













SERMONS.



SERMONS

ON

CHRISTIAN COMMUNION,

DESIGNED TO

PROMOTE THE GROWTH OF THE RELIGIOUS
AFFECTIONS,

BY LIVING MINISTERS.



TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON. — 1 John i. 3.

EDITED BY

T. R. SULLIVAN.

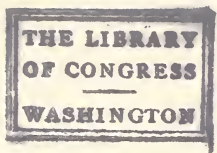
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P R E F A C E.



“By Christian communion the strength of one, the light, the trust, the piety, the peace of one, become the strength, and light, the trust, piety, and peace, of many.”*

Christian communion is a joint participation in the same religious hopes, affections, and aims. Sermons on Christian communion, accordingly, are discourses poured forth from deep Christian feeling, with the design of exciting it in others. As the Lord's Supper always revives this holy unity of mind, that occasion has thence taken the name of the Communion. It is observable that religious addresses to the affections and the will — those which urge most impressively upon men the duty of consecrating themselves to God through the Saviour — are wont to be in some manner connected with preparation for the Lord's table, and the profession of Christianity. Public profession and Christian communion, ideas not inseparable, are

* Dr. Putnam.

by custom joined in one. For though a serious Christian worshipper may be a communicant without any other open confession of Christ more formal or express, yet professing members, united as such, have a regular place in the established order of our churches.

To be a professor or communicant implies a lively sense of personal obligation, and of active service due to Christ and the truth. It implies a fellowship of purpose with the Father and the Son, and a fellowship of hope with that unnumbered multitude, — that “cloud of witnesses,” — ever ascending from earth to heaven, who have been partakers of the like spirit. It is an important use of the act of public profession to make the truth impressive to the community, while it is the effect of the rite of commemoration to render it affecting to the individual. It may, therefore, be said to be the design of the ordinance to deepen religious feeling and conviction.

This work is not, however, confined to the special claims of that institution. Whether provided for the communion day or not, its plan, like its name, would include all sermons addressed to the religious sensibilities, — both those adapted to awaken a tender sense of what is due to God and Christ, with a corresponding desire to commence a religious life, and those suited to advance the already awakened interest towards the highest attainments of the spiritual and heavenly mind. In conformity with this, the real though not formal arrangement of the contents makes a series of practical discourses

of the persuasive kind,* relating to repentance, or the duty of beginning the Christian course, to edification, or the encouragements to progressive Christian improvement, and to the Eucharistic service, as affording exercise for all the grateful and devout affections of the heart in every stage of its subjection to Christian discipline.

The design of this publication is, then, partly, to heighten the interest in the communion. But since interest in the communion is only a means of grace in connection with preaching, — the great appointed means of keeping faith alive and fruitful in the world, — it is hoped also that it may react upon the pulpit, through a response to the call for a style more persuasive and affecting. In the language of Sydney Smith, — “The forms which the Gospel exacts are few, and instituted for the only purposes for which forms ought to be instituted, to awaken attention to realities.” Preaching the word is only impressing through the ear those very realities which the communion symbolizes through the eye. Practically to regard the occasion as a stand-point at the outset of the Christian race, and the departing-place of the Christian’s ever-renewed progress, might secure to the ministry the double benefit of greater unity of effort and more individual earnestness. “The want is, — everywhere in the pulpit the want is of that *simple* and *deep religious sensibility* which would give a vitality and charm to many a discourse that has

* See Campbell’s Lectures, p. 221.

sense enough and truth and wisdom enough in it, but yet is perfectly dead, and leaves the hearer dead, for want of that living earnestness in the preacher."*

If the plan have wholly succeeded, the reader, as he goes on, will increasingly feel the pulpit's moving influence upon the better part of his nature, — the more than human influence of the word, earnestly preached, to enlighten and convince, to excite and to soothe, to humble and to elevate, to comfort, establish, and control, — and should he be so affected by but one sermon out of all the collection, the plan will not have entirely failed. He will meanwhile be led to form a just estimate of the true purpose and power of the pulpit. He will feel that its highest object is accomplished then, and then only, when, through its ministrations, the conscience has been aroused, deep religious impressions have been made, and, as the final result of these more serious convictions, men have been persuaded to take the decisive step in the Christian course of dedicating themselves to God in a life of simple religious obedience and high Christian endeavour. The volume thus prepared may serve, we trust, with the Divine blessing, to awaken a more fervent piety, to dispose men to more Christian methods of living, and to promote a revival of pure religion; and thus advance the pulpit's exalted work.

THE EDITOR.

* Dr. Dewey.

NOTE.



“ *Κοινωνία*, *fellowship*, 1 John i. 3. ‘Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.’ In this passage *κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*) means a joint participation of something with others. The same word also signifies *a fellowship*, or company of men joined together by a common bond, for the purpose of obtaining certain advantages by means of their union. Among the heathens there were a variety of such fellowships, many of them for the purpose of celebrating the mysteries or secret worship of their gods. The particular god in honor of whom the fellowship was instituted was considered as the head of it, and the author of the benefits which the associated expected to derive from their fellowship in his worship. In this sense the word *fellowship* is with great propriety applied to the disciples of Christ, united, by their common faith, into one society or church for worshipping the only true God, through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, and for receiving from him through the same mediation the great blessings of protection and direction in this life, and of pardon and eternal happiness in the world to come. Agreeably to this account of Christian fellowship, the Apostle, in this third verse, contrasts the heads thereof with the heads of the heathen fellowship, — ‘Truly *our* fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.’” — Macknight on 1 John i. 3.

“In 1 Cor. x. 16, the same Greek word is rendered *communion* in the English: — ‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [*κοινωνία*, joint participation] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*κοινωνία*, joint participation] of the body of Christ?’ This account of the Lord’s Supper the Apostle gave, to show the Corinthians that by eating thereof the partakers declare they have the same object of worship, the same faith, the same hope, and the same dispositions with the persons whom they join in that act of religion, and that they will follow the same course of life.” — *Ibid.*

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S E R M O N I .

BY HENRY A. MILES.

MAN BEFORE GOD IN THE ATTITUDE OF A SINNER.

GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER! — Luke xviii. 13.

By a few simple and graphic words, what wonderful pictures did Jesus draw ! The parable with which this text is connected holds up before us almost a living scene. We can see the proud Pharisee with his broad phylactery and boastful self-righteousness, and with that curl of contempt on his lip when he saw the despised publican at his side ; nor is the picture of the publican himself less strongly marked, with his downcast look, smiting his humble and contrite heart, and daring to offer only the words, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ” Language cannot paint any thing more striking than the contrast here presented. In all ages of Christendom, in all tongues into which the Gospel has been translated, and in all minds which have received the words of Jesus, has this parable been preserved, a living picture, rebuking spiritual pride, and showing to us the true attitude in which we should present ourselves before God.

This is the lesson which I would offer to you at this

time : the attitude in which we should come before God is the attitude of sinners humbly seeking forgiveness. With no plea of self-righteousness, with no thought of any merit, with no complacency in view of our good lives or good intentions, with no expectation of favor on the ground of any right or claim, but remembering that all favor is of grace, that all notice is of condescension, that in God's sight we are guilty beings, and that our first want is that of forgiveness, we are to sue for it in humility, in deep self-abasement, — “ God be merciful to *us* who are sinners ! ”

This is acknowledging the true relation in which we stand. The relation is that of sinners. No self-delusion can prevent us from seeing this. So long as we know that there are duties which we have put by, opportunities which we have not improved, gifts for which we have not been thankful, invitations which we have unheeded, and clear, positive laws which we have not obeyed, how can we possibly conceal the fact that for all this we are guilty ? There is no man liveth and sinneth not. Frailties and infirmities cleave to the best, so much as to make humble confession and earnest entreaty for forgiveness perpetually necessary. What, then, must be the case with all others, who live so easy and careless, who give so little of their hearts to Him to whom their whole heart is due, and whose rule of life is their gain, their pleasure, their reputation, their ease, and not the law and pleasure of Him whose they are, and whom they are bound to serve ? Yes, we are indeed sinners, to an extent which we do not know. Angels and spirits above us, who see our capabilities and obligations, see our guilt, too, far more clearly than we see it ; but no thoughtful survey of our condition

can fail to open our eyes to it, or to bring the conviction that we are like those servants who knew their Lord's will but did it not. The attitude, then, of penitents pleading for mercy is the attitude which becomes such beings as we, — there is fitness and propriety in it, — there is a call and necessity for it, — the prayer, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ” is the prayer which our condition demands.

This is the attitude and prayer, moreover, to which the Gospel endeavours to bring us. The very first word which the Saviour uttered in his preaching was *Repent*. In all his discourses he addresses man as a sinner, who has need of forgiveness. He came into the world on purpose to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Everywhere he holds up a pure and holy standard, that by looking at that men might see their own short-comings and sins ; and everywhere he presents the Father in the light of a placable and gracious being, who would never refuse forgiveness to repentant supplication. Thus he sought to bring us into that state of self-humiliation in which we shall cry to God for mercy. Prayer for forgiveness was one of the petitions included in the brief model which he gave to his disciples when he taught them to pray. The poor sin-sick prodigal, returning in low self-abasement to his father's house, and the humble publican, smiting his breast, and saying, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ” — for what were these pictures drawn, if not to show us the way of our approach to Him from whom we have wandered, and against whom we have sinned ? When, then, we do approach Him in this way, we may be sure we are right ; when we come renouncing all thought of our own merits and claims and rights, when we come

under a lively sense of our ill-deserts, and plead humbly for compassion and pardon, we come in the way which Jesus directs and the Gospel requires, we come in the spirit which the Bible, from one end of it to the other, enjoins, and without which we may seek and pray in vain.

Still again : the prayer of one who feels himself to be a sinner, and is humbly pleading for God's mercy, — that is the prayer which is most effectual with God. We may suppose that the same principles operate in the breast of the Divine Father which are so effectual in the breast of an earthly father. How it is with us who are parents we all well know. Never are the parental feelings so much moved as when the disobedient child returns, and says, "Father, I have done wrong ; do forgive !" The greater have been his wanderings and the deeper has been his guilt, the more do our hearts yearn towards the supplicating penitent. Every evidence of his sense of self-abasement, and every imploring look for our mercy, touches fountains of pity and love in our hearts which have never before been so deeply moved. We know that we love all our children, but for this one we feel a depth of interest and affection which we are not conscious at the time that we entertain for the rest. Now it is certain that Jesus does authorize us to transfer these feelings of an earthly parent to the breast of the great Father in heaven. For observe what it is that he tells us : — "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth"; and then, recognizing the same fact in the feelings of God which I have just named as what we are conscious of ourselves, the Saviour adds, — "more than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance." These are a

father's feelings. Other children, good and obedient though they are, do not for the moment so move his heart as that one repenting child. How strongly is this brought out in the parable of the Prodigal Son ! Coming back to excuse his delinquencies, to palliate his crimes, and to attempt to justify himself, the prodigal would not have been received ; he would have been driven forth from the door, as unworthy of a father's forgiveness, unworthy of the companionship of that elder son who had never disobeyed. But coming in a different attitude, coming owning all, disclosing all, feeling all, coming self-abased, broken-hearted, asking only to be admitted as a servant, how could a father's heart resist this ? The fatted calf must be killed, and more rejoicing made than ever the elder son saw, though he had never transgressed. These, I say it again, are a father's feelings, and they are the feelings of the great Father of all. He who seeks Him in low self-abasement, in earnest entreaty for mercy, will find God's ear open to hear him, though no other prayer be heard. Nothing is sooner heard in heaven, and nothing is more effectual there, than the simple words, coming from a contrite heart and from humble lips, " God be merciful to me a sinner ! "

Neither, as I add in the fourth place, is any thing more effectual for our own deepest peace. Because, for this, a man must feel that he is in a true relation to God. We are accustomed to speak of the joys and satisfactions of worship, prayer, and a religious life. But suppose all this is outward and formal, standing in decencies, proprieties, and respectabilities, and covering up secret depths of guilt in the heart, which have never yet been probed and laid open to the light of God's eye, then there must be a perpetual consciousness of

hollowness and insufficiency, which will be fatal to all true enjoyment of religion. Much of what is called religion, in the world, is of this character, and can yield only unsatisfying fruit. Built upon the idea of a generally correct moral life, a fair compliance with virtuous precepts, and a bodily attendance upon ordinances of worship, it may minister to self-complacency and spiritual pride, but must be a stranger to the deepest and holiest peace. That can come only from a true relation to God, — from a conviction that we do know ourselves, — that the deepest places of bosom-sins, and self-delusions, and secret faults we have laid open to the light, — have confessed all and deplored all, — have dared to look upon the nakedness of our souls, concealing nothing, excusing nothing, and taking the lowest place of self-renunciation and abasement. It is from this point that all true peace begins. God enters that heart which has thus emptied itself of every self-reliance and every secret guile. No washing cleanses like the tears of penitence; no fire purifies like the loathing of all sin. If all spiritual experience be not a delusion, no emotion exceeds the thrilling joy of a consciousness of pardoned sin.

“Sweet was the time when first I felt
The Saviour’s pardoning blood
Applied to cleanse my guilty soul,
And bring it home to God.”

I am speaking of what we do know by our own experience if we are truly Christians. There have been times when we have searched ourselves, and have probed our hearts to the quick. We have felt naked, and helpless, and sinful, and have lifted up our voice for pardon, and have found the words of our text the fittest

to express the cry of our soul. And God has heard us, and come into our souls, and fulfilled his promise that he would be in us ; and has given us a sense of his presence and favor which we would not exchange for a kingdom, — no, not for a world. How many humble and devout souls have spoken of this sense of pardoned sin as the most thrilling emotion which it is given to mortal heart to know, the corner-stone of all religious peace, without which the path of virtue is a path of disagreeable restraints, and all outward worship a heartless formality ! So was it to those alluded to in the text. See how the case of the Pharisee and publican confirms the truth which I have now set forth. The Pharisee went down from the Temple to his house, thankful that he had offered his prayers, and that he could give so good an account of himself to his Maker and Judge. But was there a deep current of peace flowing through his inmost soul ? Had he no half-consciousness of something covered up and hollow within ? I tell you that the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other, because he felt in a true relation to God, — because he felt that, in his degradation and guilt, which he laid all open and lamented, God had yet come to him, and had blessed him with his mercy and his love.

My friends, the great lesson which I would have you learn from what I have now said is this : there is but one gate through which we can come acceptably to God, and that is the gate of penitence and self-renunciation. God might have made human condition differently. Starting from the innocence of infancy, he might have ordained that we should never fall, but should ever advance towards angel and archangel excellence and

blessedness. But this is not the constitution of things under which we live. We each fall from our native purity, and pass through the waters of sin. It seems mysterious to us how this is connected with our higher advancement, but so no doubt it is. The growth of some of the highest and noblest virtues is favored by that deep penitence and self-abasement to which we are called. Such are the virtues of gentleness, compassion for others, distrust of ourselves, a keener sense of God's goodness, a humble leaning upon Him for all our hope, a hungering and longing that that heart may be filled by Him which else will be filled with what we have come to loathe and deplore. We always recognize this principle in the estimate we make of character, and venerate him the more who has attained to virtues through penitence, trial, and self-discipline, rather than inherited them through an amiable constitution.

Nor let us fail to see another deeply important truth which our subject should teach us. All true excellence must have its beginning in the lowest views of ourselves. How can you expect him to make any efforts for himself who does not know his own wants, who looks complacently upon his present state, and feels that he is doing well enough? It is he who has searched his case to the bottom, who has dared to look into all his deficiencies and sins, and who, laying all open, sees that he is nothing of himself, — he it is that will make that prayer, struggle, and rebound by which alone the spirit can rise and soar high. Thus the ladder to an angel's greatness stands on the lowest human abasement, and we cannot place ourselves on that series of steps but by going down and planting our foot on the first round. We need, therefore, a religion which shall humble man's

pride, and bring him to seek for mercy as a sinner. The old theology is right in affirming this. It errs only in the way of seeking it. It is not by pouring contempt on our nature, for that is taking away the very cause why we should feel abased. But it is by showing our abuse of our nature, our love of the world, our indifference to spiritual realities, our secret palterings with sin, our preferring, — instead of soaring to the high and blessed things for which we were made, — our preferring to sink down to the low and poor things of time and sense. Here is enough to make us weep, and to take the attitude of penitent supplication. A religion which does not bring us to these depths of self-abasement, a religion which concerns itself only with superficial moralities, a religion which teaches us to see nothing in sin which we need to loathe, and nothing in ourselves which we can bitterly repent, — that religion breathes not the spirit of the Gospel, deals not truly with man, is as false to his deepest wants as it is powerless to realize his highest hopes, inasmuch as it can never nourish higher than commonplace virtues.

One other lesson, my friends, and I have done. Let us doubt whether we are on the right path if we have never been brought, in the sincerity and depths of our soul, to offer the prayer of my text. Not that we should be always mourning over our sins, and sitting in sackcloth and ashes. True religion should doubtless make us feel peaceful, happy, serene. And such will be its fruits if we have built our hopes on a rock. But even then there will be times of serious self-questioning and self-dissatisfaction, when we shall see infirmities, omissions, short-comings, bosom-sins which are ever easily besetting us, and shall feel that we can be nothing to

God, that we have no strength and no health of our own, and that it is on his mercy alone that we can rely. And now what I say is, let us distrust and suspect ourselves, if we are never visited by such moments as these. I am much impressed with the fact, that the more men grow in goodness, and the clearer becomes their spiritual vision, the livelier, also, is their sense of indwelling sin, and they feel that all that they have they owe to God's mercy, for they are nothing of themselves. The case is parallel to what we see in other departments of human inquiry and progress. The new student of any science soon feels that he knows a vast deal upon the subject, and his superficial complacency comes only from the fact that he has never sounded down in its fathomless depths. But as he pursues his investigations, his progress in knowledge is proved by his conviction that he knows less, till the height of human knowledge is to know that we know nothing at all. So is it in the religious life. How many are there whose superficial self-complacency proves that they have seen but little of the heights and depths either of God's truth or of their own nature! We may be sure that we are not advancing, if we do not often meet with moments when all pride is humbled, when a sense of our ill-desert is lively, and we feel that we know nothing and are nothing in the presence of that Infinite before which we stand in awe. And let us all remember, that if we would build up a temple which shall rise in fair and lofty proportions, with turrets on which shall play the sunshine of God's smile, and with spire losing itself in the clear blue of heaven, we must first go down far below all that can be seen, and have our foundations in the lowest humility and self-abasement.

SERMON II.

BY FRANCIS PARKMAN.

RELIGIOUS SOLICITUDE.

GOOD MASTER, WHAT SHALL I DO THAT I MAY INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE? — Mark x. 17.

AND HE TREMBLING AND ASTONISHED SAID, "LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?" — Acts ix. 6.

It is natural to the humble heart, to the spirit oppressed by a sense of weakness and sin, to seek with earnestness the way to peace. To the sinner, who has wandered far from his God, conscious of ill-desert, and knowing that his only hope is in his Father's mercy, the inquiry of my text is of the deepest interest; and we have the utmost reason for gratitude to God, that in the Gospel of his Son it is so clearly and so graciously answered.

At the same time, the whole history of religion and the history of our race, while they have shown the solicitude with which men have sought acceptance, that they might find mercy with God, show also the perverseness of ingenuity with which they have substituted something of their own devices for true religion; placing it in what it *is not*, utterly forgetting or not choosing to accept it in what it *is*. In proportion to the love of the besetting sin, or the cherished evil

habit, was the earnestness to offer something like expiation. And the record of what superstition has invented for the quieting of conscience and allaying the fears of the transgressor, by its altars and its sacrifices, by its bodily inflictions, its frequent fastings, its wearisome pilgrimages, that neither took away sin nor the intention to commit it, serve but to confirm the sentiment of a sagacious moralist, — that to find a substitute for violated morality is the leading feature and design of all false religions.

Now it belongs to the religion we profess, it enters into every conception we can entertain of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, that upon questions vital, as is this, to the human soul, it gives the most explicit answer. That while upon subordinate topics much is left unexplained, all that is essential to man's virtue and man's salvation is clearly exhibited. For "behold, one came running to Jesus, and said, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Such was the momentous question. Mark now the brevity, the simplicity, the comprehensiveness of the answer. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And whatever might have been the purport of the same question in the mind of the affrighted jailer, as given in the record of the Acts, however his thoughts might have been occupied by the hope of a mere temporal deliverance, of escaping the consequences of an official negligence, the answer given him related to a far higher object. The apostle, turning from the things temporal to the things eternal, speaking to the needs rather than to the wishes of his hearer, replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," — saved not only from the wrath

of a Roman governor, and the punishment of thy neglect, but from spiritual death. And, you will remember, it was this same apostle who, when on his errand of persecution to Damascus he was arrested by the heavenly vision, cried out with trembling solicitude to the Saviour whose disciples he was pursuing, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The solicitude which suggests such inquiries must, I apprehend, be experienced in greater or less degrees, at some period or another, by every reflecting mind. Let us hope—although in surveying the aspects of society and the undeniable worldliness and insensibility that prevail it may seem like hoping against hope—that there are few in any Christian community, living under the good influences of religious institutions, who never give to such a subject a serious thought. We have but to remember, that this world is not our home, that we are destined to immortality, that on present character depends final destiny, and we cannot but anxiously inquire, "What shall I do to be saved?" He who has never felt some solicitude upon this subject, — whose memory, amidst all his consciousness of frailty and all the monitions of God's providence, cannot recall some serious thought as to his character, his spiritual condition and hopes, must be strangely engrossed by the life that is, — must be sadly insensible to the life that is to come.

That state of mind which prompts to such inquiries is a state altogether reasonable in beings such as we are, accountable and immortal; and, by whatever name it may be called, should be carefully cherished. I am not ignorant that what is sometimes technically described as "religious concern" may be

exhibited in doubtful or erroneous forms. It may spring from mistaken conceptions of religion, of the character of God, and the requirements of his law. It may be connected with much that we may disapprove. It may exhibit itself in forms revolting to a just religious sensibility, and in conduct tempting us to doubt the reality of the feeling itself. But, after all, the worst error we can commit, the most deplorable of all mistakes upon this matter, is to have no religious concern at all. You may deride, if you can, the delusions of the fanatic, you may proudly reject his doctrines and his practices as extravagant, contemptible, and absurd, and all the while be committing yourself the far greater, because fatal error, of having no religion at all. Little as we may approve the extravagances of the enthusiast, utterly as we condemn the pretensions of the hypocrite or the loathsome exhibitions of the conceited, we adopt unreservedly the sentiment of a Christian philosopher,* that the wildest opinions ever entertained on the great interests of religion, be it only with sincerity, are more rational than irreligious indifference or blind unbelief. For “upon this subject,” says he, “nothing is so absurd as indifference; no folly so contemptible as thoughtlessness or levity.”

Now, the solicitude of which my text is an expression may be awakened by a variety of causes, and it may also be variously exhibited. It may be the result of religious education. It may spring up in the heart, from the hidden depths of the soul, unbidden by any outward influences. It may come with calm reflec-

* See Dr. Paley's Discourses.

tion, such as every thoughtful man, such as all men if they be wise, will be disposed to give to the great themes of religion; and which, with the help of God's spirit upon the heart, — not to be separated or distinguished from the operations of our own minds, — will be followed by peaceful fruits. Beginning in sources like these, it will become the settled conviction of the mind, and manifest itself in the quiet tenor of the life rather than in any tumult or transport of the affections. Being, alike in its origin and effects, independent of outward circumstances, and not liable to change with these, it will be found, I apprehend, at once the most healthful, the most rational, and therefore the most durable form of “religious concern.”

For he who in the secret silence of his mind reflects upon his condition and his destiny, who, in whatever outward circumstances he may find himself, communing with his own heart, considers what he is, what he has done, and still has to do, whither he is hastening, and at whose tribunal he must appear, will assuredly find enough in these momentous thoughts to awaken his most anxious concern. Let him in the night-watches, or in any hour of retirement, ponder such words as these: — “Thou God seest me”; “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom I have to do”; “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Let him unite with reflections like these the thought of God's spotless holiness and absolute justice, the remembrance, moreover, of the solemn alternatives of a final judgment, and he

cannot fail to experience some earnest solicitude ; and, should he give utterance to his emotions, I doubt not they would be like those of the royal Psalmist : — “ My flesh trembleth for fear of thee ; for if thou shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand ? ”

Or let us suppose the individual to be one of an anxious and distrustful mind, and in some hour of peculiar solicitude, — not unknown even to those whom the world numbers with its most prosperous, — when fears are in the way and the heart is heavy, words like these should by any hidden ministry arise to his thoughts : — “ Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he will sustain thee ” ; “ Let not your heart be troubled ” ; “ Though thou pass through the waters, I will be with thee ” ; “ Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ” ; — let some such passages as these, I say, be presented to his thoughts, and any one of them shall be so blest, as to awaken new confidence and hope, as to scatter all darkness and distrust, and become a fruitful and abiding source of a cheerful obedience.

There are changes, also, in our lot, such as God is pleased continually to permit or appoint for the welfare of his children, the influence of which shall be to quicken the religious sensibility and awaken their religious concern. Nor need we look to adversity alone for these healthful influences. For outward prosperity is not happiness, and even in its brightest glory, when most coveted by an unreflecting world, may leave the heart to wounds and griefs, to humiliation and want, which God alone can solace or supply. To the tender and conscientious spirit prosperity itself becomes a heavy care, to be reposed only on Him who gives it. It involves claims and expectations which it demands

wisdom to meet, and duties which without toil and sacrifice and self-denial we cannot perform. No, my brother, whom God has made prosperous ; I appeal to your experience whether prosperity in itself be happiness. It cannot save you from grief. Your wealth, though you heap up silver as the dust, cannot shut out sickness or bereavement from your dwelling, or anguish from your heart, — the anguish of blasted expectations, of humbled pride, of disappointed ambition, — the yet deeper anguish of conscious guilt.

Nor is it all the kingdoms of this world or the glory of them, neither thrones nor sceptres nor they who hold them, that can deliver from the changes which a sovereign Arbiter ordains, and from which in their turns neither the highest nor the humblest are exempted. It is for this purpose He sends death into high places, and from “the very pinnacle of human society,” from the princes and the nobles of the earth, makes them the most signal monuments of frailty whose condition and prospects combine all that the world counts glorious. It is for this purpose, and that men may be taught wisdom, that He commissions his messengers of sickness, and weakens our strength in the way, or removes from us our friends, and leaves us to the bitterness of bereavement ; or that He appoints adversity in yet another form, and takes away the riches in which we had trusted, that he may take from us also the earthly mind, which is death, and implant the spiritual mind, which is peace. Happy, my brethren, shall we be, if, either by the observation or experience of such changes, we are led, as God designs, to reflection. Happy, if, through any trials common to humanity which our Heavenly Father ordains, we are taught the uncertainty

of this world's prosperity, are persuaded to aspire to higher objects, and to inquire with earnest hearts, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Still happier, if, knowing our Master's will, we shall do it.

II. But while we should studiously cherish any good influences upon our hearts, which may be drawn either from the Divine bounty or chastisement, and be grateful to God if in any measures they have been instrumental to our spiritual growth, we are by no means justified in depending upon such influences, and yet less in *waiting for such changes* to produce them. Our character as Christians and all our preparation for eternity are wholly independent of the vicissitudes of outward condition. Whatever that condition may be, prosperous or adverse, we have immortal souls to provide for; and it is not the part of wisdom, nor is it permitted to a rational faith, to suffer that provision to depend upon the joys or sorrows, the darker or the brighter aspects of our lot. As religion itself is unchangeable, and its demands ever the same, not varying with the progress of society or the vicissitudes of life, so there can be no possible changes in our lot that can in the slightest degree affect our obligations to comply with its demands. "Ye are my friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." "And if thou wilt enter into life," he replied to the young lawyer, "keep the commandments." What he said to his disciples at the beginning, he says now to us. The same dispositions and character, the same service and obedience, which were required of them are required of us. If they, his first followers, could be his friends and obtain everlasting life only by believing in Him and

keeping his sayings, so neither can we. Here is the faith, — “Believe on the Lord Jesus”; here is the duty, — “Keep the commandments”; and what Paul taught to the Jewish converts to correct their false judgments and to teach them, that obedience is every thing, is true in the full extent of its meaning to us. “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.” “He is not a Jew, he is not a Christian, who is one outwardly; but circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.” And the Apostle teaches us, in his admirable summary of true religion, that it is “living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

III. Here, then, is the answer to the great question of my text. Here, as in the broad light of heaven we are taught what the Lord our God requireth of us; what we must be and what we must do, if we would attain to everlasting life. The texts I have cited need no commentary of mine. They speak for themselves, and in terms which all can understand. We may point to them as summaries of Christian faith and duty. They explain other texts, that are obscure, while they require no explication for themselves. They are unerring guides, pointing as with the finger of God, and saying, “This is the way; walk ye in it.”

And of this class of texts it has been well remarked, that they are always to be understood in their plainest and most obvious sense, — in the sense in which they are first interpreted by the honest and unprejudiced

mind, without evasion or qualification. When men set themselves to explain what is already clear, they are apt to darken counsel by words without knowledge; and when they would bring of their learning or ingenuity to illustrate precepts already plain, there may be suspected some lurking inclination to release themselves from duties which they cannot otherwise evade. Therefore, let these texts be taken in their most obvious sense. No favorite hypothesis that can be formed, no system of divinity, however skilfully contrived, no refinements of casuistry or philosophy, may be permitted here to obscure the truth, or to bring into question the obligation of an express command. And when the Master says, "Keep the commandments"; and when the Apostle says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"; and when the prophet who predicted him declares, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord thy God requireth of thee, — to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"; — there are distinctly set forth the conditions of salvation; the way of life is opened to us, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

Will it be objected, that in thus placing the substance of religion in obedience, we are advocating only an outward morality, with which the affections have no concern? No, my brethren; the foundations of Christian virtue are broad and deep. That "godliness, which has the promise of the life that is and of the life that is to come," lies deep in the soul. The faith that saves works by love, and is fruitful of good works; and that which does not reach the heart, and make us alive to God, which does not lead us to the mercy-

seat, and kindle our devotion, which does not subdue our pride and selfishness, and keep us pure and humble, does not deserve the name of religion. But, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that there may be fervent affections without a corresponding life. There may be much profession of love to God, and of reliance on Christ and zeal for his truth, and the heart be not right in the sight of God. Still it may be written of us, as of the monarch of ancient times, — “Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.”

True religion, that which the Master taught, and that for which we must strive, if we would attain to eternal life, is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy”; grounded in a true love of God and faith in Christ, expressed in every form of filial service, — in submission, gratitude, and trust, in holiness and in charity, even the charity that was in Jesus, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and went about doing good.” This is the religion which Jesus taught, and whose voice we are called to obey. This is the religion whose power is to be seen, not in name, but in deed; not in profession only, but in heart and in life; not in warm affections, in convulsive transports, nor in fervent resolutions that pass away, but in the subjection of the whole will of man to the will of God. And if there be within us that which makes us heartily to love God and to hate sin, which subdues our envy, our malice, our uncharitableness; that makes us contented amidst straits, moderate in prosperity, and ready to distribute, pure in heart, and in all manner of conversation; “if such things be in us, and abound,

they shall make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of God, and so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

SERMON III.

BY SYLVESTER JUDD.



WORTH OF THE SOUL.

WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD,
AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL? OR WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN
EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL? — Matt. xvi. 26.

I PROPOSE to offer a few suggestions upon the meaning and the instruction of these singular words of our Saviour.

It is common to estimate the worth of the soul by what may be called mathematical standards. Equivalents are found in a combination of figures. The question put by Christ is resolved into one of pure finance. It is tantamount to the algebraic inquiry, What is the value of x ? The soul is a certain bulk, and we must find another bulk of corresponding dimensions and weight. This answering quantity is composed of two elements, time and pain; the value of the soul is thought to be equal to the time it shall endure and the pain it shall suffer. Or, briefly, the soul is as time and pain. Thus, in arriving at a solution of the question, the power of numbers is challenged; we have ages multiplied into ages, quantities of woe carried to their highest cube,

logarithmic signs of the greatest possible conceptions ; and when the imagination itself can go no farther, we are told that this is but the beginning, an infinitesimal preface of that which shall be. All the strong figurative expressions of Scripture, denoting intensity of suffering, and interpreted as threats of vindictive punishment, are thrown into the scale. By these and similar things is the value of the soul estimated.

Popular and almost universal as is this method of calculation, it is one that I am not prepared to adopt ; nor does it seem to me to express at all the ideas of Christ.

It is clear that Christ does not make the worth of the soul depend upon its living and suffering for ever. He intimates that the man who will not take up the cross and follow him, who denies him, loses his life or his soul. What is it, then, not to follow Christ, — to deny him ? It is to refuse to possess the spirit of Christ, to discard his teachings and disown his sovereignty. In other words, a man who lives a life of sin, and rejects truth, virtue, and the Christian spirit, loses his soul. And the question which Christ puts is this : Suppose a man should gain the whole world, become ever so rich, and still be vicious, unprincipled, wicked, unchristlike, what would it profit him ? What would be given in exchange for his soul, — for what he has lost ? Can he buy virtue with dollars ? What good person would sell this wicked rich man his goodness ? — Reference here is undoubtedly had to something else than the pains that may be inflicted upon one during an eternity in hell, — to something, on the other hand, which in its own nature is valuable.

My first general observation is, that the worth of the

soul is intrinsic and spiritual ; and is not to be sought by mere outward physical estimates.

On the parable of the rich man in Luke, let me observe that *soul*, in this and in the other cases of Matthew and Mark, is the same word in the original as that rendered *life*. "This night shall thy life be required of thee," is the literal reading. Christ, we are told, would admonish his disciples against covetousness ; and so he relates the parable, or states a supposititious case. The man would build new barns, and say to his soul, his life, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." This was evidently an avaricious man, who, having amassed a large property, was on the point of squandering it in sensual gratifications. But the voice comes that he is to die that night. "Then whose will those things be which thou hast provided ?" You have devoted all your days, the vigor of youth and the wisdom of manhood, to collecting the means of vicious indulgence. You must die to-night ! What good will they do you ? You may be rich in lands, you are poor in virtue ; and now you are about to die. So, says Christ, is every one that layeth up treasure for himself ; that consults his own corrupt and selfish aims alone, and is not rich toward God ; is possessed of nothing valuable in the sight of God ; has no virtue, no love, no piety, no moral excellence. Fool, indeed, he is. In this account is sustained the observation I make, that the worth of the soul, according to Christ, is something intrinsic and spiritual. Our Saviour does not lift the veil of eternity ; he does not tell us what transpires beyond the grave ; but in view of what is exhibited here on the earth, in one's own lifetime, he permits this man to be called a fool, an unwise, infatuated person.

Thus far, we learn, in the estimation of Christ, a man who forewent the Christian spirit, who abused his powers and perverted the means of existence, lost his soul.

We are now introduced to a field of important observation. My first remark is, that the soul is valuable for what it is, and not for the sufferings that may be imposed upon it. A man may be subject to a chronic disease, and undergo a deal of pain all his life ; still, if he possesses patience, serenity, resignation, he does not lose his soul ; its value is unimpaired. Pain, in itself considered, even if it should endure through eternity, lying upon us in mountain-like accretions, could not destroy the soul or diminish its worth. Indeed, if there be any thing that demonstrates the excellency and power of the soul, it is, what we so often see, the ease with which it rises above external ill, and the vigor whereby it outshines the darkest circumstances.

In the second place, I observe that the value of the soul is as its capacity ; and whatever indicates the capacity of the soul may be taken as an exponent of its value.

To understand, then, the value of the soul, we are not obliged to penetrate the flight of ages, and take the dimensions of hell, or even count the glories of heaven ; we shall understand something of the subject by looking at what is about us, and attending to the known phenomena of human life. All virtue, all love, all truth, all self-sacrifice, all genius, all heroism, all greatness, exemplify the capacity and teach the worth of the soul. The pyramids of Egypt, the temples of Greece, the ruins of Yucatan, instance the capacity and the value of the soul. The fabrics of government and the extension of empire are monuments of the same fact. All

triumphs of mind over matter, all subordination of nature to art, all discoveries pushed into the realm of the unknown, all forth-puttings of vast energy of will or character, show the worth of the soul. What astronomy has done, in bringing down the big heavens into our school-rooms, mapping out the stars, throwing wheel-bands over the orbits of comets, and inserting metronomes in the mechanism of creation, what geology has done, in disinterring the history of the earth from the sepulchre of ages, teach the same fact. Raphael, with his pallet, Canova, with his chisel, Milton, with his pen, illustrate the capacity of the soul. Bonaparte, from whose intellect leaped the live thunderbolts of war, and whose hand shook the nations as in a dice-box, is an instance in point, so far as mere strength and resources are concerned. The covering of the sea with ships, of the wilderness with habitable towns, the elaboration of the cocoon into gobelin tapestries, of clay into Etruscan vases, the conversion of trees into coaches, of rocks into palaces, are similar denotements. Christianity itself, so far as its character or its extension depends upon human agencies, is a proof of the capacity of the human soul. Its propagation, the application of its principles, the realization of its aims, the multiplication of its disciples, its churches, its cathedrals, are of the same sort. The great attempt to abolish slavery and the slave-trade, originating with Clarkson, — that to extinguish war, begun by Worcester, — the later incursions into the empire of drunkenness, — all testify to the same truth.

