never to be reclaimed. If you say you have no taste or ability for this work, we must say in the words of Mr Wesley, 'You must get the ability, or go home.' Nothing stronger or better can be said on this subject than what is found recorded in the Report of the Committee on Pastoral Visitation, adopted by the Conference of 1847:—'That this Committee recognises the absolute obligation which is laid upon all the Ministers of our Circuits, to secure, by mutual consultation and arrangement, such a general, stated, and efficient visitation of our people at their own dwellings, as is involved as well in the Scriptural command to "feed the flock of God," as in those other statements of the Sacred Volume which, in varied language, represent Christian Ministers as the under-shepherds of Christ. That this obligation has been solemnly confessed, both at the time when we received ordination, and also when on subsequent occasions our approval of the "Minutes" of 1820, in which this duty is detailed, has been acknowledged; and that, thus recognising the obligation, this Committee suggests, that the general ministerial duties of Circuits should, in given cases, be so allotted and arranged, as that families, espe-

cially among the working classes, which cannot be collected or found during the day, may be visited in the evening.' The difficulties to which I have referred are acknowledged; and the Report goes on to say, 'That notwithstanding all the difficulties which have been stated, this Committee is, however, convinced, that by a wise economy of time, by a carefully arranged *system*, and by perseverance and energy, much *more* may be accomplished; and that in the present day the increased temporal cares and dangers of our own people, and their increased exposure to the manifold seductions of worldliness and error, make this additional zeal and energy on our part to be a matter of absolute necessity.'

You will do well frequently to direct your attention to Mr Wesley's advices on this subject, contained in the Minutes of 1766, in which the objects to be attained by pastoral visitation are distinctly set forth; and the spirit in which it ought to be conducted is admirably inculcated. You will do well often to ponder the solemn words of the Apostle in our text: 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine.'

The first subjects of your pastoral care will be the sick. Consider how momentous to them will be the results of this providential visitation, and how much the character of these results depends upon the mode in which you perform your duty. Go about it solemnly and thoughtfully. Be tender and affectionate; avoid a boisterous, careless man-

ner. Let your footfall be light in the sick chamber. Let your address be sympathising, but be earnest and faithful. Urge the sick to a more entire consecration to God; to a union with His Church, if hitherto only hearers; to give up, by solemn vow, the evil companionships and practices in which they have hitherto indulged. See that the dying be plainly and correctly instructed in the plan of salvation. Avoid a merely soothing and palliative treatment, where the conscience should be probed and awakened: clear yourselves of this solemn responsibility by earnest fidelity. Let your pastoral visits, to those who are not sick, be properly and exclusively pastoral visits. Announce the object of your call at once. It will be easier to begin religious conversation in this way, than to bring it in after some time spent in mere gossiping chat. Always pray with them before you leave, and, if possible, obtain the attendance of the children and servants. Your pastoral visits to the houses of the poor would be more welcome and influential, if you would become the almoner of the Church's bounty, by conveying to them the sums granted from time to time by the Leaders' Meeting, which are too generally sent by the Leader. This would induce a proper recognition of your pastoral relation, as it would be a grateful exercise of your pastoral office; and though your allowances are too limited to enable you to give much to the poor from your own resources, yet in many Circuits you will find wealthy laymen who will be glad to furnish you with the means of a more extended liberality. An important branch of our pastoral visitation is the meeting

of Classes for tickets once a quarter. If our members would conscientiously endeavour to meet us on these occasions, our visiting from house to house might be almost exclusively confined to the sick and wayward; but some of them greatly neglect this. You will do well to explain and insist upon it frequently at your Society Meetings, and to invest these quarterly visitations with due importance by never sending the Tickets to *whole classes* under any circumstances, nor to individual absentees but after strict inquiry, and when you cannot possibly take them yourselves. I know that all this will require order and arrangement, and a steady resistance to that *vis inertiae* with which we have all more or less to contend; but men of business, for mere worldly gain, make their arrangements and maintain their order. They do not while away time; they go straight from one engagement to another. They spend no more time in one place and over one business than it requires, and they get through an astonishing amount of work with ease and regularity. They do it for an earthly, we for a heavenly, reward; and surely our labours, with their infinite and eternal consequences, should claim from us a zeal and energy equal to theirs.

