

THE LAST THREE SERMONS

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PREACHED AT OXFORD

BY

*PHILIP N. SHUTTLEWORTH D.D.*

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THE LAST  
THREE SERMONS

*PREACHED AT OXFORD*

IN 1839 AND 1840

(ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE LATTER YEAR)

BY  
PHILIP N. SHUTTLEWORTH, D.D.  
(AFTERWARDS LORD BISHOP OF CHICHESTER)

TO WHICH IS ADDED  
A LETTER

ADDRESSED IN 1841

*To a Young Clergyman now a Priest in the Church  
of Rome*

RIVINGTONS  
London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1875

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RIVINGTONS

<b>London</b> . . . . .	<i>Waterloo Place</i>
<b>Oxford</b> . . . . .	<i>High Street</i>
<b>Cambridge</b> . . . . .	<i>Trinity Street</i>

## Preface

THE republication of these Sermons, the last which the author preached at Oxford immediately before his appointment to the see of Chichester, has arisen out of the following circumstances. The appended "Letter" having been reprinted in one of the Church journals, drew forth the expression of a wish (probably from some who originally heard them), that the Sermons might reappear, as especially adapted to the present needs of the Church. To this wish the surviving members of the Bishop's family have acceded, in the hope that the beneficial influence which resulted from the first publication of the Sermons may attend this new edition.

An anonymous correspondent thus wrote in 1840: "I feel it to be a debt of gratitude, to send to your Lordship the expression of my warmest thanks for the benefit you have conferred upon the whole Church, and upon myself individually, by the publication of your Three Sermons lately preached at Oxford. The reading of that book has conduced much to the settling of my mind, which had been previously

much perplexed and harassed by certain recent theories of Divinity."

This small volume expresses the matured convictions of the Author upon subjects as important to the present generation as they were to those of his own day. By all who knew him at Oxford (the period of his Episcopate having been lamentably brief), he is remembered as a Christian philosopher, a powerful and eloquent reasoner, and a firm adherent, from a conviction of their truth, to the principles of the Protestant Reformation.

Justification through Faith  
The Merciful Character of the Gospel Covenant  
The Sufficiency of Scripture as a Rule of Faith

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## THREE SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

*THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD*

IN THE COURSE OF

THE PAST AND PRESENT YEAR

BY

PHILIP N. SHUTTLEWORTH, D.D.

WARDEN OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND RECTOR OF FOXLEY, WILTS

*I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.—1 COR. ii. 2*

London

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and Waterloo Place, Pall Mall

1840

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TO THE RIGHT HON.

BARON LEIGH

OF STONELEIGH

THE FEW FOLLOWING PAGES ARE DEDICATED

AS A RECORD

OF THE AUTHOR'S ADMIRATION OF HIS TALENTS

AND ESTEEM AND AFFECTION

FOR HIS TRULY CHRISTIAN CHARACTER



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## Advertisement

HAD the following discourses been written by me ten or fifteen years ago, I probably should not have conceived it to be worth while to lay them in their present form before the public. However suitable the discussions which they involve may be for keeping alive the recollection of the great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel in the minds of a Christian congregation, still the sentiments which they express were at all events too universally assented to at that period as obviously and undoubtedly true, to require their being formally pressed upon the public attention through the medium of the press. But circumstances in this respect are strangely altered. The restlessness of public feeling, which has for some time past been exercising its influence over other branches of study, has now extended itself to our theology. The doctrines of "justification through faith," of "the free pardon of sin through the Gospel covenant," and of "the entire sufficiency of Scripture as our guide to salvation," are no longer, as formerly, accepted by all parties within our Church as almost trite and undeniable truths. Within

the last few years a strong and extensively organised effort has been made, if not openly to controvert them, at least to weaken their evidence, and practically to supersede them. Minute and unessential points of practice have been rigidly insisted on ; inferences, either derived from Scripture by a strained exaggeration of particular texts, or purely and simply the product of human caprice, have been oracularly brought forward as indispensable parts of faith ; and thus, whilst men's attention has been drawn away from fundamental principles, a system of theology has been set up, not of that soul-stirring and yet simple character taught by the Apostles, but blended with many of the superadditions, not to say cold superstitions, of a later and far less pure period. That a form of Christianity thus at once arbitrary and servile (not now adopted for the first time, but merely the revival of obsolete and almost forgotten opinions,) is not likely to retain any lasting hold of the public mind, I most readily believe. Momentary novelty, strong excitement arising from external and incidental causes, and the plausibility which always to a certain degree accompanies theories when set off by a display of discursive reading, may invest it with a short-lived popularity. But the characteristic lineaments which mark God's revealed

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dealings with mankind stand out in the Sacred Writings too strongly prominent to be thus easily obscured. With a little time and patience, truth will re-assert her rights. The recurrence from a trifling and fanciful theology, such as that now described, to the contemplation of the great scheme of God's reconciliation with man as revealed to us in the Gospel, is like a transition from the study of some puny efforts of art, to that of the great works of the Creator as displayed in the awful magnificence of nature.

“ As one who, long in populous city pent,  
Forth issuing on a summer morn *to breathe*  
. . . . . from each thing met conceives delight,”

so the mind, intensely conscious of its spiritual wants, is not likely to be detained long by the artificial pageantry of human inventions from throwing itself in humble but satisfied confidence at the foot of the Saviour's cross. Confident, however, as I am that the system now attempted to be set up in this country is not likely to be of long duration, still it is not without feelings of anxiety that I have remarked the momentary prevalence which it has obtained during the last few years, more especially among the younger members of our clergy. Under such circumstances it would seem to be incumbent upon every sincere friend to the principles of the Protestant

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Reformation, and (as I conceive them to be) of evangelical truth, openly to declare their dissent from doctrines which, if they are doing nothing more, are at least disarming those principles of their poignancy and efficacy. In order to do this, however, it does not appear to me to be either necessary or desirable that they should entangle themselves or their readers in the irritation of controversy. A candid, calm, and dispassionate statement of their own opinions, precisely as they have derived them from the fountain head of Holy Writ, with as little reference as possible to the rival sentiments of others, will be all that will be required of them. Such a mode of proceeding (not the usual one, I confess, among conflicting theologians,) would, I imagine, be not inferior in efficacy, and certainly more befitting the characters of Christians and Churchmen, than any appeal to the anger and excitement of direct polemics. In disputes of this nature we should never for a moment forget that, however dangerous we may conceive to be the tendency of the doctrines we controvert, they are for the most part maintained by our adversaries with entire good faith, and a sincere belief in their accordance with God's Word. Whilst, therefore, we attack the opinions, it is still our duty to respect *the motives*, and often to revere the piety of

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those whom we oppose. Such, I trust, have been my own feelings in preparing the following discourses for publication. As compositions they are probably worth little: they have, however, been written with a solemn, conscientious belief in the soundness of the principles they advocate. Being such, my hope is that they may be in some degree useful in calling out an increased attention to the fundamental and palmary truths of the Gospel. Should they fail of that effect, still my object, though in a much lower degree, will be in some respects answered: they will serve, at all events, to record my formal dissent from that opposite system of doctrines which have of late been set forth under so many advantages of confederated members, extensive erudition, and (why should I not add?) of unblemished excellence in the details of Christian practice.

PH. N. S.

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## Contents

### SERMON I.

#### JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH.

	PAGE
<i>When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost .. ..</i>	1
JOHN xix. 30.	

### SERMON II.

#### THE MERCIFUL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL COVENANT.

<i>Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.—</i> JOHN xx. 17 .. .. .	30
---	----

### SERMON III.

#### THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE AS A RULE OF FAITH.

<i>In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight ..</i>	59
LUKE x. 21.	

APPENDIX .. .. .	93
------------------	----

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## SERMON I.

### JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH.

*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished. And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

JOHN xix. 30.

“IT is finished.” Such were the significant words by which our Lord, in his last agony, announced the final completion of that great scheme of redemption, the commencement of which was coeval with the first dawnings of man’s history. From the time of the original promise made to our fallen first parents, that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head,” this mysterious process had, for the long period of four thousand years, been advancing gradually to its full development. It had been obscurely hinted to the antediluvian patriarchs; it had cheered at a distance, through a long vista of time, the faithful Abraham, as an arrangement which, though not destined for its completion in his own days, was to be a blessing to his posterity, and through them to the remotest regions of the earth. It had been prophetically foretold by Moses; it had been anticipated in the

Levitical covenant, under the expressive symbols of ritual purification and expiatory sacrifices ; it has been triumphantly hailed by the inspired David and, as the important period drew nearer and nearer, it had been still more clearly announced by a succession of prophets, all of them in various ways anticipating that happy period in the arrangements of Providence when the reign of reconciled mercy should commence ; when man's unrighteousness should be forgiven, and when the service of the heart, tendering its humble offering of sincere but imperfect obedience, through faith in its Redeemer's merits, should be graciously accepted by God. Four thousand years of solemn preparation passed thus away, and the Saviour at length descended from on high in the form and character of man. His appearance was startling to the carnal anticipations of human vanity ; but it was worthy of that Divine moral sublimity which can well afford to set at nought all the external trappings of worldly grandeur. The Saviour came ; but he had no outward form, or comeliness, or beauty, that we should desire him. He came, to the common understanding of mankind, in the humble guise of a carpenter's son. His friends and disciples were fishermen, earning their daily bread by their bodily labour. His doctrines were those simple but cogent truths which come home at once to the breasts and feelings of every class of human beings ; namely, love toward God, with implicit submission to his will ;

love toward man, with a total denial of self, and of every uncharitable feeling ; entire purity of life and morals, with a renunciation of every sentiment of self-righteousness ; and hope, having for its sole foundation a humble conviction of God's paternal mercy and forgiveness. His ministry lasted but the short term of three years ; and then he who, for the sake of purchasing man's salvation, had emptied himself for a season of that Divine glory which he had possessed from all eternity, suffered the fearful death of a slave and of a malefactor, hunted down by the worldly and bloodthirsty men whose corruptions of God's word, and whose secular arrogance and ambition, he had systematically denounced. Such is the short but momentous history of the preparation for and completion of the great and all-sufficient sacrifice for human transgressions, once, and only once, offered. It was the result of the intense concentration of man's wickedness, struggling with and overpowered by the still more active principle of God's strongly concentrated mercy. It was a spiritual warfare between the opposed powers of heaven and hell, in which man was destined rather to be the spectator than the agent. It was a ransom for sin, the payment of a debt which not all the collective energies of mere human merit had the means to liquidate. It was a tender, made by God himself, of retributive suffering, fearful to think of, if we take into account only the bodily agonies of the cross ; and yet perhaps still

more fearful, did we know, could we imagine, all the bitter conflict of the soul during the spiritual agony the preceding evening in the garden of Gethsemane. That price, however, great as it was, our blessed Saviour came on earth for the express purpose of paying ; and though the infirm flesh which he had assumed for that occasion shrank instinctively as man from the horrors which it anticipated and underwent, that price as God he willingly and effectively paid. "He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied." "He justified many by bearing their iniquities ;" and, having completed the great object of his mission, he finally announced its completion in the pregnant and emphatic words, "*It is finished,*" and then gave up the ghost.

Such then was the preparation, such the conduct, and such the consummation, of that stupendous external process by which God, in his own good time, reconciled a lost world to himself. The victory accordingly is now achieved. The primeval prophecy is fulfilled : the serpent's head is crushed. Christ is literally become, as it was foretold of him, "the Lord *our* righteousness." His work of redemption is finished ; he has ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men ; sitting henceforward at the right hand of God, and awaiting the time when all his enemies, whether of this world, or of the spiritual power of darkness, shall be made his footstool. Here then, in the *consummation* of this stupendous process, of which

God was the sole agent, and ourselves the party benefited, here is the one cardinal fact in the chain of events—the one great point in the current of time towards which, as to one common centre (in the earlier ages with eagerly anticipated hope, in the later ages with a grateful recollection of mercies received), the word of revelation has uniformly directed the attention of mankind. From this important epoch, accordingly, we date the second and more momentous creation of man, in his capacity of a regenerate spiritual being : that period which the expressive language of Holy Writ designates as “the latter days ;” intimating by that term the commencement of Christ’s kingdom upon earth, and which, by a new and distinctive character, marks the boundary between the infancy of the world, and its season of maturity. Here, so far as the actual process of man’s redemption was concerned, the work was finally closed : God’s covenant was sealed and ratified. For a considerable period, indeed, subsequent to that ratification, the Holy Spirit continued, as we are assured, in an especial manner to superintend and instruct the infant Church. But the illumination thus specially vouchsafed, though posterior in point of time, was in reality but an appendage, as it were, to the process already completed. Just as the prophecies of the Old Testament looked forward to the events of our Lord’s ministry as things to *be done*, so the inspired writers of the New Testament looked back to them, and

spoke of them as *already done*. The Holy Spirit brought all things, whether facts or doctrines, to the remembrance, and rendered them intelligible to the apprehension, of the Apostles. It explained, it illustrated, it more completely developed this one great fundamental fact of Christianity ; but, then, it added nothing whatever to it. "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer." Such was its doctrine. It left untouched, in all its awful and majestic prominence, the one sole stay and support of our hopes of salvation, namely, our Lord's atonement. In the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles, in all the epistolary writings of the New Testament, and in the mysterious book of the Apocalypse, one single thread of doctrine is alone traceable from first to last : that doctrine is Christ crucified. The subject matter may, in these later writings, indeed, be spread over a larger surface ; it may be more elaborately dwelt upon ; it may be varied in the mode of telling ; practical inferences may be drawn from it in a vast variety of forms : but still it is the same fundamental proposition of "man's works rendered acceptable through the Redeemer's sufferings" which meets us under every aspect, and lies at the root of every argument.