These things, on what might be called a large historic scale, instruct us in the worth of the soul.

We are taught the same lesson in a more individual

way, and particularly by Christ. I wish you to observe what he says, and the connection in which he says it: — “Whosoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself. He who loses his life in my cause shall save it; whoso saves it, by rejecting me, shall lose it. And what profits it, if you should even gain the whole world and lose your life or soul?” Then he adds, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in his kingdom.”

This losing the soul has reference, then, to denying Christ. And what was it to deny Christ? Or, in other words, saving the soul, or the worth of the soul, has a reference to Christ. How is that seen? Who was Christ? How is the value of the soul seen in this relation?

I observe that in Christ himself was especially exemplified the worth of the soul. He founded an empire of love in the world, that overshadows, and shall outlive, all empires. From a simple mechanic he rose to be the greatest of monarchs. He lived near the heart of God, and became an emanation of the Divine love; with all singleness of vision he saw into the truths of God, and became a revealer of the Divine light. There was no guile in his mouth; he uttered himself frankly, undisguisedly, incorruptly, without a sense of fear or a regard to favor. Plainly dressed in an unseamed coat, which his mother had probably woven for him, without a king's signet, or a priest's cope, he gained access to the houses of the great, he was welcomed in the cottages of the poor; multitudes thronged him wherever he went, his course was like a triumphal procession, and the little children spread branches of palm under his feet when he entered

Jerusalem. Yet he had his trials, sharp and bitter ; but the Devil (representing therein the lust of avarice and ambition) he conquered ; the chief priests and elders who compassed his death he forgave. He had many a cross of opposition, desertion, and infirmity to bear ; he bore them manfully and well. His faith was inextinguishable, his confidence profound ; he knew what was in man, and loved all men as brothers ; he dined with publicans and sinners ; he spake gently to the woman charged with adultery ; his charity embraced the heretical Samaritans ; he noticed the obscure, he sought out the lonely ; he fed the hungry ; he cured the diseased ; he gave rest to the weary ; he was like a cloud floating down from the blue upper heavens, charged with mercy and sweetness for a sin-parched world. In all this we see the worth, the greatness, of the soul. Christ had a soul, as we all have ; and these are some of its developments and fruits. We are wont to look upon Christ as a sort of trajectory, cast by Almighty force from Bethlehem to Calvary ; as a kind of miraculous machine working its way through Judæa. No, he was made perfect through sufferings ; he was clothed in flesh and blood ; he had a moral soul as much as we have ; he had a soul to save or to lose, as well as his disciples. He saved his own soul.

And I beg you to dwell on one point an instant. Our Saviour described a man who made wealth his god. Compare this with an event in his own experience. He, in some part of his life, had been tempted by avarice. The Devil, we read, took him up into a high mountain, and promised him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them if he would worship him ; that is, if he would do some mean act, condescend to some base passion. Now if Christ had yielded at that moment, he

would have lost his soul, as certainly as any human being. He struggled against the suggestion, he repelled his malign adviser. This rencounter, this trial, seems to have made a deep impression on our Saviour's mind ; and he more than once takes advantage of the circumstance to convey useful instruction. He knew that every child of Adam would be subject to the same temptation, and he seeks to warn them against the danger. So he tells the story of the rich man ; so he says, " You must deny yourselves and follow me, do as I have done, resist the temptation to avarice, as I did ; if you do not, you cannot be my disciple. What if you should get the whole world, what good will it do you, if you thereby impair your moral character, sink your integrity, and become abject and degraded ? What will you give in exchange for such a loss ? If I had yielded, what would be my situation now ? " I say this matter has a peculiar interest, connected as it was with Christ's own experience.

So the text, the context, the related passages, and the whole subject of the worth of the soul, are intimately connected with Christ ; he himself gives a personal turn to the topic. In following him, in yielding to him, we realize the worth of the soul ; we save the soul. In refusing to follow him, in denying him, we depreciate, we lose, the soul. We put ourselves in such a condition as that he himself will be ashamed of us. Observe, my friends, the application of this course of remark. When we narrow down the vast spiritual powers which God has given us to dollars and cents, when we seek our supreme happiness in party distinctions or official emoluments, we lose our souls. When we suffer our faith in God or man to become straitened and distant, we lose our souls. When we refuse to follow Christ in

respect of loving all men, we lose our souls. When we have guile in our mouth, when we grow pharisaical, self-righteous, and supercilious, when in the midst of an adulterous and sinful generation we are ashamed to espouse the side of Christ, we lose our souls. When we have no cup of water for the thirsty, no compassion for the needy, no sympathy for the erring, no light for the blind, we lose our souls.

There are those who seem to suppose that this rejection of Christ, and consequent loss of the soul, depend upon not going forward to be prayed for, not being conspicuous in the use of a cant phraseology, not being willing to perform some sectarian rite. Nothing can be more fanciful or more delusive than such an idea. The rejection of Christ is a practical rejection; the loss of the soul is a real injury the soul itself sustains. You reject Christ when you do not do as he did, feel as he felt, be as he was; when you do not obey his words, fulfil his precepts, imbibe his spirit, carry out his purpose.

Intercourse with Christ imparts, if I may so say, a divine courtesy to the manners; communion with him inspires us with the spirit of the upper world; by conversation with him we acquire the language that angels use; by following him we complete our triumph over evil, and gather the brightest laurels of spiritual victory.

I have shown you how, on a large historic scale, the worth of the soul was manifested. I said the same thing was apparent on an individual scale; I have pointed to Christ as the first instance, and said that by imitation and pursuit of him we all show forth the riches, the worth, of the soul.

My next general remark is, that the worth of the soul is proportioned to its virtues, and its loss to its vices.

The historic scale to which I referred exhibits the soul only as some high observatory presents to the eye the face of the earth. You see hills lying side by side, like ridges in a new-ploughed field, and mountains embosomed in mountains, and some Himalaya overcapping the whole. The valleys, the brooks, the sunny slopes, are hidden. So history only gives us the tops of the highest things ; and any historic view of the soul's worth is exceedingly imperfect. The vales, the lower places of human existence, which the sun every day visits and God loves to look upon, history does not open to us. But, in fact, near the palace is a cottage ; by the side of the great king lives a little peasant ; adjoining the celebrated battle-field is an humble, quiet village ; Raphael's immortal pictures are taken from the face of a gentle girl, whose name scarcely survives ; while Milton composed the *Paradise Lost*, many a paradise was regained in the holy family circle, and in the acquisitions of meek spirits ; while a hundred thousand men were twenty years hauling stone for the Egyptian pyramid, as a sepulchre for a dead king, winds and woods, birds and flowers, were busy converting into an edifice which the Almighty himself should inhabit, the heart of some nameless man by the side of some nameless brook. There is a beautiful painting by Aldus of a poor woman, who, having spun past midnight to support a bed-ridden mother, has fallen asleep through fatigue, and angels are represented finishing her work. The obscure woman who anointed Jesus's feet most unconsciously did an act which the Divine Saviour himself has published to the praise of all ages. And where, in the Gospel adjudication, many were rewarded for things they wist not what, they were told it was because they had given cups of

water to the thirsty, and in unremembered ways relieved the distressed. Down in the by-places of life, in untravelled regions, in unstoried actions, in unbestarred lowliness, the soul has been rich toward God, — its true worth has been displayed, its salvation made certain. All diabolical temptation has been repelled ; all insidious, soul-degrading thought been extinguished ; the sweetest charities have been cultivated, a resistless, far-reaching love exercised, and a pure spirituality attained. Many a widow has cast in her mite ; her person was unrecognized, her name unknown, her destiny unascertained ; but Christ blessed her as she passed along. The tawny Indian, who in his arms bore one of our Pilgrim forefathers, that had lost his way, across a river, took him to his wigwam, fed him with beans and maize, gave him a wolf's skin to sleep on, and in the morning conducted him to his home, — that Indian, I say, was killed ; but I believe he went to heaven.

But, on the other hand, the denial of Christ also goes on ; a profitless speculation is had in evil ; men barter away that which they can never recover ; — they lose their souls.

The intemperate man loses his soul. He annihilates his self-consciousness and self-command ; he quenches conscience and reason ; he parts, by degrees, with all the finer attributes of our nature ; he repels the heart that is devoted to him, he wastes affections that are lavished upon him. The voice of God he does not hear, and the still, small voice of wife or child, in stupid violence, he assails. Disease writes her blazonry on his face, and perdition catches his soul.

The avaricious man loses his soul. One such, even for twenty pieces of silver, betrayed the Lord and Saviour

of the world. It was such a one, also, that Christ described in the passage I have read. This man, it would appear, abandoning the higher prerogatives of his nature, despising the proper attainments of a rational and immortal being, hardening himself to all philanthropic sympathies, thought only of his worldly estate, and gave himself up to monetary accumulations. The hungry might starve for him ; the good of society he cared not for ; all duties to God or man or himself he left undone. He is presented to us as the type of one who concentrates all thought, feeling, means, opportunities, times, in an inordinate selfishness. On that empty shell of humanity rings the hand of death. " This night is thy soul required of thee," is the strange, dreadful voice he hears.

The hypocrite loses his soul. " Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites ! " One cannot long maintain a false position without becoming in his own heart radically false. You practise pretence and subterfuge, and your own character loses its best, its divine instincts. Hypocrisy leads, straightway, to the basest duplicity and the most ruinous hollow-heartedness. A hypocritical politician not more certainly exposes himself to the derision of mankind, than to the disintegration and waste of personal, conscious rectitude. Those who live to seem soon only seem to be ; every vestige of substantiality disappears ; there remain but the shadow and semblance of a man. The cloak we put on, like the robe of Hercules, corrodes and consumes us. The grosser kinds of hypocrisy, in this day of civilization, are somewhat discarded. Our hypocrisy is very refined, and very plausible, and interlarded with a good deal of truth and apparent sincerity ; so much the worse for that ; the nearer poison comes to the heart and the

springs of action, the greater is our danger. We deceive ourselves by our pretexts, till we know not what we are ; like the man who committed perjury so often, he knew not when he spoke the truth. Goodness itself becomes hypocritical, and saints broaden the phylacteries of their sainthood. Such a course is onward to ruin. The true inner life of piety, by such fair seeming, is fast turning into a whited sepulchre. We act diplomatically, from an ambassador at a foreign court down to a shop-boy. Death is in all such business, — death to truth, death to happiness, death to our prosperity, death to principle, death to the soul.

There is no single vice which our Saviour so especially reprobated as that of hypocrisy, none which seemed so effectually to counteract all the purposes of his mission, and none from which his own principles were more abhorrent, or to which his whole conduct formed so vivid an exception.

The bigot loses his soul. The bigot has no strong appetite to feed, like the drunkard ; he has no absorbing aim of life, like the miser ; he lacks even the supple smoothness of the hypocrite ; — his position is one of hatred to all that is beautiful, free, joyous, in the world. Like death, he lays an icy hand on the flowing pulse and the active frame of our life. He repels all approach to his sympathies, to his magnanimity, to his impulses. The love of Christ which embraces all, encourages all, blesses all, he never felt. He prays, but he has no exaltation of spirit ; he communes, but he has no fellowship. If he had lived earlier, he would have pronounced sentence of death on Christ ; now that he lives later, he makes Christ the punitive judge of others. The fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, gentleness,

goodness, long-suffering, he has none ; but what passes for a holy indignation, a species of sanctified malice. He voluntarily cuts himself off from Christ, and lies a dead branch ; the sap and juices of his soul are dried up. He does not lie, nor steal, nor swear, but he has erected stakes, excavated dungeons, established Inquisitions, reared pillories, built jails, and recommended the gallows. He is a bronzed statue in the midst of living men.

I describe characters, not persons, and tendencies rather than finished results. No man, it is said, is a hero to his servant ; and we have often said, no man is all a villain. What germs of goodness may slumber in those I have described, what indestructible element of spirituality Omniscience can detect, it is not for me to say. But such tendencies are in the highway to final ruin. Such men *are the ones* who deny Christ ; they are the ones who are ashamed of him, and are most unlike him. Whatever treasures they may lay up for themselves, they are not rich toward God. They are poor in his sight. Their noblest powers are abused. The regeneration of their natures is prevented. Let them carry their gold, their fair-seeming, their loud professions, to heaven's gate ; will such things be received there ? What have they to offer in exchange for a whole life's perversion, this long waste of talents, and abuse of privilege ? But Christ, in the text, has not lifted the veil of the other world ; " This night shall thy soul be required of thee," is all he says. It was enough for him to see the process of destruction go on here. And it would be enough for us, my friends, if we had the least sensibility to goodness, the least real dread of sin.

Finally, there is a sense in which it might be affirmed we go through hell to hell ; and, as some one has said, we may have a little heaven to go to heaven in. We day by day rise to heaven, sink in hell. The pit of perdition and the gates of paradise open from every dwelling. The cup of life or death we sip at every meal. All inward rejection of Christ is vice, and vice is self-destructive ; all inward adherence to Christ is virtue, and virtue is self-edifying.

Strive, then, my hearers, to enter in at the strait gate. To many he will say, I know you not whence ye are. There are last that shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Many that you call the best are in reality the worst, and there are among the worst the best. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth, yea, much sorrow, when those who have flattered themselves they were the especial favorites of Heaven are thrust out. Strive, then, one and all, for that godly sincerity, that purity of heart, that Christlikeness of spirit, that angelic virtue, which alone is acceptable before God, which alone renders immortality desirable, and which is the only basis of a glorious hope beyond the grave.

SERMON IV.

BY FREDERIC D. HUNTINGTON.

THE SIMPLICITY OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

FOR ALL THE LAW IS FULFILLED IN ONE WORD.—Gal. v. 14.

THE minds of some persons are perplexed by an impression, that the duty of a Christian is something complicated. They labor under the notion, that Christian truth is hard to be understood; that it is a lesson difficult to be learned. The Christian's path, they think, is an intricate, tortuous path, beset at all points by tangled questions, which can be settled only by laborious study, by the nice and subtle distinctions of the casuist, or be cleared up by some almost supernatural illumination, poured in upon the mind in a moment of grace.

This is a mistake. It is an injurious misconception of the genuine character of Christian duty and truth, which, in reality, are very simple and very plain.

Christ appealed to the common understanding. He addressed his instructions to the simplest class of minds, — to uneducated fishermen and unsophisticated women. He drew his illustrations from the most familiar objects, — the grain waving, ripe for the harvest, on the hill-side before him, the birds wheeling in the air over his head,

the lilies blossoming in beauty at his feet. "The common people heard him gladly." He taught, clearly enough, that honest good-sense and a pure or sincere heart were the only qualifications absolutely essential to a right apprehension of his message. He preached his Gospel to the poor ; instilled his heavenly doctrine into the untutored hearts of the peasantry of his people. And he knew, beyond question, to whom his words were adapted, and who were most likely to accept and welcome them.

Let me not be understood as implying that there are not difficulties in maintaining a Christian life. Of this there are a multitude of difficulties in the way. The self-denial it costs to relinquish earthly gratification, whenever it comes in conflict with righteousness, and to take up the cross of daily effort, — this is one, and perhaps the mightiest, obstacle. The moral fortitude it requires to lay down personal pleasure, and often to trample it under foot, and to enthrone high principle as the sovereign of all the motions of the soul, is an attainment not to be won by easy struggles. The resolve to make Christ the Master and God's law the rule of life, — to keep that resolve and hold it fast, that it shall not fall nor even waver, — demands a vigilance that tasks every energy of the soul. But these are difficulties, observe, in doing the work, not in understanding what that work is. Many moral sacrifices are necessary for the actual keeping of the commandments, and reaching the lofty aim of Christian uprightness. Let no man deceive himself with the flattering imagination that this is an easy thing. For if he does, he will be tempted to give it up sometime in despair. In *being* a Christian, there are needed courage, toil, a persisting

patience, an untiring perseverance. But in knowing what it is to be a Christian, and how to begin, all we need is the simplest faculty of an ordinary intelligence and a teachable spirit. What is simple to be understood is not always easy to be done. The hindrances that hold us back from being true disciples are moral, not intellectual. They lie in men's torpid will, not in the natural deficiencies of their minds. It is not that the doctrine is incomprehensible, but that we love self and the world too well. The law of God is plain to the understanding; it is "all fulfilled in one word." But it is the law in our members, warring against it, that brings us into captivity. We know the right, and yet the wrong pursue.

Christian duty is a very simple thing, — of itself, viewed apart from our perversions and misty statements of it, — very simple and very plain. It is "all fulfilled in one word." I proceed to explain more fully my meaning in this declaration.

Suppose an individual — any one of us — is sincerely desiring to become a Christian man; to establish a Christian character. He is in earnest about it, and is only seeking the best way. How shall he proceed? Shall he begin on the outside of his character? Shall he pay his first and chief regard to his external deportment? Shall he devote his care to the little proprieties and minute details that appear on the surface of his life? Shall his great anxiety be to make his conduct appear decently in the eyes of his fellow-men, — a well-arranged piece of artificial workmanship, an elaborately-wrought mechanism? Or shall he look round on others, and copy various traits of different persons, taking one item from this individual, and another from that, thus patching up

a character, wholly by servile imitation, out of heterogeneous and ill-assorted materials? If he does, he will fail. He may well grow discouraged in that hopeless undertaking. Character is not built up by that sort of process. It is contrary to all sound philosophy, — to the very constitution of human nature. That would prove, indeed, a perplexing, complicated labor. If this were the method of being good, most of us will be obliged to abandon the idea of being good at all. We must throw up the attempt in disgust.

But this is not the method; and we may be thankful it is not. Christian character is not made up of separate, distinct parts, thrown together and fitted in, like the bricks and timbers of our dwellings, or the bars and screws of an engine. It is an organic and living whole, developed out of one principle of indwelling life, growing out of that, just like the tree, the plant, or the human body, only as it is infinitely superior to them, in that it possesses consciousness and immortality. A man's character is one vital whole; it possesses unity; it is subject to a law of growth; and each part is intimately related to every other. It is not put together, like mosaic, by an assemblage of disconnected pieces, till it assumes some prescribed shape and color. But it is all unfolded out of an inward secret life, sending its power and sustenance into every portion, just as the swelling life of the tree pushes its way and communicates its vitality to every branch and leaf that shoots from the trunk. Character grows, not as the pile of sand grows, by the addition of particle to particle through some foreign hand; but as the little seed, by the quickening of a germ latent within itself, sends up the strong fibre, the blade, the ear, the full corn in the

ear. The aphorism, that moral improvement mostly comes, not in the way of acquisition, but of development, seems to indicate the only tolerably philosophical theory of man's spiritual growth.

We are ready now to see how it is that to become a Christian or a good man, in other words, to form a Christian character, is so simple a thing, and in fact but one thing. It is but to gain this one animating principle of the soul, a right purpose. It is to take into the mind this one all-governing and abiding resolve, to honor God and love men ; to take this up, — this resolve, this purpose, — up into the highest place among the desires and determinations of the heart. It may be done almost by a single impulse of your will. Not the whole work, but the great burden of it, may be done in an instant. In solemn meditation, in some of the better moments of the soul's experience, that great and holy resolution may enter into the heart ; the door is opened and it enters in, to dwell there, to take up its abode, to cast out evil, to conquer temptation, to reign over the affections, and gradually to elevate and purify and perfect the entire life. Begin with that, — the adoption of the right purpose, the spiritual aim, — and you begin at the right point for a successful and noble career. Accomplish that, and you accomplish the hardest achievement, surmount the most dangerous pass, win the most decisive battle, of the whole Christian journey. Once plant deeply and firmly in your soul the one great principle of Christianity, which is love, — love to God and to man, — and you provide yourself with an inward spring and fountain of life, that will be sufficient for you for ever after. As Jesus promised the woman of Samaria, " You shall never thirst again." All the law is fulfilled in that " one word."

So a distinguished English writer on reforms, who penetrates with remarkable insight into the wrongs, abuses, and sins of society, and is certainly engaged with singular earnestness in studying the means of removing them, exclaims, — ‘ If you would extinguish injustice ; if you would be ready to allow men their rights ; if you would relieve the poor and instruct the ignorant and emancipate slaves and abolish all social evils, — first of all, get a soul ! ’ That, he would say, is the prime requisite, the main thing to be done ; and when that is done, other things will be done. First of all, get a soul, a generous, feeling, sympathizing, Christian soul into your bosom, and then you need not fear but you will be prompt enough to every humane and benevolent work. It will be so of course ; you cannot help it then. This I understand to be the same doctrine I am urging. Strike at the foundation. Go within, to the centre of your being, to the great principles of your life. Make them right ; work a change there ; put passion down and set religion up ; take righteousness for your portion ; take duty for your law ; fall once in love with goodness, — holy, gentle, brave, “ sweet-tempered goodness,” — though she brings you only peace for her dowry ; be wedded in your heart to virtue ; and then the great danger is over, and the way of salvation is open before you. Settle the grand principles of the Gospel under your springs of action, and all particular duties, the specific details of daily conduct, will take their right place, will have a right character, and you will not be obliged to perplex yourself with ever-recurring questions and altercations with conscience about them. Your conduct will be excellent in detail, because it is excellent in its motive ; blameless in all the branches of duty, because it is

sound at the root. The various relations you sustain will be true, because you have right relations with truth itself. Imbue yourself with the Christian spirit, and it will become most natural, most easy, to do the things that are Christian, — that are honest and kind, just and pure, lovely and of good report. You will do them of course, because it will then be the free inspiration of your moral nature to do them.

“It must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

It is thus I would endeavour to simplify the whole circle of requirements laid upon us by Christ and his Gospel. If you would be like Jesus, catch his heavenly-mindedness, and that will make you like him. If you would imitate his actions, partake of his spirit, and then you will be impelled to imitate them. In this sense, in all the virtues, in cultivating whatever excellence contributes to the very perfection of character, there is but one thing to be learned; learning that, you learn every thing. There is, in this sense, but one act to be performed, — the renewal of your mind; for, performing that one, you put yourself in a posture to do every other. The whole law is fulfilled in one word. It is a significant narrative of the Saviour, how Martha missed her consolation, and marred the peace and harmony of her being, by being careful and troubled about *many* things; and he revealed the whole mystery of her trustful sister's satisfaction and repose, when he said of her, “But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part.”

We may see an illustration of this simplicity in the operations of the world of nature. Her laws are as

simple, as her results are marvellous and beautiful. Look at the stupendous change that is wrought out every year in a few spring days. Out of the brown and barren surface of the earth, desolated by frost and winter, and from the naked boughs, springs forth into a bright resurrection a luxuriant mass of rejoicing life, in foliage and vegetation. In ten thousand forms, in a variety that is endless, in blending yet multiplied colors, filling the air with delicious fragrance, it spreads itself over hill-side and valley and mountain-top, and crowds our pathways with beauty. Yet the whole majestic and mysterious transformation has been produced by the simple and silent action of those few agencies, the soil, the sunshine, and the atmosphere, with the simple elements that compose them. The planets move, the globe revolves, in obedience to the simplest laws. As has been said, "The uninstructed man, looking around him on the universe and seeing a wonderful variety of appearances, is inclined to imagine there are numberless laws and substances essentially different, little knowing from how few of either the profusion of beauty that is in the world is formed. The creative energy of nature, dealing with few substances, breaks out into every form and color of loveliness. Here we have the dainty flower, which may be compared to the graceful kindnesses passing among equals; there, the rich cornfields, like the substantial benefits which the wise employer confers around him; here, again, the far-spreading oak, which, with its welcome depth of shade, may remind us of the duties of protection and favor, due from the great to the humble; and there, the marriage of the vine to the elm, a similitude for social and domestic affection. If our sympathies were duly enlightened

and enlarged, we should find that we did not need one doctrine for our conduct to friends, another for our conduct to dependents, and another for our conduct to neighbours. One spirit would suffice to guide us rightly in all these relations. No new discovery, no separate teaching, is needed, for each branch of this divine knowledge." * The spirit of love, dwelling richly in the heart, will comprehend all our duties to our fellow-men. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

There is a practical difficulty that is encountered by many persons in their efforts to lead a religious life. Their endeavours do not *tell*; do not secure that progress and yield that satisfaction that were sought for. Such persons try, it may be, to amend one failing, or to improve one quality, or to change one bad habit, — one *at a time*, without effecting a thorough and radical renovation of the heart itself. Finding it a slow process, they are disheartened. Now I do not mean to question that a change of character must be, to some extent, a slow process, at any rate; but I do mean to affirm that this noble work will be largely facilitated by adopting into the soul a comprehensive principle of duty and an inward spirit of obedience, — a deep love of goodness, a new motive, — rather than by striving to control one particular habit at a time, taking that alone, looking no farther, but leaving the rest as bad as before. It would take an army a long time to carry the strongholds of the enemy, if they were to exhaust their forces in cutting off, one by one, the stragglers from that enemy's camp, instead of making a united assault on some central posi-

* Claims of Labor.

tion. It was a maxim in the tactics of Napoleon, — that wonder of the last generation in physical prowess, turning all Europe pale with terror, — always to bring the combined weight of his battalions to bear on a central and single point ; carrying that, the path of victory was open to him, through all tributaries, outposts, and reserves, and he was sure of the field. That was a bloody and brutal application of it ; but the maxim itself is one of undoubted sagacity, and on the better theatre of our moral conflicts, our long battle with sin for the sake of the reward set before us in the peace of heaven and the approval of conscience, we may adopt its wisdom. You may toil and toil, seeking to amend the erring propensities of your heart, and may wonder that you do not meet better success ; while, probably, the secret cause of your failure is, that you have not struck deeply enough into the very centre of your affections. You may not, for example, have taken to-yourself that spiritual faith in God, in his forgiveness and help, which leads to prayer ; and without prayer you cannot reasonably expect that any efforts at reformation will be successful. There is one essential moving force which you have not touched.

So in mechanical contrivances. There are some most useful and powerful machines, perfect in all their parts ; yet you cannot put them into operation, cannot set them going, till you touch one particular spring or lever, hidden among the rest of the workmanship. Spend all your strength on the other portions, strain every nerve, and you cannot so much as start one ponderous wheel. But press that one main-spring, draw one bolt, and the whole starts into vigorous and orderly motion ; perhaps transports tons of merchandise, or weaves costly

fabrics. That main-spring is like the motive which impels all Christian action. The chemist in his laboratory, wishing to produce a given chemical result, adds one substance after another in his composition ; but all his labor and his materials are only wasted for his purpose, till at last he throws in one particular element, which, by its peculiar affinities, changes the whole mass and brings about the success of his experiment. That one decisive element, determining the nature of the compound, is like the renewing principle in the character, spreading itself through the mass, and transforming the whole. The afflicted, restless under the pang of some fresh bereavement, feel their whole inward frame to be tossed in tumult and confusion, till trust, meek trust in the Heavenly Father, comes and simplifies their experience, explaining all the contradictions of their sorrow, and healing their hearts. The worldly-minded, the sensual, the selfish, are full of confusion, till one great principle of self-renunciation reduces the discord to the harmony of virtue.

We may desire to do brave and lofty deeds ; to achieve signal moral victories ; to meet great emergencies with great virtues. It is an honorable aspiration. But we never shall fulfil it by any temporary or occasional exertions. We must not leave every such case to be met on the spur of the moment. We must have a general preparation for all such emergencies, the preparation of an established faith and a deep-seated devotion. Having that, we cannot be taken off our guard. Having it not, we can do no heroic thing. Men do not often rise far above their uniform level of moral attainment ; and when they do, they are apt to show that they are unused to the atmosphere, and fall

ignominiously back again. Moral heroes are men that cherish high sentiments habitually ; the occasions when they display them do not create those sentiments, but only call them out from the bosom where they have their familiar dwelling-place. If we would be brave disciples, we must lift up the whole platform of our spiritual life higher and higher continually, and then we shall stand on a broad and secure foothold, and nothing shall overturn our fidelity, or shake us from our steadfastness.

Such is the teaching of Scripture throughout. "Make the tree good and the fruit will be good." "If thine eye [or inward purpose] be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good." "All the words of wisdom are plain to him that understandeth," — plain and simple to him who has the seeing eye, the inward light, the living soul, in him. And "the whole law is fulfilled in one word." Jesus, the Great Teacher, sanctioned the same doctrine by his own method of instruction. He did not occupy himself with minute particulars and numberless details ; but he announced certain general principles, a comprehensive spirit, which, once received into the heart, will include all particular duties, in all possible diversities of condition in which a human being can be placed. This is his wisdom ; and it will be well for us when we adopt it in our self-discipline. We see it exemplified in our intercourse with some acquaintance. Without feeling cordially towards him, perhaps, we try to satisfy our conscience in treating him well. But though we try never so long, we never succeed till we come into right relations with him, get a sincere, brotherly affection for

him, and then we cannot go amiss from a manly justice and kindness to him. — Paul speaks of the simplicity that is in Christ, and of the danger of departing from it. The annals of the Church, the pomp of its hierarchies, the ostentation of its rituals, and the complication of its creeds, show how just were his apprehensions, and how much the world needed his warning.

Let me ask attention, before I close, to the practical bearing of the truth I have attempted to present, by noticing the close connection it has with two great doctrines that have been prominent in the religious teaching of the Church. I cannot help believing that this truth, namely, that the Christian requirement is very simple, and lays the chief stress on our getting a right heart, lies near the foundation of both of them.

One of these is Justification by Faith, which has often been called the foremost doctrine of the Reformation, and is almost identified with Protestantism. It is a doctrine that, as held by some of the Protestant sects, we discard. That *mere* faith, to the exclusion of righteous deeds and a good life, if such a thing were possible, can justify or save a man, we do not believe. But, like most other tenets that have taken a powerful hold on the Christian mind of ages, this one owes its influence to a certain measure and basis of truth in it. That truth seems to be this. There is a certain indwelling principle, as I have said, a spiritual frame of the mind, a comprehensive purpose, a devout posture of the soul, which is the first requisite to being really a Christian. Have that, and you have established an invisible fellowship with Christ. Call that principle *Faith*, — and I know of no more appropriate name for it, — and we have then “Justification by Faith,” a form of speech countenanced in Scriptu-

ral phraseology, and certainly highly significant. The Apostle himself said, — “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ” ; that is, adopt that one spiritual conviction and you are safe, because it will include a thousand others. Believe on him sincerely, and that belief will assimilate you to his holiness. Luther saw the mistaken monks and the whole Romish world groping in their darkness, vainly imagining they could conciliate Heaven and reach salvation by a routine of lifeless ceremonies, — outside works of penance and self-mortification. He knew the shallowness of this delusion. He introduced at once a more spiritual conception ; he turned men’s thoughts to their inward condition ; he held up an internal test, — reliance on God’s mercy, manifested through Christ, — and called it Justification by Faith ; till out of the unsightly destruction of the old came the fairer creation of the new. The name has become associated with partisan contentions ; and it has lost the respect of too many who ought at least to honor the thing it signifies. Rightly understood, it may be taken as that “ one word ” by which the whole law is fulfilled.

The other practical doctrine I alluded to is that of Conversion, or Regeneration. Regeneration is a change which, of course, must be gradual in its completion ; but that it commences with the one great effort that I have dwelt upon, — the adoption of a new principle of life into the centre of the heart, — I believe to be true beyond a doubt. Viewed in the light of this fact, that work of renewal becomes wonderfully simplified. Would you be really and thoroughly converted from your sins, you must cast off the old, selfish aim, the worldly mind, the sensual motive, and “ put on the new

man," turn the current of the desires, baptize the affections into a new spirit, take a new direction, obey a new law. Christian faith, by a strong determination of your free-will, must be made your guide, and Christian love your inspiration. It is a simple step, and God's spirit waits to help you. Then the virtues will cluster themselves in a natural growth to adorn your life. Duties will flow from their source within the heart, like diverging streams down fruitful hill-sides from their pure fountain in the mountain-reservoir. It is possible, I allow, that you may partially rectify some one bad tendency by taking it up separately. But you will not renovate the whole character. You may be morally stronger for that subordinate struggle, but the deep spring is not purified after all. You have not stirred the great principles of Christian reformation. A character, reformed and corrected in one part, while it is grovelling and earthly in all others, is not a much comelier sight than a tree with all the sweet nourishment of its juices diverted into a single green branch, — the rest standing dry, leafless, decaying, a distorted, one-sided thing.

Finally, then, as you would become accepted disciples, strive for that one possession, as simple as it is sublime, — simple as a child's heart, plain as the Gospel, clear as the soul of Christ, — a spirit of indwelling faith. Deal with the great principles of the Christian life. Give them a resolute adoption and a firm lodgment in the soul. Grasp the one doctrine of love; make it your own, and it will have infinitely varied manifestations in all your daily action. Give yourselves in unreserved allegiance to your Master, Christ. Be renovated, once and for ever, by his divine temper. Be led

by his heavenly instructions. Get the heart of love, the soul of faith, the disposition of duty. Cleanse the moral air in which you breathe. Expand your sympathies. Bear a generous and noble purpose at all times, into all places. Live a whole-hearted life, — genuine in its motive, right in its principles, pure in its spirit, and then you will not need to perplex yourself continually about petty rules of behaviour. Elevate the general level of your spiritual feeling ; lift that higher and higher ; and then, raised above the world, you will come into the liberty and the light of the children of God !

S E R M O N V .

BY CHARLES T. BROOKS.



PREPARATIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT. — Hebrews xii. 1.

THIS alludes to the practice of the competitor at the racing-match, who, having stripped himself of every encumbrance, and having also, as the Apostle reminds us in his Epistle to the Corinthians, subdued his body by temperance, so that that shall be as little of a burden as possible, girds up his loins and prepares to pass lightly and joyfully over the race-ground. This is the example the writer recommends to those who are called to run for the prize of perfection in Christ Jesus; and in no respect is the example more instructive or important than in this, that the racer in the games is careful to “lay aside every weight.”

And how often we see his example imitated in this particular by those who are not Christians, and do not pretend to be, on the great race-ground of human life and effort! Observe the man who is enlisted — heart, soul, mind, and strength — in the race after riches! see how wise he is to divest himself of every weight that would clog his steps, — how strong and stern to

deny himself those pleasures of body or mind which would damp his ardor for gain, or dull the edge of those faculties which, all alive and active, are so keenly bent upon its acquisition! He robs himself of needful rest, in his anxiety lest sluggishness should steal from him his golden prize. He robs himself of the comforts of society, lest any friend should win away his affections from mammon. Nay, does he not sometimes, to make all sure, put away a good conscience, — put away all sense of his heavenly stewardship, — does he not (to change the figure for a moment), by way of lightening his unseaworthy bark, and riding over the sunken rocks and shoals among which he has godlessly ventured, cast overboard the last precious remnant of his small stock of faith, — does he not, in short, to resume our proper image, thus “lay aside,” oftentimes, “every weight” of religious responsibility, that he may run the more lightly and successfully the race which the god of this world hath set before him. Again, look at the man who has entered the lists of ambition, — whose grand object is, with or without regard to the moral character of the means employed, as the case may be, to make himself notorious in the world. So anxious is he to shake off every weight that would retard his footsteps along the road to distinction, that at last, in many cases, he drains dry the very fountain of life, and lies there with a wasted body and a wandering mind, — a melancholy reproach upon the lukewarmness of those who, for infinitely nobler rewards than he sought, are commanded only to give their bodies a *living* sacrifice, and who yet, so often, have not ambition enough to live for that perfection, in hunting after the shadow of which, he not only lived, but died!

Thus ready are they to lay aside every weight, who run for no higher prize than earthly aggrandizement, — whose god is gold or glory. Why is it that Christians (I do not mean merely those who so call themselves or whom the world calls so, but why is it that they who, whatever their actual character or pretensions, know and feel that they ought to be Christians) are so often found running their race uncertainly ?