3. You must *rule* the Church. You are held responsible for the exercise of godly *discipline*, and the administration of Church-government. This you are to do, not independently, without the concurrence of the laity, nor capriciously, without reference to the laws of the Church. Still you are not to consider yourselves as the mere Chairmen of disciplinary meetings, in which you are called to

preside, but as having a solemn responsibility, which, while it is shared, is by no means *equally* shared, with the laity. You would do well to study this subject as it is generally treated in such works as Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' and in more modern and concise writings, where the subject is treated with special reference to our own Church, as in Dr Beecham's Essay, and especially Dr Smith's Treatise on the Christian Pastorate. From these studies you will learn that no *precise* scheme of law for the constitution of a Christian Church is found in the New Testament; but that while the grand design of the gospel is clearly stated, and its great principles and holy character explicitly declared, the internal form and structure of religious society, the disciplinary usages and laws of the body, are left open, subject to such arrangements as the varying states, opinions, habits, and intellectual attainments or social culture of different nations and communities may require. The Word of God does not in this respect exhibit fully and in detail a model Church. Diocesan Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Wesleyan Connexionalism, may each be honestly held by different Christian denominations as the best embodiment of New-Testament principles; and may all—if imbued, in their Ministers, members, and ministrations, with the influence of the Holy Ghost—be made efficient agencies for the promotion of the cause of Christ in the world. There is not, however, the same uncertainty as to the persons by whom the government of the religious community is to be administered. This was placed in the hands of the Pastors in every Church,

who were called Elders or Presbyters, in reference to their office itself, and ἐπίσκοποι, 'overseers,' in reference to the duties which devolved upon them. There appears a remarkable similarity in the circumstances attending the original construction of the Churches by the Apostles, and the circumstances which attended and marked the rise of our own. The Apostles, from the first, acted under a strong persuasion that their prime object was not the mere organisation of a body, or the establishment of any particular political arrangement among their followers, but the conversion of souls, and the bringing of every convert into conformity with the mind of Christ. In the prosecution of this work, however, they always exercised all the authority necessary to carry out their great design; and, as they could not personally superintend every Church, they appointed Presbyters, who, besides having to attend to other spiritual duties, were charged with administering the government of the Church. This was *their* peculiar office; it was their business to watch over the general order, to maintain the purity of Christian doctrine and Christian practice, to guard against abuses, to admonish the unruly, and to guide the public deliberations. Not only was this the practice of the primitive Church, but this practice was the result of great established principles, which are clearly and emphatically laid down in Holy Scripture. If this can be demonstrated, then it must be admitted that, however the external aspects of the Church may change, principles and relations thus Divinely enforced are of essential and permanent obligation.

The first text to which I direct your attention is

1 Peter v. 1—4: 'The Presbyters among you I exhort, who, ~~am~~ a fellow-Presbyter:—Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over the heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.'

It cannot be denied that this passage refers to the duties and responsibilities of Christian Ministers. Peter, looking away from his superior position as an Apostle, speaks as a fellow-Presbyter on the subject of their mutual duty and care; and no language could more aptly set forth this duty and care than that here used, figurative though it be: 'Feed the flock, taking the oversight thereof,'—which means, first, that the Minister should furnish the people with suitable pasture, to provide for all their spiritual wants; and, secondly, that he should guide and govern, as well as feed, as a shepherd does his flock. The word ποιμαίνω, which our translators have rendered 'feed,' occurs for the first time in Matt. ii. 6: 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor that *shall rule* My people Israel.' This is, indeed, the precise meaning of the original term: it includes the *whole* duty of a shepherd, but especially refers to his guiding and governing authority; and, while it nowhere occurs with the simple signification of feeding, it does sometimes occur with the exclusive signification of rule, as in Rev. ii. 27, 'He shall *rule them* with a rod of iron,' and in other similar passages.