The fact of man's redemption, thus effectively accomplished, is, then, in the strictest meaning of the term, "a thing distinct and complete in itself." It stands all alone, as I have already observed, as *the one great epoch* in the annals of our history. It



is a treasure of Divine mercy already laid up in store for the benefit of those who seek for it in humble faith, and in earnest sorrow for past sin : a system perfect in all its parts ; and, consequently, admitting of no subsequent improvement, no external addition.

And now, then, my brethren, what are the inferences which I propose to derive from these remarks ? They are the following. I wish to remind you how entirely, not only in what we are physically, but in what we are morally and spiritually, we are all of us God's creatures. That the covenant of our redemption is *God's free gift* : that the holiness after which (making our own feebler endeavours cooperate with his Spirit within us,) it is our duty to seek, and to which we hope to attain, *is his work, and not ours*. That he affords the means, and that he strengthens and stimulates our otherwise inert and ineffective will. That the salvation to which we look could neither have been previously deserved by man in his unregenerate, nor could it be subsequently compensated for by him in his regenerated state. In short, that *it comes to us* : it does not originate *from us*. It is really, what its name declares it to be, *Εὐαγγέλιον*, the Gospel ; a message of good news addressed from heaven to earth. Mankind had turned away from, and had forgotten God ; but God had not forgotten them. They lay in darkness, and in the shadow of death : but, when *they least expected it, the day-spring from on high,*

of its own accord, arose and visited them. Irritated and stimulated by their evil passions, by their lusts, by their selfishness, by their intense hatred of each other, they had long pursued their own devious course, when God himself, of his free mercy, interfered to call them back to the paths of original innocence. And how, in what way, did he interfere? In one which the heart of man could never have conceived, nor have presumed to hope. In a way truly worthy of his beneficent nature. He interposed, not by establishing any new system of harsh and repulsive philosophy; not by a fresh accumulation of penal enactments, calling in the sole principle of terror to frighten them into more strict obedience than heretofore; not by driving men into deserts; by denouncing the sober and innocent pleasures of life; or by trampling down the social affections. On the contrary, he drew us towards himself, as it were, by "the cords of a man;" by awakening our gratitude, by bringing out the humble, beneficent, kindly sympathies of our nature, by proclaiming that "blessed are the poor in spirit;" by substituting the doctrine of *the pardon of sins through faith*, in the place of a presumed and deceptive personal merit; and by exhibiting to us a practical rule of life totally and essentially distinct from, and superior to, all which the heart of man had previously imagined, or had been capable of inventing. In fine, we are now become under the Gospel covenant, in *the strictest* sense of the term, "new creatures."

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“Old things are passed away : behold, all things are become new.”

From this fresh æra, then, in man's history, the altered condition in which we are now placed affects thenceforward the whole of our theological reasoning—every inference and every argument connected with the theory and practice of our religion. Even in that branch of the science of ethics which affects our duties as members of society, our position is no longer what it was. We cannot now consistently take the same views which were adopted, with some appearance of plausibility, by the philosophers of heathen antiquity. We appeal to an entirely distinct set of first principles from theirs ; we build upon higher and holier ground than that which was occupied, or could have been assumed as probable, by the moral and religious disputant before the ratification of the covenant of grace. Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I am far from undervaluing that instinctive moral sense, which I believe the Creator to have interwoven with the original framework of every well constituted mind, pagan as well as Christian. I do not deny that the mere light of nature may have established principles in ethics which are at this moment obligatory upon every follower of Christ, and by which, before the revelation of a better rule of life, the heathen world were in some degree enabled to be a law unto themselves. But what I do mean to say is this : *that so many new elements, so much entirely fresh*

*matter* has been introduced by the Gospel into the science of morals, that the whole of its previous groundwork required in consequence to be readjusted and reconsidered. Man, the isolated individual "self," was the centre towards which all the heathen virtues gravitated. God, his honour, his worship, obedience to his will, gratitude for undeserved mercies, form the great spring of action to the redeemed Christian. The pagan moralist attempted to assimilate himself to an abstract idea of excellence, a kind of intellectual idol set up in his own mind: and in proportion as he succeeded, pride, a repulsive pride both of the head and of the heart, was the invariable consequence. "Get thee hence, I am holier and better than thou," was his language. He stood, as he imagined, upon a high moral and intellectual eminence, and he delighted in contemplating his fellow creatures as so many degraded and infirm beings creeping about beneath his feet.

"— Nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere  
 Edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serena,  
 Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre  
 Errare, atque viam palantes quærere vitæ."

But far different from these self-worshipping feelings is the morality taught by the Gospel! I have described the frame of mind of the philosopher, of the boasted "wise man" of heathenism. Let me now contrast it with what, if he reason correctly, *must be the thoughts* which suggest themselves to

the sincere and practical Christian. Turn where he will, motives, not for self-flattery, but for self-abasement, meet him in every direction. He knows himself, like all the other sons of Adam, to have been lost in sin; but that Christ in his mercy condescended to die for him. A covenant of redemption he knows to be offered to his acceptance, but it is a covenant of which the benefit lies all on one side; he has nothing to give in return; he has simply to receive: if finally saved, he will be saved not through his own resources, nor by his own natural strength. He is intrinsically unclean, weak, and wayward. But God has mercifully put good thoughts into his heart by his Holy Spirit; has opened to him ways of effective righteousness, of which the heathen world entertained not the slightest conception; and has put away his transgressions far from him, because they are already cancelled by his Redeemer's blood. "Where then," as the Apostle justly asks, "where is boasting?" A pardoned culprit, knowing himself to be such, can have nothing to do with self-complacency and pride. He cannot triumph over his weak mortal brethren, for he was himself originally involved with them in the same condemnation. He cannot offer to his Maker the tender of his own good works, and of his own merits, for he knows that, so far as they are good, they are God's gifts, and that by no possibility can a clean thing come out of an unclean. Heathen ethics, and Christian ethics, then, being established

upon entirely distinct and opposite first axioms, must, in their subsequent ramifications, be naturally expected to diverge in different directions. They may, indeed, and sometimes do, accidentally unite where they chance to appeal to the same facts, in the same spirit; but when considered as *systems*, they are opposed diametrically to each other, not only as to the point from which they set out, but also as to that towards which they respectively tend.

Taking then this view of the great covenant of our redemption, of which the sacrifice of our blessed Saviour upon the cross was the closing circumstance, we arrive necessarily at the following conclusions. In the first place, that signal event has produced an "entire change in man's spiritual circumstances, and in all his various relations and modifications of duty." Secondly, forming as it does that great landmark and division in the course of time, which separates the mature age of the world from its infancy, we may assert of it that "it is not only unlike anything which had previously occurred, but, also, anything which can by any possibility happen a second time in the history of the world. It is an event entirely definite in its nature. *It is finished. It is over.*" Now there are many circumstances, as well in the good as in the evil features of our nature, which make it highly expedient that we should keep this fact, as now stated, continually present to our *minds*. Take, for instance, in the first place, the

self-willed and latitudinarian portion of mankind. Those men, I mean, who have no objection to call themselves Christians, provided they may consider Christianity to be a pliant and accommodating system, affording its sanction to every new theory which the successive and evanescent speculations of the day may invest with a transitory popularity. Such persons will talk of the Gospel scheme with apparent respect, as having been well fitted to the peculiar period, to the locality, and the circumstances under which it was first announced. But whilst admitting thus much, they will assert also the necessity of considering it in the light of a *progressive* dispensation; as a system which is to alter its character and its injunctions, according to the presumed new lights which the march of civilization may have introduced into society, or the new metaphysical theories which may have been engendered by the discoveries of experimental science. Thus, according to this view, Christianity is at once made to mean everything and nothing. With men trained up in this school, let but a few novel speculations start up with regard to the origin of our moral sense, or the doctrine of necessity and free will; let but some more minute observer detect, or fancy that he detects, some as yet overlooked convolution of the brain, or some facts connected with the growth of animal life, and their faith as Christians immediately adapts itself to the supposed newly discovered principle. The mind of man, we are gravely told,

cannot submit to be bound down by an immutable and unvarying law. Our knowledge is necessarily progressive, and our moral and religious character must be contented to follow the same rule. As Christians, we must either keep pace with the march of mind in the adoption into our creed of fresh and fresh improvements as they arise, or we must submit to lag behind whilst everything else is on the advance. And thus, in the eye of this self-sufficient philosophy, Christianity becomes only another name for all the wild and unsatisfactory guesses of the human mind in those departments of knowledge where man, unless enlightened by revelation, has been doomed by his Creator to irremediable ignorance. And yet have patience: wait but a little time, and the tide of fashion will be found to have changed, and to have borne away with it these successive short-lived theories one by one, whilst the everlasting Gospel remains still before us in all its awful and majestic fixedness, like some vast natural promontory projecting in its original boldness, from which the feeble works of human art have successively crumbled under the consuming hand of time. Most true indeed it is, what inspiration has long ago announced, "The thoughts of the heart of man are vain," whilst "the word of God endureth for ever in the heavens." Men may tread and retread the continually varying circle of human science, and imagine meanwhile that they are advancing in a forward direction; but the covenant of



our redemption remains precisely what it was at the first day of its promulgation, an entire and complete system, which no possible change of circumstances can interfere with, or alter.

It is not, however, the mere carnal student in the school of this world's philosophy only, that we would remind of the definite and peculiar character of the revealed word of God. It is not necessary that a man should be either a cold friend, or an avowed enemy of our faith, in order that he should be led into serious misconceptions of its precise nature and object. On the contrary, feelings completely alive to the sentiments of Christian piety; hearts, the foremost aspirations of which are those of obedience to the Divine will, even these may be led into error by the energy of their own excitement, if, from a mistaken anxiety to do God service, they look rather to the suggestions of their own imaginations as their guide, than to the strict letter of that covenant which He has revealed. The Gospel is indeed a stupendous, a scarcely conceivable instance of God's mercy, and of his willingness to forgive sinners. To minds, accordingly, deeply conscious of their own unworthiness, there is always attendant upon their religious studies a kind of sentiment of incredulity whether they read aright. They are conscious of a degree of misgiving, I had almost said of disappointment, when they are told that the great Creator really requires nothing more of mankind than their acceptance through faith, and

their sincere practical adoption of the revealed conditions of their redemption. "Is then," they ask, "a pure heart, accompanied with a holy life, the only sacrifice for sin which will be henceforward required of us? Can God really accept the imputed and vicarious merits of the Redeemer made ours through the instrumentality of faith, in preference to, and in exclusion of, the painful expiation of sin made by each individual personally for himself?" Such is the question which almost every sincere Christian asks of himself at some period or other of his life, which he hopes may be true, and yet almost fears to answer in the affirmative. And yet I know of no one point in which the language of revelation appears to me more decidedly explicit. The law of works, (if by works we mean the expiation of our own sins by our own personal sufferings, and the establishing of our own righteousness either in rivalry to, or in professed co-operation with, the righteousness of Christ,) all such law seems to me to be for ever abrogated and set aside by the Gospel covenant. "By faith we are saved, and not by works:" that is to say, not by such works as those now supposed. It is indeed a strange complaint for weak and sinful man to make, in discussing the charter of his redemption, that the terms are too easy; that he is not taxed personally in proportion to his demerits; that he is not more completely crushed by the weight of the burden imposed upon *him*. And yet such is the mode in which many

pious men have in all ages argued secretly with themselves, even where they have not avowed their sentiments openly in public. They have been conscious of an inward vague incredulity that God is not, and cannot be, really so merciful as his revealed word declares him to be. They accordingly, in order to make their case more safe, seek after other and other expiations for sin, in superaddition to that one great sacrifice sanctioned by Scripture as our only legitimate ground of hope. And thus, from this prolific source of will-worship, (*ἐβελοθησκεία*, as it is expressively named by St. Paul), have resulted one by one all the various contrivances by which men have attempted, age after age, to improve upon the proffered terms of salvation. Thus argued, in the very infancy of Christianity, the first hearers of the divinely inspired Apostle of the Gentiles. He called them away from the burthen-some detail of ritual expiations, and vexatious ceremonies, to the acceptance through faith of the great covenant of mercy, with the accompaniment of that entire holiness of heart, which the scriptural term "faith" necessarily involves. But, because his language was, "Sacrifice and oblations for sin hast thou not required," their inference was that a doctrine thus lenient must therefore be lax and unholy. "Shall we then sin, that grace may abound?" was their continued perverse representation of his doctrine. In vain did he reply, "God forbid; how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer

therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In vain did he proclaim that by the searching operation of the Gospel within the heart the whole body of sin was effectually destroyed, "that henceforth we should not serve sin." Still, in spite of all that he could urge, all that he could preach, the ostentatious righteousness of external observances had superior attractions for the minds of his carnal hearers. The most obstinate and the most formidable, because the most plausible, of all the heresies which have invaded the Church, took root accordingly, contemporaneously with the very first preaching of Christianity itself; and, by a strange perversity of reasoning, the ritual servitude of Judaism, that very system of spiritual bondage from which the Gospel came to rescue us, was, in the apprehension of many of the first Christian converts, inseparably interwoven, as a necessary constituent, with the doctrines of the new covenant.