Can it be that any of us fail to perceive that we have a race to run ? Can it be that we want inducements to begin and continue the moral race ? May it be that we turn away from ourselves the point of the inspired appeals and admonitions, by pleading that they were meant merely for professed and professing Christians ? Our consciences will not bear us out in this self-deception. What though we are not expressly *pledged* to be Christians (so to speak) by a formal confession of Christ before men ? We know, and in our sober moments confess to ourselves, that Jesus is the man and the master whom we should imitate and obey, and that until we do so there can be no peace for us. We may feel that we are not actually and absolutely Christians, but we do know that we ought to be. A constantly increasing cloud of witnesses bends over our pathway ; myriads of souls, purified and perfected by just such temptations as we are called to encounter, watch us with intense interest and anxiety, lest we should slink from the race-ground on which God calls us to run for the crown of righteousness and glory. Is not such a race set before each one of us ? Does not every thoughtful man (I will not say merely Christian believer) feel and know that he has this race to run ? Does not the very consciousness of powers fitted for

infinite improvement, — a conscience alive to every imperfection, — does not the very freedom which we each feel is intrusted to us, proclaim, as with the very voice of God, “I have set a race before thee”? Yes, the mingling voices of conscience and Providence and nature admonish us that we are made for perpetual progress in knowledge, wisdom, and goodness, and by their ever-varied and powerful appeals are urging us upward and onward. Conscience, the whisper of God in the soul, — his “most intimate presence in the world,” — is daily teaching and enforcing this lesson. It comes to us as often as morning returns, with its renewed opportunities of improvement and of beneficence, — it comes to us at noontide amidst the multitude of a Father’s mercies, — it comes to us sweetly at the even-tide of a well-spent day, solemnly at the close of a day misspent and wasted. The dissatisfaction which will steal over us in many an hour when we fancy we are doing much and yet fear we are doing nothing, — the consciousness that when we have done all we are still unprofitable servants, — the deep self-reproach we feel when any little progress we may have made in wisdom or goodness is suffered to damp our zeal for further and nobler improvement, — these are but so many tones in which conscience is daily reminding us for what we were created. Nothing short of moral perfection will satisfy the inward monitor, and give man the peace for which he strives and sighs. So long as we offend, at least habitually, in one point, though we keep the whole law beside, we feel and should feel as if we were guilty of all. No obedience can atone for that one wrong trait or habit. Such is the teaching of conscience. Providence, by all the

changes of our eventful lives, is repeating the lesson and the law, teaching us, as worldly treasures and comforts drop from us, like the leaves of summer, to live above the world, and labor for "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," reserved for them that patiently continue in well-doing. Nature, with her thousand voices, admonishes us to be diligent. Day unto day utters this speech, — night unto night showeth knowledge of this, — that we should be growing "wiser and better as life wears away." Seasons, as they succeed each other, each reaping the benefit of its predecessor, admonish us thus to make each period of our moral life redound to higher progress in the next. How natural the exclamation which the prophet puts into the mouth of a slothful and sinful people :— "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"! How many are often visited by uncomfortable reflections of this nature, — are compelled to say, as seasons and opportunities pass, not only that they are not saved, but that they are not even seriously seeking salvation!

By such modes as these God is calling us to Christ, and he, in turn, is calling us to God, summoning us to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. By the memory of the toil he underwent, the comforts he denied himself, the sorrows he suffered, that he might become a perfect and remain a pure man, might keep undimmed the image of God within his bosom, and leave us an example of what humanity aided from on high can bear and can achieve, — by the disinterested devotion with which he bore and forbore, and accomplished all, — by the war he waged even unto death with the sins that beset every mortal's pathway, — he

is still entreating us to "run with patience the race that is set before us." From his bright abode he is beckoning us to tread the path which he has trod, and share the triumph he has won. He holds out to us a crown of glory, and says, — "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."

It cannot be that all these voices of conscience, Christ and God are lost upon our ears. It is very evident, if only from the pains we have to take to content ourselves without obeying it, that we hear the admonition and feel its force. True, our *eyes* are holden often, that we do not see the full beauty of Christ's character, the full glory of the prize of perfection; but this is not the worst, — our *feet* are holden by heavy weights, so that we cannot run, without tiring, the race marked out for us. Would we only lay aside every weight that now hangs about our hearts and encumbers our steps, we should run our race, not with patience only, but with joy.

There is a weight of skepticism lying on the worldly mind, — a lurking doubt of the value and reality of religion, and a doubt of the attainability of holiness, — arising from long-cherished low tastes and selfish purposes, as well as from daily contact with depraved example, which hangs like a mill-stone around the necks of many, and prevents their rising above the world. Talk to them of loving virtue for virtue's sake, — doing duty because it is duty, — striving to be perfect as God is perfect and because he is, — they will answer you with that shallow smile of worldly wisdom which seems to say, — "All very beautiful; but we do not see

any living examples amongst us of that disinterested virtue, that high allegiance to duty, which you, in the simplicity of your heart, call on man to practise." It is this secret, this shallow skepticism which chains multitudes to the earth, conscious the while that they were born for heaven. They look upon the average goodness of the world as the standard at which they are to aim, and with which they are to rest satisfied. At most, they are satisfied to be as good as the best seem to them to be. And thus they naturally bring the standard down to their own level. Let any one who is laboring under a skepticism like this converse with his own heart in his better moments. He knows that virtue is something real,—that it is not *a shade*,—that it is not a vain thing for man, because it is his only lasting good and real life. He knows that every man was made for virtue,—is capable of generous virtue,—and that to point to the imperfections and inconsistencies of presumed or pretended saints, as a proof that man is not called to be perfect, is pitiable sophistry. Let him turn his eyes away from the world a little while, and look unto Jesus. Contemplating his holy and harmless life,—holy and undefiled, though spent in the midst of corruption,—harmless, meek, and merciful, though embittered by perpetual persecution,—let him remember that *there* is a pattern of what man might and should be. I know what reply the weakness of the flesh, backed by time-hallowed misrepresentations of our Saviour's nature, will make to such appeals. They will be pronounced presumptuous. I shall be reminded that Jesus was in a totally different sphere from ours,—that he was endowed with miraculous gifts, and was made conscious, in some manner

to us wholly mysterious, of a special commission from on high. I nowhere read, however, nor do I believe, that his *goodness* was a miraculous gift, any more than all goodness is. I believe that it grew up to perfection through just such discipline as is appointed for us. I read that Jesus "was tempted in all points like as we are." I read that he prayed; — why, if not for moral strength? I do not believe that his virtue was a mechanical or miraculous thing, — that he was merely a passive instrument of the Divine will. He had a will of his own, and he *freely* submitted it to God, saying, "Not my will, Father, but thine, be done!" The question is not, then, what sphere we are called to fill, but whether *in* that sphere we are not sacredly bound to manifest just such a spirit as Jesus did in his. We, too, have each a call and a commission from on high, as truly as Jesus had. Our faculties and our affections, which are the inspiration of God, and our position in the world, are a call from him, clearer and stronger, perhaps, than any outward call could be; and the very emotions of admiration and shame with which we follow our Saviour's history and unavoidably contrast its spirit with our own, are as good as the audible voice of the Author of our nature, saying, "Go, and do thou likewise." O, let not that dead weight of skepticism, that unmanly and irreverent distrust of our nature, our calling and our destiny, drag us down to the dust! Let this burden be dropped at the foot of Christ's cross, and consider whether there is no meaning in the word which says that he is the "*Captain of our salvation*"!

But how many there are who even see the beauty of holiness, — feel the worth of virtue, — find no peace

in an unspiritual life, — are heart-sick of the toil and torment the god of this world imposes on his worshippers, — long to engage in a better service, — and yet cannot summon energy enough to shake off the old yoke! Sometimes they do make an effort to run the new race, with their fetters still clanking around them; but they soon stumble and fall away. So must it be with every one who slights the admonitions of inspired wisdom. A voice from old time and from above bids us *first* “lay aside every weight.”

One weight, which hinders many such from running with freedom and perseverance the race set before them, is the heavy remembrance of past sins and follies. But why should the recollections of the past interfere with the obligations of the present? The past is fixed and fled for ever. It can neither be changed nor called back. Neither tears nor prayers can make that not to have been which has been, or undo what has been done. But though no floods of sorrow can wash away the record of conscience, God’s mercy can throw over it the veil of forgiveness, and will do so the moment we repent and seek his forgiveness, and show the sincerity of our repentance by beginning the work of reformation.

But there is still another weight, the heaviest of all, to be laid aside. Not the memory of past disobedience merely, but, far more, the evil habits which have resulted from it, — the low tastes, — the worldly tendencies it has left in the character, — all these are to be counteracted and corrected before we can be ready to run the race of Christian living. This preparation, of course, is not to be made in a moment. It may be begun at any moment. By severe meditation on

lofty and eternal things, — by struggling with self as for life, — by humble and hearty prayer to Him with whom alone is the sufficiency, — by seizing the opportunity, when our minds are most free from the world, to *do* something for God or man, — we may be gradually lessening the weight of that sin which, by reason of long indulgence, doth still so easily beset us. Hard, indeed, may be the struggle, — severe the sacrifice, — but the sterner the conflict, the nobler the victory ; the sweeter the peace, the more glorious the triumph. “ There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”

Are we of the number of those who are said to “ need no repentance ” ? Are we “ just persons,” — righteous as Christ is righteous ? He is our standard. It is idle to dream of satisfying our consciences while we aim short of him. Let us not deceive ourselves by *comparing ourselves among ourselves*. Let us not waste, in inventing compromises with conscience, energies lent us by Heaven for far other and nobler purposes. While there is one sin, — gloss it over by what name we please, — call it fault, frailty, infirmity, or whatever else, — so long as there is a single sin, of thought or speech, deed or desire, omission or commission, which secretly besets and conquers us, — let us not lay the flattering unction to our souls that we may set over against this one sin so many virtues that there shall be a balance in our favor. “ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Even supposing we had the pretended or fancied virtues, the fact would only make our one sinful habit or disposition so much the darker a blemish on our characters.

When we have once laid aside every weight, —

shaken our souls free of earthly encumbrance, — then, standing up and standing forth in our manly and Christian liberty, we shall no longer need to be *admonished* that we have a race to run. Our sight once purged from sin and selfishness, the image of heavenly perfection will beam out before us in all its real effulgence, — the nearness of that cloud of witnesses will be felt by the soul, and *there* the moral race-ground will lie before us in noonday light and more than earthly glory. The vision will charm and cheer our eyes. Our ears, free from the teasings of earthly anxiety, the bewildering din of confused and conflicting passions, will hear voices innumerable and irresistible urging and invoking us onward. They will call us from the east and from the west to lay hold on the starry crown. But we shall require no *encouragement*. Our feet, clear of the weights and clogs that held them to earth, will, of themselves, leap to advance in that path where alone is freedom. The spirit, no longer weighed down by the superincumbent mass of earthly corruption, will rise, by its own natural buoyancy, into its native and proper ethereal element.

Say not in your hearts and habits, — say not in your tastes and daily temper, — that the large and lofty considerations on which we have been dwelling overlook, overleap, and mock the hard and homely duties of ordinary life. What is it that you are called on to do? Simply to keep a high and holy purpose before you *in* all life's relations, — not to go out of the world (which you could not do if you would), but simply to use the world as not abusing it and as not abused by it. Whatever your hands find to do, that your hearts and consciences tell you is worthy to be done

by men and Christians, do it with your might! The Christian race-ground runs through the midst of the gay and busy scenes of human care and enterprise, pleasure and passion. You are admonished only to lay aside those *weights* which the world hangs around the neck of its *slave*. Do this, and the very labors, and obligations, and cares of your every-day life, so far from proving stumbling-stones in your spiritual path, will serve for stepping-stones to perfection. You will find them the rounds of that ladder, which, resting on the earth, reaches to the skies.

Be not satisfied, or rather, dream not that you can satisfy yourself, with a negative, a nominal religion. The nature God has given you demands something more. Be admonished, be persuaded, to study your nature and learn its wants. Spurn the sophistries of importunate desire, — of the sin, the selfishness, the sluggishness, which so easily beset you. Be not afraid nor ashamed to converse with your very innermost selves, and with those thoughts which are continually accusing or else excusing one another in the inner chamber and judgment-hall of every human bosom. “Listen in prayer at the oracle within.” Meditate on those restless aspirations after purity and perfection, which nothing but the consciousness of constant progress can begin to satisfy. Lay aside *that* heavy weight which he must for ever bear about with him whose conscience tells him that he has no real and hearty love of moral and spiritual excellence itself, but only wishes to escape in the easiest manner possible the burdensome sense of obligation. Be assured, you never can be happy, so long as you merely ask yourself, Am I clear of the foul caverns of vice? — Are my skirts free from

the stains of outright iniquity? Never, till your habitual question is, Am I positively running and rejoicing in the sunshine of the Redeemer's righteousness? — Am I breathing the free and vigorous mountain-air of Christian faith and hope and charity?

SERMON VI.

BY NATHANIEL HALL.



THE PLEADINGS OF GOD'S SPIRIT.

BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR, AND KNOCK. — Rev. iii. 20.

GOD is often conceived of as a far-distant Being. If in our devotional phraseology we speak of him as near and present, the truth which the words convey seems not to be apprehended in its fulness.

That God *is* present to every portion of his universe is what reason assures us must be. The energy that called into being must be ever present to uphold. The work of creation was not once only, but is momentarily repeated. The beauty and sublimity that we see around us are not the tokens of a Presence passed away. They are the radiant footsteps of a present God; the garment in which he clothes himself; the visible outbreaking of his eternal thought. Not in the infinite height alone, where eye nor thought has wandered, but here also, here and everywhere, is God, — the all-witnessing, all-pervading, all-quickeningsoul.

But in an added and higher sense is he present to his spiritual offspring. His spiritual offspring, — familiar words! but how little do we regard, do we comprehend,

their import ! The Father of our spirits, the Soul of our souls, literally and truly, is God. They partake of his nature. They are a portion of himself. Yes, exalting thought ! — something of God the soul is ; a communication of his own intelligence, — of his own moral attributes. It is formed in his image. It is receptive of his life. It is made capable of bearing that image, of receiving that life, in ever-increasing degrees of fulness and of power. What a glorious distinction is this, — that we are made in the likeness of God ! — that we may grow into that likeness, for ever and ever, by continually fresh communications from his infinite Spirit ! What a glorious distinction, — that a spark of the Divinity inheres within us, susceptible to influences from its sacred Source, that shall fan it ever to an ascending flame, and bring us into intimate and blissful union with the Almighty Father ! How poor, how empty, how insignificant, seem all temporal distinctions compared with this ! Why do we make so much of them ? Why do we overlook, in the circumstances of man's earthly condition, the great fact of his inheriting a spiritual nature, — of his being, in solemn truth, a child of the Eternal ? Why are we giving, so almost exclusively, our care and attention to what is outward and transitory, while within us are the elements of a holy temple in which the very God may dwell, and over us his waiting inspiration, to quicken and expand them in an immortal beauty ? O man, man ! — when wilt thou know thyself as thou art, and uplift thyself, in lowly dignity, on thy spiritual distinction, and be enamoured of thy possible achievement ? — when wilt thou recognize, in thy relation to the Holiest, in thy capacity for receiving into thyself, and for evermore, of his exhaustless fulness,

the true distinction of thy being? — when wilt thou make an unflinching fidelity to these the high aim of thy being? — when wilt thou see in these man's sacred title to be revered, his enduring claim to thy sympathy and regard, — a claim no longer to be overruled by the paltry considerations of wealth, of place, of power?

We are blinded to man's true distinction, because our unspiritual hearts give us so little consciousness of it. We see not God in others, because in our own souls his presence is so unfeeling. Some are even led, from this cause, to question the literal truth of those Scripture passages which speak of man's filial relation to the Deity, — of those promises that his Holy Spirit shall enter into and abide with those who prepare themselves for its reception, and the soul become the temple of God. Cruellest skepticism! that with regard to man's capacity for the divine life, — to the sincerity of those calls made upon him from the holy word to become one with the Father, and receive from him, to this end, communications of life, and light, and power! O, discard such skepticism! Believe in the indwelling God. Believe in that inspiration of the Almighty which is the soul's native endowment, and that continually proffered inspiration by which its hidden powers may be unfolded, immeasurably and eternally, and the riches of a boundless grace be poured into it. Believe it to be the chief end for which God reveals himself, that the Divine may live in the human, — the life of God in the soul of man; the end, especially, of his revelations by Christ; and that then only is the purpose of Christ's mission accomplished, when, in his own words, we are filled with the Father's fulness, and dwell in God, and have God dwelling in us. The expressions to this effect from those holy lips are

no senseless imagery. They have a meaning, — a meaning for us ; ay, and a deep and a glorious meaning. God still is. He is not imprisoned in the Past. But now, as ever, he exists and acts, — an actual Presence, a living Power. “No nearer was he at Tabor, or Gethsemane, than here, to us, this day and every day. Neither the nature he inspires, nor his perennial inspiration, grows older with the lapse of time ; every human being that is born is a first man, fresh in this creation, and as open to heaven as if Eden were spread around him ; and every blessed kindling of faith and new sanctity is a touch of his spirit as living, a gift as immediate from his exhaustless store of holy power, as the strength that befriended Jesus in his temptation, or the angel-calm that closed his agony.” *For ever* stands the promise to the pure in heart, that “they shall see God.”

He is near to all souls ; but how few of all discern him, — how few receive him ! Many are seeking for him afar, with their philosophies and theologies ; roaming abroad with theories and speculations, sounding and interrogating the whole metaphysical world ; — while he is nearer to them than the nearest beside ; yea, at the door of their *hearts* he stands, — he knocks.

But he enters not. The interposing barrier is their own earth-bound affections, unsanctified desires, and unobedient wills. Let these be removed ; let them renounce all impurity, all self-seeking, all worldliness, and he will come in and bless them as all the universe beside could not. “If any man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

God is revealed to us as the gracious lover of all souls, desiring to redeem all from sin, waiting, with in-

finite compassion, to lead them to their rest, to restore to them their departed peace, to impress upon them more and more resplendently his moral likeness, and thus make them, in the highest sense, his own. The obstacle to this — the only one — is in the soul itself; by itself placed there, and kept there. A moral effort, on its own part, is necessary, in order to remove the obstacle, — to unloose the door. I repeat it, let it hush the strife of unholy passions; let it cease from the pursuit of selfish ends; let it be faithfully true to conscience, to its own light, to the written word; let it humble itself as a little child, be as confiding, as loving, as simple-hearted; let its prayer be for God, — his light, his love, his life, — and he *will* manifest himself; that soul shall feel the answer to its prayer, and realize the fulfilment to it of the Saviour's promise. God cannot bless us as he would, against our wills. He cannot force upon us the heavenly good his infinite love designs. We must desire it. We must make room for it. We must open the door.

For this he waits. At the door of thy heart he stands, O sinner! and has stood these many years, waiting for thee to yield him entrance. He has not been wearied by thy long delay. He has not abandoned thee to thy wilful hardness. But still, as at each moment of thy past existence, he stands there, — and knocks. In the events of life, in the scenes of nature, in the Sabbath's teachings, in the presentation in any form of holy truth, — in every elevated thought by these suggested, every serious impression produced, every throb of devotional sensibility awakened, — has God called thee, has his spirit plead with thee to open to him thy heart.

As you have stood amid the spring-time's bursting

beauty, and seen the myriad buds unroll to the genial air, and the timid blossoms look up from the softened sod, and have heard the glad warbling of the returning birds, and felt on cheek and brow the warm, fresh breath of the straying breeze, — as every thing around seemed instinct with rejoicing life, and your purified thought has ascended to the great Creator, and you have believed that he was Love, and your heart in relenting tenderness has almost joined in that hymn of gratitude which all nature seemed to send upward, — *then*, by that sweet conviction, by that throb of unvoiced devotion, by that impulse to yield thyself thenceforward to his guiding hand, did he speak to you, did he call you. And as your thoughts have rested at *life's* rejoicing spring-time, as childhood has come back to you, with its varied experiences, — its hopes and joys, and ready sympathies, and blessed freedom, and stainless heart, — and you have sighed at your long, far wanderings from its innocence, and have wished back its unbroken peace, and have longed to feel upon your soul the breath of your Maker's forgiveness, — then, then, too, did his spirit plead. And when memory has recalled to thy side the mother that bare thee, — her tender love, her fond caress, her patient care, her gentle virtues, her holy counsels, her prayers that God would guard her child from evil when she should sleep in death, — as those counsels and prayers have come back upon thy heart with a softening power, and thou hast knelt and prayed that they might not be all unblessed, — *then* has the ever-present God sought an entrance within thy soul.

And when you have stood at the bedside of a beloved child, and seen, with anxious heart, the shadow of disease deepening upon its fair countenance ; and in its

fevered brow, and languid eye, and quickened pulse, have had forced upon you the fearful anticipation ; and have gone in your distress to a Father's throne — long, it may have been, unvisited — for help and succor ; — and when that child was at length taken, and lay before you in marble beauty, — the vacant shrine of your fond idolatry ; and your faith, with unwonted vigor, followed it in its heavenward flight, and entered with it its home of purity, and prayed that you, too, might one day be there ; — and when, as your eyes have rested on the treasured memorials of the departed, or as, in night's solemn stillness, you have lain wakeful upon your bed, or have looked forth in the spiritual light of the o'er-watching stars, the thought has come over you of child, or parent, or brother, or sister, or dearest friend, as living in that world of light, and bending, it might be, with fondest interest, over the loved ones of its earlier home ; and you have been conscious of the hallowing influence of such thoughts, and have felt loosed from the binding sway of the senses and the world, and have had better thoughts and holier purposes stirred within you ; — and when you have felt upon your frame the hot, stern grasp of disease ; and the great work of life seemed all undone, though apparently its last sands were falling ; and conscience has stung you with sharp reproaches, and you have called upon your neglected God, and resolved in the depth of your heart, should life be spared, to live it in his service ; — and when you have felt upon your fortunes the pressure of calamity, and been made to know how vain the dependence upon earthly good, how vain the thought of resting *there* one's hope of happiness ; — in all these, and in every thing that has urged you to prayer and thoughtfulness, to meditation upon life,

and duty, and privilege, and obligation, has God called you, — has his spirit plead for a lodgement within your hearts.

And, O, how often have we grieved that spirit, and suffered to be quenched the holy spark it was fanning into a flame ! How have the voices of the living and the dead, of earth and heaven, of nature and grace, of love and of terror, been lifted up in vain ! How have we again surrendered ourselves to worldly and sensualizing influences, and kept our hearts still barred against an all-encompassing Deity, — an all-living Father !

“ How oft our guardian angel gently cried,
 ‘ Soul, from thy casement look without and see
 How he persists to knock and wait for thee !’
 And, O ! how often to that voice of sorrow,
 ‘ To-morrow we will open,’ we replied,
 And when the morrow came we answered still, ‘ To-morrow.’ ”

My friend, seasons such as I have described will return upon us. Serious thoughts, kindling aspirations, prayerful resolves ; hopes, desires, purposes, after a holier life ; — these will again be ours, — as God is merciful. I beseech you, cherish them. Let them not come to naught. Bind them to thy heart by daily meditation. Pray over them with all thy spirit's fervor. God is in them. Thy Father pleads in them. In resisting them thou dost resist his grace ; yea, thou dost war against thy soul's everlasting happiness. — God will not cease to call to thee. But closer and closer, by every neglect of his promptings, grow the folds of indifference ; and that gentle voice may not pierce them ; — farther and farther goes the soul from its rest, and long, long and toilsome, the steps by which it must return.

Now does that voice plead with thee ? “ Quench not the spirit.” Resist not its strivings. Yield thyself to thy Father’s guidance. For he *is* thy Father ; and he will surely lead thee to thy rest, — thy home.

S E R M O N V I I .

BY JAMES I. T. COOLIDGE.



THE ATTRACTION OF THE FATHER.

NO MAN CAN COME TO ME, EXCEPT THE FATHER WHICH HATH SENT ME DRAW HIM. — John vi. 44.

I DESIRE to explain and develop the significance of this passage. How are men drawn to Christ by God? What is the attractive influence exerted? I answer, in brief, it consists in the divine voice in the soul, which becomes audible in the longing after a union with God. Every man who hears the inward and attracting voice of the Father, and suffers himself to be taught by it concerning his needs, enters into union with Christ. This truth it will be my purpose to illustrate and enforce.

I remark, in the first place, that there is in every soul a divine voice. In the inmost sanctuary of the human breast, in the deep and unfathomable recesses of the soul's being, God for ever dwells and speaks. There is an inward holy of holies, of which all other temples are but the faintest types, where passion does not come, and earthly sounds are hushed, and the presence of the Father spreads the sacred peace which passeth understanding. There is the throne of the Most High, and

there the pure soul worships in silence and adores ; and there for ever the divine voice, speaking of heavenly and eternal verities, gives forth clear and beautiful utterances. It speaks of truth and duty, of love and faith, of heaven and immortality. It offers explanation of life, of its trials and griefs, of its joys and blessings, and makes indubitable the eternal destiny of the human spirit. But this voice may be silenced for a season ; and it is silenced in many hearts by the noise of this world's cares and perplexities. To most men God seems apart, dwelling in the depths of his infinity, and visiting the world of man but once or twice in a thousand generations. Or if they would seek Him, it is in the silence of nature, in the mountain visited all night by troops of stars, or in the deep, sombre wood, or in the temple which their own hands have builded, that they hope to find Him. The secret places of their own souls are unknown to them ; the shrine of God in the heart is unvisited. They have not learned to wait in silence for the utterance of God within. For what is the life of men ? Is it not an outward life simply, a life ministered to only by worldly influences ? The talk and the concern of men are gain, pleasure, worldly comfort, ease, and prosperity. What is the highest purpose of most of those with whom we meet ? — not what they believe it ought to be, but what it really *is* ? What is it they are in reality living for and towards ? In the great majority, it is for mere worldly success, as told in the amount of their income, the rich furniture that adorns their dwellings, in the materials of pleasure and ease they gather around them. Success, mere worldly success, is the engrossing care of multitudes of men. Grant this, and they imagine the highest good attained ; withhold this, they feel all

is lost, and life's great end for ever defeated. Spiritual interests are vague and shadowy. They count nothing, they weigh nothing, they go for nothing, in the estimation of the throng. They are not discerned, conceived, realized. They are driven back into a misty dream-land, where unsubstantial shadows wander, or they hover dimly in the sick man's chamber or by the dead man's bier. They come not, are not suffered to come and stand in the dusty, busy streets, where men buy and sell, and get gain, — where traffic is loud and souls are bartered, sold, and lost. And so do men live a life that is outward, sensual, superficial. What more unknown than a man's soul! what stranger place than a man's heart! How few can speak of its interests, how few will assemble for the satisfaction of those interests! How can the still, small voice of God be heard amidst the loud clamor of the world which is suffered to fill thus the whole inward being, and which makes the temple of God, which temple we are, a mere house of merchandise, or pleasure, or revelry?

But it is not so for ever. There are times in the experience of each when this voice sounds up above all others with fearful power and emphasis, and startles like the archangel's trump the slumber of the heart. Heaven grows distinct. The infinite fear of severe but just retribution falls terribly upon the mind. The soul is seen and felt to be emaciated, starving, its powers weakened, its purest hopes withered, its most generous and noble aspirations chilled into a deathly lethargy. We are conscious of the Father by our side, looking on the works which the years of our life have wrought with deep displeasure, and hear his voice sounding through the emptiness of our soul, and saying, with fearful distinctness,

“ The way of the transgressor is hard ” ; “ The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Or if such seasons are not in our experience, there are times when a crushing sense of the vanity of all life’s pursuits comes over us ; when prosperity palls, and success has lost its glow, and pleasure has ceased to charm ; when we feel a want that is not, and cannot be satisfied with the objects that now claim our industry and thought ; when the soul stirs within us and asks for its own proper food, and we feel we have it not to give ; and we seem to hear a voice awakening us to the consciousness of something more important than the wants of the body to provide for, something more than this life to provide for, and giving birth to hopes and fears not connected with the desires of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, — hopes and fears which take hold upon those very spiritual interests which we had thought so vague and shadowy, and press them upon the trembling soul as solemn, momentous, awful realities.

Or there are times when the soul is stirred, we know not how or whence. It longs to break away from its servitude, and become free. It would put on the strength of virtue, the unbending erectness of principle, the grace of charity, the purity of devotion, and the beauty of holiness. It hears the call which religion makes, and would answer it with ready obedience. It feels itself summoned to noble deeds and high enterprises, — deeds which have an imperishable worth and dignity, and enterprises which look far beyond the present for their full accomplishment. It would throw off its insincerity, its hard insensibility, its unworthy disloyalty to conscience and truth, and take up with a generous alacrity and a strong will and a pure purpose the vocation to which it is called of God.

Or there are times of solemn and silent meditation, as we walk abroad with nature's pure scenes around us ; as the sun sinks with flaming clouds attended, or as the night falls, and the stars come out, one by one, in the silent vault that bends over us ; or alone in the busy streets ; or in the long night-watch by the side of the dying ; or in the silent hour, come when it may, there are times when meditation brings holy visions, and the earth's walls are broken down, and the freed soul soars upward into the illimitable space, and feels, through every living sensibility, its own immortality, its supremacy over time and sense, its life when the outward man, the mortal body, shall be dust and ashes in the grave. Then does the divine voice within woo and win us to penitence, to holiness, and peace, as it softly whispers, — " My son, give me thine heart."

In these and all similar seasons the divine voice becomes audible, and stirs the strong yearning of the soul for a perfect union with God, — to be one with Him in plan and purpose, in every thought and in every pursuit. The soul is convinced that in reconciliation with God alone is there peace, joy, rest, satisfaction ; that until it attain to this, it must be miserable, and poor, and wretched. And in this conviction, this consciousness, we feel that drawing of the Father of which Christ spoke in our text, this longing after union with God, this desire to be evermore at one with Him, to be conscious of the protecting presence of the Most High, of his everlasting arms around and beneath us, of his bosom open to be our refuge and rest ; this earnest looking of the soul towards God is the strong attraction of the Father. Yet it is not an irresistible power. It is no compulsory influence. It may be withstood, opposed,

and rejected. The solemn season may pass, and the Holy Spirit may be grieved away. The heart swayed and lifted by the sacred movement may sink back into its former heavy lethargy again. The pure emotions, the generous and devout aspirations, that raised the soul so near its freedom and true glory, may perish, one by one, and let the soul down again to its poverty and servitude, — and the divine voice be hushed into silence once more.

But if we would cherish and realize the salvation such moments promise, whither shall we turn for guidance, for strength and hope? We are seeking with strong desire a deep and full sense of oneness with God, of reconciliation with the power above us. But how shall we come to the Father, we who have been and still are in the rocky wilderness of sin? Who or what shall assure us of the inextinguishable tenderness of the Father towards the disobedient and prodigal? Who or what shall open the way, give us strength to walk therein, and lead us as with a divine hand to the paternal home? Nature speaks of the Father only in broken language. "It tells us of his infinitude by those heavens, where whole forests of worlds silently quiver here and there, like a small leaf of light. The ocean-waves of Time, that roll and solemnly break on the imagination as we trace the wrecks of departed things upon our present globe, declare his eternity. The tranquil order and everlasting silence that reign through the fields of his volition reveal the scope of his intellect and the majesty of his rule." But nowhere clearly seen and indisputably can we find what most concerns us, and what we most desire to know, — the assurance of his pardoning love. The theories of human speculation,

likewise, the wisdom of mortal learning, the searchings of philosophers and their stammering teaching, agitate, but cannot soothe and relieve, the burdened spirit. Our own minds also, clouded these many years, so often mistaking shadow for substance, falsehood for truth, so often calling evil good and good evil, we dare not trust. Whither, then, shall we turn? To whom shall the soul seeking union with its Father go for guidance, for knowledge, for hope? There is but one, even he whom the Father hath sanctified and sent to be the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, the friend and redeemer of man and God's own chosen Son. He alone can speak with the confidence the soul craves, for he dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and spake only as the Father gave him utterance. He alone can reveal the Father, for in him the fulness of the Deity dwelt manifestly. He only can give rest to the weary and heavy-laden spirit of man, for he alone can call forth a mighty power in the human breast, kindle in us a celestial flame, breathe into us an extinguishable hope, lay within us the foundation of an immovable peace, and lift us to God. This is his mission, the sacred purpose of his life. This is the meaning of that mercy which sent Jesus to be "God with us." He offers to bring us to the Father by showing us the Father, who veiled his glories and appeared in the life of his Son. "Whosoever hath seen me hath seen the Father," — a being all love, and mercy, and compassion, grieved at the sinfulness of man, and warning, urging, inviting him to cast it off, and rise to penitence, peace, and heaven. He not only commands us to love God with all our heart and soul, but shows us in himself how worthy of our deepest and most sacred affection our God is. He not only commands us to follow after

righteousness, but shows in himself the beauty of holiness. He not only commands us to be at one with God, reconciled unto Him, but shows in himself the way, and the peace ineffable with which that consciousness fills the soul in the darkest hour of human experience.

My friends, do we long for inward peace? Do we thirst for the living God? Is there a crying out of the heart for the Father's favor and love? Then come to Christ. I do not use this phrase as mere cant. It may be often so used, indeed, but there is a meaning in it which the moved soul perceives, and in which it finds relief. Come to Christ; not to his words alone, not to his teachings simply, not to his system; but to himself, to *him*, as he lives and moves in the Gospels, as he lived and walked in Judea, in power, in tenderness, in undying affection, — as he rises before the eye of your most sacred imagining. Come to Christ in no formal manner, not as to a teacher only, or a cold embodiment of wonderful and unapproachable excellence and perfection; but come as to a personal friend, whose voice is music to your ear, whose quick sympathy falls sweetly upon your often-wearied heart, and whose love is ever open for your repose and refreshment. Come to Christ; sit at his feet, look up into his countenance, as he speaks of the Father's bounty and mercy, as he dries the widow's tears, heals the crippled frame, or shelters the repenting sinner from the rebukes and scorn of the Pharisee; drink in as fast as you realize it, drink in his pure spirit; look upon him, till you are changed into his likeness by the very spirit of the Lord. Come to Christ as to a real living being, and he will lead you to the Father; as he says, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Read of him in the Gospel; meditate upon him till his

image be stamped upon your memories ; stand by him in all life's emergencies ; come to the table of his remembrance where most distinctly he stands before the eye of our contemplation ; and you shall feel his last prayer accomplishing itself in you, — “ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

I have spoken only to those who feel this attractive voice of the Father, and through it speaking in their hearts earnestly desire union and reconciliation with their God. Such only is it that Christ says can come to him. We need not marvel, then, that so few have chosen him as their way, truth, and life, since few feel and cherish this drawing of the Father. How can one be saved till he seeks salvation ? How can one come to a being of purity and love, whose heart is satisfied with the world, and has no sympathy with heavenly and eternal realities ? To such Christ is as if he were not, God but a distant image, heaven but a dream, and eternity a fiction. May the Lord have mercy upon such, and by his holy spirit excite within them a thirst for the living waters which flow for ever from the full heart of Jesus Christ !

SERMON VIII.

BY GEORGE W. BRIGGS.



FAITH THE CHILD OF LIFE.

LORD, I BELIEVE; HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF. — Mark ix. 24.