Men of the world, and carnal professors in the Church, may feel inclined to regard this clearly expressed official duty as a high privilege, and as affording opportunity for a great and most agreeable exercise of power. These were not the sentiments of Peter; nor did he impute such views to the persons for whom he wrote: on the contrary, he regarded, and believed them to regard, this *shepherding* of the flock as a duty imperative and onerous indeed, but far from desirable. The Apostle is therefore compelled to exhort his brethren to devote themselves to its discharge '*not by constraint, but willingly;*' as if he had said, 'The duty of watching over the flock is so great,—the anxious care for the feeble and the weak, the firm and godly restraint required for the wayward, and the correction and reproof necessary for the erring, involve so much painful exercise,—that men are prone to shrink from duties so uncongenial to their kindness of heart, and to allow evils to creep into the Church and gather strength, dealing only with those that cannot be avoided, and even then acting by constraint and reluctantly.' Against this form of unfaithfulness the aged Apostle enters his protest, and not only enjoins the guidance and government of the Church as a duty legitimately identified with the office of Presbyters, but exhorts that its claims be willingly admitted and cheerfully discharged. But, lest this wise and godly counsel should fall on the ear of some Presbyter of unsanctified mind and ambitious spirit, the Apostle adds, 'Neither as being lords over the heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear,

ye shall receive a crown of glory.' The sense is evidently this:—Although the Church of Christ is placed under your charge and care,—as the sheep are intrusted to the care of a shepherd,—yet, as the sheep do not belong to the shepherd, but he is responsible to the owner for the tenderness, diligence, and judgment with which he feeds and leads them; so the Minister, because he has the care of the Church, must not regard himself as the lord or proprietor of it, but simply as a shepherd, who must give account of his trust to the Proprietor and Judge of all. Many other passages of Sacred Scripture describe this governing power as belonging to the Ministry, and give directions for its exercise. I can do little more than quote them; but they will be found well explained and reasoned out in Dr Smith's book, to which I am indebted for some of these remarks. 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5: A Bishop must be 'one that *ruleth* well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for, if a man know not how to *rule* his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?' 1 Tim. v. 17: 'Let the elders that *rule* well be counted worthy of double honour.' 2 Cor. x. 8: 'For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.' The doctrine common to all these portions of Scripture is clearly this, that the Minister possesses the power and the right to *rule* the Church, and is consequently responsible to God for the exercise of this trust. The existence of the power and right being admitted, I proceed to give you some directions in reference to their exercise.

First, consider the nature of this authority in its subjects and objects. You are only 'over your flocks *in the Lord,*'—by spiritual appointment, and for spiritual purposes. It gives neither qualification nor authority for intrusive meddling in the private and social affairs of the people, nor for dictation how they should use their political rights and privileges. Nothing is more calculated to endanger the proper and spiritual authority of the Clergy, than the attempts which have sometimes been made to claim a general instead of an exclusively spiritual superiority, and to extend the exercise of this authority beyond its just and well-defined limits. It deals only with those things which affect a man's character as a Christian, and with them only in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Church, by which Ministers and people are alike bound.

Secondly, this leads to the remark that the government should be considerate and intelligent. Some men may be found who will blindly submit to all that is said by certain other men, more under the caprice of personal attachment than the principled recognition of a wise and proper authority. But the majority of men, while they admit the right of the Clergy to rule in the Church, will not render a very willing and hearty obedience to authority which does not come also recommended by an intelligent acquaintance with the laws to be administered, and some weight of personal character. A wise man once said, 'I can submit to the powers that be, if they *be* powers;' and, while your right to govern rests upon your holy office, the facility and success of your administration will depend greatly upon the

opinion which is formed of your knowledge of our laws, and of your wisdom and piety in their administration.