That such a mistaken apprehension of the conditions on which it has pleased God to reconcile the world unto himself, should have descended, together with other misconceptions, to our own time, cannot, I repeat, be a subject of wonder. The error is *altogether a natural one*. Man is much too sinful

a being at the best; and a man imbued with the searching influence of true devotion is ever much too conscious of his own sinfulness, to feel warranted, without the express sanction of Scripture, in conceiving as probable such a scheme of stupendous mercy and forgiveness as revelation holds out to us through the covenant of faith. "Can it be true," we naturally ask, "that God, the pure, the holy, and the just God, really thus puts away, as though they had never been, the multitudinous past sins, the rebellion and the waywardness of those who return to him with a humble and contrite heart?" This awful question is best answered by putting another. "Is it true that the Second Person of the glorious Godhead himself did indeed assume our mortal nature, that by the shedding of his most precious blood he might redeem us from sin?" Admit that the thing to be redeemed was great, (and great it undoubtedly was), still, may we not naturally ask, was not also the price paid equally great? If then divine revelation answers this latter question in the affirmative, (and this surely is the one great prominent truth which distinguishes the Christian covenant), can we doubt for a moment whether the former question is not to be answered by us also in the affirmative? Has Christ suffered in order that the dispensation of mercy might prevail over that of strict retaliatory justice, and are we, I ask, preaching the word of divine truth, if we inculcate that the divine justice is even yet not satisfied; that it still requires the same

rigorous observances and expiations as before? That it continues to exact that same strict repayment, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," for which our as yet unredeemed nature originally stood responsible? I am well aware, indeed, what advantage the laxity and selfishness of ungodly men have ever been prone to take of this blessed doctrine of a vicarious expiation of sin, and of justification through faith. But then I know also that those persons who imagine that a true faith in Christ's merits can really take possession of the heart without kindling within it a strong desire to assimilate itself to his holy nature, and to obey his will, conceive little indeed what a vast pregnancy of meaning that short word "faith" involves. "Christ died that he might rescue us from sin, and from the death of the soul, the consequence of sin." Be it so. This is an undoubted scriptural truth. But if this is really our belief, then we must also believe that "wilful and deliberate sin is most repugnant to his nature, and, by consequence, totally incompatible with our profession as his followers." If we accept the first proposition, we must necessarily accept also with it all the consequences which its admission involves. We must, accordingly, put away for ever what St. Paul denominates "the old man;" for it was that very principle which Christ came to destroy. We must consider our originally corrupt nature as *actually crucified, dead, and buried with Christ, and our regenerate nature as already raised from the*

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grave, to live with him even here on earth to the works of holiness. And, if this be so, surely this entire allegiance, this complete transfer of the obedience of both soul and body to our Master's service, involves a sufficiently difficult course of duty to supersede the necessity of considering by what fresh devices and contrivances of our own we can render our mortal probation more efficient. Set before the generality of men's eyes the simple evangelical doctrine of salvation through faith, with its attendant holiness, as the sum and substance of the Christian scheme, and they quarrel with the very leniency of the terms offered to their acceptance. According to them, its yoke is too easy, its burthen too light, for the energy and impatience of their zeal. And yet, let those persons who thus argue consider for a moment what is the course of spiritual discipline which this apparently easy duty and service really require. Innocence of thought, purity and simplicity of life, practical and unfeigned love towards mankind, with a sure and steady reliance upon God's covenanted mercies, may without difficulty be expressed in a few short words ; and yet, as a rule of action, they require more real energy, more actual self-denial, more thorough devotion of the soul, than any one of us, should the term of our lives be extended to the longest possible period, will probably succeed in carrying into full effect. Let us not then be offended at the simplicity and brevity of that proposition in which are thus compendiously

involved the sum and substance of a Christian's hopes. The words which convey it may be few in number, but, I repeat, they are pregnant with the most intense meaning. They tell us nothing less than this—namely, that if we have *faith in Christ*, we must, so far as human frailty will permit, be *like to Christ*. They tell us what is the readiest and best method by which we may put on the Christian character: that it is done, not by the accumulation of good works, *as prior in order of time*, that through them we may arrive at faith; but by the planting in our hearts, *in the first place*, the root of faith, in order that it may necessarily germinate in good works. We are to begin by being Christians, and the result of Christian obedience, holiness of life, will assuredly follow.<sup>1</sup>

Firmly as I believe this to be the plain statement of Scripture, I am aware that there is that in its first appearance ill calculated to make it generally

<sup>1</sup> We have recently been told by the writers of a peculiar school of divinity in this country, against the tendency of whose doctrines I feel it my duty to protest, however I may be disposed to respect their individual characters, that sanctification is either in itself identical with justification, or precedes it in the order of time, as cause is prior to effect. Not only does this statement appear to me directly contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament, but I cannot imagine in what way its supporters consider it as compatible with the doctrines of our own Church, as comprised in its 12th and 13th Articles. "Albeit that good works which are the *fruits* of faith, and *follow after* justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively *faith*; *insomuch that* by them a lively faith may be as evidently



acceptable. Men fear lest the simple doctrine of justification by faith, if taken in its broad acceptation, should lead to carelessness and recklessness of life. Even those who cordially assent to its truth have still their occasional scruples about bringing it forward as a primary and fundamental doctrine. It may be true, they argue; but still it is safer to take the more cautious and less sanguine view. Let us then, at all events, perform those additional expiatory acts, which, even if they do us no good, can do us no harm. If justification through faith be the true scriptural doctrine, it will still stand us in stead, even though accompanied by supererogatory works on our part; whilst if it be not the true doctrine, then those works are absolutely necessary.

Now it appears to me to be at once a sufficient reply to this view of the question, that it was not thus that St. Paul reasoned. *He* had no such apprehension of the danger of proclaiming the full, simple, and entire truth. He uniformly brought forward, without disguise, reserve, or hesitation, "the atonement of Christ, and faith in that atonement," as the one great fundamental position of the Christian scheme. And, as it appears to me, there

known as a tree discerned by the fruit." "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to God, inasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, *neither do they make men meet to receive grace*, or (as the school-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, *we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.*"

is a sound and sufficient reason for his having done so, as well as for all other preachers of Christ's doctrine doing the same. Works such as I have now supposed, however scrupulously and conscientiously performed, can scarcely be practised, in the first instance, as a *means* of arriving at justification and for their own sake, without suggesting to the agent some self-complacent feelings of his own merit ; some idea that he is purchasing his own salvation at his own cost. But now just reverse this view of the question. Consider holiness of life not as the *cause* but as the *consequence* of our acceptance with God ; in other words, bring forward, *in the first place*, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's expiatory merits as the great palmary and fundamental truth of Christianity. I repeat that, if we accept this proposition in its full evangelical sense, not only will good works necessarily follow in as large a numerical proportion as under the other process, but *more* than this will ensue. *Those works will be of a higher and holier class.* They will issue at once from the fountain-head of a Christian heart strongly impregnated with high Gospel principles. They will be the spontaneous and unstudied overflowing of a mind grateful for immense benefits received. They will be warm, energetic, and abundant, because they will be voluntary ; they will be humble and unassuming, giving all the glory to God, and denying any share *of it to themselves*, because the very principle from

which they proceed necessarily involves the acknowledgment of a gratuitous gift, and a direct denial of all personal merit.

What then, I ask, do we gain, or rather what do we not lose, with respect to the cultivation of practical holiness, by keeping back this doctrine as a thing dangerous, or to be ashamed of?—as a proposition indeed intrinsically true, and salutary to the prudent and well disposed ; but liable to be misconceived by, and therefore to prove injurious to the many ? Surely, if this be indeed a scriptural doctrine, as we believe it to be, God’s wisdom may be trusted for the salutary tendency of his own revealed truth. So far from pursuing the timid course now alluded to, let us then, on the contrary, strive to preach the Gospel as the inspired Paul himself preached it. Let us lay open, without distrust, reserve, or apprehension for the consequences, the whole declared counsel of God. Let us proclaim to all sinners, indiscriminately, in every quarter and region where our voice may be heard, or our sentiments penetrate, that there is an inexhaustible well of mercy for all who turn again to their God in faith, and in sorrow for past sin. Let us bring forward *prominently* (because we find it *prominently* stated in Scripture) the great truth of “the gratuitous redemption of mankind by our Saviour’s vicarious expiation” as *the* point from which all our other doctrinal and religious inferences are to spring ; from which they are to receive their several direc-

tions, and to which they are all harmoniously subservient.

Just as our original creation, my brethren, was the work of God, and not of ourselves, so is our second creation—the redemption and purification of our souls—the result of his exclusive agency. Our participation in the great work consists, not in suggesting the terms, nor in arranging under what conditions and through the medium of what services we are to be reconciled to him, but in gratefully accepting those terms as they have been tendered to us. The charter of our salvation has been eighteen centuries ago completed, and has received its final ratification. *It is a thing done.* There it is: it lies open before us, drawn out in a clearness of expression which none of us can misconstrue. There is no new extraneous matter which we can venture to dictate by way of improvement to it; no superfluous matter which we can expunge from it. It only remains for us to submit meekly to its ordinances. Express that submission in one single word, and it is comprehended in the scriptural term “faith.” Expand and define that term, evolving all its implied pregnancy of meaning, and it will be found to branch out into that interminable course of holiness which is conveyed in the rule, “Be ye followers and imitators of Christ.” Thus explained, it implies entire sanctity of character; thoughts, of which love to God is the moving principle; the *coercion of our passions*; the submission of our

will ; habitual sentiments of humble gratitude to our Maker and Redeemer ; with deference and submission to the bearers of legitimate authority over us, whether spiritual or civil. It is indeed a high standard of excellence which is thus prescribed to us ; and, of course, it is not one at which we can arrive by desultory efforts, or mere transitory excitement. The discipline of a whole life will be required for its attainment ; and, even when that life shall have been expended, we shall every one of us be found to have fallen infinitely short of it. After all, then, our real hope and comfort must be in him who died for us ; in him who is not extreme to mark what has been done amiss, because he himself has already paid that penalty and forfeiture which he might have demanded at our hands.

May these reflections stimulate our endeavours after righteousness, and direct our souls in unfeigned sorrow for sin to the only legitimate source of forgiveness. "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered : blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not *impute* sin." A strict law of works as the condition of salvation, clearly cannot be the true theory of our religion, because under it no human being could possibly be saved. A law exclusive of good works, again, cannot by any possibility be the true theory of our religion, because as such it would be opposed to the purity of the Divine attributes. That law, then, which assumes as a fact the existence of sin, and

yet which finds a way for the reformation and pardon of the sinners ; which enjoins holiness in its highest possible import, and yet which does not annex irretrievable forfeiture to a certain degree of failure ; such a law, under the present position of human nature, only and exclusively can be at once worthy of God, and salutary to man. And such is in all points the Gospel scheme. Let us then accept it humbly and gratefully, with all its peculiarities, all its apparent paradoxes, and with all its annexed conditions. By the aid and illumination of God's Holy Spirit it will guide our feet in the ways of peace through all the intricacies of our social and religious duties ; and, whilst it will extinguish within us every sentiment of personal merit and self-righteousness, will, notwithstanding, raise us up practically and effectively in the service of our Creator and Redeemer, "a peculiar people zealous of good works."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have been told in a recent publication that "justification comes *through the Sacraments* ; is received by faith," &c. If the meaning of this expression is merely, that "by our participation in the Sacraments we manifest our faith in our Lord's atonement, and through that faith are justified," then the only objection which I would make to it is, that it is less clearly worded than it need have been, had it approached more nearly to the usual phraseology of Scripture. If, however, the intention of the writer be to assert that the Sacraments are *ultimately*, and "*per se*," the instrument and cause of our justification, then I have no hesitation in saying that such an assertion is directly contrary to the express declaration of St. Paul. "Brethren," says that inspired Apostle, "I would not *that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto*

Moses in the cloud and in the sea ; and did all *eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink*, (for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ), but with many of them God was not well pleased, *for they were overthrown in the wilderness. . . .* Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples ; and they are written *for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*" It cannot be doubted that in this passage St. Paul considers the passage of the Red Sea, and the miraculous gift of manna, as typical of the two Sacraments of the new covenant ; and, as the Israelites, notwithstanding their enjoyment of these blessings, ultimately perished through their want of *faith*, so he clearly implies that in the Christian Church the same deficiency, however accompanied by a participation in the Sacraments, would be followed by the same result. It can be no derogation from the value of the sacramental institutions of our Saviour, to say of them, that, whilst they rank foremost among the means of grace vouchsafed to us by our Maker, their efficacy still consists in their reference to a higher principle which they typically represent, and from which they derive their entire value. We cannot be too grateful that we are allowed to be partakers of them ; but it is because they point directly to the expiation made for sin by the sacrifice of our Redeemer, and lead and fix our thoughts in that direction, that they are endued with that spiritual potency which every Christian must believe them to possess. As memorials and types of the atonement, they stand foremost in the catalogue of Christian ordinances ; but their excellence is still merely *derivative*, and depends entirely upon that one great truth which constitutes the fundamental doctrine of our religion, and without which they would be without meaning, and consequently unproductive of benefit.

## SERMON II.

### THE MERCIFUL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL COVENANT.

*Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not ; for I am not yet ascended to my Father : but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God.*

JOHN XX. 17.