IT is not infrequent to meet a spiritual condition which laments, and sometimes trembles, on account of the weakness of its faith in what men generally term important, possibly in what they deem vital, spiritual truths. It is not a settled disbelief to which I refer. It is a condition far less sad. Yet, in one respect, perhaps, it may be a deeper trial to the heart. For I suppose that a *fixed* disbelief must bring a comparative quiet to the soul, however sad it may be to contemplate it. Man then sits down, freed from the tortures of doubt, in the desolate home he has made for himself. I refer to a state which cannot yet find any unquestioned opinions wherein it can rest as its home. It harbours no wish to disbelieve. Nay, it may shun the desolation of actual unbelief, with deep revoltings of heart, with shudderings of the soul. But a multitude of questionings continually intrude themselves, to disturb and unsettle what seem most like clear and bright convictions. There is a longing for a certainty not yet found. The heart longs for an abiding faith in the

Father, for instance, like the steady light of day. Yet only at intervals does that faith come with perfect clearness, in occasional flashes, making the frequent uncertainty seem doubly dark. The soul longs for that unquestioning, childlike faith in prayer, which can ask without one wavering thought. But the speculations of a maturer mind, that has outgrown infant ignorance, but has not ascended to an angelic trust, check its supplications. They go into the closet where it seeks to commune with God, until that becomes a place of distracting thought, and not of confiding prayer. And how are the buddings of more fervent feeling often sadly blasted by these chilling doubts ! The heart cannot repose in the convictions wherein many trust, and yet it cannot rest while those convictions are absent. It cannot go where it would, and it cannot stay where it is. It cannot find a home, and yet it is only tormented by its wanderings. When the father was asked concerning his faith, in the passage whence the text is taken, he could not answer Jesus with an unhesitating, whole-hearted declaration of confidence. He could only say, in doubtfulness of spirit, and with gushing tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." It is precisely thus with many hearts. It is not belief, neither is it unbelief, in which they live. Rather is it a strange mixture of the two, which they must acknowledge whenever their spiritual state is perfectly disclosed. They affirm and they doubt. They accept and they question. And in many hours, could they hope for a blessed relief, we doubt not that such hearts would cry out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Two questions are always suggested by all such con-

fessions. First, how can our weak and often wavering faith be changed into those clear convictions which we desire? And, next, the question which naturally grows out of the discussion of this first inquiry, — What is that faith which is made so indispensable in the teachings of the Scripture?

“Help thou mine unbelief.” I suppose it may be affirmed, as a general principle, that there is no certain cure for any questionings disturbing our faith, except in a growth of our whole being. The difficulties, the doubts, whatever they may be, are incidental to the present spiritual condition. They belong to that stage of progress in which we are standing. We cannot escape what belongs to this condition, while we remain within it. The soul can never escape childish weakness while it remains a child. We must gain some new power to overcome the difficulties which our present strength cannot successfully meet. We must attain a higher point of view, to see beyond the limits that now bound our prospect. Strive as we may, we cannot lift ourselves above ourselves. In his vain endeavours to remove the doubts attending his present stage of progress, man often seems like one who is lingering in the depths of a valley, but is striving, nevertheless, to look beyond the hill directly before his face. When we ascend some more commanding height, this once towering difficulty will be beneath our feet. The path of inward peace and of true philosophy is to leave the doubts which we cannot at present solve, in absolute devotion to the truth which is clear. Let the whole mind and heart be filled with the light beaming from that, when sought with a single eye, and the soul can see through whatever may have previously been an impenetrable cloud.

Does speculation ever intrude, for instance, where no speculations should enter, — does it intrude into the place of prayer, asking *how* God can answer, till devotion is banished by perplexing reasonings concerning natural laws, and an unchangeable Providence? No speculation can remove the difficulties which it has itself created. Hear the instinct, teaching men to pray, which breaks out in supplications through all human lips when no human help can save, or fills the soul with feelings too profound for speech. See the great doctrine there distinctly revealed, by the handwriting of God, in the deep places of the spirit. And then once learn the need of new supplies of grace to make these feeble hearts victorious over the temptations in their way, — open your eyes to these continual exigencies from which no human strength can deliver, — and the hourly dependence will make you stand in the attitude of perpetual supplication. Or, else, look up to the love of God, — forgetting for the time your fancies about his laws, — until the great idea of that love irradiate your soul. Draw nigh to that until it draw nigh to you. Meditate, until the fountains of feeling are unsealed, and they overflow in tears. Muse, till the fire burns. And at length, by the resistless power of an inward impulse, your souls shall be poured out in aspiration and in prayer, in a trust more unquestioning and absolute than filial love ever knew in any homes of earth. Speculate when you have fathomed the depths of human dependence, for then you will have learned the deep foundations of this instinct to pray in the human soul; or when you have realized the infinity of God's love, and are smitten to the heart by convictions of his readiness to aid. Speculate *then*, if you may

then desire so to do. The materials for the argument will be in your hands, and the power to use them rightly will then be gained. But cease, cease your speculations now.

Do any say, "Help thou mine unbelief"? We *outgrow* unbeliefs. There is our help. Thus has experience taught every heart, which has been conscious of any real mental or moral change. We find ourselves looking differently at many things after a lapse of years. Childish difficulties have gone. Greater difficulties, possibly, may have come. Yet that does not affect the principle. Some have gone. We know not always how they went. They were not directly removed by any process of argument. Still, they have gone. The Spirit blew as it listed, in a new breath of life. Every thing which gave strength to the mind, or tenderness to the heart, brought its aid. All experience, all life, have imparted new wisdom and energy to the soul. The dews of grace in a thousand evenings thus came silently down, and the light of a thousand mornings noiselessly entered the breast, in these all-encompassing influences of the providence of God. And the result is, that, in this general growth of our being, the childish difficulty is no more here. That once appalling cloud has gradually, and almost insensibly, melted into light. We know not whence the Spirit cometh, or whither it goeth. We cannot track its way. But we have heard the sound thereof in this experience of its power.

We outgrow unbeliefs and doubts and fears by clinging to what we do believe, and thus ascending to a nobler life. No other deliverance can be. There are numberless illustrations of this principle, numberless as

human weaknesses and human fears. Does the shadow of death fall heavily upon your heart? You cannot argue down that shuddering. The spectre now alarming you will not look less frightful, while you continue to gaze upon it with a trembling soul. Enter into life, bright, earnest, glorious life, — the life of immortal love, of glorious trust, of godlike affections which are not born to die, — and lo! the grave receives a transfiguration in your eyes. And the messenger that calls us to the Father's arms is the Angel of Love, and not the King of Terrors. The truly living and believing soul sees across the valley of the shadow of death, and begins to learn the meaning of that sublime word of Jesus, — "Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." This frequent impatience with ourselves, or with the world, because a troubling doubt of some great truth cannot be directly overcome, or a bright view, which earnest souls may have uttered, cannot be at once accepted, is a miserable short-sightedness. This is sad, doubtless. But impatience will not help it. Can you command yourself into that better faith? Can you storm the world into a higher thought, or a purer love? These things cannot be forced upon the soul. They grow out of it. The heart will never give angelic feelings a home until it become endued with an angelic nature. The kingdom of God cometh not with storms. It is the peaceful unfolding of ever-new and ever-purer thoughts within you. Men say that the Christian spirit, in its highest form, can never seize the weapons of war. Certainly, were men like Jesus, they could die, but could never fight. Meek suffering of injury is the sword of victory in the Redeemer's kingdom. Never let the direct pleading for this vital Chris-

tian doctrine cease to be heard from Christian men. And yet there is an immeasurably greater work to be done, to establish this reign of peace, than simply to repeat this truth, even in most fervent words, in the ear of the world. The entire heart of Christendom is to be more deeply Christianized, by every thing which has power to exalt or ennoble it. If you will gain this particular end, you must not forget that more comprehensive aim. Then shall the world's unbelief be banished in respect to this great truth of the Saviour's teaching. War shall be outgrown, as other wide-spreading crimes have been outgrown before. The true comprehension of the Redeemer's love shall equally take away the causes of provocation and the spirit of violent resistance; and the prophesied peace shall come over the world, like the dawning of the morning. All these special unbeliefs can only be removed by the incoming of a nobler life.

Here is a consideration most needful to be uttered at the present hour. The time is more distinguished, perhaps, for activity of speculation, than for lowly communion with God in the silent retreats of prayer. We have been calling up new difficulties in ceaseless thought, while we have not so constantly been gaining a diviner life to meet these myriad questionings. The agitations of doubt concerning the holiest things have sadly shaken many souls. There will be no deliverance till these speculations are partially stilled, and the heart waketh. These demons of doubt can only be driven out by prayer and fasting. The secret closets of meditation, so long deserted in the general tendency of the time, must be opened again, to be trodden by reverent feet. The mind wakes, while the heart sleeps, and we are

like the disciples in the ship when Jesus slumbered, with threatening waves and pelting winds beating upon our fearful souls. Nothing, save the waking of the spirit of the Master, can make the tumult still, and bring us to the firm land whither we would go. The holy flame of love in the heart shall illuminate the understanding. Would I know Jesus aright? I am content to pause in my speculations, till I can put my hand, as into the print of the nails and the spear, in some overwhelming convictions of his love. And I will accept what the heart says, when it cries out in its fervor, "My Lord and my God!" as a better faith than my argument alone can fashion. Do I desire to know God? I remember that glorious word, "The pure in heart shall see Him." The answer to many of my inquiries concerning his purposes and ways will be found in the lowliness, and yet in the exaltation, of a deeper devotion. I must rise above the mists that blind me, on the strong wing of prayer. It is the Comforter that leadeth into all truth.

The growth of our whole inward being, we say, delivers us from these unbeliefs. And here we are led to the second question which we proposed. Here we perceive the nature of that faith which Jesus declared to be so essential, — the light of life, — the assurance of salvation. It was not the acceptance of any precise and particular conclusions. It was rather the intense devotion of the soul to truths already seen. It was the believing spirit, the divine essence of all faith, which communed with all it saw of the Master, knowing that more of his spirit would bring more of glorious truth. There is a distinction between the spirit of unbelief, and any questioning of particular conclusions. Some

need to remember it for their solace, and all for their instruction. We say to any who may be troubled because they cannot accept the conclusions of religious minds in all respects : — Be not troubled simply on that account. The real cause of disquiet, if any there be, lies deeper far. Be not troubled at all for this result, if the living, glowing spirit of faith dwell in you in respect to the truths you do accept. Leave these questionings, as difficulties you cannot overcome while in the state which has given them birth, and follow the Lord in his unquestioned and unquestionable commandments. If your doubts be errors, that is the path to a better light. “ He that followeth me,” saith Jesus, “ shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Do not fear simply because you cannot accept a doctrine which others may deem most precious. Only fear, when the spirit of faith shall fail. Fear not the difficulty which may only exist in the mind. Fear that which convicts of want of life in the heart. “ He that speaks a word against the Son of Man,” in his mistaken or misguided thought, “ may be forgiven.” But he that “ speaketh against the Holy Ghost,” he that doth not hear and obey the ceaseless pleadings of the Holy Spirit in his heart, stands in the fearful peril. For the spirit of unbelief, which denies the authority of these calls of duty and truth, that are clear as the daily light, or which only accepts them in an assent that goes no deeper than the lips, can claim no present consolation. There may be hope for it still, in the infinitude of the heavenly mercy ; but the fitting present call must be the sharp, reproving exhortation to immediate and radical repentance.

The distinction which we have made, the sincerely

earnest, but sometimes doubting, minds may safely take as their solace. But all men need to remember it, in their judgment of themselves and others. It shows who is, and who is not, the real unbeliever, in the deepest sense of that word. I sometimes find the spirit of faith in those who deny conclusions which to me are vital truth. I see there a Christ-like fidelity to truth, which consecrates every feeling and every faculty as a living sacrifice upon its altar. And I sometimes see the real spirit of unbelief in those who never question customary opinions; who are shocked at the doubts of other men; but who have never inwardly known the power of the truths they echo with their lips. The vital unbelief, that which is fatal to the soul, may frequently nestle closely to the altar, deeming itself, in its terrible mistake, truly believing. Where must it go when the Lord comes to see who is really robed in a wedding garment? Doubtless there is a vast importance attaching to our views of religious truth. There may be perilous heresies in respect to them. Still, we never forget the simple distinction we have presented. We must never forget that the only damning unbelief is that which leaves the heart impure.

There is a spiritual condition, then, to which it may be proper to say, — Be content amid the difficulties and doubts often sadly trying you; as we say to the child, — Be patient amid the want of apprehension pertaining to childish years. The light of God's countenance shall gradually beam out upon your advancing heart. Yet I cannot think there will be any real difficulty in overcoming these perplexing questionings, if the spirit of faith be living in us. However high or however

low we may be standing in the scale of spiritual knowledge, the counsel is always the same. Surrender the heart to the truth already seen, and you shall see the more. Let a man begin with the bare idea of right, of duty, as declared in any whisper of his conscience, — with that first, that eternal fact, from which none can escape. With new clearness, with a more commanding majesty, as he meditates, it will declare its commands in the manifold details of life, until it shall seem to unfold the great law of God in the height and the depth of its application. Wrapped in the truths which conscience must enforce, when thus obeyed, are the eternal commands of Heaven's law ; its calls to justice and love ; its dread remonstrances against the sins of life and heart ; the revelations of a tribunal of judgment, with its righteous sentences of blessing or of doom. In this single fact of our nature the finger of God inscribed a law within the soul, which shall appear in letters of light, as we gaze upon it, to guide us in our pathway, or glow into a consuming fire, as the visitation of disobedience. Man need not be left to grope darkly on through his appointed pilgrimage. The seeds of noblest truths are thickly scattered round him, which may become trees of life through a patient and faithful husbandry. Do you complain of a want of clearness in your convictions ? Are there any questionings concerning Jesus and his teachings that ever disturb ? Go to what you see. Go to that sacred cross. No cloud obscures the revelations there. Read the bright teaching given there of God's infinite benignity in that unexhausted compassion, dropping tears of pity upon murderous hands, — in that love gladly dying to save. Read the great commandment to fidelity, which is writ-

ten there, in that calm steadfastness of soul, when mockings, and revilings, and the hour of crucifying came. Read that lesson of a divine philanthropy, which suffered, not for friends, but for foes ; which went up willingly to the sacrifice, finding joy in its pains, because it must become the ministry of blessing to otherwise ruined souls. Do you seek spiritual light ? The love of God breaks forth there, as in visible manifestations, to still all human anxieties and foolish fears. The streams of spiritual light and life flow down thence into all earnestly gazing and admiring hearts, freely as the blood of the sacrifice was poured out for the sinning world. And in your kindling love you will find the incoming of a glorious faith, which shall teach you to sing the song of praise to the Lamb, which the Church Triumphant sings ; the song of blessing to him who taketh away the sins of men. Light shall come, if the spirit of faith be in you which does the commandments, and thus learns of the doctrine. Man must be always embosomed in a world of spiritual light. The Father must be waiting to be gracious, as the morning light waits upon his still slumbering eyes, ready to bless him whenever he will receive the blessing. Lift up thine eyes and see ; and thy whole heart, like thy whole body, shall be full of light.

SERMON IX.

BY ABIEL A. LIVERMORE.

THE ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

THEN SIMON PETER ANSWERED HIM, LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. — John vi. 68.

THE character of Simon Peter exhibits the excellences and the defects of an impulsive nature. Quick to feel and bold to express the true and the noble, but irresolute in their maintenance in the moment of pressing danger, he shows us how fascinating, but how perilous, is the gift of so generous, but so wavering, a mind. In the words of the text, he darts up in a flame of grand sentiment, of indignant remonstrance, as if it were possible for them to resort elsewhere for such a life of wisdom and love as Jesus was daily pouring into their souls. And the fact, that he afterwards swerved and fell from this spiritual loyalty to Christ, can of course vitiate in no degree what he said in his best moments. Truth is truth, though we cannot always be as faithful to it in the wear and tear of daily struggle, as we are earnest in its expression in the rapt hour of meditation or social intercourse. Wisdom is justified of her children, notwithstanding their inconsistencies. We gladly accept

the words of nobleness from him who, at other and darker times, denied his Master, or dissembled the principles of his unlimited Gospel in compliance with Jewish prejudices. The errors of the Apostles cannot dim the glory of truth, nor falsify the religion of Christ. Its spirit and power, incarnated in him who was without sin, were also reflected through them and from them who were his companions from the beginning, and whose testimony stands, and will stand for ever, despite the incredulity of Thomas, the faltering of Peter, and the betrayal of Judas.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” All sentences of wisdom are valuable, not merely for what they declare, but also for what they suggest; — for the state of mind in which they grew up in their author, and which underlies his positive and uttered thought, and for the kindred state of mind which they originate in the reader, beyond the definite reproduction of the same ideas. This is eminently true of the teachings of the Scriptures in general, and of those of Jesus in particular. They are instinct with whole clusters of thought and emotion not directly stated. They touch by analogies and associations great circles of sentiment. They are generalizations of truth, that often condense in one strong line whole lifetimes of experience, whole immortalities of aspiration. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” takes us out of time into the widest possibilities of eternity. “He that loveth is born of God,” begins with us in our homes of affection, and leads us forth to universal philanthropy, and to the everlasting, widening, deepening growth of the spirit in its true life with God and its fellow-beings, when time is no more, and earth is a forgotten dream of our childhood.

Thus the state of mind from which the Apostle spoke, and which his words naturally suggest to us, was the confidence and interest felt in great principles, when they are proclaimed by one whom we love. The union of the absolute and the relative, the universal and the individual in Christ, commanded the enthusiasm of Simon Peter. The Master was tenderly and devotedly loved, and the disciple was thereby led to listen attentively to whatever he might say ; — how much more when he announced the greatest truths, the very words of everlasting life ! “ To *whom* shall we go ? ” — to what person, to what friend or teacher ? — for to some one we must resort by the necessity of our nature ; we cannot stand alone, we cannot rest on abstract truth merely, we cannot adhere to universal principles simply, unembodied, un-lived, unrealized ; we cling to persons, we are trained in the concrete, we follow examples ; and Jesus was the personal friend, the winning Master, combining awe and tenderness, majesty and affectionateness. When, therefore, he added to these qualifications of the private person the high, broad, and eternal teachings of infinite truth, he met the whole want of his disciples and of humanity.

The idea now stated is so obvious that it is often overlooked, or so remote that it is not discovered. But it is verified in all intellectual and moral progress. The attributes of the Deity himself, mighty as they are, show themselves to us not in their abstract might and universality, but they condescend to human apprehension in the works that are made and visible. Infinity stoops to us through the finite ; the ideal through the real ; the everlasting through the temporary. The uses of sky and star, of earth and ocean, are not half recognized, until

we discern their relation, not only to the dwelling-place, feeding, and clothing of man the mortal, but the culture of man the immortal, the development of his spirit in every direction, of taste and imagination, love and truth, power and happiness. Through this growth he becomes a living, sensitive, throbbing soul, a harp fully strung and vibrating to the touch of God in nature, and giving back in faithful responses the eternal melody of the universe.

We are at school in this life, and we are poor and graceless scholars if we are not learning something new every day, of fact or principle, of truth or duty. The whole frame of the outward creation turns on the pivot of man's improvement. And the graceful vicissitude, the perpetual fluctuation of all objects, colors, sounds, and scenes; the earth, that has the warmth as of a mother's breast; the living air, that whispers and sings of a presence of love and power round about us; the fine spiritual blue that bends over us, with its sparkling eyes of watchfulness, and seems to shelter without confining us; — what are they all, but God descending from his absolute glory to clothe himself in garments by which we may see and love him, — the eternal fused in the transient, the perfect merged in the finite?

We little appreciate, too, how much we are indebted for our relative knowledge of God in his works to the still more individual expression of that knowledge by other minds. Nature and Providence, suggestive as they are of the Mighty Spirit that works behind them, are yet too high up in the region of the universal to convey their powerful meaning, until they have been brought down and interpreted by the poet, philosopher, and moralist. So palpably is this the case, that with all our present

bursting treasuries of thought and sentiment, with all the bards to sing, and all the teachers to explain, and all the orators to impel us, multitudes in civilized and Christian lands are not enlightened or moved, while the wretched inhabitants on many a golden shore of paradise, the creation all vocal with melody and love, grovel in stupidity and lust. We need, therefore, not only all the works of the Creator, but also the long-accumulated commentaries on those works by the wise and good geniuses who are sent on such errands of mercy to their less gifted, but not unteachable, fellow-beings. So has God come very near to us, and articulated to our ears the significations of the earth, sun, and seasons, as they have been read into sense and music by the long succession of the large and loving spirits who have gone before us. They have deciphered Nature, and justified Providence. They have brought home to each man's heart and hearth some portion of that universal and absolute truth, which, first dwelling on high in infinite perfection, has been shadowed forth in all the wonders and glories of this breathing universe, and which has finally been dealt out, as men have severally needed and sought it, to the endless varieties of condition and character. To accomplish this beneficent mission, these chosen light-bearers of the world have first been most richly endowed with the capacities of comprehending the primal truths, the ideas and types of all things, and then most generously gifted with enkindling imaginations, great humanity, and intelligent sympathies, to dispense to others their own priceless wisdom. Such have been the mighty sages of our race; and into their rich inheritance of thought we are all born, as much as we are into the realm of Nature or the school of Providence. The

glorious truths they have taught have filtered through all portions of society, and reached the poorest in their hovel, and the most ignorant in their darkness. Every man is better off in living, doing, and suffering, because these sons of light have preceded him on the way-march of life, and left behind their footsteps of guidance to the better country. Thus has God become visible and intelligible in the world he has made, and in the spirits he has animated ; and the Infinite is incarnated in the finite.

But in Jesus Christ there is a yet more perfect union of the universal truth with its relative adaptations to the wants of mankind. Whilst he was absolutely true in the direction of God, he was accessible and attractive in the direction of man. And this marvellous fitness is implied in the words of Peter. He instinctively expressed what divines have since laboriously thought out by painful meditation. For while he saw in Jesus the loving friend, he beheld in him also the revealer of the ultimate truths of spiritual being. And with such a combination he might well despair, if he turned elsewhere, of finding what in our blessed Lord was at once so high and so lowly, so divine and so human, so spotlessly pure and so winningly lovely.

Hence it is, likewise, that when Jesus speaks of himself and his work in the world, we are never conscious of any offence or uneasiness, as if any grain of self, or vainglory, or personal exaggeration, mingled in the heavenly discourse. We know that *I* does not stand for self-esteem, nor *me* and *mine* as terms of narrow and jealous possession. He sought, we feel in every word and deed, not his own glory, but the glory of God, and the good of every human being. What would other-

wise have been ambition was in him steadfast adherence to duty ; and what would have been pride was self-respect to himself, and a dignified appeal to conscience in others.

Hence it is, too, that he is always most practical even when most abstract. His annunciation of the great spiritual laws of the universe is in no mere cold and speculative tone. They are instantly felt to bear on the life of men. His truths are motives, and his principles means. He depicted no ideal commonwealth, but he set in motion those efficient causes which would work out true liberty and peace for every nation on earth. It is this bringing down of the fire of heaven to warm the firesides of men, this speaking of the words of eternal life, of the purest forms of spiritual thought, in familiar, practical, but dignified authority, in illustrations and parables which men could understand, but never exhaust, which make us feel now, what others felt and said then, that never man spake like this man.

Even in elucidating and impressing what Jesus has taught, we often feel how soon we run into the speculative and the visionary, and busy ourselves about the distant and the abstruse, without either rising to the greatness of simple principles, or reaching directly and effectually the hearts and consciences of men. But no fact more shows the height and grasp of the intellect of this divine being, and his intimate admission into the counsels of the Father of spirits, than the joint sublimity and lowliness, the infiniteness and the practical character, of the New Testament. Little children draw from it the familiar lessons of duty, while the Miltons and Newtons have found it too deep to be sounded by mortal line.

In all his precepts we witness how truly in accordance with our nature, how philosophically, in fact, our Lord addressed mankind. He did not impose truth on the mind so much as call it forth from the mind. In inculcating the largest sentiments, he commenced from humble beginnings. From the domestic affections he deduced the germs of all religion heavenward, and all morality earthward, denominating God our Father, and man our brother. He took man in his natural position, with all his human and individual feelings about him, and from that, by the aid of those very feelings, he led him on and up to the absolute truth and the eternal heaven.

We know, therefore, not by the rules of the schools or the maxims of logicians and rhetoricians, though they are all good so far as founded in nature, and so far are all followed by Jesus, but by the inward satisfaction of the heart, that this is the bread of-life. It nourishes us, and we grow strong. It feeds the spiritual appetite and sustains the divine life. Much reading cannot take the charm out of these precious verses ; and much practice only endears them the more, while it enshrines them more deeply within. As existence deepens into life, and life into love, we see continually more and more how every want and aspiration of man has been met by Christianity.

We need not undervalue the pleasures of life to enhance the glories of faith. The body has its uses and its enjoyments not to be despised. The senses have been created by the same skill that endowed the mind. We gain nothing in the end by exaggeration. Man was made to be happy here. If he know not the art, or will not use it here, what right has he to expect the boon hereafter. So, too, it is idle to slight the power of

intellect, the glory of genius, the might of will, the wealth of fancy, and all the miracles and beauties of literature and art. They have their place, and it is a glorious one. They have their mission to the individual and to society, and it is a most beneficent one.

But when all this is justly conceded, it need not be said, were not the mistake daily made, that another and higher part of our nature goes uncared for and unsatisfied. For though we feed the palate with Oriental luxuries, and animate the intellect with the enkindling themes of genius, and stir the blood with the mighty passions of literature and life, there is still a cry coming up from a neglected but royal domain of the mind, that is not, and from its inborn nature never can be, appeased, except by its own peculiar aliment. The conscience cannot be put off with delicious viands or beds of down. The moral sentiments cannot feed on fancies, though they may be bright as the stars, or on imaginations, though they are kindling as the sun. The spiritual aspirations cannot find nutriment in learning, however copious ; wit, however keen ; poetry, however beautiful ; or eloquence, however impassioned. They ask for their own supplies, and all the riches of the universe are poor beside.

And when, by hard-wrung experience, the decay of many a brilliant structure of youth, the bursting of many a gorgeous bubble of hope on the morning stream, we at last learn who and what we are, — when the solemn and everlasting reality breaks in upon the inward consciousness, that we are more than bodies to exist, and more than minds to think ; that we are, higher and better, souls to live, — great is the crisis. It is the moment when the command is given, “ Let there be light,” and there is light. But in the pause between chaos and cre-

ation, the awakened soul cries out with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Thou canst speak our tempest into calm, our confusion into order, our death into life, our darkness into light, and our coldness into love.

I am not now saying that mankind must precisely either in this or that way satisfy the hunger and thirst of an immortal nature, but the want must be met somehow. Whole Edens of delight cannot fill it, whole kingdoms of wealth cannot appease it; all the fame and bravery and circumstance of genius, and the trophies of science, and the splendors of poetry, and the researches of learning, cannot minister to this heartfelt want, and satisfy it. In one age it may be filled in one way, and in another age in another way; for even the Gentiles and heathen, not having a law, are a law unto themselves; but the perfected and satisfying regimen of the immortal nature is described in the words of the Apostle. The poor man who receives it may not eat from a richer board, but he will nourish himself upon food that gives, indeed, no fleeting strength to these wasting muscles of flesh, but power to the eternal faculties of reason, conscience, aspiration, and love. He may be no wiser in history, nor more conversant with art and literature, but he will, through his Redeemer, have ascended to that primal source of beauty and truth and sentiment, from which all the boasted wealth of galleries and libraries, of Parthenons and Vaticans, is but a broken reflection, a dim, discolored ray, compared with that mighty primal sun whence they have all proceeded, and whither they all return. Through Jesus he rises to God, and spirit answers to spirit, and being unites with being.

With so much depending, with our higher life at

stake, we cannot lightly pass by any means to further this all-essential end. We must not slight any filament of attraction that leads us on and up, and attaches us to the sun and centre of all good, and yields the fruition of our purest yearnings and spiritual desires.

And in the means provided in the Church of Christ, in the simple emblems of faith and the ritual of devotion, we enter into wide and ennobling communion, not only with him who is our exalted Head, but into fellowship of soul with good men, living and dead, of all times and all nations and all beliefs. The hoary bond of centuries is upon us ; the ties of ages link us to virtue and heaven.

One may say, "I am not affected ; it profits me not ; it has not to me the quickening of life and the inspiration of holiness." But it is very marvellous if it have not a divine efficacy ; if it stir not unwonted emotions, and pervade not the mind with a breath and odor from another sphere than the careful and troubled earth. It must be a peculiar organization that can pass unmoved and unimproved through scenes of the ancient and the divine, — a crucified Saviour, an ascending Redeemer, an opening heaven. And precisely herein, as we have sought to show in this whole discourse, is the consummation and perfect excellence of the Christian revelation, that its Author and Finisher did not neglect the practical and familiar while he provided for the universal and eternal. Wiser than many of his followers have been, he did not discard the power of association and symbol, the appeal to sense and sight, the embodiment of the infinite in the finite. Because heaven is gloriously spiritual, he did not therefore despise the humble rounds of the ladder by which mortals are to climb on high. He

did not rest all on abstract principles, however potent. He paid deference to the visible and customary. He recognized the force of the outward. He associated even with an ordinary event illustrious meanings. He bound his disciples by no awful oath, but by gentle sympathies, and endeared memories, and glorified hopes. He teaches us the simplicity and naturalness of his religion by no marvellous and unusual rites, no fearful ceremonies, but by the ordinary language of human friendship, and by the participation of food. He has thus met the wants of the intellect, the senses, the heart, the whole Christian man. Here is no doubt, no dread. All is affectionate and significant. Blessed memories wait on the occasion, glorious hopes illumine the future. A beloved and suffering Master, fond but wavering disciples, the long line of the saintly dead, the populous heaven of the just made perfect, the reunion of the lost, the final gathering, and the blessed abode, where the dim hopes of this world are swallowed up in the unclouded brightness of eternal realities, — all these gather around, as holy angels of the New Covenant, to hallow the Lord's Supper to a Christian imagination, and endear it to a Christian heart.

SERMON X.

BY JASON WHITMAN.



THE GOSPEL SUITED TO HUMAN WEAKNESS.

A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK, AND SMOKING FLAX SHALL HE NOT QUENCH, TILL HE SEND FORTH JUDGMENT UNTO VICTORY. — Matthew xii. 20.

HAVE you never, my friends, looked upon the reed, or the slender rush, as, in its most vigorous and flourishing condition, it waves with the slightest breath of air, and seems a fit emblem of ever-yielding weakness? Have you not regarded it as a vegetable production, which, for want of strength of fibre and firmness of texture, may be carelessly thrown aside as utterly useless? Nay, further, have you not seen this frail and apparently useless thing beaten and bruised, and have you not felt that now, at least, it is utterly worthless, and that any thought of converting it to a useful purpose is vain and hopeless, — that it may as well be at once broken in sunder and left to be the sport of the winds? But to apply the lesson. Have you not, at times, looked upon a fellow-man who has become the sport of temptation and the slave of sin? Have you not seen him forming good resolutions and then forgetting them, wishing and praying to be delivered from the power of sin, and

straightway yielding to its allurements and falling a victim to sinful indulgences? And when you have thought of his ever-yielding weakness, of his being borne about by every breath of outward influence, and carried away by the slightest temptation, have you not felt that there was so little of moral firmness in his nature that there was no firm ground of hope, no real encouragement to exertion, for his rescue? And when you have seen him bowed down under a sense of his own sinfulness, truly penitent and contrite, have you not felt that still there was no hope, no just ground of confidence, so utterly destitute has he appeared of all moral strength? Have you not expected that the pure and spotless Jesus, — so distinguished for his own devotion to duty, for his strength of moral principle, for his firmness of moral purpose, for his unconquerable resolution in withstanding temptation and avoiding sin, and so well able to penetrate the inmost recesses of the very soul of man, — have you not expected, nay, almost believed, that the pure and spotless Jesus would pass him by in neglect, would leave him to himself, to be not merely bruised, but broken and destroyed? Such might, perhaps, have been the feelings of man, and such his treatment towards his brother-man. Such, I say, might have been the feelings of man, buoyed up by a false estimate of the correctness of his own conduct and of the strength of his own principles, towards a fellow-man, bowed down under sorrow for past sin and a consciousness of his own weakness. But such were not the feelings of him who spake as never man spake, such is not his treatment of the broken-hearted and contrite sinner. You see him taking the bruised reed tenderly in his hand, carefully binding it up and training it by the side of

some firm support, until it shall have gained strength to stand by itself. You see him taking the frail and yielding, but contrite, sinner by the hand, whispering in his ear the word of encouragement, kindly cherishing the faintest virtuous wish, the feeblest holy desire, assuring him of God's willingness to forgive, and promising those spiritual influences of which he now so deeply feels his need. And thus he perseveres in his course of kindness, until he has established the power of Gospel truth over the soul, and fixed firmly the principles of religion in the heart, yea, even until Gospel truth and religious principles have become victorious over every sinful propensity, over every moral weakness, over every spiritual enemy. "The bruised reed shall he not break, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Again, have you not looked upon the lamp whose light you had hoped to enjoy, the lamp which has burned brightly for a while until the oil has been consumed? Have you not seen its feeble and flickering flame, now flashing up with momentary brightness, and now dying away into almost total darkness, with no signs of life save the offensive smoke that hovers over it? And, as your eyes have been pained by this faint and changing light, have you not been prompted to extinguish it utterly and at once? So, too, I may ask if you have not at times looked upon the professed follower of Jesus, upon one who has walked worthy of his vocation, the light of whose Christian life has burned brightly, the influence of whose Christian example has been sensibly and widely felt,—have you not looked upon such a one, as he has fallen from his first love, become engrossed in worldly pursuits, forgetting the high calling whereby he is called? Have you not seen his Christian graces

beginning to languish, becoming fainter and fainter, and at last almost dying away from your view? It may be that at some religious meeting, in some moment of religious interest, they burst forth and blaze brightly for a time, and then again, amid the cares and temptations of business and society, they sink away and almost disappear. And have you not, as you have seen this, felt that he was unworthy of his privileges and his profession, and that he deserved to be cut off at once? Have you not feared, and almost expected, that the all-perfect Jehovah, that the pure and spotless Jesus, would regard such a one only as a cumberer of the ground, and strike his name from the book of their remembrance? Such, perhaps, would have been the course of harsh-judging man, but such was not the course of him who came from heaven. You see him kindly and carefully protecting the flickering flame from the blasts around, which threaten to extinguish it, gently fanning it into greater strength and brightness, and generously filling the lamp with the oil which is to afford it nourishment and support. You see him kindly taking by the hand those whose Christian graces are beginning to languish, or seem just about to expire. He calls them back, not in a voice of angry thunder, but in the sweet tones of affectionate love. He encourages their fainting hopes, he cherishes their good feelings and holy desires, he fans the flame of devotion in their hearts, until it warms the whole man, and then he supplies them with the oil of divine grace, that so the life of piety may be sustained, and the power of religion may go on from conquering to conquer. "The smoking flax will he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." I have dwelt, my friends, at some length upon these introductory remarks, because

I have wished, by bringing up to the mind's eye the figure of the text, in connection with the instruction it was intended to convey, to present more distinctly the beauty of the passage. To me this is one of the most interesting of the many touching passages in which the sacred Scriptures abound, and one which presents to the thoughts a peculiarly endearing characteristic of our religion. And in the further remarks which I shall offer I shall endeavour to point out the adaptation of the Gospel to man as a weak, frail, erring being.

Perhaps we shall the better understand and the more fully appreciate this adaptation of our religion, if we direct our attention to some one individual, and follow him through all the various steps of his religious experience. Here, then, we will suppose, is one who has for years been indifferent to the subject of religion. He has listened, it is true, to its instructions, has maintained a regard for its institutions, and at times, when he has met with truly good and devout men, he has felt a deep respect for its influences upon the heart and the life. But it has not been his object to become himself personally religious, in feeling, in principle, in purpose, and in character. At length he is visited with sickness, he loses a friend, or he listens to some arousing discourse. By these, or by some other similar circumstances, his thoughts are turned more particularly to the subject of his own religious condition. As he dwells upon the subject in thought, his feelings are awakened. He sees as he has never seen before his obligations to God, obligations to devote time, talents, wealth, influence, — all that he has, all that he is, — to the service of God, by regulating all in accordance with the principles of the Gospel, by devoting all to the good of man. One of his-

first thoughts is, I have indeed sinned against God ; not that I have been guilty of gross vices, but that I have not consecrated my affections to him, have not loved him with the whole heart, have not served him with a single purpose. You may attempt to soothe his feelings and assuage his anxiety, by reminding him of his past correct deportment. It is in vain. He now sees the law of God as he has never seen it before, requiring inward purity, and expressing God's love. That love of the Father appears to him as it has never appeared to him before, in all its length and breadth, and as requiring the devotion of the affections, the principles, the purposes, the life. He feels that, with all his correctness of outward conduct, he has been living for self and for time, not for the good of others, not to the glory of God, not for the development and training of his own soul. And he will tell you that the largest share of his affections has been devoted to earth, — that he has previously experienced only an occasional passing thought of heaven, a fleeting desire to become holy, a momentary glance at Divine goodness ; and these fall short, very far short, of the requisitions of the Gospel. He is ready to cry out, " Can God forgive one who has so far forgotten, disregarded, disobeyed, his commands ? " What shall be done to meet this state of mind, to allay this anxiety, and give peace and happiness ? The Gospel furnishes the adapted remedy. It assures the anxious one that God is love, that he is ever desirous of manifesting his kindness and his mercy, and that he is only waiting to be gracious, until the soul, by its earnest desires of his grace, is in a fit state to receive and appreciate its holy and purifying influences. It brings up before him the prodigal son, as, after having wasted his sub-

stance in riotous living, he approaches his father's house with trembling steps and a misgiving heart. It points out the venerable form of that father, as he totters forth in all the feebleness of age, supported only by the strength of his love, and seizes by the hand his long-lost son, draws him to his bosom, and welcomes him home. It pictures to him the woman taken in crime and brought to Jesus, and points out that moral manifestation of Deity, as he says, in accents of kind forgiveness, "Go, and sin no more." It represents the holy Jesus in the midst of his persecutors, of those who afterwards became his murderers, as he looks upon the fickle Peter, who had denied him with an oath, with a countenance so beaming with love as to become a severe, though silent, rebuke. It holds up to his view that same pure and spotless Jesus, as he hangs upon the cross, all in agony and torture, and when you are expecting to hear only groans of anguish, or imprecations of vengeance upon those who have placed him there, you are astonished and overwhelmed with those few simple, touching words, — "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." By these representations the trembling sinner is encouraged to hope for pardon, and is prompted to return to God. And is there not, in all this, a peculiar adaptation to one in a state of religious anxiety? To such a one I would come, as a herald of the Gospel, and say, you need have no fears that your Father in heaven will be unwilling to forgive you. He is ever ready to grant his pardoning mercy, and is only waiting to be asked. His arms of parental love are ever open to receive you; he is only waiting for you to approach him. And if you think yourself unworthy to approach his throne, remember that you do not approach it alone,

that he who died on earth for your salvation is said to live for ever as your intercessor. You may hope, then, that your cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" may be seconded and supported by the prayer of your ascended Saviour, — "Father, forgive thy sorrowing servant, thy penitent handmaid, for they knew not what they did." Most surely, then, my friends, is the Gospel suited to one in a state of religious anxiety. It is fitted to cheer and encourage, to inspire hope, strengthen resolution, and urge to effort.