Thirdly, your rule should be constant: 'He that ruleth' should rule 'with diligence.' It should be uniform and impartial; not by fits and starts,—at one time screwing everything up to an extreme and unbearable tension, and at another letting all things get into disorder by a negligent laxity. Impartiality is essential, not only to secure the approval and submission of the Church, but also to secure the present blessing and final approbation of the great Judge, who has commanded us to judge righteous judgment. If you tolerate in one member of the Church practices which you visit with severity in another, you not only vitiate your proceedings in that particular case, but you permanently prejudice all your acts and offices, and bring down upon yourselves the pity and censure of all good men.

Fourthly, remember that you possess this power for edification, not for destruction; and that it should ever be exercised with an earnest desire, not merely to punish, but also to save: 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Even a heretic is not to be rejected until 'after the first and second admonition' (Titus iii. 10). The Church in all its arrangements, its discipline as well as its doctrines, exists for the salvation of men; and it is a perversion of the entire purpose and order of things, that the Church should be so administered as to sacrifice those whom it exists to save. This was the error

of the Jews, who would have maintained the institutions of their law, at the cost of the sufferings and death of the men whom these institutions were designed to relieve and bless,—an error which our Lord rebuked in the memorable words, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.’ And if He, who would have mercy rather than sacrifice, declared that this oldest institution should not be so maintained and defended as to defeat its merciful intention, surely we must say in reference to all ecclesiastical laws, ‘The system is made for man, and not man for the system; and it should be worked for edification, and not for destruction.’ Be cautious and discriminating; there is a difference between the tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin, and the great principles of justice, mercy, and faith. We owe no thanks to the man who embroils us with our people by some act of tyranny; or who, by the over-strict and severe application of law, is skilful in turning out of Society the members whom other men have yearned, and laboured, and prayed, to get in; and the Great Shepherd will call him to account for scattering the sheep he was sent to fold and feed.

A low estimate of the nature and effects of our discipline has led, in some instances, to severity in its exercise; and this, like all extremes, has begotten its opposite, and thus led, in its turn, to laxity and confusion. And this will always be the case where expulsion is regarded as the only sentence, which must be inflicted alike on all offenders, great or small. For many offences, a private censure is abundantly sufficient; for somewhat graver ones, a censure at the Leaders’-Meeting, or removal from

office, would be a quite adequate punishment; while the final and extreme penalty of expulsion should be reserved for cases of repeated or hopeless delinquency. I know that this low estimate of the nature and effects of our discipline may be traced, in a great measure, to the equivocal position of our Societies in their early history, when admissions into them, or expulsions from them, did not necessarily affect the position or standing of a man with the Church of which he was a member. And, as this question is one of great and increasing importance, I beg your serious attention to it. It has forced itself on the anxious consideration of those who have contemplated the future of Methodism. The late Rev. James Macdonald published a treatise upon this subject, containing some valuable suggestions; and the late Rev. Richard Watson gave occasional utterance to his large and comprehensive views of this, as of other matters vitally affecting Methodism.

Mr Wesley's notion of a Society in a Church is by no means original or peculiar: it has existed and must ever exist while religion itself exists in the world. The Church has ever contained multitudes whom it was necessary to recognise, whom it was desirable to bring under its influence, instruction, and restraint, as much as might be, and in reference to whom its broader and more comprehensive provisions are made. Within and from among these multitudes of comparatively careless people, you have ever had a few who have regarded religious obligation and enjoyment in a more serious aspect, have voluntarily bound themselves under stricter

rules than were observed by the community at large, and have endeavoured to bring others into association with themselves. Such were the Pharisees in the Jewish Church, the Monastic Orders in the Church of Rome; such are the Puseyites and Evangelicals in the Church of England. I know that many of these Societies have degenerated into elements of corruption instead of preservation, and have become distinguished from the great mass, not by their holiness, but by their awful depravity; but this does not affect the argument. The abominations of their subsequent history cannot affect the purity of their original separation, any more than the future degeneracy of Methodism could invalidate the records of the earnest piety and Apostolic labours of our sainted fathers.