THE words which I have now quoted are selected from what has always appeared to me one of the most striking and affecting passages in the New Testament. They will of course be recognised by you as having been addressed by our blessed Saviour to Mary Magdalen in the garden of the sepulchre on the morning of his resurrection. I have chosen them for my text, as containing a striking illustration, out of the thousand others of like import which are scattered through the evangelical writings, of the singular, the unearthly and scarcely conceivable spirit of benevolence which characterizes the Gospel covenant ; a spirit, let me observe, which few of us are apt adequately to recognise, and none of us to appreciate as it deserves. *Let me then avail myself of the present opportunity*



of examining, together with you, the context of the entire passage, that we may rejoice also together over the consolation which it so abundantly supplies to each and all of us, who, turning away in hearty sorrow for our past sins, shall by God's grace betake ourselves to that infinite treasure of mercy, made available to us through faith in the meritorious sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order then to understand thoroughly the abundant comfort which this narrative contains, it is necessary that we should keep in mind all the circumstances of the case. In the first place, we should remember the close and affectionate intimacy which had subsisted between our Lord and his disciples previously to his crucifixion ; and the vast change which had subsequently taken place in their relative position, now that, his earthly ministry being closed, he returned to them in his original character, as the God of power and glory. Secondly, we should recollect what kind of a world that was which he voluntarily came to redeem, and who he was who thus condescended from his eternal Godhead, so to redeem it. Of the character of that world, my brethren, I need say but little. We all know it too well from the sad internal experience of our own hearts ; from the general aspect of existing society around us ; from the dark and sickening records of past and of present history. And yet to rescue from eternal misery a race thus steeped, as we know it to have been, in habitual sin, that

mysterious portion of the ineffable Godhead, the Second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, descended, as the inspired writings inform us, upon the earth under the semblance of man. But his reception by those whom he came to save was such as might have been expected from persons who, from long indulgence in wickedness, had lost every wish for the attainment, the very faculty of the perception, of righteousness. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not : he came unto his own, and his own received him not." Of the population of Judea, the ambitious portion hated and persecuted him, because they thought that they saw in him a destroyer of their exclusive national privileges. The learned detested him, because his lessons were humiliating to their vanity ; because his appeal lay from the tortuous ingenuity of a captious intellect to the unsophisticated feelings of the heart. The depraved of all classes conspired against his life, because he lifted up his testimony against the deadliness of their corruptions, and taught the doctrines of spiritual purity and self-denial. A few persons, on the other hand, too humble from their station in life to be misled by ambition ; too ignorant and uninformed to be seduced by the fallacies of spurious learning ; too simple-minded and innocent to let their minds be prejudiced against him through the blandishments of sin, were summoned by him to become *his disciples*, and obeyed his call. For a space of

about three years these chosen few associated with him in the closest and most affectionate intimacy. They partook of his bread ; they heard his doctrines ; they witnessed his miracles ; they beheld the holiness and purity of his life : and in their rapturous admiration they declared of him, that surely "this is he who should redeem Israel :"  
" This is indeed the Son of God." But, alas ! the moment of trial, that moment which so fearfully instructs mankind of the entire weakness of their nature, at length arrived. Of the twelve favoured Apostles, one became a mercenary apostate and traitor ; the remaining eleven, forewarned by him of their feebleness, and yet vain of their presumed strength, they who with one accord had exclaimed, " Though we should die with thee we will not forsake thee ;" all within a few short hours after that moment of self-deceiving confidence, saw the storm of adversity overtake their beloved Master ; they witnessed his arrest and condemnation as a common malefactor, and they left him to bear alone, as he best might, the weight of his affliction, and sought their own safety by the denial of him and by flight !

Such was the truly characteristic reception by the world of him who came to save the world. Little indeed did that heathen philosopher know of the deep wickedness of the human heart, who asserted that if virtue in its own shape could visit the earth, all mankind would hasten to love and cherish it. The experiment has been made, the attractive

power of goodness over the human heart has been put to the amplest and most convincing test ; and we know what has been the result. Virtue in its purest form *has* visited the earth, and it has been ridiculed, calumniated, and murdered. It has been hunted down with the bitterest intensity of hatred by the bad, and abandoned by those better-disposed but feeble-minded persons who believe themselves its admirers. Thus then closed the long foretold, the long wished-for visit of the Redeemer to mankind ! The reign, the triumph of the prince of the power of darkness appeared to be now complete. But far otherwise was the event. It was not in the power of hell to retain the soul of the Most High, nor could the body of the Holy One be destined to see corruption. The commencement of the third day from our Lord's crucifixion arrived ; he then burst the bonds of the grave and revisited mankind, no longer as the poor and persecuted carpenter's son, but as the King of life and glory. Sin and death had done their worst upon him, and he now returned triumphant : the serpent had indeed wounded his heel, but he in return had effectually crushed the serpent's head. And now, then, with what feelings of justly contemptuous indignation may we suppose him to meet his weak and irresolute disciples ; those men who, had their faith and moral resolution lasted but a few days longer, might have hailed him with joy as their returning triumphant Lord, but *who now had* to tremble before him as deserters

from one whose just authority they had renounced ! Let us judge, from our own carnal feelings and passions, what would appear to be the most probable state of his mind at such a moment with respect to those whom he had so long and so kindly cherished, and who had repaid his kindness by apostasy. Let us attempt, as mere human beings endued with the usual sensitiveness of our nature, to place our own minds in the same position which we might naturally imagine to have been his. With what feelings, I ask, should we, as men, had the case been our own, have returned to the society of those who, since the time that we had last met, had forfeited all their pledges of fidelity, and left us to combat alone with sorrow and with death ? We may, I think, confidently assert, that not one of us who are now assembled in this place would, or could, rejoin the society of those who had thus disappointed us, but with sentiments at least of sorrow and bitterness, not to say of distrust and partial alienation. We might indeed feel pain at their desertion of us, but it would be pain for them, accompanied with what we should deem a just and necessary indignation for ourselves. We might attempt to find out palliations for their misconduct ; we might even look forward to the time when we should propose at length to pronounce their forgiveness, and to restore them to our former goodwill ; but still we should consider it a kind of duty, in the meanwhile, to interpose a long interval of probation

and repentance, during which they might at least make some compensation for their offence, and strengthen their minds by a course of sterner discipline for a life of unflinching fidelity for the future. Thus, I repeat, would probably the best disposed of us have argued and reasoned, had the case been our own ; and thus, I believe, would argue the kindest, the most benevolent, the most tolerant individuals who have ever done honour to the human race. But let us now turn our thoughts away from these earthly passions and feelings, and fix them upon what we read of our returning and glorified Redeemer. He came, and he brought also his own divine feelings along with him. He returned to his former associates : and what was his manner of salutation and recognition ? The words of my text at once answer this question. It contained *not one word of expostulation, not one particle of remonstrance, not one hint at objurgation* ; it was solely and entirely kindness and benediction. "Go to my *brethren*," (such was his compassionate designation of those who, now shrinking in shame and sorrow into one small room, were brooding over the recollection of their late weakness), "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

What a spirit, my brethren, of more than human, of truly heavenly kindness and benignity is here ! And recollect that these are the sentiments of one *not capriciously* choosing or fixing his affections, as

men are wont to do, upon this or that favoured individual, under the bias of sect or party or country. On the contrary, they are the words of him of whom it is expressly declared, "that he is *no respecter of persons* ; but in *every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.*" And such (if, discarding the spirit of bondage, we will adopt that humble love inculcated by the Gospel, which putteth away fear), such, to those who read the revealed Scriptures aright as the message of peace of God to man, is indeed the merciful tenor of the blessed covenant of our redemption. It is a kindness which speaks more energetically, more touchingly, more effectively, as proceeding from a Being possessed of infinite power, and addressed to prostrate beings beneath his feet, than any language of mere objurgation possibly could do. In contemplating the gracious offer of reconciliation held out by the Christian revelation to the repentant sinner, the heart which threats might have failed to touch becomes softened, in spite of itself, by this amazing display of the Divine goodness. Perfect astonishment, I might almost say incredulity, at compassion thus unsought for and undeserved on our parts, is the first feeling which rises in our minds upon the contemplation of these high and holy matters ; whilst our second sentiment is that of looking back upon our past lives with contrition and self-detestation for our *persevering* misconduct. It is not, accordingly, so

much the fear of punishment, as a sense of absolute shame and sorrow which weighs heavily upon the heart of the awakened Christian prodigal, when returning to the household of his heavenly Father; shame and sorrow, the natural results of the recollection that a being worthless and degraded as himself should have dared to outrage a Master thus worthy of his most ardent love. Never, I repeat, does a mind not entirely callous to every holier and better feeling find itself more thoroughly subdued, more truly humbled to the very dust, than when addressed in the consolatory language of Scripture, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." When the repentant female, who had bathed our Lord's feet with her tears, received the assurance of the Divine forgiveness, she went away, as the hearts of all here must tell us, not with the purpose of sinning afresh, but with that of making her future conduct worthy of her high spiritual calling. In her case much was forgiven, and her love and gratitude were, we are told, increased in a like proportion. When again Peter recklessly and unfeelingly denied his Master in reply to the harsh and threatening interrogatories of the household of the high priest, one single look from that same Master whom he thus disclaimed (a look no doubt of the tenderest commiseration), softened him at once into tears; "He went out and wept bitterly." So *must it be* with every one of us, my brethren, if we *read the Gospel aright*. We cannot at one and the



same moment love God and serve sin ; we cannot at once be grateful and rebellious. It is enough for a Christian to know that all unrighteousness is repugnant to his Almighty Benefactor's perfect nature, to make him from his heart abhor and shun it. He recollects that it was to destroy the whole body of sin that our Lord condescended to become man ; that it was the sins of mankind (those of himself, and every individual among the sons of Adam), which degraded him for a season from his glory, and nailed him to the cross ; and he feels therefore that, even at this moment, to sin wilfully is literally to crucify his Redeemer afresh. Such impressions as these, I repeat, are not only the holiest and purest, but they are also the most powerful of all possible motives to a holy life. And for this reason it is that we cannot, I conceive, entertain ourselves, or inculcate in our education of others, too lively a conception of God's goodness, and of the interest which, through that goodness, we all of us individually have in our Saviour's blood. We cannot too strongly feel assured of the absolute certainty of the Divine forgiveness, if we feel at the same time proportionately humbled in our own self-estimation, truly repentant for our past offences, and firmly determined, by God's blessing, to live for the time to come in perfect obedience to his will.

And now, my brethren, let me state what was my object in calling your attention at this moment to the foregoing remarks. It was this. I conceive

that all of us, not merely from that natural mis-giving which every delicate and reflecting mind must feel when attempting to form an accurate judgment of its own moral conduct, but also from the result of the course of study more especially pursued in this place, of which human philosophy and human ethics form a necessary portion, are apt, without being aware of it, or intending it, to let the impressions thus derived blend themselves in some degree with our religious meditations. We forget from what entirely distinct principles pagan and Christian morality respectively take their rise. The former aims, hopelessly indeed and ineffectually, but still it *does* aim, at a perfect course of virtue through an entire adequacy of good works : the latter at once throws itself, in a humble acknowledgment of sin, and with all its imperfections, upon the mercies of a reconciled God. Consequently, the whole moral feeling, the entire course of reasoning, upon which we proceed in the one and in the other case, are essentially different. Now, in order to judge of the Gospel rightly, we should keep this distinction continually present to our minds. Our religion is not that of heathenism but of Christianity. We are not to think with Aristotle, or Cicero, or Seneca, and imagine that we are thinking with Paul, or John, or Peter. We must remember that it is not a retributive debt, the price of own deserts, *which we demand* of our Creator, but a gratuitous *boon of undeserved* mercy ; that our only firm

ground of reliance is not our personal merits, but the imputed righteousness of our crucified Redeemer. In short, we must learn to accept (in fear and trembling, I admit, but still in its full and authorised extent), that entire and plenary free gift of the remission of sins through faith in Christ's merits, which the New Testament lays down as its great fundamental truth. Now it is evident that faith of this kind is more easily described, by hearts constituted like ours, than practically arrived at. We are all of us at first sight almost incredulous, as I have already observed, of the superhuman mercy which the Gospel so distinctly announces. The mind requires to be thoroughly familiarised with Christian ethics before it can entirely conceive it, or fully assent to it. Setting Revelation apart, our situation in the universe is no doubt a tremendous one. Nothing is or can be so appalling to a sensitive and well-disposed mind as the retrospect of its past offences of omission and commission. How truly awful is the idea of an infirm and self-willed created being rebelling against and wilfully offending its God! A review of this kind awakens within us a fearful feeling of retribution which must in some shape or other be undergone; of a collision between ourselves and the great Author of our existence, from which nothing short of our own destruction can apparently ensue. But then, my brethren, what is the legitimate conclusion to which *this admission would lead us? Why, it is this.*

These very sensations, in all their depth, their gloom, and their horror, are among the strongest internal proofs that some such powerful external remedy as that held out by the Gospel is *demand*ed by every circumstance of our nature, and *must* therefore exist somewhere among the arrangements of God's providence. Adequacy of merit on our own part, or in its' place expiations and satisfactions for sin made by ourselves upon our own account, are clearly unattainable by us. One only alternative then remains as a solution of the difficulty : that is to say, some means external to, and independent of, ourselves, for the obliteration of sin and its consequences ; some vicarious substitute in the place of that entire duty and service which it is confessedly not in our own power to arrive at. Now it is evident that such external help can come alone *from God*. It is no less evident that, being undeserved by us on *our* part, it must be an act of *gratuitous mercy* on *his* ; whilst it would seem also to follow that such a free gift of redemption, thus tendered by our Creator, if it fail to attain to that universality of operation which might be expected of it, must receive its limitation not from any unwillingness on the part of the giver (for Scripture expressly declares of him that he is no acceptor of persons), but from the wilful rejection of it on the part of the intended receiver. We cannot imagine God capriciously *withdrawing his hand* whilst in the act of distributing *his gifts* ; but we can readily conceive the pride of

man declining to supplicate for a boon, the very application for which involves an acknowledgment of his own weakness and unworthiness.