But now this awakened individual begins to distrust himself. He says, — "There is no ground to fear that God will be unwilling to pardon, but there is ground to fear that I have myself become so completely the slave of appetite and passion, of temptation and sin, that I cannot break away from their influence, throw off their chains, and draw near to God in true repentance and living faith." He will say, — "I have already resolved and re-resolved, once, twice, yea, many times, and then have broken my resolutions; I have no power in myself. I see that God is good. But what can I do? Every past attempt to lead a religious life has proved a failure. For I have occasionally had my serious thoughts; I have read my Bible, have prayed to my Father in heaven, and resolved to live to his service. But no sooner have I done so, than temptations have assailed me which were too powerful for me, and I have been overcome; I may as well fold up my hands and sit down in patient waiting for the day of the Lord's power." Such are the feelings of self-distrust sometimes experienced. Where shall we find motives and considerations suited to this state of mind? Every appeal which we can make, having reference to the individual's own strength,

will be in vain ; for that has been tried and found wanting. But the Gospel enforces its appeal by considerations adapted to this state of feeling. It exhorts us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." But where the despairing soul is just beginning to say, "This is impossible," it adds, for his encouragement, "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." In the spirit of the Gospel, then, I would say to him who is filled with self-distrust, give yourself up to the spirit of God and to the power of Gospel truth. You are, indeed, to watch against temptation, to labor in working out your own salvation. But then you are to connect with your efforts fervent prayers to God for the renewing, the strengthening influences of his spirit. And you are encouraged to do this, in the strong hope that, if you pray aright, your prayers will be answered. For you are told that God is more willing to give of the influences of his spirit, than are earthly parents to give good things to the children of their love. Banish, then, my friend, I would say, all self-distrust, as well as all self-reliance ; think of yourself only in regard to your efforts, and not in regard to your strength or your success. These are from God. It is yours to strive. The strength with which you strive, and the success which may crown your exertions, are from God. And you may rest assured that he requires of you nothing but what he will give you strength to perform, if you are only faithful in your efforts and fervent in your prayers. While, then, you strive to improve aright the strength which has already been given you, seek and pray for more. While you work with fear and trembling, rely upon God to work within you. Then may you press forward with cour-

age, then may you hope for success, in the cultivation of holiness here, as a preparation for everlasting blessedness hereafter.

And now the individual feels his need of instruction. As he looks around him, he sees the Christian community divided into various sects, and filled, too often, with bitterness and contention. If he seeks for guidance to heaven, one denomination will give one direction, and another a different. His mind will be confused with hard names and abstruse doctrines, and he will be in danger of giving up, in despair, all hope of ever finding any clear truth or plain guidance in the way of duty. Here you have only to direct him to the Gospel, as the storehouse containing all the instruction and guidance which he may need. There he will find those simple declarations in regard to God, which are easily understood and applied, — that he is our Father, that he is love, that he seeks those to worship him who will worship in spirit and in truth, and that we are to glorify him on the earth by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, and by deeds of kindness and love to our fellow-men. There he will find clearly stated those principles which will apply to all his intercourse with his fellow-men. I would say, then, to every doubting mind, you may go to the Gospel of Jesus for the practical principles which shall become the guide of your life, with perfect confidence that you will be directed aright. If you will sincerely, faithfully, and prayerfully study the Scriptures of the New Testament, in order to know how you ought *to live*, with a determination to practise according to what you there learn, you will be preserved from all hurtful error, and guided into all necessary truth. You may, in your speculative opinions, agree with this denomination of

Christians or with that, or you may differ from them all; still, if you will bring your spirit and your conduct into conformity with the practical instructions of the Gospel, you will be saved from all dangerous error and guided into all needful truth. You may not find there instruction which will satisfy your idle curiosity upon all points. You will remember that, when our Saviour was on earth, there came one to him asking, "Are there few that be saved?" And I would hope that you will especially remember the answer which was given, when our Saviour did not gratify his idle curiosity, but said, "*Strive thou to enter in at the strait gate.*" Do you feel that you may be in danger of mistaking the force of the practical precepts of the Gospel? There is the life of Jesus, an inexhaustible fountain of instruction, a living commentary upon his precepts. To that may you go to learn, from the manner in which our Saviour applied his own principles, what is their real meaning and their full force. Does not the Gospel meet our wants as erring men?

At length the individual is brought to the determination to devote himself to the service of God, the determination to lead a life of more engagedness in the faithful discharge of the various duties of his station, a life of holiness and of prayer. But as he makes this determination, he feels that there will be danger of his forgetting his good resolutions and his holy purposes. He feels that in seasons of reflection there will be but little danger, but that there will be seasons of forgetfulness and hours of temptation, when he may fall away from his high purposes, his holy resolutions.

Here the hopes and sanctions of the Gospel find a place of operation, and come in to meet a state of mind

to which they are well adapted. In the Gospel he is taught to regulate his conduct by the unchangeable will of the one pure and perfect God. He is encouraged by the hopes of eternal joy, and warned by the thought of unutterable woe, following in the train of his conduct as its natural consequences. These thoughts are not confined to the transitory scenes of earth ; they relate to the future, the spiritual, and the eternal, and are adapted to raise one above the earth, its cares and allurements, and to lead him to live for eternity. They constitute a fund of religious strength not soon exhausted. And just to the degree in which they have a hold upon and exert an influence over the mind, just to that degree do they nerve one to withstand temptation and perform duty.

But how shall these principles, motives, and sanctions be kept vividly before the mind, and made to exert a controlling influence over the life ? Jesus did not leave his system incomplete ; he knew what was in man, — his wants, his weakness, his dangers. And for the very purpose of keeping his principles more distinctly before the mind, and impressing them more deeply upon the heart, he appointed the ordinances of his religion. These are the helps which are needed, and which are suited, by being addressed to our senses, to our present condition and wants. Does the parent feel deeply anxious for his much-loved offspring, and does that anxiety relate to his moral character and spiritual welfare ? The Gospel encourages him to take with him his children, when he comes to consecrate himself to the service of the Lord, that he may dedicate them also to God, in the ordinance of baptism, and assures him that by doing so he may find himself strengthened for the more faithful performance of his parental duties.

Then there is the ordinance of the Supper, especially intended to assist us in our weakness, especially fitted to our condition as frail, as erring and sinful. Show me the man that is sinless, and that has that degree of moral and spiritual strength which may render him certain of ever remaining sinless, and he is one who does not need the ordinance of the Supper. It was appointed because, in our best efforts, we are weak and frail, and every day liable to sin. Does any one tremble to approach, who, with earnest desires after holiness, and honest purposes of religious obedience, feels himself weak and unworthy, let him remember that it is a merciful Father and a loving Redeemer he is to approach. Let him remember, that, although his good principles are weak and frail as the humble reed, it is not the spirit of our religion to break the bruised reed ; that, although his religious feelings and desires are faint and wavering as the smoke of the exhausted and almost expiring lamp, it is not the spirit of our religion to quench the smoking flax. It is the very object of the Supper to bind up and strengthen the bruised reed, to fan the flickering blaze of religious feeling, and to fill the soul with the oil of divine grace.

The Christian may, with propriety, say, “ Do you ask why I seat myself at the table of my Master ? ” and answer, “ It is because I feel myself to be a weak, frail, erring, and sinful creature. I wish to consecrate myself to the service of my God, to live while on earth in a constant course of preparation for heaven. I feel that it is on the principles, motives, and sanctions of the Gospel that I must depend for strength to sustain my religious efforts.— I have wished to keep these principles, motives, and sanctions continually before my mind, and to impress

them more and more deeply upon the heart. It is for this reason that I approach the table of remembrance, with the feeling that I am a sinner, and because I feel myself to be so." Nay, more. He may go further, and say, — "Do you tell me that I have been guilty of sin and of short-comings in duty since I first seated myself at the table of the Lord? I admit the charge. Indeed, it is for that very reason that I rejoice in every repeated opportunity of engaging in the observance of this ordinance. As I look back I can see, as I reflect I can feel, that I have fallen short, that I have transgressed and sinned. I am sensible that my religious principles are weak, and have not the controlling power which they should exert; that the motives and sanctions of the Gospel have, at times, become indistinct and confused in my mind. I wish, then, to draw near to this table, that I may strengthen religious principle, and revive the power of Christian motives and sanctions. All this sinfulness and unworthiness," may the Christian say, "I am conscious of; under a sense of all this, I am oppressed and burdened. But then I remember what is the spirit of our religion. I call to mind the words of the prophet, as they are quoted by the Evangelist, as descriptive of the character of the Gospel. 'The bruised reed shall he not break, the smoking flax shall he not quench, until he send forth judgment unto victory.' I remember that the ordinance is the place appointed by our Saviour himself, where we are to meet him, and receive at his hand all those strengthening influences which we may need to cherish our languishing virtues and to perfect our Christian characters." He, then, who is honestly striving to lead a religious life, may come to the table of remembrance, humble, contrite, penitent, but at the same

time rejoicing in his Christian hopes and purposes and privileges. He will come, praying for forgiveness for all past sin, and, at the same time, giving thanks for an ordinance so well adapted, in its nature and influences, to our condition as frail, erring, sinful beings.

There is no one view of the Christian religion which has been more touching to my own heart, which has given me more consolation, support, and happiness, than this of its adaptation to our wants as weak, frail, erring, and sinful beings. I have looked upon myself. Here I am, created for high and holy purposes, for present holiness, for future glory, for everlasting blessedness, with spiritual capacities, with eternal longings. Here I am, too, surrounded with worldly cares, which have often drawn away my affections from heavenly things, — with temptations and allurements, to which I have often yielded, — with pollution and sin, of which I have been occasionally the victim. I have compared myself with what I ought to have been, with what I am required to become, with what I have often resolved to be. Then I have turned to my God and my Saviour, to the Divine law, and the spirit of our holy religion; there I have found all purity and peace and holiness. But, as I have looked to my God again, I have found, united with his own perfect holiness, infinite mercy for the most abandoned sinner, who comes to him with a contrite heart. I have looked again at the Saviour, and have found that, although without sin himself, he is filled with compassion for sinners. And what compassion was that! Not merely the compassion of a few kind words, a few isolated acts, but compassion stronger than the love of life, — which led him to the cross, and strengthened him to bear its tortures. I have looked again at the nature of

the Divine law, and found it to be only the expression of Divine love. I have looked again at the spirit of our holy religion, and have found it fitted to meet my wants as a frail, erring, and sinful creature. And thus, when I have felt myself to be but feeble and frail, — a bruised reed, — when I have felt that the divine life which I had hoped was kindled up in my heart was but a feeble, flickering, dying flame, I have rejoiced to hear, in the words of my text, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” I have seen, in our religion, no word to console the impenitent or encourage him in his sins, but I have found there every thing suited to cheer and encourage the truly penitent, contrite, humble heart, burdened with a sense of unworthiness, and casting itself upon the mercy of God, as made known by Christ. And I have felt that it is indeed a blessed religion, adapted to purify our hearts on earth, and to prepare us for the happiness of heaven.

SERMON XI.

BY JAMES W. THOMPSON.

THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE.

AND I APPOINT UNTO YOU A KINGDOM, AS MY FATHER HATH APPOINTED UNTO ME; THAT YE MAY EAT AND DRINK AT MY TABLE IN MY KINGDOM, AND SIT ON THRONES, JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. — Luke xxii. 29, 30.

OUR Saviour speaks here and in other places of his kingdom, — *his* kingdom. He is, then, a king. Though he is invisible, though he has no earthly palace, though no armies bear his standard, though no geographical boundaries define the limits of his empire, yet he has a real kingdom in the world. Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, who was born in a stable almost two thousand years ago, and who died the death of a malefactor at Jerusalem, has been for ages, and is at this moment, at the head of the most powerful kingdom this earth contains. Thousands and millions of intelligent beings, the wisest and best of the children of men, profess allegiance to him as a king, love and obey him as a king, own no authority that conflicts with his sway, toil and pray for the glory of his kingdom, and devote themselves to the duties of his subjects with as much fidelity, as much cheerfulness, as much persever-

ance, as though every morning they were receiving fresh direction and encouragement from his lips.

Christ, then, has a kingdom. Obviously, it is not like other kingdoms that have risen and fallen from time to time in the world's great history; or like those which still divide the earth into larger or smaller human sovereignties. It has features of its own, — characteristics which belong to no other; and some of these it may be useful for us here briefly to notice.

The kingdom of Christ is not an outward and visible kingdom. It embraces the domain of man's spiritual life. Its strength is within the soul. Its grand aim is to quicken, to enlarge, to exalt, the soul, — to lift it higher and higher towards heaven, — to bring it into harmony and communion with all that is true, beautiful, and good, — to provide for it durable riches and righteousness, — to render its welfare not an ephemeral prosperity, fluctuating with the harvests, but sure, deep, and everlasting. All its conquests are invisible, — in the sphere of the will, of the thoughts, and of the affections.

But it is not so with other kingdoms. Their dominion is outward and visible. They can exert only an external sway. They can control only the limbs and the actions of their subjects. The springs of action, the moral sentiments, they cannot reach. They can take the lip's oath of allegiance, but not the heart's. They have no power over what is noblest and best in man. Their grand aim is to secure to themselves temporal prosperity and aggrandizement, physical strength and glory; leaving to a higher power the work of controlling, enriching, and leading onward to its perfection, the spiritual life of man.

Other kingdoms, moreover, are confined to this world, and to definite portions of it. But not so with the kingdom of Christ. Christendom is not merely that part of the earth where the Christian religion is established. It includes all those portions of the universe, visible and invisible, where Christians — the true children of God — live and worship. What is commonly called the Christian world is only a province of the vast kingdom of Jesus. “God is gathering together in one all things in him, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in *him*.” Our brethren who have finished their course and passed into the heavens are still in his kingdom, — in the same kingdom of love and holiness with those lowly disciples who yet linger in these tabernacles of clay. Only a thin veil separates them, — a veil which was transparent to the Saviour in the days of his flesh. He saw through it. He saw clearly what was the other side of it. He surveyed by a glance his whole immense kingdom, what was above as well as what is below, — innumerable mansions of his Father’s house. His subjects, then, are all to whom he gives law, all who are governed by the principles unfolded in his word and life, all who live in the spirit which filled his bosom, all who love God and man with his affection ; no matter where they dwell, no matter what names they bear, no matter what the modes of their worship, no matter what the symbols of their faith ; all such belong to the kingdom of Christ, and are members of the general assembly and church of the First-Born. The follower of Christ here — the good man according to the Christian idea of goodness — is as truly in his kingdom at this moment as Stephen, and Paul, and John. It needs no change of place to disclose to the sojourner on the earth its thrones, princi-

palties and powers, but, being a spiritual kingdom, all the change required is a change of mind and heart, — the regeneration of the soul ; and this may take place here as well as hereafter, in the body as well as out of it.

There are two inquiries suggested by the relation of men to this kingdom, to which we may now for a few moments direct our attention. One has reference to the mode of *entrance* into it, the other to the conditions of *continuance* in it.

1. How does one *enter* the kingdom of Christ ? What is the living way by which the soul of man passes into the eternal realm of the Saviour's power and blessedness ? The Catholic Church answers, "Baptism is that way." Other churches give the same answer, regarding baptism as a regenerative rite. I will not say that ; but I will say to him who asks this question, — "We enter the kingdom of the Lord Jesus by that way of which baptism is the sacred symbol, — by that repentance, consecration to duty, inward washing, earnest faith, of which baptism is the outward sign and profession." There is no other way given among men. There is no pass-word by which the door will be opened, — a mere word, a profession of the lips. None can enter simply by enrolling his name on the records of a church. None can enter by a substitute, nor in virtue of another's merits. None can buy admission with gold and frankincense and myrrh. No ; the heart must be immersed in the redeeming spirit of Christ, buried with him in a spiritual baptism which renounces the hidden things of dishonesty, which abandons all falsehood, error, and vainglory, which denies passion, and which pledges the soul to "whatsoever is true, honest,

just, pure, lovely, and of good report," against all temptation, and notwithstanding any temporary evils which such a course may produce. "If any man will come after me," said the Saviour, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This is the great step, — self-renunciation ; withdrawal from all corrupting pleasures, and from all unrighteous pursuits, however gratifying to present desire ; crucifixion of the affections and lusts that paralyze the energies of the heart, and grieve the Holy Spirit ; the voluntary and absolute relinquishment of all purposes and works, of all imaginations and hopes, incompatible with the spirit of meekness and love, — love to man and love to God, — which is the sum of all duty. Who is turning his thoughts towards the New Jerusalem ? Who stands without, anxious to enter into the Redeemer's rest ? Who, trembling and weary under the weight of this life's cares, and manifold burdens, and unsoled woes, sighs for renewing strength, for Divine encouragement, for the dawning of heavenly light upon his soul ? Who, oppressed and cast down by a sense of guilt, by the consciousness of having abused and perverted his nature, neglected his opportunities, resisted admonitions, regarded with indifference or contempt the entreaties of Christian faithfulness and affection persuading him to a better life, — who, thus disquieted, seeks relief, the remission of his sins, the light of the Father's countenance, and the comforting assurance of his love ? To him there is an open way into the kingdom. Let him be baptized with the baptism of repentance, and self-denial, and a holy spirit, and the kingdom of God shall be his. Around him there shall be beauty, within him peace. He shall utterly change his relations with the world ; from being its slave he shall become its master, and instead of being

enfee' led and worn by its perpetual draughts on his moral strength, shall be able so to use it as to make it minister to his Christian growth and excellence. Blessed is he who thus enters the Messiah's kingdom !

2. But, in the second place, entrance is not all that is necessary. This is but one step towards the attainment of the soul's highest good, — an important step, indeed, yet but one. No necessity holds him in his new position who has once entered the kingdom, and secures to him, in indefeasible possession, the rest of God's people. The Saviour speaks of those who "abide in him." *Continuance* is also necessary. What, then, we proceed to ask, are the conditions of continuance in Christ's kingdom ? I will not say that these are all summed up and expressed in the Lord's Supper. But I do say, that they are all comprehended in that which the Lord's Supper represents. And what is that ? What is it of which the Supper is the affecting symbol ? I know you will answer, it is love, — the love of God to his children here below, the love of Christ to us and our brethren of all ages, for whom he died, and the love of man to man, binding all together in one communion, in the fellowship of one spirit. Now it is this love working in the heart, by the head, by the hands, by all the instrumentalities which it can command, creating and diffusing good, opening channels of mercy, visiting the poor, the sick, the prisoner, making glad cheerless hearths, repairing decayed altars and rearing new temples, spreading abroad the light of a Christian example, multiplying the sources of human improvement and enjoyment, and lifting up the soul in calm devotion to heaven, — it is this love, I say, operating steadily, burning brightly, that keeps the baptized soul true to its King, and binds it in eternal loyalty to his government. For love fulfils the law.

There is no requirement above or beyond it. The soul is made perfect by love, and its union with God established beyond the possibility of disruption. "God is love," saith the inspired Scripture, "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." Simple and sublime truth! Yet how few are they who recognize it! how completely has it been hid from the eyes of the world! And in the Church how long has it been suffered to lie buried beneath the mass of ceremonial follies and doctrinal errors which have been imposed upon believers as the essentials of faith and salvation! But now, in these latter days, — let us thank God! — it is beginning to be understood what energy, what might, what majesty, there is in the principle of love. This is not a new revelation vouchsafed to us, but only the true reading of the old Gospel restored. It was preached by Jesus, the Master; it was preached by his apostles; it was received and lived in the primitive Church, when heathen men looked on the brotherhood of disciples and said, "See how these Christians love one another." But afterwards it dropped away and was forgotten. Strange dogmas, dreamy speculations, metaphysical subtleties, complicated ceremonies, took the place of the doctrine of love, and little was left of Christianity, for a long period, but its name and its records. It is not too much to affirm, that we are now on the threshold of a new and better era, in which the profound truths of the Gospel shall be more clearly discerned and more rigidly applied to private discipline and social progress; in which the great law of love, illustrated in the life and death of the Son of God, shall be acknowledged, obeyed, fulfilled, as in no previous period of the world's history; and in which the hu-

man race shall be carried forward with unexampled rapidity towards that consummation of goodness and glory to which all prophecy looks and all earnest prayer aspires. Certainly there are wise men, — watchmen on the towers of Zion, — who believe this. Certainly there are favorable signs abroad ; — the mists are lifting ; the clouds are breaking ; the slumbering earth stirs with the breath of a new life ; heavenly voices wake the echoes of old chaos and night with the Bethlehem shout, “ Glory to God ! good-will to men ! ” — and we will hope. Whatever may be the event, we will hope. And whilst we hope, we will remember that the grand condition of our own continuance in the Messiah’s kingdom is love, — the labor and the worship of love. Nothing else makes sure our redemption. Nothing else is “ eternal life ” in the soul. Only as the heart drinks of the water which Christ gives is it refreshed ; only as it eats of the bread that cometh down from heaven is it nourished. That water is the Divine goodness of which he was the channel ; that bread the infinite love which filled his soul, irradiated his life, hallowed and crowned his death.

I have spoken briefly of the nature of the Christian kingdom, of the way of entering it, and of the grand condition of continuance in it. To enter it, you perceive, is one thing ; to remain in it, another and greater thing. To leave all, at the call of Christ, and follow him, is one thing ; to abide in him, united in one sentiment and purpose and life, is another and greater thing. But entrance is the first thing. And it must not be taken for granted that all who are born in a Christian community, all who have been taught in their early days the first principles of religion, all who attend the stated services of a Christian congregation, have entered the Chris-

tian kingdom. Have they sought and found that spiritual baptism which washes away the defilements of the heart, and leaves open and fair the image of God in which it was created? Have they left off their sins by repentance? Have they believed with the heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? Have they felt in their souls an urgent desire to be regenerated into his likeness, — “changed from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord”? This is the only way of entrance. No person goes in bearing the love of his sins with him. By a solemn renunciation, he leaves them all behind him, knowing that “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Nor must it be too confidently believed that entrance insures continuance. Many, alas! are they who, by repentance and faith, — the washing of regeneration, — have entered the kingdom of the Son of Man, and yet have yielded afterwards to the blandishments of earthly pleasure and the influence of old temptations, and gone out to live again without the peace of a loyal soul, without the comfort of a sincere hope, without the light of a Father’s countenance. They have gone out, but only to perish with hunger. Therefore it is important that we should understand how to keep our place in the heavenly kingdom when we have once gained admission. And all Scripture tells us, the life and death of Christ assure us, the experience of multitudes who have endured unto the end and inherited the promises confirms the declaration, that it is the constant exercise of that love, — not the idle and luxurious indulgence of the sentiment, but the laborious carrying out of the principle, of that

love which fulfils the law, and which, in the good it confers, reflects the benevolence of the Heavenly Father, — that it is this alone which is the safeguard and guaranty of the perseverance and permanence of the saints in the kingdom of our Lord. For love, I repeat, is the element in the soul of its eternal life. It is more powerful than all knowledge, and outlives all faith and hope. Whatever is once made alive by it abideth for ever. When the dazzling splendors of the world so eagerly coveted shall be dulled and darkened, when the emblems of human power and authority shall lose their significance, when thrones and crowns shall be no more, that love which begins to burn here in the kingdom of Christ on the altar of Christian souls shall be to them as the effulgence of noonday, — perpetual light with boundless joy.

And that love which insures the soul's continuance in the kingdom of Christ is also, let it be remembered, the source of all its power. Our Saviour is a king. But what gives him authority over men and angels? What is the secret and mighty influence that binds all Christian hearts in allegiance to him? It is not the strength of the physical force at his command. It is not the terror of his avenging arm. It is not the splendor and magnificence of his regal array. Nor is it the awe of his intellectual greatness. It is none of these; but it is the love that pervaded his soul, that gave to his life a beauty such as was never seen before, and crowned his death with a divine glory, the lustre of which, so far from being diminished by the lapse of time, successive ages have only increased by the grateful and admiring remembrance which they have sent back upon it. Yes; his love is the pavilion of his power. That is the throne of his glory, on which he now sits, gathering all nations be-

fore him. And when he promises to his apostles each a throne, it is such a one as that which he himself occupies. What is an earthly throne? In itself nothing; a mere semblance. It has no moral quality whatever. Simply to sit on a throne is no advantage and confers no distinction. But the throne is an emblem of authority, of dignity, of extended influence. The promise of a throne, therefore, which Jesus made to his apostles, is equivalent to the promise of great authority and wide-spread influence amongst men. To sit on a throne, in the view of Jesus, is to be a kingly man; to command by the majesty of goodness; to sway others by the attraction of love; to bind them in fidelity by services of benevolence. And such power needs no extraneous appendages to sustain it. The more one has of it, the more deeply and widely is his influence felt. Inferior souls look up to him with reverence, as to a crowned brother. In his presence they feel their own sordidness and hardness of heart rebuked and condemned, and thus are they judged by him, — both the descendants of Israel and the children of the Gentiles. Thus the apostles of the Lord are throned magistrates. Here below they are held in profound reverence, and in heaven the twelve tribes of Israel cast their once-boasted honors at their feet, in acknowledgment of the grandeur and perfection of the Gospel of love which they preached.

We are taught by the Saviour that in the moral world *they reign who serve*. He himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, that is, to serve. And his life, spent in labors and sacrifices, devoted to the highest welfare of man, reproveth and condemns all who sit upon thrones of worldly dominion and occupy places of power merely to gratify their own love of glory, or passions less noble than that, whilst they are ministered unto by the

heartless flattery or timid subserviency of their fellow-men. *They reign who serve.* They have the most extended influence, their authority is greatest, their names are highest in the kingdom of heaven, who are most wise to know and most prompt to do the will of our Heavenly Father. They wear crowns whose hearts, enlarged with great sentiments, keep them busy in good works. *They reign who serve.* And God is served by the patience of labor and suffering, by resignation in want, disappointment, and sorrow, by the compassion which relieves distress and by the tears of that pity which has no power to relieve, by the forbearance that overcomes evil with good, by the Christian gentleness that whispers of a peace which the world cannot give, by the prayers which go up from the closet of the lowly and devout heart, — by these testimonies of a right spirit, — as effectually and acceptably as he is, in other circumstances, by the more active efforts of Christian duty and philanthropy.

And now, brethren, let us seriously ask ourselves, as we close these meditations, where we severally stand in relation to the Christian empire. Are we established under the dominion of the Prince of peace? By solemn renunciation of the idols of this world, whose service is slavery and death, and by devout consecration of our lives to the highest ends, have we sworn allegiance to him who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and whose service is perfect freedom and immortal life? Where is our place, where are our interests and affections, in the great controversy which is waging between the King of Zion and the powers of darkness? Would to heaven this might be to us the searching question it ought! Would that it might give us no rest till it is answered in our perfect submission to the Christian law and our full experience of the Christian salvation!

Why, O, why shall we longer hug our chains, when the Deliverer is come? Let us rather cast them off, and go out to meet him with gratitude and joy. Why shall we shut our eyes and refuse to see, when the majesty of the Lord is passing by? Let us rather lift them up in reverence and hope. Nay, let us say to our hearts, "Be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors"; and the King of glory shall come in.

Christian brethren, the hour of the Holy Supper is come. We have now an opportunity of testifying our sense of the value and benefit of the services rendered to the human family, and to us as members of it, by the Son of God. Before us are memorials of those services which were consecrated and ordained by his own lips. As we sit at his table and meditate on his death, may we feel all his spirit stirring within us, and moving us to new and more earnest endeavours to do good and finish our work as his disciples! For to do good and finish our work is the great object of life, the one thing needful, the only thing which we shall be able to look back upon at life's close with much satisfaction, and which will afford a reasonable hope that, having been faithful in a few things here, we may have many things placed at our use and command hereafter. O, let us follow after Christ, doing the work of our Father, asking for more strength only that we may accomplish more labor, and for longer life only that we may be able to adorn that life with a richer grace and make it more fruitful of Christian benedictions; remembering always this saying of our Master, — "He that will be greatest among you, let him be the servant of all."

SERMON XII.

BY HENRY W. BELLOWS.

FAITH IN CHRISTIANITY AS A FACT.

“IF CHRIST BE NOT RISEN, THEN IS OUR PREACHING VAIN, AND YOUR FAITH IS ALSO VAIN.” — 1 Cor. xv. 14.

AMONG all the moral and spiritual definitions of *faith*, there is not one to compare in real force with its simple and obvious and popular meaning, as real belief. Theologians have thought to elevate faith by distinguishing it from belief, or by crowding under that one word all the right affections and pure principles of which our nature is capable. But its first and simplest and most practical acceptation is, after all, its most important one. Faith in Christ is belief in him. Faith in Christianity is belief in Christianity. It is easy and natural to confound the fruits of faith with faith itself, because faith is important only for its fruits. But it is well to call things by their right names, and the world would have escaped much false theology if faith had always been naturally and practically defined. Belief in Christ, — belief in Christianity. Consider what it is. Run your thoughts through the familiar pages of the New Testament, and reflect what it is we are professing to believe. A being calling himself the Son of God, of spotless

virtue and solemn sanctity, appears upon the earth, as a delegate from the invisible world, — the commissioned messenger of the Maker of heaven and earth, the unseen Ruler of the universe, — and becomes the preacher of truth and righteousness, under new and divine sanctions. But, more than this, he substantiates his claim to the name he assumes and the authority he asserts by a long and varied series of miraculous works, as benevolent and holy in their spirit and object as they are manifestly supernatural in their origin and character. He heals the sick by a touch, makes the blind to see and the lame to walk by a word of his mouth, feeds hungering thousands with a few loaves and fishes, raises the dead, and meanwhile so interweaves instruction and practical beneficence, so proves his authority while he communicates his message, so wins the confidence and affections of the people while he astonishes and awes them, that it is impossible to say which do most to substantiate his claim to a divine character, his works or his words; his miracles or his wisdom; his commission or his character. Who, prior to experience, could anticipate the form in which God would directly communicate with his creatures, or imagine how there could be united in one person the image of God's moral perfections and the representation of infinite sovereignty? Who could foresee or credit the possibility of a union of perfect meekness and super-human power, of childlike simplicity of character and miraculous works, of ineffable sweetness and purity, with boundless authority? Yet such is the exhibition which the New Testament affords us of our Saviour. A character fitly called the express image of God's own, united to works which no man could do unless

God were with him, is the moral miracle which demands our faith in the records of our religion. And what are the chief doctrines, either expressed or implied, which this messenger and teacher, come from God, reveals to man? He teaches the strict personality and Fatherhood of God; he reveals the brotherhood of the human race, and the impartial interest of the common Parent in all his rational offspring; he announces a life beyond the grave, the immortality of the soul, and the connection, here and for ever, between duty and the favor of God, righteousness and everlasting happiness. These are his doctrines, illustrated in his own holy life, both in his trustful and intimate intercourse with God and in his active and universal philanthropy, and proved by his own resurrection from the dead, — a triumph over the grave distinctly foretold by himself, and its actual occurrence vouched by many credible witnesses.

Brethren, such is Christ and such is Christianity; — do we believe in Christ and Christianity? Is it true that such a being, with such a history, has appeared? I do not ask you whether you are prepared to deny it, or if you are disposed to doubt it; I know you are not. I do not ask you if you are ready to assent to it, for I am sure you are. But if you really believe it, believe it as you believe other most important events received on historical testimony. For if it be true, is it any less important to us than it was to our Lord's contemporaries? If it be true, can any thing be so interesting, exciting, awakening, and consoling? If it be true, is it not the very substance of faith to believe it with all the mind, and heart, and soul, to realize it in the most distinct and detailed manner, and to date

our hopes and opinions and consolations from its wondrous story ?

There are those, I know, to whom the moral truths of Christianity, the obligations of duty, the precepts and spirit of Christianity, recommend themselves so fully, that they would believe and value the Gospel just as much if its history should prove a fable as they do now that they believe it as a fact. And there are those who regard the internal evidences of its spiritual truth with such satisfaction, that they are disposed to discountenance any anxiety about its external or specific proofs. I am sometimes inclined to think, that those who have attained this philosophic frame of mind would be just as well satisfied to believe that the individual soul has no conscious immortality, as that it is destined to a personal and distinct existence beyond the grave ; would as soon have Nature for their parent as God ; are as well satisfied with the evidences of natural as of revealed religion ; and, in short, pushed to the point, would confess that the special need and value of the Christian revelation was not as plain to them as it is ordinarily claimed to be. Far be it from me, my brethren, to dogmatize upon the precise grounds on which Christianity shall be received, or to assert that, so it be heartily received, it matters greatly on what testimony it is accepted. But it does seem to me of the utmost consequence that it should be thoroughly believed on some grounds, and that something definite should be believed about it ; and I do not hesitate to ascribe the poverty of its fruits, the insufficiency of its supports and consolations, and the want of its attractiveness, to the fact, that it is not believed in the character which belongs to it.

I cannot conceive of the state of mind which allows the indifference that some profess in regard to the historical facts of the Gospel. Is it a matter of no moral or spiritual importance whether the man Christ Jesus ever actually lived and spoke the words and did the deeds and experienced the fate ascribed to him in the Gospels? Is it a question of indifference whether what we call the laws of nature have a Being above them whose interest in us is so paramount to their necessity that he *can* interrupt and has interrupted them to attest his presence with us by his appointed messenger? Have we so deep and unwavering a faith in God's interest in us as individual men and women, that we need no direct assurance, under the crushing sense of our insignificance and errors and sins and mortality, of his care, his mercy and pity, his forgiveness and love? Are the intimations of our immortality so strong within us, that we demand no proof beyond our instincts that we are to live again? or are our desires for immortality so weak, that we are content to remain in uncertainty upon the subject? Is the providence of God so plainly just and benevolent and holy, considered only with reference to this brief life, that we need no assurances of his paternal love and justice? and are there no anxious, agonizing questions in the present order of things which demand extraordinary illumination and interpretation?