Mr Wesley, in forming his Society, had no intention to interfere with the existing membership of any Church. In his original rules, he says, 'Such a Society is no other than a company of men, having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.' And he tells us that, in order that a man should be a member of the Methodist Society, it was not necessary that he should cease to be a Churchman, a Dissenter, a Quaker, or a Moravian. But, while a few were members of other communions, the great majority were members of the Established Church, where they occasionally attended the ordinary services, and very regularly attended to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It

must be evident that, while things continued in this state, expulsion from the Society was a much less serious matter than it is now. Then the expelled man was simply excluded from the Class and other Society meetings; his Church-membership remained unaffected; he retained his regular seat, and continued to communicate with the Church of which he was a member; in many instances rather gaining than losing in the estimation of his neighbours, by his withdrawal under any circumstances from the sect which was everywhere spoken against. But Methodism soon appeared in a new and altered condition. The rapid increase of their numbers, and the persecutions to which they were exposed, combined to drive the Methodists to the erection of separate places of worship. These circumstances, taken in connection with the notorious immorality and unfitness of the Clergy in many places, created an earnest desire in the hearts of our people to receive the Sacraments from more worthy and tolerant hands. After many prayers and deliberations, and by steps which I need not here recount, the administration of the Sacraments and the ordination of Ministers were introduced, and Methodism gradually assumed the character and position of a distinct Church; and, while the Society retained its distinctive rules and ordinances, large congregations were gathered, who attended no sanctuaries but our own, and who, without being members of the Society, were permitted to apply to the Superintendent for Quarterly Tickets admitting them to take the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In Scotland, Mr Wesley himself denominated members of the con-

gregation thus admitted to the Sacrament, 'Members of the Church.' Expulsion of a member under such circumstances is not only an expulsion from Society, but virtually from the Church: he must either remain disgraced among his fellow-worshippers, which few are likely to do, or leave his accustomed place to seek communion with some other Church, or, as is too frequently the case, to abandon himself to the world and sin. I would have you therefore to be mild and merciful in your administration and rule, especially in the infliction of the extreme sentence, which, however mildly it may be described in argument, amounts in many instances to *practical* excommunication. Try all means of restoration before you have recourse to so fearful an alternative.

This great notion of a Society in a Church merits a little further consideration in reference to the future of Methodism. It has been stated, by some who have considered the subject with great anxiety, that two courses are before you, and that you will soon be driven by necessity to adopt the one or the other. Either you must relax the strictness of your Rules of Society, abandon the compulsory attendance on Class-Meeting, and bring your whole system more into accord with the general views and practices of mankind; or you must abide rigidly by your original principles and usages, however distasteful to mere formalists, and to only half-awakened professors. If you adopt the former, which we are told is the more generous and enlightened course, then these results will follow:—Methodism will bring under its influence multitudes who would

gladly embrace it in a little milder form, but who are repelled by the unbending austerity of its original constitution. And, having by these reasonable concessions gained access for it among the wealthy and refined, you would have placed at your disposal for your works of holy enterprise and charity an amount of means and talent which you could not otherwise command. On the other hand, if you abide inflexibly by your original rules and principles, it is urged, that you guard against the manifest suspicion and danger of adopting any religious course whose prominent, if not principal, recommendation is, that it shuns the cross and the reproach, and gains its followers rather by converting religion to man, than by converting man to religion. You retain the salt with all its savour; and if the world's corruption is to be counteracted, it will not be by a dilution of the seasoning agent. You keep in the safe old path, to which you have been called by a chain of remarkable providences, and in which you have been cheered by above a century of gracious manifestations. You retain your high and distinguished position as a witnessing Church, maintaining before the world, through all its changing fancies and fashions, an uncorrupted doctrine, a severe morality, a saintly experience, a spiritual worship; and, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, remaining firm and steadfast to the end; humbly, very humbly, aiming to imitate our great Master in things pertaining to Himself, that there shall be 'no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' In setting these two courses before you, I deny that we are driven to the alternative of taking exclusively either