Considering, then, these remarks as applicable to the character of the Gospel covenant, (and for the correctness of the application I make my appeal to the whole book of the New Testament, and to the apostolical epistles more especially), the real question between a Christian and his Maker, so far as his eternal salvation is concerned, would appear to be, not so much the number and extent of his past sins, as whether he has now truly and earnestly repented of them ; whether he has at length learned to detest those abominations which once led him away in willing bondage ; and whether, whilst seeking henceforward to serve God in full obedience, so far as his natural powers extend, he is still content to rest his hopes of salvation upon his Redeemer's merits only. The case I am now supposing, if answered in the affirmative, comes, I conceive, strictly within the declared conditions of the Christian covenant. To such a person, if there is any truth in the promises of Scripture, there is no future condemnation. But am I therefore, whilst I am thus standing up to advocate the great evangelical doctrine of the free mercies of God, am I placing on the selfsame footing a life of uniform and consistent holiness, and the life of him who, after a course of ungodliness, turns at length to his Redeemer in unfeigned repentance? Far from it. The nature of sin is not therefore changed

because our Maker is merciful. The pardon of our transgressions in the sight of God may be complete ; yet remorse, earnest, painful remorse, on their account, is a just penalty, which in this world we must still be contented to pay. It is the nature of sin that, even where it is healed, it necessarily leaves a scar behind it ; and it is the characteristic of a sincere penitent that, though humbly conscious that he is forgiven by Heaven, he cannot entirely—he does not even wish to—forgive himself. I am not therefore arguing that a repentant sinner, even whilst clinging in humble hope to the Gospel promises, ought not still to be conscious of the deepest shame and humiliation ; but what I am asserting is this, that where his repentance and faith are sincere he cannot, upon Christian principles, doubt that his repentance is accepted, and his faith made available to his justification. God has put away his offences : not that in the strict meaning of the term they are therefore become nonentities, but merely that they shall not be allowed to rise up in judgment against him. “All manner of sin and blasphemy,” says our blessed Redeemer, “shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” The most probable meaning of this rather dark sentence, I conceive to be, that there is under the Gospel covenant a complete remission of all manner of sins, *however serious* in their nature, provided we duly *accept the means* of grace under all their necessary

conditions ; and that the only entire and irreversible condemnation is of those who resist the workings of the Holy Spirit, and set at nought the scheme of divine mercy. But when will mankind learn to judge thus adequately, in its full length and breadth and height, of the plenitude of the loving-kindness of their Creator ? When will they begin to apprehend and confess that the Gospel is really what its name implies, a proclamation of *good news* to mankind ? When will they dare to confess, distinctly and without reservation, that through faith in the atoning merits of the Redeemer, or, in other words, through a sincere acceptance on their part of the covenant of mercy, their past iniquities become in the sight of God as though they had never been : that they are washed, that they are purified, and, if not literally, at least by imputation, are innocent ? I repeat, we must be Christians in feeling, in apprehension, and in experience, before we can duly assent to the entire extent of this doctrine. And yet, take up the Bible, and there it is in clearness and evidence of language, which no gloss or exposition can do away. Even under the infinitely less merciful Jewish law, how far beyond every sentiment of mere human love is that which the Almighty declares that he bears towards his creatures ! Take, for instance, the following passage, out of a thousand others of similar purport which might be quoted : “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; but thou hast

been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings ; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices : but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." If such, then, was the language of inspiration under the old covenant, we cannot surely be surprised at meeting with the following similar sentiments in the New. "What shall we then say," are the words of St. Paul, "to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." But let us take another and yet more striking passage from the New Testament. If there is one sin which would at first sight appear more fearful, more perfectly irremissible than another, it is that of those who joined in the fiendish cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas," and *who, stimulated to fury by the ferocious malice*



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of the Jewish rulers, extorted from the reluctant Pilate the crucifixion of the meek and merciful Jesus. And yet mark how Scripture deals with an offence even of this awful description! Turn to the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and you will there find Peter addressing these very men in the following consolatory words: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? . . . The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. *But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead. . . .* And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. . . . *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things. . . .* Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, *sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*" Oh, wonderful and inconceivable mercy! oh, much misunderstood, strangely misconceived

message of God's reconciliation with mankind! It would be endless, my brethren, were I to attempt to cite all the passages of the New Testament which might be adduced to 'the same effect. I refer you, therefore, to your own memories, and to your own private studies for them.

And now, then, having made this review of the terms of God's covenant, as revealed to us in the inspired Scriptures, I come, as every assertor of the doctrine of justification through faith alone has done before me, to meet the plausible but often refuted arguments alleged against it by carnal philosophy. Does not, it will of course be once more urged, does not this assertion of the ready mercies of our Creator hold out a direct encouragement to sin? Is it consistent with the entire perfection of his nature, that he should thus freely pardon our most grievous offences, upon the simple act of our turning to him in faith upon his promises and repentance for our misconduct? Is it not far more reasonable to suppose that our acceptance with him should be the result of a life previously spent in the laborious exercise of a strict spiritual discipline, than that our justification should have the priority in point of time, and practical holiness be the effect and not the precursor of it? These reasonings, I repeat, plausible as they may at first sight appear, are the inference of a carnal philosophy entirely mistaking the circumstances of our spiritual *nature*. Scripture is against them, piety is against

them, experience is against them. The infinitude of God's paternal mercy and forgiveness an encouragement to sin! What a strangely unnatural sentiment is this to persons who come to the practice of a Christian life with minds imbued with the principle of evangelical holiness. Can gratitude, we naturally ask, afford encouragement to disobedience, or love lead to rebellion? Hardened and unregenerate minds may, it is true, pervert this doctrine of the longsuffering and forbearance of their Creator, as we know that they do other parts of Scripture also, to their own destruction. But it is no argument against the soundness of a scriptural principle, (on the contrary, it is an argument in its favour), that it gives out the wholesome truths it contains to the apprehension of the pious and well-regulated heart only, whilst it withholds them from the lax and the obdurate; that whilst it is a sweet savour of life to the former, it is a savour of death to the latter.

Nor again is their argument more sound, who think that the earning of each man's salvation ought, in justice, to be left to each man's individual endeavours; who imagine that the imputation of vicarious merit is unworthy of the perfection of the Divine attributes, and that readily to forgive sin is in fact to connive at it. Such an argument, I would again reply, may sound plausibly in theory, but practically it is shown to be unsound by every circumstance of our present condition and nature.

We must of necessity either admit or deny man's sufficiency to attain to holiness by his own natural strength. If we admit it, we at once proclaim the Gospel covenant to be unnecessary ; if we deny it, we at the same time assert that his justification is by faith alone, and his righteousness the inward working of the Holy Spirit. We may deny that it is consistent with God's infinite purity, to be thus infinitely merciful in pardoning man's transgressions ; and yet, if the reverse of this proposition is true, then the blessed covenant of the Gospel is practically of none effect, and our immortal souls are inevitably lost. Human philosophy may teach that man's righteousness is the result of his performance of good works : we have ; on the other hand, our Saviour's own authority for declaring that good works are the *result of righteousness*, that it is the good root which is the cause of good fruit, and not the excellence of the fruit which occasions that of the root.

Were we, my brethren, in the habit of deriving all our theological opinions from the unadulterated Scriptures alone ; (what I admit we scarcely by any possibility can do), could we entirely exclude from our religious speculation all our own incidental theories, and all the theories of other persons ; could we so far put aside all our besetting fears, misgivings, and superstitions, as fully to believe that God really means what he so expressly asserts that he does mean, when he declares his willingness to receive *sinner*s, all that I have now said upon this subject

would have been superfluous. The glad tidings of the Gospel, as a proclamation of peace and goodwill towards men, would be a familiar, and though a joyful, still a trite subject of discussion. But it is difficult, I repeat, if not impossible, in this late period of the world, after the speculations of eighteen centuries, to take this single-eyed view of this truly awful question ; to avoid setting up a god of our own imaginations instead of the God of the Gospel, as the object of our worship ; and to recollect that his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Still the effort is one which it is our duty to make ; striving by a continual application to revelation at its fountain-head, to contemplate our Maker as he has really manifested himself to us, and not as our alarmed apprehensions would incline us to picture him.

Having, however, dwelt thus plainly upon the theory of that process of man's salvation revealed to us in the New Testament, let me now remind you that of all modes of religion that of salvation *through faith alone* is the most intensely *practical* in its effects upon our manner of life. The whole compass of theological language does not, as I have already observed in the preceding discourse, contain a more complex idea, a word more pregnant with practical meaning, than that of "faith." Externally it may appear to imply mere historical belief in a peculiar revealed fact ; internally it embraces the whole sum *and substance* of personal righteousness, and of that

holiness of the heart without which none of us shall see the Lord. Faith, rightly interpreted, is the conversion, the regeneration of our whole nature; the turning away with all our soul and strength from every species of sin; and the consecration, the entire addiction of ourselves—both mind and body,—to the love, the fear, and the service of God. To preserve us in this healthy frame of mind, of which the dedication of ourselves to God, and our acceptance by him, are the first commencement, to strengthen us in our daily practice and discipline, and to prevent our falling away from Divine grace, our blessed Master has provided us with ordinances well fitted for the purpose; with his sacraments, with the Holy Scriptures, with opportunities of assembling ourselves together in public prayer, with all the wise discipline and authoritative superintendence of a well regulated Church. These mighty advantages and means of improvement it is our bounden duty, as well as privilege, to avail ourselves of to the utmost of our power, in order that we may profit by them. Let me merely observe, as a precautionary statement of the question, that we are to adopt them, not in order that *we may become* Christians, but because we *are* Christians; not so much as instruments by which we may attain to grace, as means by which we are prevented from falling away *from* it. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and if we set our *hearts aright* in this direction, good works will

assuredly follow. "Arise and go into the city," were the words of our blessed Redeemer to the persecutor Saul, "and it shall be told thee what thou must do." In like manner it may be said to the seeker after the righteousness of the Gospel, "Arise, and throw thyself in faith and sorrow for sin upon thy Lord's mercies, and it shall then, and not till then, be told thee what thou must do." Where the aspirations of the soul are holy in the first place, the subsequent details of practical righteousness will suggest no difficulty to our understanding; a good life, ceasing to be a work of calculating labour, will become a voluntary, unreflecting, impulse. We shall shun sin simply because by the aid of the Holy Spirit we have been made to hate it; we shall adopt every feasible means of pleasing God, because to do his will and to keep his commandments will be as food and aliment to our souls.

Let us then, my brethren, setting aside our scholastic speculations wherever they may seem to savour of this world's philosophy, our timid misgivings, our hesitating criticisms with regard to God's merciful dealings with us, learn to think of him solely and exclusively as we find it written in the book of his revealed will. Let us do justice to the blessed covenant of our redemption, by considering it in all its amplitude, and all its comprehensiveness. To doubt of his entire forgiveness of our past transgressions, when we *do* really turn away from them, clinging to our Saviour's cross as

our place of refuge, manifests on our part a want of true Christian faith. It is an ungrateful undervaluing of the vast extent of his goodness ; it is the setting up of our own morbid doubts and servile apprehensions in opposition to that language of encouragement and conciliation which is the Gospel's grand characteristic. Be assured, that to a heart which the Divine grace has once softened, no evil, but, on the contrary, unmixed spiritual good will result from the habit of contemplating our Almighty Father's mercies in all their vast length and breadth and depth. Love to God is our first duty ; but we can never love him so intensely as when we apprehend entirely all that he has done and suffered for our sake, and how completely he justifies those who seek to him as their expiation and their righteousness. Our sins may indeed have been as deep as scarlet ; and if so, we cannot possibly lament over them too bitterly, nor detest them with too much loathing and disgust. But it is one thing not to forgive ourselves, it is another to despair of the forgiveness of God. It is one of the many apparent Christian paradoxes, that under the Gospel covenant we find the most entire self-depreciation, with the most undoubting faith in the Divine clemency, united in the same person ; the deepest humility with unshaken reliance upon the final accomplishment of God's gracious promises. There is not, there cannot be, in the nature of things, a stronger motive and *stimulant to future holiness* than the consciousness



of undeserved past mercies. We love God because he first loved us. Fear may drive us as slaves, gratitude will lead us onward as children ; and convert that terror by which we shrink from punishment into that confidence with which we cry, " Abba, Father." Still, however, let us anxiously be on our guard that our ground of hope be as rational and scriptural as it is encouraging. Let us, in applying to our own consciences, and in proclaiming to others, the Gospel promises, be at the same time earnestly careful that we cry not, Peace! where there is no peace. Most certain it is, that entire forgiveness is promised to all sin from which we turn away in faith and repentance ; but equally certain it is that *unrepented sin* continues under a curse, and has no part whatever in the promises of the Gospel of our redemption. Faith, I repeat, in order to be effective as a means of grace, must be taken in all its strictness of detail, in all its complex pregnancy of meaning. It must be an acceptance of the entire terms of Christ's covenant, accompanied with earnest repentance for the past, and practical amendment for the future. It must not dare to sin in order that grace may abound ; it must not dare to argue that, because God has found out a way for abolishing the fearful consequences of man's wickedness, therefore he is, or can be, indifferent to it. There is no truth in revelation more clearly established than the one, that "*without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*" What Scripture does say with regard to the terms

of the Gospel covenant is this; that from the moment that our repentance is complete, and our faith in Christ's healing expiation entire, our state of justification begins. But then, in order to be finally effectual, it must be persevering. The regenerate Christian may, after all, fall away from grace, and forfeit, by renewed transgression, his claims to the covenanted mercies of his Creator. Even Paul, whilst strenuously performing his Master's work, expressed his apprehension lest he himself should one day be a castaway : and if so, well may we, in our cold and laggard state, entertain the same just cause of fear. Life's paths are, from first to last, too slippery for men to traverse them without the danger of a fall. But the same Almighty Power who justifies can also sanctify. He can support and strengthen us under temptation, or he can avert it so that it come not in our way. He can, and will, pray for us that our faith fail not, provided we perseveringly look up to him for succour. Let us then never forget that our strength is in him, and not in ourselves; that the imperfect endeavour may in some small measure be ours, but its final completeness and efficacy, when it ripens into Christian holiness, must be his. Only let us, from first to last, hold to our faith, nothing doubting. Let us "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for our feet." Such unassuming confidence is not only our *privilege*, but our duty. It teaches us to walk

worthily of the high calling to which we have been invited, and to loathe sin as the badge of him from whose servitude we have been released. This is not presumption, but merely authorised Christian *hope*, that very frame of mind which the Apostle enjoins as befitting our station here, and as preparing us for its perfect realisation hereafter. Meanwhile let us pray without ceasing that we may have grace to persevere unto the end ; and that “ the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ,” to whom, with the Father, and the Holy and ever blessed Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

**NOTE**—The Author trusts that he may be allowed to subjoin in this place the following paraphrase of the fifty-first Psalm, as appropriate to the subject of the foregoing discourse, which was anonymously inserted by him a few years ago in one of the periodical publications of the day.