Alas! as we behold the unequal lots which fall to our race, — so many thousands struggling with the ills of poverty, so many other thousands revelling in an oppressive abundance, so much gilded rottenness, so much mildewed worth, — here vice crowned with prosperity and there virtue crucified with adversity, — as we see under

the cope of these infinite heavens the dreadful scourges of war, slavery, intemperance, lust, and avarice rioting in misery and ruin, and no vengeance dropping from the skies to show that infinite justice dwells there, — what do we crave to satisfy our injured conscience, but one word spoken from the open heavens, telling us that this dreadful drama is not unwatched by almighty rectitude, — that this disjointed and confounding scene is but a first act, which is straightway to be succeeded by another, devoted to the allotment of strict justice, when the strange inconsistencies of this world, the wrongs of innocence, the sufferings of virtue, the pleasures of vice, and the successes of iniquity shall each be duly considered and strictly conformed to the standards of perfect wisdom and holiness? It is in vain to say that such a plan and purpose are apparent from a wide survey of the moral government of God, and that he who doubts the equity of God's providence or the tendencies of his administration must be blind. Alas! instant want and persecuted virtue and humiliated worth are not in a condition to take a wide and philosophical survey. Their whole horizon is dark and blank. The clouds form a pleasant part of the landscape to him who meanwhile stands in the sunshine, but not to him who is in its blinding mists. How many are there who dwell habitually in clouds and darkness! What general considerations can sustain the poor mother, worse than widow perhaps, whose youth tasted comfort and peace, and who now, forsaken in a foreign land, feeds herself and her orphans in abject seclusion, toiling at unaccustomed and severe labors to put bread into their mouths, and yet staring beggary in the face from week to week, — what can sustain sufferings like these, but a

direct appeal to the pity and justice of Heaven and a confident hope of a better world? And is all the argument you have to give her one founded on the instincts of the soul, or drawn from the indications of justice in the Divine administration of this world's affairs? Alas! one syllable of direct assurance from a being showing a divine authority to speak were worth all the philosophy in the world to her. Tell her that the Son of God, working miracles of healing and of supply for thousands, had not where to lay his head, was despised and rejected of men, but is risen and ascended to the heavens, whither he invites the weary and heavy-laden, and you have given her the only adequate consolation or solace her misery can receive.

Brethren, there are few who have not at some time known the bitterness of bereavement. The enemy "that loves a shining mark" has taken away the most promising child in our flock; death has smitten the widow's only son, and his bier has passed out at the city gate, and no benignant Jesus has stopped the funeral train and given back the awakened clay to the mother's arms; or the old prophetic warning has been verified again, — "two shall be lying in one bed; one shall be taken and the other left; two shall be grinding at one mill; the one shall be taken and the other left"; and thus the most intimate ties of domestic life or the most accustomed union of occupations have been rudely severed, — making half the world to be of that desolate class who have been "left." Whose faith, my brethren, is so strong, that even now any thing less than a miracle can fully satisfy the longing for assurance, for certainty, that our dead are not all and for ever gone? It is easy to believe in the immortality of the living;

difficult indeed to conceive of their mortality. It is not hard to be satisfied that the friends of others are safe in the better mansions. The question does not press upon us then with all its reality. But when our own beloved ones, those whom it is worse than death to live without, whom we would die to save, who make all that is attractive and blessed in existence, in whom our pride, our hope, our affections, are all treasured, — when these cease to answer us, — when no fixed looks of ours can start the rigid eyelid, no agonizing questionings bring forth one syllable through the frozen smile that seals their lips, no embalming tears and affections save their dear forms from swift corruption, — what then would we not give for one instant's glimpse of the disembodied spirit, to attest its triumph over death! Nay, might the awful silence of the grave, the dreadful monotony of nature and heaven, be broken by any voice that told of spiritual existence anywhere out of the flesh, should we not feel that a drop of celestial balm had distilled into a wound, whose anguish nothing else can soothe?

But, brethren, what we thus ask is never again to be granted. It has already been bestowed. What we thus demand is secured. The dreadful void of heaven has sent forth a living, articulate voice. The land of spirits has furnished its hostage. Corruption has risen from its shroud, and the stilled heart has beaten, the leaden eye has shone, the stagnant pulse has throbbed, again. The grave, in full possession of its prey, has rendered back to life its mangled, heart-pierced victim, and the dead has resumed the ways of life, and ascended in a visible shape unto the skies. Not to speak of those whom Jesus raised from the

dead, — Lazarus, the widow's son, the daughter of Jairus, — all exquisite and touching illustrations of our Master's spirit in the choice of occasions for his mightiest works, and each speaking to its own peculiar class of bereavements, — is not the resurrection of our Saviour worthy of continuing what it was at the outset of his religion, the corner-stone of the Gospel? Is not all that renders us indifferent or insensible to it the fact, that it seems altogether too much what we could desire to be quite credible? Such a blessed ministry as this to our doubts, such a rending of the many-folded curtain hanging before futurity, such a glimpse into the heavenly mansions, such a proof of immortality, seems so unlike the general mystery, reserve, and silence that close up the pathway of mortality, that we are afraid to credit it. But, brethren, the Gospel is the grace of God. Christ came bringing life and immortality to light. And the crowning glory of his religion is, that for once every hope, desire, doubt, or fear of the human heart was met. We asked ideal perfection on earth. God sent it to us in his Son. We asked a sign from heaven; and that which was for a time withheld from those who sought it was at length yielded to us. We complained that virtue was neglected and abandoned to disgrace; and Heaven, to reconcile us to such a lot, gave its only begotten Son to the sufferings of the cross. We asked that the laws of nature should not for ever interpose between man and his Maker; and his arm was made bare and his instant presence exhibited in innumerable displays of supernatural power. We asked that the grave should disgorge its victims; that the dead should speak; — and the rock is rolled from the tomb, and the crucified, the dead and buried Lord comes forth, and

again mingles with those who had seen his agonies and received his parting blessing and breath. For once, all that human affection, all that the disbelieving senses, all that the trembling, yearning heart, of mortal man could ask is granted. Once and for ever, that, and *all* that the reason, the scrutinizing understanding, the incredulous senses, the dull imagination, the importunate affections, could ask of almighty power and love, to satisfy them in respect to the most pressing and difficult questions in the human lot and the future destiny of the soul, has been vouchsafed. And shall we make the affluence and condescension of Heaven an argument against the reality of its own bounty? What we all were asking and craving so inappeasably, shall we doubt to have once been given, only because it is so unspeakably desirable?

I know well the pervading skepticism of these days in every thing wearing a miraculous aspect. The world is offsetting the credulity of centuries by a spirit of doubt; and because the fathers believed in witchcraft and ghosts, the sons are determined to credit nothing which surpasses their own experience. So much of doctrine and form once held sacred has proved useless and been abandoned, that it has, not unnaturally, but hastily, been inferred that every thing peculiar in Christianity would finally be reasoned away, except its pure morals and benevolent spirit. But Christianity is an historical fact, and the profoundest research made by the freest minds has done nothing yet to bring its records into just question, or to divest it of its supernatural character. The authenticity and credibility of the New Testament are more thoroughly vindicated, as learning becomes more accurate and searching; and we have the same evidence of the supernatural facts of the Gospel,

which we have for the Sermon on the Mount. It were as easy to separate the veins from a marble slab without crumbling the stone, as to disentangle the miracles of Christ from his moral precepts and his holy character. His moral character is involved in his miraculous works. He was either an impostor, or he possessed supernatural powers, — or else all his disciples were impostors, and the same men that gave us the holy and truthful and simple character of Jesus falsified themselves by inventing his miracles. We may perhaps imagine that they were merely enthusiasts; but they not only ascribed miracles to Christ, they pretended to have wrought them themselves. No, they were not deceived, but deceivers, if the miracles are not real and credible.

And now, my brethren, what distinguished the early disciples from ourselves, — what gave them their zeal and glorying spirit, and made the Gospel so all in all to them? Was it not that, whereas we accept it, or do not deny it, they *believed* it? They knew it to be *true*; and, being true, could not but feel its tremendous import and inspiration. What do *we* need but to believe it also, to experience its mighty power to transform our lives, to change our aims, to console our sorrows, and to supply new and mighty motives of righteous and holy living? Could the resurrection of Christ occur again, and within our own immediate knowledge and observation, think you it would be possible to continue as indifferent as for the most part we now are to the existence of a future world? With such an argument before our eyes, think you we could go on heaping together houses and lands, and fixing our affections and efforts upon the possessions of this world, as if we had an eternal tenure of life? Could such an instant and

awakening proof as this be given us of the actual presence of God, should we think it a matter of mere sentimentality or superstition to call upon his name in daily prayer? Should we continue to postpone the preparation of our own souls for the judgment to come and a spiritual existence in another world, until the ebbing tide of life made religion a necessity without grace, merit, or profitableness? If Christianity be true, if Jesus Christ has lived, if he has wrought miracles in attestation of his origin and mission, if he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, what a stupendous peculiarity, what a momentous interest and importance, attach to his precepts and commandments and disclosures! Think of it, brethren. Take up your New Testaments, as if for the first time, and remember that you are reading history. These facts are not less wonderful because they occurred eighteen hundred years ago. The pious Jew sends his thought back more than twice as far, to find his great prophet, and yet observes his precepts with a jealous fidelity. Christianity is not so old that every generation does not do something to explain and enlarge its meaning and scope. Nay, in the light of a profounder acquaintance with collateral contemporary history, the New Testament is better understood now than a single century after it was written. Its miraculous facts have an importance increasing with every age, and the explosion of all other claims to the supernatural only adds new lustre and power to the Christian miracles. Even our Saviour's own disciples, believers as they were in magic and the power of evil spirits, could not attach as exclusive and correct a value to his works as we can, who know that to God alone belongs the power of setting aside or transcending

the laws of nature. Besides, every new discovery in science and every development of the mysteries of nature only teach us how utterly helpless all known or latent principles of mere nature are to do such wonders as Christ wrought. How feebly compare the best efforts of those modern sciences claiming a sort of supernatural knowledge and power with the simple but direct and open exercises of miraculous power manifested by Christ, in feeding the multitude, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead and buried ! Brethren, can these things be so, and you feel no lively interest in your religion, no eager wish to understand it, to study its records, to meditate its doctrines, and to frame your lives by its rules ? Is it not worth your while to stop the hurrying train of business, to forego some advantages of worldly success, and settle with yourselves these questions : — Is or is not the Gospel true ? and what is the truth in the Gospel ? I am sure no man can fairly consider these questions without feeling that indifference to religion is the greatest of follies ; that much for which we are delving and slaving is comparatively worthless ; and that in pursuing the pleasures and interests of the world, to the neglect of virtue, duty, and the hope of immortality, we are digging cisterns that hold no water, and choking and filling up the fountain of life. If Christ be risen, we are immortal creatures on our way to judgment. “ If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God ; when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

SERMON XIII.

BY EZRA S. GANNETT.



TRUST IN GOD.

THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST IN HIM.—Job xiii. 15.

THERE is a state of mind, into which many persons are led by their acquaintance with life, to which in fact but few persons of thoughtful and serious habits, I apprehend, are wholly strangers. It is produced by experiencing or observing the discipline which falls upon individuals in such various forms and with such different degrees of severity, and which, in many cases as they singly arise, and in a multitude of cases as we extend our view over any considerable portion of society, it is so difficult to reconcile with the goodness of God. The consciousness of this state of mind is often attended with self-reproach, or is endured as irremediable, when a right understanding of its character might show that it neither is a proper occasion for blame, nor is incapable of alleviation. It is not unbelief, nor is it rebellion or resistance to the Divine will ; for it is acknowledged by those who entertain no doubts concerning the existence, perfection, providence, and moral government of God. It is a mixture of surprise and pain, of suffering caused by the

events of life, and of wonder that such events should fall within the Divine providence. It expresses itself in exclamations like these, — How dark ! how mysterious ! or in questions like these, — Why am I or my friend doomed to such an experience ? what have I done that I should be called to endure such a peculiarity or accumulation of trial ? It is, in a word, the state of mind which is awakened on beholding the dark side of life in some of its gloomiest aspects. It is the strife of the soul with its own experience, when difficulties and disappointments embarrass its ascent into that region of heavenly contemplation where things are seen in their true shapes and actual relations. It is the struggle of the mind to reconcile what it believes with what it sees, the weariness of the heart when it finds that its patience must be stronger than its hope. It has been known to men of a reflective and religious cast of mind in all ages. It was the trial through which Job is represented as passing, and the recognition of this state of mind in him will open to us the meaning of many passages which he is made to utter. It is nowhere, perhaps, better described, than in the words which a living poet of England puts into the mouth of another : —

“I bear an earnest Christian faith ;
I never shrunk at thought of death ;
I know the rapt’rous light of heaven,
To man’s unscalèd vision given ; —
My spirit is not blind : — but when
The tortures of my brother-men,
The famine of gray hairs,
The sick beds of the poor,
Life’s daily stinging cares
That crowd the proudest door,
The tombs of the long-loved,

The slowly broken heart,
Come thronging thick about me,
Close in the world without me,
How should I not despond?
How can I stretch my sight so far
As where things blest and holy are?
My mortal nature is too frail
To penetrate the sable veil, —
I cannot see beyond.”

We “cannot see,” — that is the heart of the difficulty. We long for a vision which we cannot obtain; and, failing to obtain it, we fall back upon our amazement and our suffering, — the perplexity which tortures our hearts, and the experience which does not unsettle, but disquiets our faith.

Now, in regard to this state of mind, my first remark is, that it is perfectly natural, and therefore we ought not to be either surprised or distressed that it comes to us. *It comes to us*; we do not go in pursuit of it. It is, with many of us, inevitable. It is the fruit of what we observe or what we feel, and we might with as much propriety blame ourselves for the unpleasant sensations which a harsh wind causes, as for the uncomfortable moods through which the spirit is compelled to pass as a consequence of its exposure to the sterner discipline of life. One error, indeed, we are apt to commit, in exaggerating the amount of evil that falls to our own lot, or that is endured by our fellow-men. It may not be an absolute exaggeration, but in a comparative judgment of things we overstate the amount. Many a person has thought his own case peculiar, or regarded himself as an example of unequalled suffering; when, if he could have looked into other homes and other hearts, he would have found those whose condition resembled

his in its most painful circumstances, and some whose burdens were heavier than his own. In considering, also, the severity and variety of trial which claim our notice in the world about us, we must not forget the number and diversity of blessings which the Father of all bestows on his children, — in unequal portions, it is true, but in such abundance as vastly outweighs the sum total of appointed or permitted suffering.

Yet, under these restrictions or corrections, there still remains substantially the same state of mind of which I have spoken. And now, my friends, I ask you to observe a special evidence of God's love arising out of this very consciousness of human souls. It is a well-known principle of the Divine government, that it provides a compensation for every evil which it introduces, or which it allows to have a place in the course of human experience. There is no suffering for which there is not some means of relief, and with which is not connected some spiritual advantage. Even sin, that evil of our own production, is not permitted to form an exception to this remark. Mercy is provided to meet the condition into which man brings himself through sin, and against the agony of remorse is set the delight of restoration to a Father's love. We may expect, therefore, to find some provision made for the distress which the mind encounters through its inability to solve the mysteries of life. And in this expectation we shall not be disappointed. For just the case which I have described relief is provided ; the soul need not prey on its own want. A way of escape from this terrible discontent with the dealings of Providence, this virtual impeachment of the Divine wisdom and goodness, is opened, through an exercise of which the soul is naturally capable, but of

the value and extent of which it could not have known without the experience that calls it forth.

The relief to which I would point, the remedy for the state of mind which we are considering, is trust in God, — simple, steadfast, equal trust, which the mind is capable of exercising under the greatest suffering, but which it never would exercise to the full extent of its capacity if it were not subject to such suffering. And this trust, let me observe, in further illustration of the Divine love that overrules our lives, is the only remedy of which the case admits. Nothing else would relieve the consciousness of want. If we could see through all God's arrangements, we should probably find, alike in the moral and the physical worlds, that each evil has its specific remedy. Here, at least, we discover a provision in the original capacities of our nature exactly suited to the exigency it is meant to relieve. The unhappiness which is a consequence of the limited range of our spiritual vision is removed by the unbounded trust which we may repose in God.

The justification, as well as foundation, of such a trust is our faith in God. We believe in Him as a Being of infinite perfections, the righteous Governor, the all-wise Disposer, the Heavenly Father. These are familiar words, so familiar that we are blind to their significance. They mean more than tongue can tell; they mean every thing that the mind can inquire after, or the heart sigh for. They are the keys that unlock the treasures of the universe; the instruments that open for us the nourishing sweetness of life, that spiritual life of which our visible experience is often but the hard and bitter rind. If we will allow them to convey into our minds so much of their meaning as we are capable of appre-

hending, we shall perceive the justice of our reposing a perfect trust in Him who not only cannot do wrong, but all whose ways must be faithfulness and kindness towards us. *Must be*, I say. I do not attempt to show how they bear this character. In many instances they *seem* to bear a different character. But in these instances we must not let the appearance mislead our judgment. If God is God, then he is both great and good. If I believe in the teaching of Jesus Christ, I believe that God is the Father ; and believing this, I know that his providence must be faithful and kind in its relations to us. Trials must be disguised blessings. Affliction must be parental discipline. Death must be the security and enlargement of life. Even punishment must be beneficent in its purpose, as well as righteous in its character. There can be nothing wrong in the providence or government of God, nothing which is not both reconcilable and harmonious with the displays of his love that strike even the most careless or skeptical observer. The examples of suffering which we pronounce inexplicable, which disturb our peace or vex our faith, — the examples of lonely struggle, of incessant pain, of overwhelming grief, of accumulating bereavement, — or of social injustice, of blasted usefulness, of imprisoned hope, — these, and worse, if worse there be, are not proofs of Divine inconsistency. They are not even episodal, but essential parts of a perfect whole ; not parenthetical sentences, if I may so speak, in the book of life, which God's hand is ever writing out, but passages which could not be spared without impairing its sense or destroying its connection. All this must be true, if our faith in God be not a delusion. And if it be not, and all this be true, then a constant and entire trust in Him is just as reason-

able, just as proper, just as clear a duty, and just as delightful a privilege, as gratitude for mercies which we can distinctly trace to his goodness, or prayer for blessings which he has promised to bestow on those who ask for them. Simple, patient trust, this is what we ought to maintain, unless we mean to forsake Christ and deny the Heavenly Father.

And such trust is what we need ; what at some time in the course of our lives, perhaps often, most of us, if not all, will require as their defence against the assaults of trouble, their refuge from the storm that will beat upon them ; what at other times we shall all need, as we look over the condition of our fellow-men, and see so much which we cannot understand, and should in vain try to relieve. I know that a large proportion of human suffering is the consequence of a violation, either voluntary or through ignorance inevitable, of what are called the natural laws by which life should be regulated ; and I know, also, that society is the author, through its institutions, of an incalculable amount of individual distress. But the difficulty which presses upon the mind that would understand God's ways does not vanish before such knowledge. It is only removed from one position to another. Why is society permitted to be the author of so much harm to them whom it should infold in its protection ? Why are multitudes so situated that they must be unconscious transgressors of the laws on which comfort, health, and virtue depend ? Religious philosophy may boast that it can answer these questions, but its boasting is like that of the child, who, because he can perform the operations of simple arithmetic, imagines that he can solve the problems of the higher mathematics. Philosophy has not yet learned far

enough. Nor do I believe that it ever will in this life. And besides, there are seasons of personal experience, when, in spite of all that philosophy and Christianity can do for the heart, the only interpretation of its groans is, — Why is this? Why am I so afflicted? — seasons, when

“ We grasp at words and find them meaningless,
Bind thoughts together that will not be bound,
But burst asunder at the very time
We hold them closest ; — find we are awake
The while we seem to dream, and find we dream
The while we seem to be the most awake.”

In such hours we must have a filial trust in God, or we shall be tossed from doubt to doubt, from sorrow to sorrow, like the weed which the sea breaks upon the rocks. We grow tired of asking questions which no one can answer. We grow tired of reasoning which does not satisfy us. We grow tired of explanations which are no explanations to us. We long for rest, for peace ; and we can find it only as we take into our souls the meaning and application of the Saviour's words, “ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

There we may find it, for this trust is sufficient for our greatest necessities. This calm, confiding reliance on God will comfort and sustain us when nothing else can, — when sympathy can only smooth the surface of our grief, when instruction can but lay its vain commands upon a restless mind, when the bruised heart would continue to throb with anguish, even if the music of heaven were sent to charm away its pain. Even then, in those bitter moments, the soul that puts its trust in God can command its sorrows and its passions, can be meekly submissive, even as Jesus was when amidst

the agonies of the cross he maintained that wonderful composure which extorted the admiration, and the self-condemnation, of those who had clamored for his death. Trust in God will close our lips against all complaint, and repress every impatient emotion. It will regulate that feeling of insecurity which is so sure a consequence of bereavement, and will relieve us of that feeling of loneliness which is the heaviest part of our load. For we shall have placed our confidence, not in one who is afar off, but in the ever-present and omniscient One, in that guardian Power which never leaves us, that fatherly Love which never remits its tenderness. Implant this sentiment in your heart, child of suffering, and you will be strong to do, as well as patient to bear, God's will. Commit yourself to him, and you will escape from fear and anxiety, from all irritation at the present or alarm concerning the future, from despondency and despair. Let the prospect before you be ever so gloomy, you will exclaim, in tranquil expectation, — "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Be obscurity your condition, be poverty your lot, let injustice fasten its fangs upon your reputation, let bereavement rob you of child and companion and friend, let sickness waste your frame, and ill-success wear out your energies, still you will be firm, as one who stands on solid ground, braced against an immovable support; you will be quiet, as one who having passed through great dangers is incapable of feeling apprehension; you will summon the remnant of your powers to the service of God, and gathering up your bleeding affections from the earth where they have fallen, torn from the objects to which they clung, you will bind them around the thought of that Being in whom the love or hope of his creatures can never meet with disappoint-

ment. Though others may regard you as living in a cold and dark world, you will not pronounce it such, for you will have learned with how much truth it has been said that "God's love is sunlight to the good," shedding radiance upon their minds and diffusing warmth through their hearts; and who does not know that the world and life, the present, the past, and the future, are what we judge them to be in the light under which we choose to view them? You are not alone in your experience, either of the need, or of the sufficiency, of this trust. Multitudes before you have endured the same conflicts, and have overcome through the same faith. Many around you are visited with similar afflictions, and are sustained and solaced by a like trust. In abodes of penury are toil-worn men and women, whose only possession is this trust, and whose only learning is that which they have gained in the school of Providence. In costly mansions are hearts which have been wrung with agony, and been quieted only by a surrender of themselves to God. Be encouraged by their example. Trust; perhaps it is all you can do. Do that, and be at peace.

Especially is this repose of the soul in God needed, and will be found sufficient, under the first shock of bereavement. That, I am sure, is not the time for elaborate comfort or violent exertion. Then we have little inclination, and little power, for those offices of inquiry or study which might reveal to us some of the reasons of God's dealings. Then, I conceive, the heart rather shrinks from a consideration of the benefits that may flow from our trouble. It seems too much like an attempt to balance our loss by a proportionate gain, and we involuntarily avoid what presents itself to our

thought as unfaithfulness to the memory of the departed. We are oppressed by an immediate calamity. We are enveloped in a cloud. We "cannot see." We can only *trust*. This is what I would address as my first and last counsel to the mourner at such a time,—trust in him who has called you to pass through the gloom. Abide beneath the shelter of this one truth, that God is good. Believe it. If I should attempt to prove it to you now, I should fail in my purpose, for you are not in a state to feel the force of such, or of any argument. But you can believe and trust, as Job did when his friends reproached him and he sat in the dust, as David did when his darling child was taken, as Jesus did when he said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Tell me not that this is inadequate consolation, that these are cold words of comfort to address to a stunned or aching heart. They are not comfortless words. No; they are words of the highest and best comfort. They direct the inquirer and the mourner to the Source of all light, strength, and peace. What if I cannot answer the questions which an irreverent curiosity or an impatient grief may propound? If I indicate the resource to which the mind may flee from all the doubt or distress that such questions create, I render the sufferer a better service than if I brought his whole experience within his comprehension. Communion with God is better than the knowledge which many persons crave. Trust can heal the wounds of the heart, when knowledge might only inform the intellect. What if I leave an atmosphere of mystery around human life? If I can lead you to believe that this is the atmosphere which the good God has appointed to be the element for our souls to breathe,

I shall inspire more contentment than if I could remove the mystery and let you see all things as they appear to beings of a higher order of existence ; for confidence in God is a surer spring of contentment than reliance on the accuracy of our own judgments. What if I say, we must " walk by faith, not by sight " ? Faith is the soul's vision of the Infinite, and this is better than an understanding of all that intervenes between us and the Infinite One. He who walks by faith walks safely.

" Perfect light
Might dazzle, not illuminate, our sight."

He who trusts in God secures a protection against surprise, an alleviation of all trouble. Here is an anodyne for the soul, which does not take away its consciousness, but subdues the irritation of its distress. If he who has discovered the means of producing brief insensibility to bodily pain be regarded as a benefactor of his race, what must not be the value of that solace which permanently controls the sharpness of mental suffering !

Above all, do not say that this is an unnatural course into which I would direct the exercises of the heart. Trust is not unnatural. On the contrary, it is the first and the last office to which our nature prompts us. Childhood is trustful, and in death man lays hold on his trust in God. There is a period of life when we are apt to think it a mark of greater wisdom to doubt than to believe, to inquire than to trust. But this is the period which separates the wisdom of experience from the simplicity of youth. As we go on in life, and learn to estimate more justly its dimensions, reaching from earth to heaven, and spreading themselves through the diversified experience of humanity, and learn, also, to understand ourselves better, in both our capacity and

our inability, we come back to the habit of our early years, and renew our trust in a care and guidance which are not our own. This is the second childhood of the soul, not that mental imbecility over which we mourn when we see it in the aged, but the indulgence of that childlike disposition which Jesus commended when he said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." This docile and confiding temper is agreeable to our nature; for a time, indeed, checked by self-esteem, but really its proper growth. In persuading you, then, to trust in God when that state of mind which we have been considering recurs within your experience, I do but oppose one natural feeling to another. Let me entreat you, my friends, to cherish this trust. In all your perplexity and all your trouble, wait on Him who cannot err, in the confidence of a filial piety. Be tranquil, be strong, through your conviction that the Father's love includes all events within its oversight and its plan. Find here your consolation. Seek here your duty. Let no shock throw your souls off from their reliance upon the Infinite One. Let no suffering corrode the integrity of your trust in Him. But feel your nearness to Him, his presence with you, remembering that

"Man does not live by joy alone,
But by the presence of the power of God."

SERMON XIV.

BY ANDREW P. PEABODY.

OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

I HAVE NOT FOUND THY WORKS PERFECT BEFORE GOD. — Revela-
tion iii. 2.

THE religious life comprises both sentiment and action, — feeling, and its appropriate expression in word and deed. Each of these languishes without the other. An outward religious walk grows careless and faulty, when not sustained by deep feeling; and, on the other hand, the religious sentiments become cold and languid, when not carried out in speech and life. This last, I apprehend, is a very common case. I believe that there is a great deal of sincere religious feeling, where there is a sad lack of open, determined, consistent Christian speech and action. There are many who have great quickness and tenderness of feeling on all subjects connected with religion, — who enjoy the Scriptures and the public and private exercises of devotion, who cherish thoughts of heaven, and reach forth constantly towards a higher purity and spirituality of character, — who yet hang back from many of the obvious

outward duties of the religious life, and seem as to many matters of habit and practice to belong where at heart they do not belong. They are spiritual in thought and desire, and still quite worldly in life. They have benevolent feelings, yet in practice a very contracted charity. They are philanthropic at heart, and yet bestow cold words and no effort at all on the great moral enterprises for the redemption of their brethren. The consequence is, that they are perpetually doubtful and dissatisfied as to their own religious condition. Their best thoughts and feelings are often clouded over by despondency. They feel that, with all their aspirations, they are not growing in grace. Their faith, not made perfect by works, though sometimes strong and clear, is often frail and flickering. They do not realize the full blessedness that they desire and expect from religious sources. They feel rather as if poised between the two worlds, than as citizens of heaven. The wings of the spirit droop and languish, whenever they attempt to rise into the higher regions of meditation and devotion. Is not this too true a picture of many whom we could ill afford to lose from the household of faith, and on whom we trust that the Master looks with no unfriendly eye, but to whom his earnest exhortation would be, "Friends, go up higher"? Nay, is not this description in some degree applicable to all of us, who desire and endeavour to be Christians? Are our works as perfect as our notions of duty, — as pure as our devotional feelings, — as true to God and Christ as our hearts are in their best hours?

Now it is or may be very clear to all of us what a Christian ought to be. Christ is the disciple's only model. And what was he as to outward duty? First, pure,

gentle, unweariedly kind, forbearing and forgiving to the utmost, rigidly sincere and truthful, without a trace of resentment, pride, or envy ; — then, energetic, self-sacrificing, going straight onward in the way of duty, alike in good and in evil report, with the favoring or the opposing suffrages of those around him ; — then, again, unworldly, spiritual, self-consecrated, living as under the eye of God and at the gate of heaven. In fine, we cannot trace in his life the distinction, which may be too plainly traced in ours, between common and sacred seasons. We see him in the casual intercourse of the way-side, — at table with his friends, — in the retirement of home, and under these circumstances he seems no less holy and divine than when he prays on the mountain, or bears his cross through the streets of Jerusalem. But do not we, professed disciples of Christ, lead, many of us, a sadly divided life ? Are we, in business and in pleasure, at our homes and in our social intercourse, towards the poor and the sinning, towards the cause of Christ and of man, all that we are at the communion-table ? Might we not, to the eye that could track us from month to month and see our hearts, seem different beings under different outward circumstances, — devout at church, yet often worldly at home, — sincere in prayer, and equally sincere in Mammon-worship, — when we think of it, thirsting for the praise of God, and yet, at other times, willing to forfeit it rather than to incur misconstruction or reproach from man, — at the altar praying, “ Thy kingdom come,” but elsewhere doing little or nothing to advance that kingdom ? Our fault (at least the fault which I would consider now) is, not that we lack right and good thoughts, desires, and purposes, but that we are prone

not to carry them with us when and where we most need them, — that we leave many departments of our speech and conduct governed by lower motives, and not by religious principle. And it seems to me that there is sometimes an almost stubborn determination to do this. We admit the control of religion in some things, and resist it or are deaf to it in others. We say to the fountain that ought to flow in and cleanse our whole hearts and lives, “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.”

I think that I have sufficiently defined the moral condition which I wish now to address ; and it seems appropriate to our communion season to inquire, — What are the chief obstacles in the way of our being in speech and life all that we ought to be, — all that with a good measure of sincerity we profess and intend to be ? In enumerating these obstacles, do not think that I am assuming a Pharisaic attitude, and casting the stone at my fellow-Christians as without sin myself. No. I am going to speak of obstacles which have lain in my own path, — of trials which I have keenly and painfully felt. I know that many of you have encountered the same, some of you, perhaps, without full consciousness of their nature, and I may therefore be able to show you your weak points, and to help you to renewed watchfulness and diligence at those points.

1. First among these obstacles I would name the love of ease. This is an infirmity of the flesh against which we all must struggle. In the early days of the Church, one had to mortify this at the outset, in order to make a Christian profession or to put on a Christian appearance. Self-denial fenced the very gate of the Church, and hedged in the disciple's whole path. None, there-

fore, entered or staid, but those who felt strong enough to bear the cross. But in these days a Christian profession implies no self-denial. One may maintain a decent standing in the Church without effort or sacrifice. The conditions for Christian communion are nowhere crushingly heavy. If one only lives as his fellow-worshippers do, refrains from vice, and attends upon the outward ordinances of religion, he encounters no censure or reproach from his brethren, to remind him of the Christian duties that he has left undone and the Christian graces that he has left uncultivated. He may also, in this negligent life, have some religious enjoyment. He will derive inward peace and satisfaction from the virtues which he does cultivate, and from the religious services to which he brings any degree of sincerity. He may be thankful to God and at peace with man. There may be nothing positively wrong in him to mar his happiness; and, because he is thus free from remorse and mental anguish, he may conclude that his spiritual condition is all that it ought to be.

Now is it not undeniable that very many (so-called) Christians make their ease the measure of their duty even to their own consciences, as if the Gospel rule of self-denial were abrogated, and man's convenience were God's law? How often is the plea of inconvenience urged as decisive against the most manifest demands for activity or claims of charity! Yet many of the most obvious forms of Christian obedience do require effort. Speech always reverent, considerate, just, and kind requires effort. It costs an effort to suppress the sally of wit that would make free with sacred names and hallowed associations, — to refrain the lips from censorious or disdainful words, — to stem

in behalf of the absent the flow of unrighteous scorn or calumny. It costs an effort to perform worthy works of Christian charity. Many part, not without a severe struggle, with money, — the very cheapest instrument of charity; and with many, who are not penurious, it requires an arduous effort to bestow the time, thought, and labor, without which no good can be done to men's minds and souls, nor yet their outward wants be met with any certainty. Every form of religious charity demands the sacrifice of ease, the tension of the mind, and the surrender of the best powers and affections to the work. It seems to me that the whole duty of a Christian demands as constant, though not so arduous and painful, self-denial as it did in the days of the Apostles, — that, though we may now go to heaven surrounded by our families and by all outward blessings, the appointed path demands full as much activity and energy, and permits as little selfish ease, as when Christians had to forsake kindred, wealth, and comfort, and to encounter stripes, the prison, and the stake.

Now, have we not all yielded more or less to the solicitations of ease, in opposition to the manifest claims of duty? If so, how is this obstacle to be met and overcome? I know not, except by deliberate and determined effort at the outset, in the faith that the effort will soon grow easy, and will meet a speedy reward. I have called the love of ease an infirmity of the flesh. It is emphatically so; for it is only bodily ease that we attain by holding ourselves back from duty. The soul meanwhile is not at ease, but is liable to doubt, disquiet, and self-dissatisfaction. The soul's true peace is in activity; its rest is onward and upward movement in the Saviour's foot-marks. And in a life of diligent and active

duty, one soon begins to realize the fulfilment of that promise, "My peace, — not as the world giveth," but, infinitely more, "my peace I give unto you." There is thus experienced a quietness and repose of spirit, a fullness of inward joy, a constant gladness of heart, from which he who has felt it will be unwilling to fall back upon the low and grovelling forms of ease to which so many cling. Thus is verified, in the experience of every active and faithful disciple, the promise of the Redeemer, that he who denies himself for his sake shall receive a hundred fold in the life that now is, as well as eternal joy in the life to come.

2. Another obstacle which stands greatly in the way of Christian duty is the opinion and fashion of our companions, associates, and friends, or, in its more extended form, general fashion and public opinion. This is so far right, and there are so many respects in which the disciple may go along with it, as to make deviation from it at the call of duty doubly arduous and painful. Yet there are points in which I suppose that every Christian is sometimes called upon to part company with those whose sympathy and good opinion he most loves, and to assume an attitude in which he may incur temporary suspicion or disesteem from the many who take for their creed, "Whatever is is right." This is particularly the case as to all subjects connected with the reform of existing and time-hallowed evils and sins. It is obvious that public opinion can never be in favor of any reform at its outset; for the existing state of things is simply the expression and result of public opinion, — things are as they are, because men think them right, and are willing to have them so. But if the world is ever to grow better, if sin is to be put away and ever-

lasting righteousness brought in, there must always be a higher, truer ground than that on which the many stand, and those who occupy it, no matter how conscientiously and prudently, will always incur reproach and obloquy. This is not a casual evil, or one that can in any way be prevented or obviated; but it has its source in the very constitution of society, and every one who would follow Christ should make up his mind to meet and bear it. For, on all these questions of reform, there cannot, in the light of the nineteenth century, be any reasonable doubt what the mind and the law of Christ is. Every one knows, that, as to the Temperance reform, our Saviour's sympathy is not with those who minister to their brethren's degradation, nor yet with those who love their own indulgence too well to forego it for a brother's good, nor yet with those who stand by and see the enormous guilt and woe in which drunkenness is sinking its uncounted millions, without an effort or a God-speed for their rescue; but with those who deny themselves what may make their brother sin, and who reach the hand to him to help him back to duty and to virtue. No one imagines now that the blessing of Christ rests on the battle-field or the garment rolled in blood; but all know, as well as they know their alphabets, that only the peacemakers and those who overcome evil with good can shelter themselves behind his approval. Among us, at least, all believe at heart that by the law of Christ men are not chattels, but free-born, and that his Gospel would break every yoke and unbind every chain. And so long as these momentous subjects are open to controversy, every Christian is sacredly bound to utter himself, and to pledge his example, influence, and effort, so far as they go, on the side of Christ

and of humanity ; and I believe that, so far as we have failed thus to speak and do, there is reserved for us the sentence, “ Inasmuch as ye did it not unto these my brethren, ye did it not unto me.”