one or the other. Mr Wesley's notion of a Society in a Church relieves us entirely from this necessity. We need no change; and should the question of change ever be seriously entertained or agitated among us, it would be fraught with fearful danger. Any attempt to relax our Rules of Society to meet particular cases, might procure us, for a time, much apparent prosperity, in the increase of members and resources; but it would soon utterly destroy Class Meetings, lower the tone of Christian experience, diminish the number of sound conversions, and, by taking away those peculiarities in which our great strength lieth, make us weak as other men. Let this part of our system remain unaltered, so long as the sun and moon endure. All that we want is a more distinct and intelligent recognition of those who, though not members of Society, are yet constant members of our congregations, and whose moral lives, whose reverent fear of God and observance of His ordinances, would make them desirable members of any Church in Christendom,—who, in Mr Wesley's days, would have been members of the Established or Dissenting Churches, and who are now members of ours. By this more distinct and intelligible recognition, I mean, first, that you should exhort them to partake of the Lord's Supper; that you should give them the quarterly tokens to admit them to this ordinance; and that you should take the opportunity of their renewal for pastoral oversight and admonition, especially urging them to come within the inner circle, and avail themselves of the additional spiritual advantages to be found in membership with the Society. Invite

them to the privilege and duty of regular contribution towards the support of the Ministry; and do not repel them as aliens, who have no interests in common with yourselves; but tenderly care for them, as those from among whom your best instructed and most faithful members of Society will constantly arise.

Do not, under any temptations or inducements, forsake Methodism. For any man, and especially a Minister, to change his form of religion, is always a most serious thing, and can only be justified on important grounds.

There may be a change in his doctrinal views. Where this occurs after mature deliberation, competent reading, and much humble and earnest prayer to God, it is not only allowable but necessary that the change should be made; but, even under these circumstances, a man of right feeling will make the change with reluctance and sorrow. In *your* case this reason for a change ought never to exist. You were required to read our doctrinal standards before you were admitted to your first examination: you have been brought into more and more intimate acquaintance with them in your college studies and labours, and have given public and formal avowal of your approval and belief of our doctrines every year of your probation. You should not be 'ever learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth,' after such a course as that through which you have passed. The great articles of your creed should be so fixed in your minds and hearts that nothing could shake them; that ye be not driven to and fro by 'every wind of doctrine;'

but that you should assuredly know, and clearly and firmly hold, the things which are freely given to you of God.

But some who have left us find fault not with our doctrines, but our discipline. I might repeat in reference to discipline what I have said in reference to doctrine: you either have or ought to have made yourselves acquainted with it long ere this; and it speaks ill for any man, especially any Minister, who forsakes a Church not because its discipline is lax and inefficient, but because it is too strict, and joins himself to another Church, not because its discipline is better, but because it has no efficient discipline at all. It is scarcely possible to speak too strongly in reprehension of those who, intrusted as you will be with the care and leading of the flock, set them the example of base desertion, either to escape the reproach and persecution of Methodism, or to get into a more wealthy and what they think a more respectable position. They are often disappointed in both these expectations, always in the latter; for no position which can ever be occupied by one who has thus betrayed his trust, will make him respectable. We look upon him with pity as a bird that has wandered from his nest; and the party that receives and caresses him ever regards with suspicion, and in heart despises, the man who has once broken the vows, and deserted the religion, of his intelligent and conscientious choice; while he, in submitting to a second ordination, disparages the validity of the first, and alleges that all his previous ministerial acts were no better than the mere mimicries of sacred duties by a presumptuous and unauthorised intruder.

Abide in the calling in which you are called ; meet the labours and difficulties of your arduous but honourable position with a bold and cheerful heart ; consider yourselves committed to Methodism for life, and let no second or alternative thought dwell for a moment in your minds. The 'double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' If you diligently and faithfully improve your opportunities, and work this great system to which you are now so solemnly pledged, you may personally attain all the heights of holiness, living in the enjoyment of a rich and constant communion with God ; you may be instrumental in bringing many souls to Christ, and doing more good than you could do in any other Church in Christendom ; and, if faithful to your high vocation, true to God and to yourselves, you will doubtless return with joy, bringing your sheaves with you, and hear the Great Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful servants : ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you rulers over many things : enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'

THE END

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