OH thou, who lov'st the wretch to spare  
Whom sin has led astray !  
Hear, righteous God, thy suppliant's prayer,  
And wash his stains away.

Yes : let my humbled soul with shame  
Its fears, its guilt confess ;  
Be mine, O Lord, be mine the blame ;  
Be thine the righteousness.

Thou know'st in wretchedness and guilt,  
Man's earliest years begin ;  
Corrupt his embryo frame is built,  
His infant thoughts are sin.

Yet, Lord, through this corrupted heart  
Thy cleansing streams convey ;  
Oh, sanctify each inmost part,  
And wash its stains away.

What though polluted it has been,  
By shame and fear oppressed ;  
Cleanse thou, O God, and it is clean ;  
Bless thou, and it is blest.

From him the wretch to thee who turns,  
Avert not thou thy face ;  
Nor from the humble heart that mourns  
Withdraw thy helping grace.

So shall I swell the note of praise,  
From sin and bondage free ;  
And show the mercy of thy ways  
To those who've erred like me.

Lost though I be, defiled with blood,  
Yet thou thy help dispense ;  
My wailing shall be gratitude,  
My guilt be innocence.

No slaughtered victim dost thou need,  
Or victims I would pay ;  
And many a sacrifice should bleed  
To wash my stains away :

But no ; the soul's repentant smart  
Thou, Lord, shalt not despise ;  
A broken and a contrite heart  
Are thy best sacrifice.

### SERMON III.

#### THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE AS A RULE OF FAITH.

*In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

LUKE X. 21.

**I**N these words our gracious Redeemer announces the important fact, that a simple and unsophisticated mind will often be allowed to arrive at a right apprehension of Gospel truth, whilst the self-same doctrines shall continue as a sealed book to the learned and ingenious. Our Lord, we are told, moreover, “rejoiced in spirit” when making this declaration. It is of course therefore to be considered by us as a communication of glad tidings. Let us then accept it as such; and let us make this beneficent arrangement of Providence the subject of our present grateful reflections.

Now it appears to me that the following reasons may be assigned why a Divine revelation, intended for the benefit of all mankind, might naturally be expected to answer to the description here given of

it. A heavenly message of this kind would seem, as to its subject matter, to divide itself necessarily into two heads: namely, into things to be *learned*, and into things to be *performed*. The first of these answers to what, in the more strict interpretation of the term, we should call *revelation*. That is to say, it contains the exposition of such high and transcendental mysteries as no ingenuity of man could possibly have discovered. The evidence of their truth is therefore solely and simply that testimony borne to their reality by what we believe to be the infallible voice of inspiration. They present themselves accordingly to us as *mere matters of fact*. They constitute the first fundamental axioms which we reason *from*, but dare not reason *about*. Human ingenuity having nothing to do with them, they are of course accessible in equal degree to the learned and to the simple. The second head consists of those *practical* moral inferences which result immediately from the preceding. These, however, being things to be *done* rather than *discussed*, address themselves not so much to our intellectual powers as to those *spiritual and religious perceptions* which, as moral agents, we possess in common with the whole human race. In this double arrangement, then, we find a means of exercise for *faith* on the one hand, for *obedience* on the other: whilst under neither the one nor the other division do we discover any strongly marked demand for that elaborate exercise of the *intellectual powers*, which so many of us, from a not

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unnatural prejudice, are apt to deem necessary for a due apprehension of evangelical truth. Before, however, I proceed further on this subject, let me make this precautionary statement, that I may not be misunderstood. With regard to the observations which I am about to make, I wish to be considered as entirely confining their application to such truths only as in the strict sense of the term constitute the *faith* of a Christian ; and which, if we assent to the reality of inspiration, we must believe to be absolutely *necessary to salvation*. Accessorial difficulties undoubtedly there are (and those in no small abundance) awaiting the Biblical student ; difficulties which the hardihood of unscriptural ingenuity on some occasions, which heretical perverseness on others, and the necessary changes in national usages and languages produced by the mere lapse of time during the course of eighteen centuries, have introduced into the studies of theology. These latter questions undoubtedly fall immediately and almost exclusively within the department of the learned. They form the legitimate occupation of the theologian as a scholar and a philosopher, and call into healthy exercise some of the noblest faculties of the human intellect. But with them the present discussion has nothing whatever to do. What I now propose to consider is, revelation as involving a scheme of spiritual discipline ; as a message from God, pointing out to us as fallen beings the way to heaven. With this latter view of the subject the

subtleties and disputations of learned men have no necessary, at all events no practical, connection. They constitute, not the substance of religion, but its mere accidental outworks ; and happy perhaps may we pronounce that individual to be, who, seeking only to know and practise the entire will of God, has, by a fortunate ignorance, escaped the confusion of ideas which such discussions are calculated to produce.

The one proposition, then, which on the present occasion it is my object to maintain, is the admirable adaptation of the inspired writings to the average and more ordinary faculties of the human understanding : in other words, the entire sufficiency and clearness of Scripture, as a means of salvation, to all who apply to it for that purpose, however deficient such persons may be in those higher attainments which come under the denomination of literature and philosophy.

Now, in the first place, I have already observed, that what I have assumed as the twofold character of the Christian revelation, is precisely that which we might anticipate as likely to accompany any real communication of the Divine will, intended for the practical amelioration of mankind collectively. Did it not contain facts and truths equally above the reach of the learned and of the ignorant to find out, it would not be a revelation : being intended for the instruction and improvement of all mankind in *their moral*, rather than in their strictly intellectual



faculties, it cannot be supposed that its lessons would be conveyed in a manner to which those faculties would be unable to respond, or with which they could not fully sympathise. Here then I would say, let us put the obviously occurring question: "Do the Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament really accord with what I conceive to be this their asserted character?" I have no hesitation in declaring my own decided opinion that they do so. Thus with regard to the Old Testament, for instance: we find Moses arranging the whole substance of his laws under the precise twofold description already laid down. "The *secret things*," says he, "belong unto *the Lord our God*: but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the works of this law." With respect to the New Testament, innumerable other passages, in which the whole of a Christian man's duty is summed up under the two main heads of *faith* and *obedience*, will no doubt recur to the recollection of you all. For brevity's sake I therefore omit them, and content myself with referring you once more to our Lord's own words, as already quoted in my text.

But if these things be so, then, I would observe, we cannot doubt as to the method, and the befitting frame of mind, with which the Scriptures ought to be studied by us. That is to say, we should learn to consider our strictly intellectual faculties simply as the channel through which their

truth is conveyed, but our moral and spiritual perceptions as the actual point to which they are addressed, and on which they are intended to operate. And if this be the correct view of the question, then it will appear necessarily to follow that "for every practical religious purpose, the simple and pure mind which, praying for the Divine guidance, seeks merely after substantial truths, may naturally be expected to see further into the purport of revelation, to enter more into its spirit, and in all respects to judge of it more soundly, than the person who considers it rather as a mystical treasure, and a text-book for learned refinements and ingenious speculation."

Again then, I would ask, what reason could we possibly assign for expecting a Divine revelation to be otherwise than such as I have now described? Let us lay aside, for the moment, our literary vanity, our self-complacency, our idolatry of our own favourite theories and opinions, and consider *ourselves* as what we really are—*sinners*; *Scripture* as what it really is—a *message of mercy and reconciliation to mankind*. God wills the salvation of us all. He is no respecter of persons. Both these are undoubted scriptural truths. If one man stands higher than another in his favour, it is not because he is more learned, more accomplished, more wealthy than his neighbour, but because he is a better Christian; more humble-minded, more *religious*, more self-denying. We cannot open our

Bibles without perceiving such to be the case. And are these impartial dealings of our Maker with his creatures to be viewed by ourselves with feelings of jealousy and wounded vanity? Are we to wonder that in transmitting his revelation of himself from heaven to earth, he has made it to correspond with the object for which it was really designed? That he has been careful that it should be such as should meet all the wants, correct all the deficiencies, elevate and purify all the affections, not of this or that favoured individual, but of human nature in general? What, let us recollect, is the basis, the very foundation stone of the Christian revelation? It is this: The whole world, the Jew and the Gentile, the ignorant man and the philosopher, were all alike estranged from God. Every one of us, every descendant from Adam, had gone after the evils of his own ways. But God of his own free grace essayed to bring them back to the path of holiness which they had forsaken. He did so by the most astounding and merciful of all possible arrangements: by the miraculous communication of a species of knowledge which no then existing, no possible future discoveries of unassisted human wisdom could ever have attained to. That stupendous revelation comprehended the incarnation, the earthly ministry, the mortal agony, and self-sacrifice for the sins of a lost world, of the Divine Being himself: the sanctification of the corrupt passions of the human heart by the operation of the Holy

Spirit, the establishment of the Church militant in this its state of trial upon earth, and the promise of a Church triumphant in the world to come. Such is the subject matter, such the sum and substance of the Christian Scriptures ; a book of which it may be confidently asserted, that as human wisdom and philosophy had nothing whatever to do in its first production, so that they can do nothing in the way of subsequent addition to it. It is, in the strictest meaning of the term, a Divine work ; peculiar and distinct in its own awful exclusiveness—the gift of God to man—the charter of our salvation—the record of all that has been done and undergone for us—the summary of our various duties—the guarantee of our future hopes. In that book we find mysteries which under all circumstances every human mind whatever must be inadequate to comprehend ; but there they stand broadly stated as facts. In that same book, wherever a new duty growing immediately out of those facts (of which there are many), wherever a religious, moral, or social principle is to be inculcated, we find it expressed in language such as infancy itself can comprehend ; and with an appeal so simple and direct, that every well-constituted mind at once responds to it. Again, the practical effects resulting from our possession of this blessed gift have, we know, proved themselves worthy of the Divine Giver. *Inadequately acted upon as the Gospel precepts have been down to the present moment, they have*

nevertheless impressed upon Christian society, upon the policy and legislation of Christian states, a suavity, a beneficence and purity, which no heathen community on record has ever attained to.

Do we still then ask, why the Holy Scriptures were given to us by Divine Providence? That question, I conceive, admits only of the following answer. They are a gift to us and to our children, collectively and individually, that we may lay them to our hearts, that they may be to us our rule of life, and that, by following their precepts, we may daily approach nearer and nearer to God. This, I repeat, must be their great and primary object. They are not, then, nor were they ever intended to be, a hidden treasure hoarded up in the sanctuary of the Church, to be visited only on solemn occasions, to be held up at a distance to the veneration of the multitude, to serve merely as a test to the accuracy of our oral teaching; but they are at once the *individual possession*, the *personal friend*, the *monitor*, the *familiar oracle* of every servant of Christ. To those who would argue otherwise, and who, in addition to the obviously necessary adjuncts of an upright mind, and a sound and unbiassed judgment, would call in the aids of profound learning as absolutely necessary for the exposition of the spiritual wisdom contained in the Book of Life—to such persons I would, then, reply as follows: I would ask them to point out, if they can, any one fundamental doctrine of Scripture which, whilst it

is decidedly *above* the reach of the well-intentioned but simple-minded student of Scripture, is at the same time *within* the apprehension of the scholar and of the philosopher: which, not coming under the head of those *revealed* mysteries to which the learned and the unlearned must alike bow in humble and implicit submission, is yet *too obscure* to constitute a rule of *practical* holiness intelligible to all mankind alike. I can only say that, with regard to my own acquaintance with the Sacred Writings, I know of no passage answering this description. I am not aware of any *third* head in the subject-matter of revelation, which, being *neither an inexplicable mystery* received by us through *faith*, *nor a simply practical rule of life*, may not at all events be rendered sufficiently intelligible for every useful purpose, by applying to it the easy mode of Biblical interpretation recommended by St. Paul; that is to say, the elucidation of Scripture by Scripture, the availing ourselves of the light afforded by the clearer passages of the Sacred Writings, for the purpose of explaining analogically those which have been left comparatively obscure.