And now let me ask (and I plead guilty myself), Is there one of us whom the tyranny of public opinion has not kept back from the free and honest discharge of his duty in some or all of these matters ? Has not fashion often sealed our lips, or forced from them timid, halfway utterances, if not utterances in which our words belied our hearts ? Think you that a Christian conscience ever prompted a sneer at the Temperance reform or its blessed fruits, or held a man back from efforts to reclaim his fallen brethren ? In these days, is it possible that a man can, without conscious blasphemy against the Gospel of peace, speak with approbation or with tolerance of such a war as at this moment is branding our nation with infamy ? Has any one of us ever given utterance to a pro-slavery sentiment, without knowing, at the moment, that he stood on expressly unchristian ground ? On these subjects it is timidity, a lack of moral courage, that has kept the great body of Christians silent and inactive, and has too often thrown into the hands of political agitators, scoffers, and unbelievers work which Christ has given to his Church to do, and which the Church must render a fearful account for not doing.

To place us right, my friends, on these momentous subjects, to prevent us from perjuring ourselves before God by giving countenance to what we know is unchristian, we need to think much of our final account, or rather, of our ever-present Judge, — of the cloud of heavenly witnesses, — of their unseen, yet not unfelt,

sympathy with every true and honest word and effort in behalf of virtue, peace, and freedom. We need to feel that we are members of a larger family, citizens of a more divine commonwealth, than that in which we dwell, — even of the Church of the redeemed and the brotherhood of angels. They, too, have a public opinion, universal and supreme, and its law is holiness, peace, and love. Let their favoring suffrage and unchanging sympathy raise us above the flickering breath of human praise.

3. But I must pass to yet another obstacle in the way of Christian duty, and that is diffidence or reserve beyond the due bounds of Christian modesty. A few, indeed, assume places and offices of duty, for which Providence has given them neither the ability nor the call, carried beyond their right sphere by a zeal not according to knowledge. But to one who assumes too much, there are a score who undervalue their own capacity of duty and of usefulness, shrink into a narrower sphere than Providence has marked out for them, and suppress efforts and influences which they would cheerfully bestow, did they not deem themselves incapable of doing much or any good. They are, it may be, the slaves neither of ease nor of public opinion; their only fear is of their own weakness and insignificance. They would throw themselves into this or that worthy cause or enterprise; but they think that they shall burden or embarrass it, or at least, that their weight will add nothing to it. They would gladly be lavish of faithful counsel and sincere sympathy; but the best that they can say they imagine will be as water spilt upon the ground. Words in season, words that might be the source of unspeakable consolation or moral good, mount to their

lips, and deeds of brotherly love tremble at their fingers' ends ; but diffidence ties the tongue and palsies the arm. How many precious opportunities of doing good are thus lost ! How many of the truest charities are thus dropped on their passage from heart to heart ! How much is there of the purest, holiest purpose registered on high which leaves no earthly record !

I am well convinced that here lies a fruitful source of inactivity and backwardness in the duties of the Christian life. Let it be obviated by a just self-study and self-knowledge, by self-respect without pride, by careful heed to the indications of Providence, by the contemplation of our actual places and relations in society, and of what we, in altered circumstances, might reasonably expect of others in ours. Let us have faith, too, in the dictates of sincere Christian feeling. Let us believe that no word or deed, prompted by a devout and faithful heart, can fail of its fitting end and recompense. Let us embody in speech or write out in action every dutiful, Godward, and benevolent thought, and regard all such thoughts as voices from our Father, designating our appropriate path of effort and influence.

But it is time for me to close. I have spoken of some chief obstacles in the way of Christian duty. Against the love of ease let us set the inward peace bestowed by Jesus. To earthly fashion and opinion, when defective, let us oppose the sentiment and sympathy of heaven. Let false modesty retreat before the clear voice of duty. And now, at the holy table, we are to strengthen our souls and to gird up our faith anew by Christian sentiments. We shall feel them here, I trust, and shall find our souls glowing with grat-

itude to God and Christ, and with love for man. In our homes to-day, in busy scenes of life to-morrow, through the week, the month, the year, let us write out these sentiments in prompt and active duty, that thus, while we seek to have our hearts right, we may also make our works perfect before God.

SERMON XV.

BY JAMES WALKER.

PERFECTION THE CHRISTIAN'S AIM.

THEREFORE, LEAVING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST,
LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION. — Hebrews vi. 1.

HOWEVER unlikely or impossible it is that we shall ever meet with a perfect man on this earth, still, if we were to meet with one, we should see, that, instead of being a monster, he would be of all men the most entirely natural, the most truly human. It is no objection to this, that when we see one yielding to a burst of inordinate passion, or carried away by excessive love of fame or money or pleasure, we are apt to say, "See there human nature, — poor human nature." And so we do, in a certain sense of that word, and perhaps in the most common sense; for the propensity in question is a human propensity, and in its existing and disproportionate state of development it is natural that a man should give way to it. It is a development of our nature which makes the miser or the voluptuary, but not, I contend, a *natural* development of our nature; and this is a distinction which a discriminating thinker will be

careful to observe. For there is a *natural* development of our nature and an *unnatural* development of our nature. The miser and the voluptuary become what they are in consequence of a development of human nature; but then it is in consequence of an unnatural, one-sided, distorted development of human nature. If human nature were developed naturally, that is to say, according to its just and intended order and proportions, there would be no misers or voluptuaries. The misers and the voluptuaries, — they are the monsters.

But if a perfect man would be so natural in all his ways, if human perfection would be nothing but a full and perfect development of human nature in its just and natural order and proportions, how happens it, some may ask, that we never meet with some of these paragons, — one, at least, in a nation, one in an age? Let me answer this question by bringing into view an analogous and familiar fact. Go into a forest, — nay, go from forest to forest, — and you cannot find a single perfect *tree*, — perfect, I mean, in every branch, in every leaf. Yet such a tree would be only true to its nature, — that is, perfectly natural. Most clearly, if such a tree could be found, it would not be a monster. Perhaps I shall be told, that the impossibility of actually finding such a tree is owing to external influences, — to the soil, the frost, the insects, the mildew. And so it is. But so, too, it is with man. His nature, also, while in its course of development, comes under countless influences from without of a most diverse character and tendency, some of which begin to operate before he is born, some of which are wrought into his physical organization, and some of which essentially modify his education and the whole structure of his moral and social being. Now under

such diverse and conflicting influences we do not say that he will become wholly bad or wholly good ; but we do say that the character he forms will be a mixed character ; it will not be a perfect character. The race growing up under such circumstances will not be divisible into the perfectly good and the perfectly bad ; but every individual will be partly good and partly bad. *Every* man's character will be, and must be, and is, *mixed*.

Accordingly Mr. Wesley has defined human perfection as being "such a degree of the love of God and the love of man, such a degree of the love of justice, truth, holiness, and purity, as will remove from the heart every contrary disposition towards God or man ; and that this should be our state of mind in every situation, in every circumstance of life." Even he, however, admits that this perfection, at its greatest height, does not include absolute freedom from error or mistake, nor exclude the possibility of continual progress in knowledge and holiness. We also find, that, as he grew older and wiser and saw more of the abuses to which the doctrine of perfection is liable, he was more and more disposed to modify it and soften it down ; until, in writing to one of his female disciples, who seems to have applied for advice under a desponding sense of her imperfection, he could say, — "Indeed, my judgment is, that (in this case particularly) to overdo is to undo ; and that to set perfection too high is the most effectual way of driving it out of the world."

Still, it is not to be denied that the advocates even of a nominal and qualified perfectionism like this have done not a little to suggest and foster hurtful and dangerous errors. In the first place, they have led men to be content

with inward states, — with an ideal and dreamy sort of goodness ; as if nothing more were required of us than that our *general* intentions and affections should be right ; or as if, though our *general* intentions and affections are right, we may not sin in particular acts, or in particular manifestations of feeling. Again, they have given countenance and currency to false and extremely unsafe views of temptation, by encouraging persons who think their hearts have been changed to believe that now they are in no danger ; that now they may expose themselves without fear to any form of seduction ; as if we did not know that the best men are liable to temptation, and liable to it the more in the same proportion as they are thrown off their guard by an overweening sense of their superiority to it. Worse than all, perfectionism is apt to degenerate into Antinomianism, perhaps the most pestilent and stupendous of all the perversions of religion, which teaches the indifference of outward conduct in the regenerate, making even injustice and sensuality to be no longer of the nature of sin when committed by those who have once been renewed by the grace of God.

We set aside, therefore, all expectation of actually meeting with perfection among men ; we confidently believe that under Christianity, as under Judaism, “there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” Still, there is nothing to hinder us from maintaining, as the Scriptures seem to do, the doctrine of human *perfectibility*. Perfectibility, as here used, differs from perfection in this, that a man may be pronounced perfectible though he never attains to perfection in fact, provided only that there is nothing in his nature itself to exclude the possibility of his perfection, and

nothing in his circumstances to exclude the possibility of his continually going on towards perfection.

While, therefore, we give up human perfection, we stand fast for *human perfectibility*. There are no arbitrary or determinate bounds set to any man's progress in this life, whatever may be his condition and circumstances. You cannot say, — "He can go so far, and there he must stop. He can go so far, and there he will meet a bar which will make further progress impossible." There is no such bar. The way is open to every one ; or, if not entirely open, there is nothing in the nature of the obstructions which makes them absolutely insuperable. I do not say, that in every instance a man can leap over these obstructions at an easy or a single bound. Sometimes he will be able to surmount them only by patience and toil ; and sometimes he will have to cut his way through them with courage and force. All I affirm is, that there is nothing in the nature of these obstructions, or of any other obstructions, which must needs bring his self-improvement to a stand for a day or an hour, so long as his faculties retain their natural vigor. Even while struggling with the difficulty in question, and before he has succeeded in mastering it, if he struggles manfully and in a true spirit, he is continually growing wiser and better and stronger in himself, through the new demand thus made on his energies, and the new exercise to which his faculties are thus put. I repeat it, then ; no limit is fixed or can be fixed to any man's progress, so long as his faculties retain their natural vigor, except by his own consent. I do not say simply, that man is a progressive being, but also, that he is a being capable of *unlimited* progress ; so that, of course, there is nothing too high for him to aim at, and nothing too good or too great to become the object of his aspirations.

This is all which I understand the Scriptures to mean in the text, and in other passages where they enjoin it upon us to be perfect, to go on unto perfection, and to become perfect men in Christ Jesus. They do not hold up this perfection as something of which any Christian can as yet be personally conscious, or on which he can look back as already attained, but as the goal in the distance after which all can and should continually aspire. "Not as though I had already attained," said an apostle, "or *were already perfect* ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself *to have apprehended* ; but this one thing I do, — forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

So far, then, and only so far, can the Christian doctrine of human perfectibility be fairly urged. Man is not only made capable of progress, but, with the aids which the Gospel supplies, of *unlimited* progress. The consequence is, that he can not only conceive of an ideal perfection, and see that perfection realized in Jesus Christ, but make it the object of his own aspirations, — not in his dreams alone, but in actual life, as there really is nothing in the way of his *continually advancing towards it* but the weakness or the perverseness of his own will. It is man himself who sets limits to his own wisdom and virtue ; and this he does by resting content with the degree of wisdom and virtue he has already attained, or by not choosing to make the efforts or the sacrifices necessary to further progress. It is a false and mean shifting of the blame from himself on

something else, to say that these limits were ordained by his nature, or his circumstances, or his Creator. It never is so. I do not suppose that all men, with their different capacities and opportunities, are capable of an equally *rapid* progress ; but I do suppose that they are equally capable of making *some* progress, and this, too, without limit, intermission, or end. There are no exceptions to this law. It is the universal condition of humanity. I know that we are not all spirit. We have a body as well as a soul,—a body with its grovelling appetites and tastes, and earthly tendencies, to weigh us down, and keep us from realizing in this life many of our brightest visions. But even while we continue connected with this body, and in some sense the slaves of it, we do not work like slaves tethered to a pillar, or a rock, which will let us go so far and no farther. We work rather like slaves with a clog ; we can go as far as we please, only we must carry our clog with us ; but with this cheering consciousness from day to day, that the greater our progress in wisdom and virtue, the less the clog is felt, until it is hardly perceptible as an obstacle, or even as a burden, in our onward course.

And here let it be distinctly understood, that when we speak of human perfectibility, we do not bring it in as a mere rhetorical flourish, or as a fine-sounding word which will help to point a moral, or turn a period. We mean all that we assert ; we bring into notice a sober fact, which has much to do with the direction and government of every man's daily conduct. We can go on continually towards perfection, though we never arrive at it ; we can make it to be our goal in the distance, after which we are continually to aspire, and which in reality we can

and ought continually to approximate. If we stop in the way, it is *of our own accord*, and not because we are obliged to stop. We can go on, *if we please*. Some, doubtless, can go on faster than others; but all can go on. This is the great truth which lies at the bottom of every well-grounded and immortal hope; which we are not at liberty to wink out of sight, or overlay and bury up under miserable commonplaces borrowed from superficial views of life and human nature, or the short-sighted cunning of this world. Bring me the man who has become so wise that he cannot become any wiser. You cannot do it. Bring me the man who has become so good that he cannot become any better. You cannot do it. You cannot fill a man's mind with knowledge until it cannot hold any more, as you can fill a vessel with water until it cannot hold any more. On the contrary, every new acquisition of truth only serves to enlarge his mind for the comprehension of more truth, so that the more he knows, the more is he in a condition to learn. And the same is likewise true of his progress in virtue. Because he mastered one bad habit yesterday, that has not destroyed, but only increased, his power to master another bad habit to-day; because he put forth one new virtue yesterday, that has not destroyed, but only increased, his power to put forth another to-day; and so on, without any assignable limits. The Bible fixes no limits; our nature fixes none; neither reason nor imagination can fix any. But this ability to go on involves the *obligation* to go on. If he stops, no matter in what stage of his progress, he goes backward; for in stopping he ceases to improve, and this is not merely not to obey, it is to disobey. He must go on; and thus it is, and only thus, that the path of the righteous, at first

dimly and uncertainly seen, grows brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

Let me add, that I express the doctrine too tamely when I say that man is *capable* of unlimited progress. There burns within him an instinctive desire of growth, of ceaseless progress. This principle begins to manifest itself long before that of a cool and calculating selfishness. You see it in the boy, who is not satisfied unless he can spin his top, or fly his kite, better and better ; and he would feel this desire and find pleasure in its gratification, even if he dwelt alone on a desolate island, apart from all thoughts of interest or rivalry. Or if you call it rivalry, then I should say that every man is made, in the very constitution of his nature, to be the rival of his *past* self. We see it also in the artist, whose eye has caught glimpses of an unearthly beauty, which he strives to bring out and embody on the canvas or in marble. And at last, perhaps, he succeeds ; but now his eye has caught glimpses of a beauty still more transcendent, and he is not satisfied until he can realize that. And thus it is that his ideal of excellence in art for ever flies before him ; but not in vain, as it only flies to beckon him on from excellence to excellence, and from glory to glory. The same principle takes effect also in our whole moral and spiritual life, for we are so made, that, if our minds are in a healthy state, we are never entirely satisfied with what we are. We are always seeking to rival and outdo our former selves ; but no harm is likely to come of emulation or of competition, so long as a man is his own rival ; or of ambition, if it does but consist in this inextinguishable thirst for excellence itself.

There is, however, one danger to be apprehended

from a too exclusive occupation of the mind on ideal visions of excellence and perfection, which I ought to notice distinctly before I conclude. Persons of this description, it has been said, "are deeply impressed with the idea that they are required to be *perfect before God*; but their idea of perfection being altogether of an abstract and spiritual character, the zealous fulfilment of ordinary duties, and a conscientious attention to common transactions, seem to have no affinity to their object; and hence they direct all their longings to a state of spiritual and vague feeling, of which they know not either the form or limits, and the desire of which has no tendency but to unfit them for all effectual and successful discharge of the duties of life. It is, perhaps, the besetting error of those who are commonly denominated serious and pious men; — and it is also not unfrequently the last refuge of those, who, having run, in preceding portions of their lives, a career of thoughtlessness and folly, at last betake themselves to this *vain sighing after perfection*, — instead of devoting themselves, as true wisdom would direct them, to a zealous and persevering reformation of their whole plan of life, and to an effectual discharge of every duty pointed out to them, — as active and social, as religious and moral beings."

There is much good-sense and force in this caution; but it only shows that the instinctive desire of perfection, which is wrought into our very constitution, may be misconceived, perverted, and abused. The *idea of perfection* is held up before us, not to be the object of vain longings and sighings, but to cheer and sustain us in the many weary steps we must take in its pursuit. We are still to reflect, that we must actually traverse

with our own feet the almost measureless distance that separates us from the far-off goal ; and also, that if a man is to go round the globe, he cannot take any longer strides than if he were going to the next village. Besides, perfection, after all, is our *ultimate* object ; not our *next* and *immediate* object. Our next and immediate object, both as men and as Christians, is always the faithful discharge of the common and obvious and present duties which press upon us in that particular sphere of activity, be it high or low, in which Divine Providence has placed us.

Only a small and comparatively inconsiderable part of this unlimited progress in knowledge and holiness is to be wrought out here, even by the most diligent and best disposed. But we can *begin* it here ; perhaps I ought to say, we *must* begin it here ; for there may be something in the character of the *first* attainments of spiritual growth, in consequence of which, if we throw away our opportunity of making them here, it may never be offered to us again. Heaven itself, for aught we know to the contrary, may be a place in which it is impossible for a man to *begin* a life of faith and prayer. However this may be, is it not a glorious thought that we can begin the career of angels and archangels in these dwellings of dust ? How much more glorious the thought, that, when these dwellings of dust are dissolved, we shall " be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." But who shall dare to anticipate, even in imagination, the stupendous disclosures that are to burst upon the disembodied spirit ? Of one thing, however, we may be sure ; a never-ending, ever-brightening career of knowledge, improvement, and happiness will still spread

itself out before the followers of Christ, — the same which they began here. And along the innumerable ranks of the heavenly host, a voice will still be heard proclaiming the law, "Let us go on unto perfection."

SERMON XVI.

BY CHANDLER ROBBINS.



THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD. —

Joshua xxiv. 15.

THIS was the pious resolve of one of the greatest rulers and generals of the ancient Hebrews. His valor, his virtues, and his many patriotic services had secured the respect and gratitude of his nation, and acquired for him a powerful influence over the people. He employs this influence earnestly and faithfully on the side of religion and virtue. He exhorts and persuades his countrymen to preserve the pure worship of the one living and true God, and to walk in all the statutes and ordinances of his law blamelessly and perseveringly. By every argument he can urge, by every motive he can offer, he seeks to convince them of the reasonableness, the safety, and the advantage of a religious life, and to induce them to pursue and maintain it. He recounts the signal favors of God to them and to their fathers, — appealing to their gratitude. He reminds them of the Divine promises and threatenings, — addressing, alternately, their hopes and their fears. And, to crown all,

— to give the last and strongest stamp to his wise admonitions, — he declares, publicly, solemnly, with all the emphasis that attaches to the word of a brave and resolute man, that, whatever might be the effect of his counsels, whatever the choice and habit of the rest of the people, as for himself and his own family, they should be devoted to the service of the Lord.

And what was the effect of these sound admonitions, seconded by his faithful example? That proud, vacillating, rebellious people, kindled to a noble religious enthusiasm, responded, with one consent, “God forbid that *we* should forsake the Lord! We also will serve him, for he is our God.”

Nor was this merely a momentary transport of virtuous feeling, excited by the popularity of their venerable commander. It was a strong and determined purpose to imitate his worthy example. For when Joshua, who knew their national weaknesses well enough to make him suspicious of their sincerity, proceeded to put their resolution to the test, they stood the trial manfully. Seeing the hastiness and warmth with which they responded to his first appeal, and fearing that their determination might be lightly, because suddenly, made, he changes his tone to one of deeper seriousness and caution, and says, — “Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; if ye forsake him, he will do you hurt and consume you.” But still the people answered, in the confidence of their good purpose, — “Nay, but we will serve him.” This did not quite satisfy their sagacious ruler, and he said unto them again, — “Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve him.” And again the people boldly replied, — “We are witnesses.” This was even

once more repeated, and afterwards a solemn covenant was entered into between the people and their commander, to the effect that they would hold to the promise they had made. And the historian further informs us, that "Israel *did* serve the Lord, all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived him."

So deep, so strong, so enduring, is the influence of a devotedly righteous and religious man, — of one whose example is the stamp of his instructions.

The saying of Joshua, which I have chosen as the subject of this discourse, embodies profound wisdom, no less than earnest piety. Here was a great man, whose whole life had been spent in offices of influence and command, at the very hour when his sway over the popular mind was the strongest and widest, expressing most emphatically his conviction, that, after all, he had but one narrow sphere in which his authority was paramount and sure, — one little realm for whose right ordering and religious fidelity he must hold himself answerable, — one narrow kingdom entirely subject to his personal control, — and that was his own household. He might command armies, he might give laws to provinces, he might execute judgment amongst the people, and rule in their assemblies; but when it came to the question of moral and spiritual discipline, a much more limited horizon circumscribed his power, a far more humble domain was committed to his actual inspection and government. From the broad field of his conquests, from the vast spread of his rule, he came back to his own fireside; he turned his thoughts to his own family, with the strong and wise conviction that his religious throne was there, — that the subjects of his direct moral empire were they who were born and bred within its

gates. *There* and over them he *had* authority. Here he could establish* and *could* maintain religious sentiments and religious services. Within those walls he *could* keep alive a pure altar-fire of domestic worship, and enforce the statutes of the Almighty. He was master there, and his mastery should secure therein the service of God. Yea, if all the people of the land should corrupt their ways and decline from the fear of the Most High, though they should forsake his ordinances and set up strange gods in their dwellings, piety should still find one sacred retreat, religion one safe asylum, virtue one sure abiding-place ; — “ As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Away from home, abroad, abroad, for a field of influence, for a sphere of moral and religious activity, — is the cry of inexperience, is the longing of youthful ambition, is the craving of vanity ; but *true* wisdom, I believe, with all its breadth of virtuous aim, with all its expansion of philanthropic feeling, has learned and teaches a different lesson, — that concentration and continuity of attention and effort is the law of nature and the great secret of moral and religious success. That the light of virtue is to be diffused from central points of intense and intenser radiance, as the natural light from burning suns and stars.

In looking about for the best means for reforming society, for Christianizing the world, some men may select one instrument and some another, — some men may invent this theory, and some advocate that, — but the truly wise man will never overlook the *family relation*, will never undervalue the influence of home. On the contrary, the more he observes and the more he reflects, the greater importance will it assume in his

regard, the more beautiful and wise will this divine institution appear, the more carefully will he devote himself to the religious ordering of his own household, the more earnestly will he urge upon others to turn their attention to domestic education.

Grouped together, as we are, by God, in little communities, to whose few constituents we are more tenderly bound than to all the world beside, in whose sphere our influence is unceasing and our example effectual, day after day, what an opportune and beautiful field of Christian effort, did we rightly consider it, is opened to us here, — to Christianize home ! to be a minister of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to one's kindred ! This is the *natural* way, if I may so speak, of propagating Christianity. And we may easily discover what degree of importance was attached to it in early Christian times, if we read the strong injunctions of the Apostle to the Gentiles upon those who held office and dignity in the church, to look well to their own households, to show piety at home, to regulate the family wisely, and train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Indeed, those only were considered fit to teach and govern in the church who were competent religiously to instruct, and did religiously regulate, their own households. A most wise and salutary rule, — worthy to be applied in this and every age, not only to offices of honor in the church, but to every responsible position in life ; for if a man cannot, or will not, prudently and virtuously order the affairs of that lesser kingdom, how can he be securely trusted with those of a more extensive sphere ? That is, after all, the best test of his character, the best proof of his moral influence and power.

There appears to be an increasing tendency, at the present day, to undervalue domestic influences and enjoyments, in comparison with other means of improvement and happiness. Many of the habits of what is called a highly civilized community have the effect to loosen the bonds of kindred and diminish the attractions of home. The demands of fashionable society occupy more and more of the time and interest of those who live in its enchanted atmosphere. A perpetual routine of formal visiting draws many away from the family circle. A growing passion for more exciting pleasures vitiates the pure and healthy taste which is gratified by simple, fireside enjoyments. Social obligations and engagements rapidly increase in number and complexity. The variety of accomplishments which are esteemed essential to a good education is continually enlarging, and claiming more thought and time which could otherwise be bestowed upon the duties and pleasures of the family ; whilst literary and scientific associations and lectures, and musical entertainments, have multiplied almost without limit, enticing the young and the old, fathers and mothers, to spend abroad as many evenings as can be spared from other exciting amusements and assemblies.

I think that we already see and feel the evils which are resulting from this tendency. They are variously manifested in the characters of the young of the rising generation, whose greatest deficiencies are precisely those which could only be remedied by a larger and longer appliance of the influences and the education of a well-governed home. The unfolding mind and heart of an immortal being need more shade, more careful and delicate training, more judicious and gentle restraint, in order to their

most beautiful and healthy development, than they are accustomed nowadays to receive. The nurture and management of children are too often delegated by parents to others. They are too apt to consider that they have discharged their obligation when they have provided the best masters whose services they can afford to purchase, and sent their children to reputable schools. Such parents have a very imperfect appreciation of the duty which God has laid upon them, as well as of the loss of satisfaction and happiness which themselves sustain. No time can be better improved than that which is devoted to the culture and discipline of a young mind and heart ; none can be occupied in any way that can afford more heartfelt gratification, both in the passage and in the remembrance. Why not ourselves stand in the relation of teachers, moral, intellectual, religious, to our children ? Why not employ ourselves more constantly in awakening their curiosity and exciting their interest in behalf of what is useful, beautiful, true, and good ? Is it because we have no time ? But how is it that we have no time ? Have we yet systematized our various occupations as well as we might ? Are there not some of them which are very trivial in comparison with this ? But how is it that we have no time ? Has not every day with many of us its wasted minutes ? Does every hour carry back to the chancery of heaven a good account of its use ? Could we not find time, if we were willing to undertake the labor, — if we felt as desirous as we ought to feel to discharge our duty ? Could we not find time, if we would dispense with some other occupations and amusements, some of which are of no real benefit, and some of which, perhaps, are of a questionable moral complexion ?

I have often admired, even with a feeling approaching to reverence, the sentiment and habit, in relation to the education of his children, of one of the most remarkable geniuses and scholars and voluminous writers of the last age. "I deny myself," he said, "my vesper meal, to work in my study, but I cannot deny myself the interruption that comes from my children." *He* found time, amidst a number of avocations and a press of duties which might appall the most industrious of us, to superintend, and even to conduct, the intellectual and moral culture of his offspring. And he could do this, because he acted upon *this* principle, — I would call it generous and noble, if it were not naturally prompted by a father's love : — "I will give to my dear children the *morning* pleasures and the instructions of my morning hours," — the brightest and best of the day, — "I can later work and read." He meant that, if either task must be done with greater heaviness and under greater pressure of resolution, it should not be the delightful and sacred duty of educating them. If either must suffer, *he* would suffer ; they should not, at his hands.

We are accustomed to hear much said of the value of *maternal* influence. And it can never be too highly appreciated. The mother is the centre of home. God has virtually placed the sceptre of that little kingdom in her hand. She may not be *called* the head, but the heart she is, and really, though not legally nor nominally, the head. She, if any one, can shape the destiny of future generations. She, if any one, can raise up a race of true women and men. She, if any one, can furnish our churches with their brightest ornaments and rear the living pillars of the state. And if she has been faithful, there is not a brave and strong man battling

with the world, who, in the hour of his sternest strife, is not made braver and stronger by the power of her influence, or by the memory of her love.

“ They sing us yet an ancient strain
Of him who with the Theban strove, —
The child of earth, who fought in vain
Against the child of Jove,
But still, when by his victor pressed,
Fell back upon his mother’s breast,
And gathered from his source of life
New vigor for the strife.
And thus, when half the spirit shrinks
In conflict with its giant foes,
And like Antæus, almost sinks
Beneath fate’s heavy blows,
And grief hath made the strong man wild,
Or feeble as a little child,
Then turns the stricken soul again
To her who sung it hopeful songs,
And cheered it in the fight with pain,
And armed it for the war of wrongs,
And sent it, with its powers unfurled,
To battle with the world,
Till love or memory does its part
To heal the bruises of the heart,
And sends it strengthened back, to dare
The struggle with despair.”

But there is danger lest, by lauding too highly and speaking too frequently of the mother’s duties at home, we may lead some to overlook and undervalue the duties and influence of the other parent in his family, — lest we afford excuse for the neglect — the lamentable, often shameful neglect — of the father in regard to domestic discipline and government, particularly the moral and religious control of his home.

I have somewhere seen a beautiful painting, representing a Christian mother, at the resurrection of the just, ascending, in company with her children, from the opening graves, — ascending towards the glorious presence of God, down from whose invisible throne rays of mild yet brilliant light are streaming upon the upturned faces of the lovely group, in whose expression the artist has skilfully blended the various emotions of awe, curiosity, wonder, delight, humility, trust, and love. It is a picture well calculated to produce a serious and yet pleasing impression. But one feels, as he beholds it, that there is something wanting, a painful void, an unaccountable omission, which fills the mind with questioning and regret. It represents to us, it is true, many ideas that are consolatory and delightful to the Christian in his anticipations of the future world. It shows us that death does not dissolve for ever the pleasant and hallowed ties that bind us together here. It shows us that the deep and pure affection subsisting between the Christian parent and the virtuous child will survive the mysterious change. It depicts, also, forcibly and happily, the enduring influence which a religious mother exerts over her offspring, — leading them securely through all the perils of this world, and not leaving them till it has conducted them in safety to heaven. But still it does not satisfy. Still the feeling returns, that there is a melancholy void in the group. Where is the other parent? Why is not the father there? Why has the painter portrayed the family group without the image of its natural head? Was it merely accidental? Was it because, in his opinion, it affected the beauty of his design? Was it painted for some father who had lost his children and their mother? Or has it a deeper moral?

Was it his object to typify the fact, that the father is more seldom interested and employed in the religious education of his children than the mother, — that he is less often found, at death, to be advancing in that strait and narrow way that leadeth upward to the throne of God ?

These are questions which I will not take it upon myself to answer. Every father can answer them for himself.

I am well aware that it is generally said by fathers, in palliation of the neglect to which I allude, that the unavoidable cares of business, and the anxious labor of providing worldly portions for their family, necessarily engross so much time and thought as to leave them little opportunity for domestic enjoyments and duties. Nor am I disposed to deny, that in some cases this may be a good and substantial excuse. But let us not be deceived. Let us honestly and rationally examine into its validity, — let us, like men of truth, see how far it is sound and righteous in our own case.

Is all this labor and care and anxiety of business absolutely necessary to the best welfare of our families ? Is it really for *their* sake, and their sake only, that so many fathers are thus enslaved to the cares of accumulation ? Is it really for the *good of their children* that so many are toiling to become rich ? Is it only a wise forethought for their best interests that leads so many to forego the moral improvement and innocent enjoyment of their families to-day, that they may provide them with abundance of worldly possessions against an uncertain to-morrow ? I wish it could be put directly to the consciences of those to whom I refer, whether it be really the generous and affectionate thought for

their families that goads them on in their chase after wealth, separately from the base motives of pride, vanity, avarice, and emulation. Or, if the motive be wholly generous, I should like to have their candid and deliberate judgment upon the question, whether such a procedure be *wise*, — whether they and their children do not lose by it incalculably more than they gain, even if they are successful in all their plans and toils of accumulation. Let every father answer these questions as a father, as a wise, conscientious, affectionate father should, and there cannot be a doubt to what conclusion he will arrive. Let him answer them as in the presence of God and in view of immortality, and the result cannot but be an increase of true happiness to his family and to himself, — a substantial improvement in his own character and in the moral condition of his household.

Give us Christian homes. Fathers, mothers, children, give us Christian homes, and we will give you a happy country, good government, a prosperous and peaceful age, sure and rapid social progress, quiet, steady, enduring moral and religious reform. Give us Christian homes, and we will soon give you all for which philanthropists are laboring, and the masses groaning, and the moral creation travailing. But let the domestic altar be forsaken, let family discipline be neglected, let household government and order be disregarded, and we shall have a rotten commonwealth, a dissolute and disorderly people, a prevalence of social wrongs, a religious paralysis and dearth, in spite of all our legislation, all our preaching, all our philanthropic movements, and all our beautiful systems of popular education.

Give us Christian homes. How can we believe in the power of a religion that cannot do this, — this, to

which the very force of our natural affections doth of itself so strongly impel ? How can we have confidence in the efficacy of that Christianity in a wider and more discouraging sphere, which fails of its benign effect in this narrower and more favorable field ? How can we give our heartiest sanction to that specious religion or that specious philanthropy, which, professedly aiming to make the whole earth a paradise of love, forgets to prepare an Eden in the very spot where it abides ?

Give us Christian homes. Earth affords no worthier employment ; the true heart can find no happier duty ; humanity urges no prior claim ; Christ points to no holier work ; our Heavenly Father smiles upon no more acceptable service.

SERMON XVII.

BY GEORGE E. ELLIS.



HOUSEHOLD IMPEDIMENTS.

FOR I AM COME TO SET A MAN AT VARIANCE AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND THE DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW. AND A MAN'S FOES SHALL BE THEY OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD. — Matthew x. 35, 36.

THIS is one of a few passages coming from the lips of Jesus Christ which many devout readers marvel at, wondering what they mean, and wishing that they were not found in a sacred record. There seems something so opposite to the gentle, affectionate, and harmonious influences of true religion in these domestic alienations and antipathies, that the passage which we have read has disturbed many persons, who find relief in passing it over. Now there are manifest reasons, too evident to require mention, why it is not well for us to wish any passage out of the New Testament which we find in it. It is not well for us to allow any exceptions to the reverence and confidence of our minds for all that it contains. Passages which are stumbling-blocks to our reason or our faith must be carefully and candidly examined; we must connect some meaning with them, and, instead of leaving them to be a constant anxiety to

us, we must seek, not only to remove from them their offence or cause of misgiving, but we must make them instructive too. What, then, shall we say of this passage? The most common explanation of this passage has been found in referring it to the case of the first Christians, under the persecutions and trials of every kind to which their new faith subjected them. Households would be divided in those early days, and a believer would find himself associated in the closest ties of life with unbelievers. In a pagan or a Jewish family, there might be one Christian convert, — father or mother, son or daughter, — and the consequence would be that the faith of the convert would be subjected to the most harassing of all trials, the daily vexation of the hottest strife where there should be the sweetest peace. Discord would thus make religion to be a sword of division between hearts which shared all other interests in common.

Another explanation has been offered for this passage in supposing it to be prophetic of the sects and controversies by which Christians themselves would be divided. The fact that many households through so many ages have been thus alienated by sectarianism, by religious discords and variances among their members, has doubtless suggested the idea that the Saviour prophesied such a state of things, and that this is the meaning of the passage which we have read. But this latter interpretation appears forced and unreasonable. The fact on which it proceeds is not of sufficient consequence, nor of such serious effect, as to fill out the sense of the passage. The former interpretation, which refers its meaning to times of persecution, is doubtless a just one. But the passage has not ceased to be without application in our peaceful times.

It is generally true, that those passages of Scripture which bear with their fullest force upon ancient times and a different state of things have a softened application to all times and to the ordinary condition of human affairs. There are now places, there always will be places until the complete conversion of the world, in which the literal meaning of this text will be fulfilled. And there is a softened application of the Saviour's language which meets the realities of life to all who would be his disciples now. We need not wish that text removed from the New Testament, or stumble at the assertion which it contains as if it were harsh and severe and forbidding. True, there is no longer a literal application of the words to Christians in general. The devout reception and obedience of the Christian faith will not alienate the affections of parents and children, of mothers and daughters, nor divide the members of a household by hostilities so as to make them foes. That was one of the most trying and afflictive incidents of the ages of persecution. Still, for us the text has a meaning and a milder application. Without doing violence to the sense of the passage, we may regard it as bringing to our minds the severe trial to which domestic life and all the familiarities of our household relations subject our Christian faith and duty. "A man's foes," said the Saviour's calm announcement, "shall be they of his own household." To us he repeats the lesson, and experience repeats it too, somewhat as in this milder form, — Your own domestic life will present the severest trials to your faith and obedience.