If such, however, be the case, what becomes then, in the first place, of the argument of those persons who are so prone to plead their own want of capacity as an excuse for not applying the threats and admonitions of Holy Writ to their own individual case, and who prefer deriving their instruction at second-hand from others, to the drawing it

immediately at the very fountain head for themselves? Show me, I would say to all such as would urge this feeble and inefficient excuse, show me any one human being, in possession of the ordinary mental faculties, whose powers of attainment to the Christian graces, or whose due performance of the Christian duties, have been limited, not by his want of will, but solely by want of knowledge; who, having accepted, from his heart, all the self-evident precepts of revelation; having learned to love mercy, to do justly, and to walk humbly with his God; to forgive injuries; to bless them that hate and persecute him; to repose his hopes of salvation in his Redeemer's atonement, and to pray for the sanctification of the Holy Spirit; (and who will say that these are not doctrines which stand prominent in almost every page of the New Testament?) feels himself obliged suddenly to stop short at this point of his knowledge and practice merely from want of the aid of human literature to enable him to proceed? "Stop short," did I say? Show me rather a man who has gone thus far—who has actually realised all this—and I would tell such a person that he may rest perfectly content with what he has already achieved; that he is indeed, in the strictest meaning of the term, a Christian. But, then, where are we to find an individual of this description? one who, having exhausted and got ahead of all these clear and elementary truths, is anxious for *more and more knowledge only that he may ad-*

vance still further? We may, I think, venture to assert that the whole annals of human nature will not supply us with the instance of such an individual. And yet, in the practical doctrines which I have just now enumerated, there is, I repeat, either no intellectual difficulty at all, or there are difficulties beyond the highest reach of human philosophy or learning to explain. It is then, in fact, a pure heart, and a single, unprejudiced, and teachable mind (a state and a temper which is to be obtained rather upon our knees in prayer than in the speculations of abstruse learning), which afford the direct access to divine truth. And to a Christian thus solemnly occupied, with his whole eternal salvation at stake in the issue for which he contends, I know not, I own, what human authority has a right to step in, and to say, "Thus and thus shalt thou read," and to interpose itself between the scriptural student and the most important subject of contemplation which can possibly occupy his thoughts. Will it be argued that in thus advocating the exercise of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture I am recommending latitudinarian views, or relaxing those rules of wholesome restraint and caution so necessary in every investigation of real truth? Nothing, I reply, can be more remote from my intention than the arriving at such an inference. It is, in fact, because I feel deeply how much mischief has been already *done in past ages* to the cause of Christianity by

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tampering with the revealed Word, and by engrafting human refinements and human speculations upon the clear, definite, and simple law of life : it is from a strong anxiety to see the stream of revelation to continue to flow as pure and unadulterated to the last as when it first emanated from the fountain head, that I would exhort every individual whatever to seek for his religious faith at its very source, carefully excluding the introduction of all extraneous matter whatever, however respectable may appear to be the quarter from which it may be derived. I urge this at once earnestly and confidently, for two reasons. In the first place, I cannot doubt that every really unprejudiced mind, taking the revealed and unsophisticated Scriptures in their plain and obvious acceptance, must, if it admit the *whole* ungarbled truth, necessarily arrive at all the orthodox views maintained by our Church : and, secondly, I own myself at a loss to imagine at what possible point or limit we are to check the discursiveness of our speculations, if we once transgress this definite line, and call in the suggestions of human ingenuity as necessary for the development of the entire counsel of God. Danger to the cause of truth, it may be said, may lie in both directions. I answer, let the whole history of the thousand heresies which, in the course of eighteen centuries, have distracted the Church of Christ, determine on which side of the two the danger really lies. To this test I make my appeal and

challenge. I am not aware of any one flagrant corruption of evangelical truth, from the deep-seated superstitions of popery down to the unchristian latitudinarianism of the Socinian, which has not in fact been the result of man's attempt to improve upon what he finds revealed, by the introduction of his own preconceived fancies and unauthorised glosses. The whole history of secular no less than of religious science is, in fact, one continued illustration of the thousand errors resulting from this system of "will-worship" so natural to the human heart; this impatient desire to improve upon our substantial knowledge by engrafting our own gratuitous theories upon it. In attempting to do too much, men have ever thrown as many impediments in the way of their intellectual advancement as in doing too little. In experimental philosophy, for instance, instead of allowing Nature to explain her own story by the test of cautious experiment, through how long a succession of ages did the student commence his investigation of truth by the adoption of premature systems, for the establishment of which, facts, as they successively occurred, were to be distorted or partially overlooked! The first great step made in sound philosophy, accordingly, was the unlearning of all such science, falsely so called, and the putting the human mind in a condition and willingness to embrace true knowledge, precisely as it lay spread before them in the book of nature, however startling its appearance

might be to their previous anticipations. The career of false religion, in its turn, has lain through precisely this same devious course of self-deception. The Romanist, for instance, overawed by the intensity of his own scruples, would not be persuaded that the process of man's redemption is really so simple as Scripture declares it to be. The Unitarian, on the other hand, arguing with a too presumptuous confidence in the opposite direction, would simplify it far beyond what the letter of revelation will justify him in doing. The former, accordingly, not satisfied with the single all-sufficient mediation of Christ, introduces into his creed other and inferior mediators, selected capriciously by him from the whole hierarchy of heaven. The latter, on the contrary, will admit of no mediator whatever. The point thus at issue between them of course can be determined by Scripture only. But then, in order that the question, "What says Scripture?" may be effectively put, a preparatory process must take place; the mind must be previously trained; the heart of the inquirer must be rendered morally healthy; vanity must be made to give way to the love of truth; the paramount supremacy of Scripture must be acknowledged; theories, however plausible, must be unhesitatingly abandoned the moment that they are found to clash with what has been revealed; and the Divine assistance must be sought for in a spirit of implicit candour and singleness of mind. If it be argued that the con-

trovcrsy which I am here supposing is precisely the one in which human learning may be advantageously called in to arbitrate, I reply that, in a case of this vital importance, mere human learning is not to be trusted. Mere human learning almost invariably renders herself a partisan rather than an umpire. She loves to take a side ; to make a display of her weapons ; to astonish us with her skill. She has her own besetting errors and prejudices, no less than ignorance herself ; often as many in number, often as deeply seated and as obstinately maintained, and in one respect always more dangerous, namely, because they are more ingeniously and more plausibly defended. The only real remedy, I repeat, for the multifarious wanderings of the human mind upon theological topics is that of considering heresy and sectarianism as a moral disease, not as an intellectual weakness. We must teach mankind the difficult and painful lesson of trusting not to their own understanding, but to God's oracles ; to ponder over their task as scholars, and not to dictate as teachers ; to satisfy their minds upon reasonable proofs that it is thus and thus written ; and, when such proof is established, to submit implicitly to it without a murmur. Most wisely, then, did the founders and advocates of our reformed Church lay down the fundamental principle of making Scripture, and Scripture only, the rule and standard of our faith. They knew the strong tendency of every thoughtful mind to run astray after its own favourite

speculations. They knew, accordingly, that as certainly as a polished plate of metal will become soiled and tarnished by exposure to a moist atmosphere, so surely will the religious opinions of mankind become obscured and adulterated by the mere contact with each other, unless continually renewed and set right by an appeal to the one unchangeable standard of revelation.

But, it will be argued, if the whole of the learning which is necessary to make us wise unto salvation be really contained in the single volume of the Bible, to what end and purpose are we then taught to pursue those multifarious branches of knowledge which not only in this place,<sup>1</sup> but also among learned men in general, are deemed necessary for the due accomplishment of a student in theology. I answer that, so far from denying the advantages derivable to a Christian teacher from the pursuits of philosophy and literature, I would assert their necessity the more strongly, from the very arguments which I have already advanced. On the same principle as it requires an equal degree of bodily vigour to drive back an enemy, whether rushing *into* a fortress or attempting to break *out from it*; so the sound scriptural theologian will ever find a demand for his utmost exertion, whilst on the one hand he is called upon to resist the hostile attacks of infidelity, and on the other to divert the mischief

<sup>1</sup> It will be borne in mind that this discourse was preached before the University of Oxford.

resulting from the mistaken zeal of ill-judging friends ; in fact, I know of no position, in the whole range of literature and science, which requires so large a combination, so strong a concentration of the very highest intellectual and moral powers, so much philosophy, so searching an insight into human nature, as that of a Christian teacher at a highly cultivated period. To a person thus circumstanced learning of no ordinary kind is clearly requisite to enable him to do justice to the real meaning of Scripture in its original language ; to apprehend all the important points of criticism connected with it, and to illustrate it by a reference to the kindred branches of theological literature : and yet, as I have already observed, *mere* learning, from its vanity, its ambition, its over-refinements, and the undue value which it ever attaches to its own discoveries, is often far more apt to introduce innovations than to guard against them. To such a person mere talent is not enough ; for genius is often disposed to be brilliant rather than sound, and to prefer ingenious paradox to the homeliness of simple truth. Again, a close acquaintance with the records of history is not enough ; for without tact and good sense to appreciate and discriminate between facts, history is after all little more than an ill-told tale, lending its sanction to the most opposite and discordant theories. In addition, then, to all the above-mentioned qualifications, it is necessary that there should meet in the same person, in order

to constitute a sound Christian divine, caution, good sense, sobriety of feeling, together with a practical acquaintance with the general character of the human mind, and a quick insight into its besetting errors, prejudices, and modes of self-deception. To all which qualities, after all, must be superadded, as I have also already stated, piety, integrity, and singleness of heart. Let it not then be for a moment supposed that, in advocating the entire practical simplicity of the revealed Word of God, I would wish to discard from a theological education any one branch of wholesome literature by which the intellectual eyesight can be rendered more acute, the mental energies called into more healthy action, or the reasoning faculties invigorated.

My object, however, on the present occasion, is not so much to show what educational accomplishments a preacher of the Gospel ought to possess in his own mind, as to point out the proper tone and spirit in which I conceive he ought to strive to communicate evangelical truths to others. Now his, or rather let me say *our* great primary aim should, I imagine, be, to lay before our hearers, in our writings and in our preaching, the broad and peculiar fundamental truths of Scripture *in all their original simplicity*; to discard from our hearts all self-seeking, all intellectual vanity, and all the false ingenuity which in the course of eighteen centuries has grown up, from the fatal habit of considering theology in the exclusive character of *a science*;

and to take our stand as nearly as possible upon the selfsame ground which the first Apostles occupied when they first went forth to convert a lost world. Our character, we should never forget, is that of ambassadors, bearing God's message of reconciliation to the repentant and returning sinner. The facts, accordingly, which we have to communicate are few in number ; and yet, easy as they are of apprehension, are of tremendous pregnancy of import. These facts it is our duty to guard, as a peculiar trust and deposit, from all mixture and adulteration whatsoever, and to fence them round, as it were, by an insuperable barrier of brass, marking, by an exact and well-defined limit, the precise point where revelation ceases, and where human theory begins. These facts are the incarnation, the ministry and sufferings of our Divine Redeemer for the expiation of the sins of a lost world ; sanctification through the aid of the Holy Spirit ; holiness of life its legitimate and natural consequence ; and a final judgment to come, whether unto eternal life, or unto eternal condemnation. Now, in the statement of facts such as these, where, one is again compelled to ask, lies the obscurity respecting which we hear so many complaints ? They come to us indeed originally as revelations from God ; but they are legibly written in the book of Scripture, and are made sufficiently intelligible for all classes and conditions of men whatever. Their appeal is not to our argumentative faculties, but to our moral sense ; to



those instinctive apprehensions of what is spiritually holy and healthful and seemly, which form part of the original constitution of the human heart. When men therefore tell us that they cannot see the truths of revelation, I am only reasserting what Scripture again and again declares, when I say, it is because they *will not* see them : and in proof of this assertion, I appeal to all those who have had at any time the awful responsibility of a parochial ministry committed to their care, to declare from their own experience, whether they have not uniformly found, not the ignorance of the head, but the waywardness and corruption of the heart of their hearers, the great difficulty with which they have had to contend ; for one who errs from not knowing the Scriptures, we may, I think, assert, without the least risk of exaggeration, that a hundred go wrong in direct defiance of better knowledge. If, then, the Christian pastor is anxious to save souls, (and to do this is the one exclusive object of his ministry), it is to the corruption of the heart intrenched behind its sophistry and its numerous self-deceptions that he will in the first place lay siege. He will not try to strengthen his cause by seeking for new and hidden truths in Scripture, by deducing from it ingenious inferences and remote consequences ; but he will at once press home and lay bare to the awakened conscience those great and vital facts which are there so clearly written, and to which the soul of the awe-stricken sinner so anxiously and so surely responds.

He will preach "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," so as to arouse the worldling from his dream of thoughtless levity; he will remonstrate, threaten, comfort, according as the occasion may require, and as he feels that the divine commission which he has received will bear him out: in short, he will consider himself as bearing God's message and not his own; and God's message he will assuredly be bearing, so long as he looks to the Holy Scriptures alone for his warrant and as his guide. And is it possible to imagine a nobler commission than this, with which to invest a human being? It is indeed a glorious undertaking, to go forth as an active and living principle of moral good, as an agent, an effective labourer in the cause of righteousness. "Thou, O man of God," are the words of St. Paul to Timothy, ". . . follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. . . . Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. . . . O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, *avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.*" And again: "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. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears ; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

Such were St. Paul's sentiments with regard to the mode and matter of the teaching of a Christian minister. And is then the moral position of human nature different now from what it was in his day ? Has theology, which at that period was a moral discipline, the warning admonition of God to the rebellious heart of man, been since that time transformed into a mere intellectual science, into a skirmish of polemical discussions, and sophistical ingenuity ? No doubt we should all of us readily and with one voice reply, "It has not been thus changed ; revelation is still what it ever was, the record of God's covenanted mercies towards us, and of his reconciliation with mankind." If such, however, be really our sentiments, then, I would say, "Let us be consistent ; let us not shrink from the candid avowal of them ; let us maintain them as well in our practice as in our theory." Not only all individuals, but all large associations of men, we should remember, have their besetting weak-

nesses and prejudices, which render them partially blind to the truth. Let us not then wilfully close our eyes to the fact that we also have ours, prejudices as obstinate, and, though more plausible, perhaps as really dangerous as those which characterise the more mixed society of the world, upon which we are apt to look down. In this place the leading principle, the prominent feature which gives a character to our society, is our emulation in, I might almost say our *idolatry* of, learning; of learning, not merely considered as an instrument for the attainment of higher objects, but also simply and merely for its own sake. Now the natural tendency of such a state of feeling (accompanied, I admit, with a vast preponderance of good), is to annex a high value rather to a large and indiscriminate accumulation of facts, than to a due selection and a just appreciation of them. It is always painful to have to acknowledge that information which we have obtained at a cost of much time and labour, may, after all, be of comparatively little value. We continue accordingly to attach a high imaginary importance to it, however, on the other hand, our common sense may sometimes hint to us its worthlessness. It is thus, I conceive, that we are too apt to act in our theological studies. We estimate our progress rather by the length of the road over which we have travelled, than by its right direction. The Bible we consider to be too elementary a book, unless we add to its stores some-

times the wisdom, but not unfrequently the wayward speculations and superstitions of a more recent period. We find it difficult to be the mere implicit learners and disciples of revelation, when we aspire to be its authoritative interpreters and expounders; to be the simple bearers of a message, instead of improving upon it by supplementary additions of our own; and thus it is that theology, from one of the most simple, becomes one of the most perplexing of all studies. Obscure human theories are made to come forth in rivalry to, often to clash with, what has been clearly written, and (as occurs also in the case of secular writers) the original text is encumbered and darkened by its commentary. In such a state of things, learning and philosophy are, I admit, most necessary to set matters right; but it is that they may be used in the very contrary manner from that in which they have been too generally employed. They are useful for the purpose of enabling the Christian student to retrace his steps; to unlearn the false notions which he may have taken up; to distinguish what is true from what is false, what is original from what is superadded; what, in short, are the commandments of God, and what are the mere refinements and superadditions of men.

In making these observations respecting the entire simplicity of the Gospel system as a means of salvation, it is, I presume, scarcely necessary for me to state that I am far from wishing to extend

them to the necessarily intricate and minute details of our Church government, or of our forms of national worship. These, appealing in the first place to Scripture for their original authority, and deriving also a direct sanction from those positive subsequent enactments which the Church in her legislative capacity has an undoubted right to make, are as strictly binding upon the conscience as any other regulations established for the sake of order and discipline of which we believe God to be the author. It is singly and exclusively *the great Protestant principle of the entire sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as a summary of Divine truth to those who believe*, for which I am now contending, and to which I profess my own conscientious assent. But on this latter point I wish to speak distinctly, unequivocally, and without reserve. We may dress out the study of divinity as a science; we may laboriously explore all the voluminous writings of the primitive ages; and in doing so I admit that we shall be doing well: but if the practical application of God's gifts to their original end and object be their legitimate use, then I would say that the experienced Bible Christian, whoever he may be, who has drunk most deeply at the very fountain head of Holy Writ is, after all, the best theologian. I have been assured by an active parochial clergyman, himself well versed in the lore of ecclesiastical antiquity, that he has frequently gone away from the bedside of his sick parishioners humbled in his

own mind at the superior apprehension of Gospel truth to which those uneducated persons have been enabled to attain, solely by bringing to the study of their Bibles pious dispositions and an unprejudiced judgment. I not only am not surprised that such should be the case, but I rejoice that it is so. This is just what might be expected of a revelation proceeding from a righteous and merciful God who is no respecter of persons. In such a revelation we should naturally calculate upon finding a declaration of mysteries, theoretically indeed beyond our powers of intellect to apprehend, and yet easy in their practical application as a rule of life, supplying the source and basis of an entirely new system of duty towards God and man, and placing our whole spiritual nature in an improved condition. Nor can it be considered as a very strained or improbable supposition, that the very absence of extraneous artificial knowledge may, in such cases as that which I am now alluding to, (that is to say, when the heart is honest and the understanding unsophisticated), operate rather beneficially than otherwise for the apprehension of divine truth. The entire concentration of the powers of the intellect upon Scripture, and Scripture only, unimpeded by the disturbing power of far-fetched philosophical speculations, may not unnaturally be conceived to suggest to the humble classes of society a distinctness and readiness of apprehension in divine things, and a correctness of religious feeling, which the scholar,

amid his ponderous tomes of controversial learning, may sigh after in vain. After venturing upon these observations, I need scarcely say that I do not think the powers of intellectual discrimination supplied by literary occupations do give us that decided superiority over our less educated brethren as Christian students, which we are so apt to assume as an undisputed fact. But it may probably be objected to these arguments, that although what I have now said may be true with regard to the great central and fundamental doctrines of our faith upon which our hopes of salvation mainly rest, still, Revelation as an entire whole is not the simple thing which I am now supposing. Christianity, I shall be told, is much too intricate a system to allow itself to be summed up completely in a few elementary propositions, however important those propositions may be. In addition to these, it will be argued, there are also sundry minor, but still no less necessary and essential portions of every Christian man's belief, for which this general and summary view of the Gospel dispensation makes no provision whatever. To this I reply, that the one great art and rule of apprehending merely dependent and ancillary truths, is the right appreciation, in the first place, of the more prominent doctrines to which they are appended. Begin only *at the true beginning*; lay down as primary axioms those great cardinal principles upon which the whole system turns, and the more remote inferential doctrines



will almost always follow of themselves, each in its own place and order, and in its just relative proportions : whereas, by reversing this process, and by working our way upwards from the smaller and less vital subdivisions of our creed to its larger and more comprehensive dogmas, the mind runs the hazard of perplexing itself on its road, of becoming bewildered in the discussion of comparative trifles, and in some degree of losing sight of those pregnant and primary truths from which all the others derive their value. It was thus, accordingly, that St. Paul argued. Having urged upon the Philippians the great doctrine of "the righteousness which is of God by faith," he proceeds, "Let us therefore, as many, as be perfect, be thus minded ; *and if in anything ye be otherwise minded* (that is to say, if, after having accepted this fundamental truth, you hesitate about more remote and less essential doctrines) *God shall reveal even this unto you.*" In order that the Christian scheme should be seen in all its real symmetry and consistency, the eye of the beholder should be stationed, as it were, in its very centre, looking towards its extremities, and thus tracing all its minutest ramifications to their final terminations. On the other hand, if seen from its extremities, and with our eye towards its centre as its final point, its plan will ever be apparently much more intricate, much more entangled with small and subordinate facts, and consequently much more liable to be misconceived. It is, in fact, a rule

applicable to almost every department of science, that, if we would have our minds embrace any subject as a whole, we ought to descend from the more general truths to details, and not ascend from details to general principles. In theology, at all events, this is more especially the case. The broader and more distinct we keep the original basis upon which our faith rests; that is to say, the more we continue to keep the eye of the understanding upon the leading events of our Lord's history, upon the palmary truths preached by the Apostles, and upon the well-defined boundary line which separates the oracles of Revelation from the surmises of human speculation, the less probability is there of our falling, when we come to the discussion of particular doctrines, into any serious error. Truth and falsehood are so directly opposed one to the other, that if at the commencement of our course we cordially embrace and assent to the former, there is little danger of our being eventually deluded by the latter.

Let me, then, now arrive at the conclusion to which it has been my object to lead you, but which I feel that I have in great measure anticipated. It is this, namely, that the true light in which we ought to consider the Christian covenant is pre-eminently that of a system of practical holiness, and a means, through a process in great measure external to ourselves, of our reconciliation with an *offended* God. True and admirable indeed it is, if

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viewed only as a philosophical theory, but such is not its real end and object. Its true value to us, sinful and fallen beings as we are, is that it serves to bring us nearer to God as his redeemed creatures. Being the authentic record of the means by which he has condescended to rescue mankind from their state of moral misery, it has accordingly been made accessible to all ; and, I again repeat, for the purposes of salvation, intelligible to all. What we want for the due apprehension of it is simply a pure heart and a willing mind. The mysteries of our faith form not the real perplexities which stand in our way ; for, to every practical purpose, God has revealed them to us. The one great obstacle to our deriving from Scripture the full spiritual benefit which it is calculated to afford is in ourselves ; in our worldliness, our sinful appetites, our indolence, and, though last not least, our vanity. Perfectly knowing, as we all do, the road which leads to salvation, we nevertheless loiter on our way, and inquire our proper direction as though it were a thing of which we were still ignorant. Knowing that the question really proposed to us by our Maker is neither more nor less than whether we will or will not "obey his commandments ;" instead of answering plainly "yea" or "nay," of at once accepting or rejecting the offer, we amuse ourselves in discussing the terms, in criticising the language, in exercising our ingenuity for the purpose of discovering in how many new lights, in how many

ingenious aspects a long familiar truth may be examined; and this "itching of the ears," this restlessness of the imagination, this impatience of simple, wholesome truth, we impose upon ourselves as "religion." And yet what is the religion which the Bible teaches but the living up to, and within, the rule which we there find written? but the making ourselves individually purer, and then letting the reflected light of our own life and conversation blaze forth as an example to, and for the edification of others? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" "Work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling." Would every man calling himself Christian strive to act thus, not only would holiness, of course, be more abundant, but heresies and schisms would cease from want of aliment, and controversy between believers would lose all its bitterness, even if not exploded altogether. It is by looking from ourselves to others, by criticising the services of our fellow-labourers, instead of correcting the deficiency of our own, that holiness is impeded, and charity sacrificed to polemical rivalry. Let us then, singly and individually, each man for himself, strive with all our power to attain to the appointed goal and termination of our earthly course. Let us run together, and in friendly harmony with each other; but recollecting at the same time that our peculiar and especial task is that of saving ourselves from the wrath to come. *How* that is to be done not one of us can plead

ignorance : we all know the terms upon which salvation is offered to us. That good man, but overzealous controversialist, Richard Baxter, lamented in his old age that he had not in earlier life attended less to the wranglings of polemical divinity, and more to the practical duties of religion. Such a misgiving must, I conceive, attend every well-constituted mind upon the retrospect of a life of which theological disputations have constituted the chief business. Such employment may not indeed have been wrong ; it may, on the contrary, as called forth by the pressing demands of the time, have been not only useful but necessary. But then there is another occupation, still *more right, more useful, and more necessary* ; namely, that which, whilst it saves a man's own soul, checks the growth of heresy or infidelity by the example it affords, and by the exhibition of the true Christian character which it holds out for imitation. Let such a life, I repeat and again repeat, be ours. If, after this foremost point is attained, we can in the next place make ourselves useful and accomplished in the pursuits of wholesome literature, the greater will be our just commendation. But let us never forget that, after all, it is not in the character of learned men and of philosophers, but, as our blessed Saviour has himself assured us, in that of "little children," that we are to seek for our admission into the Kingdom of Heaven.

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## Appendix

The following letter was addressed by Bishop Shuttleworth to a young friend, at that time a clergyman in the Church of England, now a priest in the Church of Rome.

From the commencement of the Romanising movement in our Church, the Bishop never doubted that it was directly opposed to the doctrine which had been declared by the Reformed Church of England: and he always candidly and openly expressed that belief.

Accordingly, when asked by one of his clergy, and in the presence of some others, whether he did not think that the Charge of his friend Bishop Sumner, at Chester, in which that movement had been noticed, was much too severe, he replied, "Indeed I do not; and for this simple reason, that if I live to write my own Charge, you will not find it in any degree less severe."

While, however, he so regarded the character and aim of the teaching in question, he frequently remarked, "I cannot say that I feel any alarm at this state of things in our Church, because I think that, in these days, it is folly too great to last: but what I do dread is the reign of Infidelity, which will certainly be the result.

" CHICHESTER, *December 13, 1841.*

"I thank you very sincerely for your attention in sending me your tract; but let me in frankness add that it was with deep sorrow that I read it. I do not wish to discuss questions with you on which, no doubt, your mind is made up, and yet I cannot refrain from asking you

how you can reconcile the undoubting and trenchant tone of some of your statements with the real want of sound evidence on which they rest. You tell us that our English Reformers were but half instructed in the theological movement of their day, and that the change in this country was almost entirely *political*. Did Cranmer utter his affecting prayer in St. Mary's church on the day of his martyrdom, and hold that "unworthy hand" in the flames, for *political* reasons? Were the Marian refugees from Zurich, Basle, and Geneva, and Frankfort, only half informed of the sentiments of their Continental brethren? Was it without an object that when they asserted in our Articles the entire sufficiency of Scripture they guarded against the *possible* introduction and super-addition of merely human opinions, by *denying the inspiration of General Councils*? Can you seriously believe that in stopping up that inlet to man's invention, they still purposely left *an opening* through which those corruptions might enter? You gravely tell us that to deny the Eucharistic Sacrifice, if not actual heresy, has an heretical tendency: can you quote one single word in our Articles, in our Liturgy, or in the New Testament, in which the Eucharist is even by implication called a Sacrifice? Our Canons and our Prayer Book speak not of the Altar, but of the Communion *Table*. Our Saviour speaks of no *Sacrifice*, but of a commemorative rite: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' St. Paul tells us by this service we show forth our Lord's death till he come; and in alluding to the irreverent celebration of the Eucharist in the Corinthian Church, he uses expressions perfectly irreconcilable with the idea of its being of a sacrificial nature. And yet, if your assertion is correct, our Canons are heretical, the Prayer Book is heretical, St. Paul is heretical, and



— You assert that the Church *Catholic*, etc. is the one ordained channel of blessing from God to man. Strip this assertion of its oracular character, and look for its warrant in Scripture, and you will find not one single word to bear you out. The whole tenor of St. Paul's arguments are in the opposite direction. He speaks incidentally of the Sacraments as of other modes of Divine Worship; but never does he, or any writer of the New Testament, urge the necessity of man's intervention between ourselves and our Saviour for our reception of the means of grace in the full sense of the term. You assert the power of effective absolution as placed in the hands of the Clergy. The New Testament contains no such doctrine, nor was it taught even by those occasionally unsound men, the early Fathers. Read the Epistles of Cyprian; for instance 51 and 74. You quote abundantly from Bishop Montague, et hoc genus omne; but one sentence of St. Paul would be worth all their books put together. Of Scripture, in the course of your arguments, you take no further notice than you do of the Koran: in fact, both books would appear to you to be equally irrelevant. And yet, you unchristianise all that will not with you pin their faith upon human inventions, and shut their eyes to Revelation. Is it a Christian spirit to call *yourselves* Catholics, leaving it to be inferred that others who believe implicitly in the whole of Revelation, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Atonement, Justification by Faith, Sanctification by the Holy Ghost, the necessity of good works, and an established Church and Ministry, are out of the pale, and are not to be deemed *Catholic*? This, I am sure, is not according to the Spirit of our Saviour; and we are told, 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' I am sure your intentions are upright. I have seen

too much of you to have any doubts on this point. But you remember the sentence pronounced upon those who preach 'another Gospel.' This is a serious question, and not to be dealt with lightly. Under that judgment I fear that your party are falling. Sure I am that your case must be made out by much stronger arguments than any I have yet met with, before I can believe it to be reconcilable with our only rule of faith, the inspired Scriptures.

“ Believe me, yours as ever,

“ PHILIP N. CHICHESTER.”

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