And is there not truth enough in that assertion to make it a valuable part of the sacred record for all time? Were I asked what is the hardest and most needful work

of a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, I should say that it is to be a Christian at home, in the nearest relations and affinities and familiarities of daily life. There are in those relations peculiar and constant exposures of the heart and character. What we call the great obligations of a Christian to others are occasional and temporary. Temptations and large trials come only at intervals, — they are prominent and remarkable matters, — and we can lay out our strength to resist them or to bear them. We are all of us better furnished for the emergencies of our lives, than to meet with faithfulness its ordinary tenor, its little matters, its trifles, its constant and habitual exposures. We can easily guard ourselves against great sins, — we find a difficulty in meeting small and incessant duties. There is, indeed, great meaning still left for us all in the text, which says that a man's foes shall be they of his own household. Not that any member of any household pretending to Christian faith or feeling would of set purpose oppose any other member of it in the attempt to live as a Christian. This may not be true. But it is true that, in any household and in all domestic relations, the incessant trials of principle and affection, the daily tasks of rectitude and grace, put all Christian principles to their severest test. Our risks are as numerous here as are our words and deeds.

All the duties of a Christian may be classed under three particulars, which embrace all his relations to God and man. The first is his own heart's culture, privately and all alone, by means of prayer, meditation, and self-training. The second is the whole range of his obligations to his fellow-men at large in the open world. The third is in his domestic concerns, in the sympathies and

cares and constant intercourse of household life. Now I say, and I say it with emphasis, that the hardest part of a Christian's duty lies in this third division, this last portion of his great obligations, — that which is found in the constant familiarities of home, in the household of daily fellowships. It is comparatively easy to fulfil the most public and the most private duties of a Christian course in life ; it is in the midway tasks that the labor is incessant and the exposure constant.

It is comparatively easy to train the thoughts to their spiritual exercise at set times in the lonely breast ; to use certain hours of the heart's privacy for meditation and prayer ; to cast the light of God's truth inward, till it brighten the chambers of the soul, and convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. In the secrecy of our solitary moments we are most able to be perfectly sincere, and when we take God alone for our witness and our judge, duty lies out all plain and inviting to the sobered mind.

It is comparatively easy, too, to fulfil the great public duties of a Christian life. The law of honesty and charity in the open world is so simple, so easily learned, so readily obeyed by the honest and right-principled man, that his path is all open before him. In our public relations with our fellow-men, a little caution will put us on our guard against the exhibition of our besetting infirmities. Our hearts are not all revealed there ; we are not constantly exposed nor incessantly tried. Intervals for relief, opportunities for rest from our large conflicts in life, enable us to learn prudence, and to be ordinarily influenced by the better principles of our character.

But it is not so amid the daily familiarities, the incessant, unrelaxing obligations and exposures of our house-

hold lives. There our duties are all multiplied ; they are the most severe, the most exacting, often the most trying to patience, and never yielding intervals of rest. It is hard to be a Christian at home. It seems as if the duty might be easy, but it is hard, and it is all the more difficult in the more uniform and ordinary tenor of home life. In the emergencies and extraordinary concerns of a household, such as sickness and bereavement, the Christian task of conduct and behaviour becomes more easy, because Christian feelings and sympathies are then intensely excited, the usual current of life is disturbed, and amid the familiarities of existence a changed feature is introduced. But in our home relations, day by day the stream must flow incessant from the heart ; and how hard it is to keep that stream without a ripple, — always pure, and never failing in its supply of gentle, sincere, and loving sympathies ! Some happy constitutional temperaments may make this duty a little more easy, while to other natural dispositions the difficulty is increased. But to all persons the difficulty is intelligible enough to give much meaning to the passage which speaks of a Christian's risk and trial in the household of his daily life.

Yet, after all, the impediments are not of a kind to admit of being accurately defined. To state them at length would be but to enumerate many homely truths, and to enter into particulars to which there would be no end in detail or explanation. The difficulty in general lies in this, — that amid all the trifles, and familiarities, and vexations, and incessant duties of daily life, it is hard to keep the mirror of the heart so smooth and bright that it shall always cast the reflection of heavenly peace and love which is the Christian picture of duty. Many per-

sons feel a shrinking reluctance to speak even of religious wants or feelings, or to profess religious purposes, to their partners in life or to their children. Probably the majority of professed Christians, if they were asked whether they were efficiently helped in the work of a Christian life by the members of their household, would say that they were not. The reason must be simply this, — the familiarities of daily life so exclusively relate to earthly things, that there is an awkwardness and a restraint in every attempt, made of set purpose, to mingle with them spiritual and heavenward concerns. Where we are wont to measure time by days and weeks, it is hard to introduce with equal familiarity the measurements of eternity. Where we meet repeatedly each day to share our bodily sustenance, the bread of heaven and the water of life may be expressive symbols, but they have the disadvantage as greater realities. The manifest duty to make home a pleasant place seems to conflict with the seriousness which is generally received as the prominent feature of religion. The little crossings of temper and uneasiness ruffle the peace of the breast, and render it difficult for us always to believe that we are in training for an angelic life. We talk so much together about trifles, that the introduction of the most elevating subjects seems too severe a change for our thoughts to undergo from one hour to another. Probably the place of all others where the great matters of science are least discussed is in a household, and the same reason why those high themes are excluded applies all the more forcibly to religious themes. A home may be brightened by love, and sanctified by the general influence of piety. But the details of religion are most difficult where the drapery of the spirit is hidden by the clothing of the mortal frame.

We are so associated as creatures of the earth, that we have but a general sense of our heavenly relations. Such incessant familiarity about earthly things bars out the more vivid view of heavenly things. The strength of the affections which unite us as mortals makes very unwelcome to us the thought which translates these bodily shapes to the misty and dim regions of the far-off land of spirits.

This, in general, is a statement of the difficulty besetting a complete Christian life in a household. Reflection and effort may dispel the difficulty in its several particulars. It is not insurmountable, but it is an actual trial, attended by many embarrassments, and involving a large measure of the whole task of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And as I have said of the difficulty itself, that it scarcely admits of being particularly defined, so I may say of the method of overcoming it, that it is a matter upon which no definite rules of duty can be laid down which may follow it into all its details. To say that we must endeavour to live and act religiously in our most familiar relations is but to repeat a lesson from the primer of our childhood, which then professed to us in vain, as larger treatises have professed to us since, to make religion easy. To say that we must artificially and by restraint force in religion within the household would be like bidding us to converse in a foreign language. These impediments, however, great and undefined as they are, come under that plain great law of the whole life of a Christian, that where our risk is greatest, our care should be most incessant. Each attempt of duty lightens its burden. By simply bearing in our minds a good purpose which we strongly desire to fulfil, we often wear our way on to

its accomplishment. There are some good ends which we may gain through any obstacle by dwelling much upon duty in respect to them, and repeating little efforts towards them. Thus slowly, but effectually, can we surmount the impediments which the incessant familiarities of household life present to a Christian. We must realize them for what they are ; we must turn the light of truth full upon them ; we must not fear them, but, committing them to the charge of a good conscience and a sincere heart, with patient labors multiplied and never discouraged, we must spread over an advancing life a pleasant task, which we shall love to see all completed at the close of life.

The course of thought which we have thus pursued admits of direct practical improvement. The greatest obstacles which a uniform religious spirit has to encounter are found in the incessant exposures of domestic life. Yet there, after all, true Christian piety may wear its loveliest aspect, and best pursue its ministrations of affection, and train our souls for the heavenly mansions. Nothing will give us so just a view of the real substance, value, and design of true religion as will an earnest practical endeavour to make it the guide of our household life. That endeavour will strip religion of the vague and visionary character which it has to many minds. It will make it less a matter of dreamy speculation and of formal observance, which are the two follies that have most perilled true piety. What value can attach to a creed which cannot be made to appear in those scenes of life where the heart and the conscience are most exercised ? What good influence can be ascribed to the formularies of religious belief and observance, if they are written merely upon the door-posts outside of the dwelling, and have no

authority within ? The effort to exhibit and really to possess a Christian temper and a kind heart about the concerns of household life will be a better test of absolute religion and of the essentials of revealed religion than criticism or philosophy can supply. It will never fail to indicate how much we may subtract from what we have been taught to regard as the essentials of religion, and how much we must add to the conditions which embrace all that the most rigid interpreters have ever thought to exact of disciples.

It is said by St. John, that, after one of the discourses of Jesus, "every one went to his own house." Doubtless the hearts and minds of many whom he addressed were then filled with reflections similar to those which we have now pursued. The true service of God, the true lessons of duty and of love, come with their most constant and impressive force to the mind in the household relations of life. There are gathered the objects of affection and of all responsible obligation. Parents and children are there to share the tenderest sympathies or the most wearing burdens of a mortal existence. Religion is there reduced to its very essence as a law of control and of culture. Whatever the bigot or the theorist may define to be essential, as a matter of creed or doctrine, will pass as of but little moment, when the test of daily action with the most intimate companions of our life is applied to it. There, too, in the household, springs up in attached hearts the hope of a reunion in a brighter world than this. That hope can live only on the purest affections. It can feed only upon what first brings it into being. Estrangement and discord, faithlessness and vice, in either member of a household, will throw a heavier cloud over that hope than will

any doubt of reason or any misgiving of the mind. Over the graves of those whom we have loved and faithfully served, with whom our earthly existence has been a pleasant fellowship of Christian experience, the hope of a restored home in the heavenly mansions asks no logic or argument to sustain it. It takes hold of the heart with a power which a personal revelation from the skies could scarcely strengthen.

These reflections, all of which will be expanded and enlarged upon farther than our limits have allowed us by every one who has admitted them to his own mind, will satisfy us that for the impediments which true Christian piety and love encounter in a household there is abundant compensation. Duty here, as everywhere else, wins by its performance a reward proportioned to its toil and difficulty. It comes within the large Christian promise, that "to him that overcometh it shall be given to eat of the tree of life."

SERMON XVIII.

BY GEORGE PUTNAM.

[DELIVERED JUNE 1, 1845.*]

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

WHEN I CALL TO REMEMBRANCE THE UNFEIGNED FAITH THAT IS IN THEE, WHICH DWELT FIRST IN THY GRANDMOTHER LOIS, AND THY MOTHER EUNICE; AND I AM PERSUADED THAT IN THEE ALSO. — 2 Timothy i. 5.

THIS text contains no doctrine of the Christian revelation. It is never appealed to in controversy between one system of divinity and another. It is never quoted to establish or elucidate any article of belief. It was private in its reference, and is neutral in its bearing, — touches no open question of faith or practice. I do not select it now as the basis of any religious opinion or ethical principle. Its whole purport and value consist in its associations, — in the feeling and thoughtfulness which it may awaken in our own breasts. I invoke your more hallowed imaginations, and that gracious sentiment which couples religion with home and household and early days, to give to the text a meaning, — a meaning more

* As this sermon sets forth the view which constitutes the main proposition of Dr. Bushnell's "Two Discourses on Christian Nurture," it may be proper to remark that it was preached two years before those discourses were published. — *Editor*.

for the heart than for the intellect. It is a text that means much to us, or means nothing, according to our mood.

It is pleasant to find the great Apostle, in the midst of those weighty instructions and grave counsels which were for the unfolding of the Gospel and the building up of the Church, descending, if it be a descent, to speak of those personal ties and early influences which so much shape the issues, though they share not the dignities, of human life. I like to hear the grave and aged Paul, with a mind intent on highest truth, and the great cares, perils, and designs that belonged to the apostolic era, addressing Timothy, his own beloved son in the faith, as he tenderly calls him, whom he had chosen to be his companion and successor in the work which he must soon surrender, and to whom he was now giving solemn and affectionate charge how to conduct the great ministry that was laid upon him, — I like to hear the chief Apostle remind his young friend and fellow-laborer, in such terms of homely simplicity, of the human origin of his unfeigned and happy faith, and of the ties by which it was bound up with domestic memories and filial obligations in that natural union of the heavenly and the human which makes religious faith clearer and stronger and homebred affections more sacred and salutary.

I like that unimportant and unnoticed text of Scripture better than many a verse on which the chief questions of theology are thought to hinge. "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." There is a something in the very names, — the homely and old-fashioned names, rather unfamiliar and unusual in

this generation, — there is a something in the very sound of them, which brings up to the fancy, and indeed to the memory of many of us, bygone times and scenes, when there was a more earnest, if not always judicious, religious nurture of the young in the domestic fold than in our day; times of a more primitive simplicity in faith and in manners; times of a more rural and artless life, when age exercised more authority and obtained more reverence, when Sabbaths were strictly kept, and the church had a greater sanctity investing its walls, and the Bible was loved and honored and read day by day, as God's very word, the law of the young and the comfort of the old; times of a positive and unquestioned faith, when the voice of prayer went up daily at almost every fireside, and men believed in the God of their Bibles, instead of the cold and impersonal abstractions of metaphysics, and in a veritable Providence, instead of natural laws and mechanical processes, to which modern science, passing wholly beyond its appropriate sphere of induction, is striving presumptuously to commit the government of the world and the destiny of our souls. Possibly those particular relationships which the Apostle mentions may be the very ones to bring up to some of us a picture of such times from our own early experience or observation. To the middle-aged the remembrance of a grandmother, and to those who are old now the remembrance of a mother, may call to mind a race very different from ourselves in Christian ideas, observances, and modes of influence, as well as in their whole aspect and manner of life. And our text, with its homely allusions, and those old names in it, now almost obsolete, I think must bring up to almost all minds an image of other times and old-

fashioned Christian homes, which they have heard of with interest, or else, perhaps, remember with a fond and tender and reverent recollection. All honor and reverence to the memory of that bygone generation, — the men and women of a strict and simple life, of a strong faith and hearty trust and humble prayer, and a sturdy will and purpose by which they ruled themselves and their households, yielding only to God's will, and to that with pious and unreserved submission, as Christ bade them! We owe them more honor and thanks than we can pay. What is best, wisest, strongest, and most Christian in ourselves, in our institutions, manners, and habits, has been imbibed from their spirit and transmitted through their hands. Whatever it be that brings them to mind, — their looks, their words, their domestic ways, and their walk with God, — whatever renews and perpetuates the fading image, be it a page of history, a fireside story, a reminiscence from childhood, or a text of Scripture, I love it, and will repeat and recall it with filial reverence and religious gladness.

It is not manly or wise to lament over the changes that take place in society from generation to generation. They must come, and always did come. We will not sadly inquire for the former days as better than these. They had their good and their evil, mixed in about the same proportions, probably, as our own days. We have lost some things that were good, but have doubtless gained others in their stead. We would avoid foolish and self-complacent boasting about universal light and wisdom, on the one hand, and repining thoughts and fears about a quick and fatal degeneracy, on the other. We could not bring back the olden time, if we would. It is presumptuous and unwise to say we would, if we could. But

there are some good lessons that we can learn from a former and simpler generation, better, I fear, than we can learn them of our own; and one of them I would speak of now. I refer to a great principle in education, namely, *the idea and the practice of a direct transmission of religious faith, principle, and piety from parent to child, from generation to generation, as a Christian duty and an office of domestic love and fidelity.*

It was the ancient idea in the Christian Church, that religious faith should be thus transmitted. The children of Christian parents were to inherit it from their parents, and not to be left to acquire it wholly for themselves, as they could, when grown up. The practice of infant baptism, which is traced back to the early days of the Church, was a recognition of this idea. By this rite the child was visibly received into the Christian fold, under an implied or express pledge on the parents' part that it should have a religious education, should be imbued with Christian faith and piety from the first. It was not to be left till children were grown up to see whether they would *choose* to be Christians or not. Parents were to see to it, as far as in them lay, that they should *grow up* Christians, and find themselves such when they arrived at mature age. In the original theory of the Church, regeneration was for those who had grown up out of the Church, bred as Jews or heathens, and on their conversion they were baptized in token of their being born into the Church. That was the baptism of repentance, conversion, regeneration. But the children of Christian parents were regarded as born within the Church, belonged from the first to the Christian fold, and were recognized as belonging to it by baptism in infancy, on the presumption that they would be brought

up in the Christian faith and character, and never need regeneration, as Jews or heathens did.

This was the theory. There would be exceptions in practice. Some parents would be unfaithful, and some unsuccessful, in their efforts to train up their children religiously. But these were regarded as exceptions. The theory was as I have stated. Education, not conversion or regeneration, was the main thing in a Christian society, and infant baptism expresses this important idea. The Baptist denomination in our time are probably as assiduous in training their children religiously as any other, and are in all respects as good Christians as any ; but in rejecting the ancient practice of infant baptism, and baptizing only converted adults, they reject the symbol of that great primitive idea of religious education. Their theory does not recognize that idea. It is excluded from their ritual. And in this I think their theory is wrong. It tends to make conversion every thing and education nothing. Every body is to be converted to Christianity after coming to mature age ; whereas, in the ancient Church, the theory and the hope was that the descendants of Christians should be so trained in Christianity that they would not need conversion to it. The conversion of the children of Christian parents ! I do not believe that the idea ever occurred to St. Paul. There is often need enough of it, but it arises in great part from the neglect of that other great idea which he brings to view in his allusion to that grandmother Lois and that mother Eunice, — the idea, namely, of Christian training, which is symbolized as a principle and a duty in the ordinance of infant baptism, and which, it is presumed, every Christian parent solemnly recognizes and assumes as a sacred duty, when he pre-

sents his unconscious child at the font. There are great ideas lying at the bottom of these simple rites of our religion, which we so lightly observe, or as lightly neglect.

But independently of primitive theories, or the church ordinances which embody and express them, this matter of Christian transmission and religious nurture claims our earnest consideration.

Religious ideas, beliefs, impressions, should be diligently transmitted. Whatever of Christian faith or feeling the parent has should be communicated to the child. Some persons seem to have scruples on this point. They say that all persons ought to form their own religious views in the exercise of their own mature reason, and that to teach them our views in their childhood is to preoccupy their minds, and hinder the free exercise of that reason in after years, and deprive it of the great right of unbiased judgment. There are many disputed points in religion, they say, and it is fairest and best to leave the young mind free to decide for itself on those matters in which no one has the right to decide for another. Let the child grow up without prejudices in favor of any particular doctrines, that he may judge for himself independently, when he becomes capable of judging. This is wretchedly false reasoning, I think. You certainly cannot impart to your child any religious views different from your own. You cannot in good faith, or common honesty, communicate to him as truth what you do not regard as truth. You must teach him your own views, if any, — yours or none. And not to teach him any is to neglect the period when the human mind is most susceptible of religious impressions, the period which is to after life what the spring-time is to

the harvest. There is an opportunity then, for which the child is not responsible, but for which you are responsible; which he cannot improve, and which, if you neglect it, is lost for ever, — a loss which no future exercise of his reason can supply or compensate.

There is a tendency in our time to carry the idea of liberty to a most extravagant extent. The idea of authority is getting obsolete in many quarters, — as if authority were always a usurpation; whereas in many cases it is a duty, and the non-exercise of it is guilt. The real rights of human beings are, in truth, so very sacred, that we are apt to think we cannot overstate them, cannot too jealously abstain from interference with them, cannot give any body his own way too much. This morbid feeling about liberty and independence, which has various insane manifestations in our day, is coming to affect injuriously the relation between parents and children. Children must not be interfered with! must not be governed! Human nature is so divine, that it must not be tampered with, but left to the development of its own heavenly instincts, which are most heavenly — in fact, are divine inspirations — in their earliest days. “Heaven lies around us in our infancy,” says a great poet, and many have adopted his poetry as their philosophy. Leave young minds free, we are told, — free as the mountain air. Shackle them not with your old-world notions. Fetter them not with your beliefs and habits. Let them alone, and Heaven will guide them, and the God within will fashion them by a better model. You infringe their rights, you violate their sacred freedom, and stifle the celestial melody that runs through the strings of a free soul, when you undertake to curb and direct them, and overlay the divinity within them by

your laws and regulations, and your world-worn ideas of things. Let them alone ; leave them free. Such is the purport of some of the philosophy of the day, and the *idea* reaches and influences multitudes who know nothing about the *philosophy* of it, or whence it comes, or whither it tends. I think we may see some of the fruits of this amazing deference to children in the absence of humility, of respect for elders, for religion, for any thing human or divine, in which many of them are trained and are growing up. Young men and maidens, of quite tender years, have grown competent, and are taught that it is a free and very noble thing, to pass their flippant judgments on all time-hallowed truth, and sneer in tranquil superiority at all the gray-haired wisdom of the world as error and dotage. Freedom and independence are, indeed, the choice and immeasurable blessing of our time, — liberty, both civil and religious, physical and mental, national and individual ; but if the idea is to be pushed to the wild extreme which some tendencies indicate, it will render inevitable, by reaction, a sterner, darker despotism over soul and body than the world ever saw before.

But the rights of children ! — They have their rights, sacred ones, many which the wisdom, conscience, and affection of the Christian parent distinctly point out. And their foremost right is a right to that which they most need, namely, an efficient and authoritative governance and guidance on the part of those whom God and nature have set over them for their good. They have a right to have a strong and wholesome authority exercised over them, mildly, without sternness or severity, yet firm and decisive, and to be put under that rational and generous bondage of wisdom and love which may save them

from the bad and debasing bondage of their own reckless caprices. They have a right to the fruits of your experience and wisdom, to have them put into their minds, wrought into their convictions and into their ways of life ; and this they can best have done, in numerous instances, not by your reasonings, nor by being left to their own instincts, but by your authority, the weight which your character has with them, — by your giving them positive instruction, and laws not to be questioned. If the parent has any definite religious beliefs, impressions, and principles, the child has a right to have them instilled from the earliest period into his mind, as much as he has a right to claim daily bread at your hands. He has a right which he cannot enforce or understand, but which the God of nature makes obvious and will vindicate, — a right to claim of those in whose hands he is placed in his helplessness that they avail themselves of that susceptible period to give him the groundwork and materials for a religious faith and feeling. Give him, transfer to him, *your* opinions and impressions. Some of them may be erroneous : of that point he will have a right to judge, and will judge, hereafter. He may modify those views very much, when he comes to revise them, in the legitimate exercise of his freedom, in after years. Be it so. No matter for that. Though he should greatly change every opinion and impression, you will still have done a work of unspeakable value for him. If you are faithful and reasonably fortunate, you will have given him, along with your opinions and impressions, a *religious bias*, a spirit of faith, an early, strong, unquestioning sense of the reality of spiritual things and relations. The particular opinions and ideas may be modified, and you need not care for that. The bias, feeling,

spirit of faith, which underlies all religious opinions and ideas, and which is the main thing, is likely to remain. And inasmuch as that feeling and spirit of faith must be for the time embodied in some opinions and ideas, let them be your own, and do not scruple to communicate your own unreservedly. There is no infringement of rights, either immediate or prospective, in doing so. It is using your rightful authority, being simply faithful to your position, and performing for your children, in the only way practicable for you, the very sacred and momentous duty of providing for them at the most favorable time a religious faith, which is likely to cling to them and bless them, through every period of life and through all changes of opinion.

The most happy and effectual faith is that which is planted in the genial soil of childhood. It is not easily killed out. It may lie dormant for long periods, its fruit not appear for many days. Pleasure, worldliness, and evil associations may long overlay and hide it ; yet that early faith and feeling is of the sort to endure. That is the faith which comes forth in after times, bursting from its smouldering ashes, a vital spark, called out by some awakening providence or new turn of thought. The faith which cheers the dark places of advanced life, and bears up the burdens, illumines the griefs, and fends off the temptations of the last years, and spans, to the fading eye, the valley of death with the bow of hope and promise, — that later faith, more precious to the soul than all the universe, — is most often the same that was poured into the confiding heart of childhood, and bound up there with the fond affections and reverent trustfulness with which God prepares the soul of infancy for the parent's planting. Reasonings, and inquiries, and in-

tellectual struggles come afterwards to modify or justify opinions ; but not from these start the germ of faith, and the sentiment which demands some opinions, and makes faith necessary to the soul as a water-brook to the thirsty. That germ, planted by the Maker of all in the breast of all, is oftenest quickened into life, and saved from extinction, by the fostering spirit of some grandmother Lois and some mother Eunice, like that unfeigned faith which dwelt, not by acquisition nor by conversion, but by natural transmission and rightful inheritance, in the breast of Paul's noble young friend and fellow-laborer.

Let Christian parents remember that it is their province, designated by the true voice of nature, and by the very theory of the Christian religion and the Christian Church, to make their children Christians. Away with all weak scruples about interference with the natural rights of the soul to think for itself, and to feel as it may happen ! If you do not interfere for good, others will not be so scrupulous about interfering for evil. Left to themselves ! It cannot be. The Devil, personal or impersonal, will not let them be left to themselves. Interference ! It is the whole duty of a parent to interfere. He has nothing else to do with his children, but to govern, guide, and form them, — to interfere with them. There are years for which he is responsible ; and if he do nothing, he is false to a great trust, and God will hold him answerable for his child's fate.

Let Christian parents strive to make their children Christians. Present the thought of God to them, as their Maker, Father, Judge, — as what he is to your own minds ; and Jesus as their Master, Friend, and Saviour, to believe in, obey, and trust, with such ideas of him and his religion as possess your own mind. What-

ever you believe or feel, impress it, repeat it, transmit it, — not always, not usually, arguing and proving it, but as truth, — the truth as it lies in your own mind. Do it by authority of nature and the Scriptures, by virtue of your office as parent, the rightful, responsible head, the natural ruler of your child, and to him the fountain of wisdom and law. Teach him to honor the Sabbath, to revere the Bible and the house of God, and all the ordinances of religion. Associate all Christian things and observances closely with his first thoughts and earliest affections, and his indestructible associations. Depend upon it, there is nothing for which so many blessings have been called down on the heads of living, and the memory of departed parents, as for the early religious beliefs, impressions, and associations received from them. I do not think children are very deeply grateful to parents for pecuniary gifts or bequests. Seldom does a child love or honor his parent, or the memory of his parent, any more for the property he may have given him or left to him. But I believe the whole air is vocal to the ear of God with thanksgivings for Christian faith and feeling, derived from the voice of love and authority in the home of childhood. St. Paul knew what he was doing, and what springs in the breast he was touching, when he put down for the eye of the young Timothy those dear old names of his childhood's home. He knew that *there* was a spell, not only to open the fountains of filial reverence and affection, but to fire with new energy and clothe with new sanctity and beauty the faith and piety of the Gospel. We may be sure the heart of the young man was touched then, and the holy flame burned brighter, and a heart's blessing was invoked on his beloved and sainted ones, that returned upon his own head

to guide and keep him. So natural, so dear, so strong, so satisfying beyond all other things to the heart, is an *inherited faith*, the spirit of faith that comes with the first thoughts, is entwined with the tenderest affections, imbedded with the earliest recollections, bound up with the fondest memories !

My friends, we may have little else to bequeath to our children, and it can be of but little consequence whether we have or not ; but our soul's great treasure, our faith, is their rightful inheritance. This will bless them, and, whether in plenty or in want, make them rich and full indeed.

S E R M O N X I X .

BY JOHN H. MORISON.



JESUS OUR REDEEMER.

AND YE KNOW THAT HE WAS MANIFESTED TO TAKE AWAY OUR
SINS. — 1 John iii. 5.

JESUS came to give himself as an offering, a sacrifice, by which to take away our sins. He would redeem us from our sins by his teachings, by his example, by his direct personal influence on our hearts, by his intercession with the Father.

I. He would redeem us from our sins by his instructions, — by the truths which he taught. “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” “And the truth shall set you free.” “Sanctify them by thy truth.” The truth — the doctrines which Jesus has revealed — is to be the great instrument in the salvation of man. Rules of life, precepts of duty, the revelation of God’s love, the means of access to the Divine mercy, the intercourse of man with God, and the never-failing fountain of light and hope and strength and joy which is there opened to the penitent and believing, — these are among the doctrines by obedience to which life and immortality are brought to light, and man is redeemed from his sins.

II. And in order to touch our hearts, to impress us at once with a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the beauty, the divine loveliness, of a devout and holy life, Jesus is himself the example, the embodiment, the living personification, the breathing, life-giving expression, of all that he has taught. He is himself all that he has taught. In him are all the divine affections that he would inspire in us. In him shine forth, as clothed with his radiance and power, all the duties that he would enjoin on us. He does not bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders ; but the heaviest cross of all he himself bears, that ours may be made light. He is not a lawgiver, laying down hard and prescriptive rules, but a Saviour, who "himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," who knew our temptations, who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," who took upon himself the burden of a perfect life amid a false and wicked generation, that a life of devout self-denial, of suffering and privation, of love to man and fidelity to God, might for ever stand forth, arrayed in all the meek, attractive, and transcendent glories of his own spirit. As he and his Father, so he and his religion were one.

Christ, then, has come by his own example to redeem us from our sins. He is not merely a messenger sent from God to point out the way of escape, but he is himself the way. He is not merely a teacher sent from heaven to announce the truth which shall set us free ; but he is himself the truth, the life, which we must receive into our souls, if we would live.

We are to go to him, to take his yoke upon us, to receive his truth, that his life may be in us, and we transformed by the renewing of our minds into his image.

Thus may we truly reverence and honor him. We may not understand the mysteries of his miraculous conception, the greatness of that nature which was once veiled in flesh, and which now shines out in all the fulness of its celestial glory. The more we labor to comprehend these things, the more are we bewildered and perplexed. We do not understand our own nature; "nor doth it yet appear what we shall be," "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality." "But we know, that, when he cometh, we shall be like him." And in order to be like him in his glorified estate, we must be like what he has shown himself to be upon the earth. "Every one," saith the Apostle, "that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." This is the only acceptable homage that we can pay to our Saviour, — not to frame magnificent theories of his nature, and to cry, "Lord, Lord, while we do not the things which he has commanded," but to come to him with lowly reverence. Feeling our imperfections and sins in painful contrast with his perfect purity, let us, with penitent and obedient hearts, hear his word, and receive of the life that was in him. So shall we be his disciples. So shall we find that God is in him reconciling us to himself, bringing us to taste freely of the waters of life, — to drink from the living fountain of his love, and be refreshed by a near and hallowed communion with his spirit.

It is good for us to dwell thus on the example of our Master; to call to remembrance his words and his acts; to live, as it were, with him, till we are penetrated and made alive by the spirit that was in him. Let us go with him from his humble home in Galilee, where he had been subject to his parents, through the desert,

amid the multitudes, in his works of divine beneficence and in his solitary devotions ; on the mountain-top with his chosen disciples, where “ he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light,” in the garden of Gethsemane, in the judgment-hall, or on Mount Calvary ; — let us dwell with him, till he becomes to us an object of constant reverence and affection, — till the meaning of his life, and the deeper significance of his death, have gone down into our hearts and kindled there a new and more sacred flame. In our prosperity let us remember him with whom the possession of powers beyond the magnificent dreams of human ambition could not for a moment disturb the meekness and humility of his soul. If, when tried by the apprehension of losing what is dearest to us or of being overwhelmed by misfortunes beyond our strength, we pray in anguish that the cup may pass from us, let us remember the deeper sorrows, the utter desolation, that pressed on him, and his submissiveness of soul ; and thus add to our request, “ Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.” Are we wounded in spirit, do we fail of gaining from man the sympathy which we crave, let us remember his tenderness, his unspeakable love, who endured the harsh repulses of those for whom his life was spent, and bore all, even to the cross, that we might live ; and though all sources of human sympathy were closed against us, we shall in him, and the fountain of infinite grace and mercy which he has opened to us by his blood, find sympathy enough to meet all our wants, to soothe and tranquillize our hearts, and breathe into them the peace which the world cannot give.

The power of Christ, as a living example, a quicken-

ing spirit within us, we do not appreciate as we ought. In every man, who makes any strong impression on others, there is, beyond all that he says or does, an invisible, undefined, electric influence, which by a secret sympathy imparts itself to others, or awakens in them corresponding feelings and desires. It has been through this influence mainly in connection with great truths, that every important impulse has been given to the moral and religious progress of mankind. Now, as Jesus possesses in himself all the elements of spiritual greatness, — whatever may give tenderness to the affections, strength to our moral feelings, or beauty and power to our religious convictions, — as these exist without measure in him, so through him may they be quickened and called forth in us. Cut off from him, we are separated from that which is our life. Something we may receive from those around us who live in him, and perhaps, as society now is, a very considerable portion of our spiritual life is thus gained from those who only reflect on us the kindling rays which they have received from the Sun of Righteousness. But still he is the Sun. In him dwells the fulness of the Divine life, and of his fulness we have all received. “The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. I am that bread of life.”

These expressions are strictly and philosophically true. For there is no faculty within us fairly born, unless through some influence from without. The eye would remain as though it were not, but for the intervention of light. The intellect and the affections would remain undeveloped and unknown to ourselves, unless there should be something apart from themselves to act upon them. And so of our higher nature, unless there

be something out of itself to act upon it, it remains, to all practical purposes, the same as if unborn. When the whole world, therefore, was sunk in spiritual darkness, there was nothing to call out man's spiritual nature. The works of creation might do something to awaken vaguely the sentiment of reverence. But the best affections of his nature, whether connecting him with man or God, as in a world of spiritual death they could be acted upon by no corresponding qualities in others, so they must have remained, to all practical purposes, nearly the same as if unborn. Men cannot raise themselves to any considerable height above the loftiest moral standard that comes from without. But when a being, in whom the highest elements of character exist in full activity and power, comes into communion with them, and they with implicit faith give themselves up to his influence, it is as if a new creation had begun within them, calling as from the tomb powers which had lain buried there from their birth. Through the quickening influence of his life they are made alive, instinct with hopes, affections, and a divine joy, which are a wonder to themselves. It was in this sense, though doubtless with a meaning profound beyond all that our thoughts can reach, that Jesus uttered the words, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

It is thus that he would redeem us from sin and death, exalting us even now through a glorious resurrection of all that is purest and best within us. The abstract questions as to his nature, which have so long agitated and divided the church, are of no consequence

here. It matters not whether we regard him as a man divinely exalted and glorified through the indwelling-presence of the Almighty, or as God mysteriously taking upon himself our humanity, and manifesting himself through the form, the senses, the affections, infirmities, and passions of a man. In either case it is the life of God in man, and through him, in all its quickening influences, acting upon the hearts and souls of men. The human is so blended with the divine, that, whichever we regard as the basis of his personal existence, his ministry is the ministry of God, his thoughts are the inspirations of God, his words are the words of God, and the gracious, life-giving influences that come from him are as if breathed forth from the living spirit of the Almighty. To believe, therefore, in Christ, is to believe in God. To commune with Christ is to commune with God; and as in him, while he was in the body, dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, so by communion with him in faith may our souls be quickened, till we also, in the language of the Apostle, "are filled with all the fulness of God."

III. These — his doctrines and his example — are doubtless the most effective means by which Jesus would take away the sins of the world. But there is another mode of action, perhaps less clearly revealed and farther removed from our usual habits of thought, which must add greatly to their efficiency, and on which I love to dwell as drawing us into a near personal relation with Christ. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will

come unto him and make our abode with him." The dying Stephen saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. So Paul not only heard his voice when on his way to Damascus, but more than once afterwards had direct revelations from "the Lord." Through the Epistles Jesus is everywhere spoken of and referred to as if this near personal relation were still existing between himself and his followers. Miraculous communications have ceased; but, in accordance with these and other passages of the Scriptures, I believe, and it is a source of great comfort to believe, that there is, through all ages, a peculiar personal relation between Jesus and his followers upon the earth, — that, in their struggles, their trials, and their victories, he is with them, and does exercise a peculiar influence over them for their good, — that he is here, assisting each one of us, who will receive his aid, to accomplish the great work of redemption and salvation.

Is it asked how this can be? Does it seem to us a thing incredible that he can thus be present with so many souls at once? The sun, at one and the same moment, sheds its warmth and light on millions of human beings. A public speaker may, at one and the same moment, extend the influence of his mind to thousands. God, the omnipresent, dwells, at one and the same moment, in all places of his dominion, and no inward motion in the smallest of his creatures escapes his notice. Now, as he reaches through infinity, may he not endow his Son with some portion of his omnipresence, and enable him, by a divinely appointed system of means, at once to see, to hold intercourse with, and to act on millions of sentient beings, and to have with each

one of them an intimate personal relation? There is no philosophy which can thus limit the powers of the Almighty. And it is in harmony with all that we know of his government here, where so much is done through ministering agents, to suppose that he, whom he hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, is still a mediator between God and men, watching over and assisting those who are yet engaged in the perilous discipline of this mortal life, sympathizing with us in our sorrows, knowing, from his own experience, how sorely we are tried, breathing in upon our bleeding hearts his own compassionate tenderness, working with us till he has redeemed us from our sins, — thus leading us to his Father, who has been ever with us, that we may be admitted into full communion with his own blessed spirit.

But do we, in our daily thoughts and experience, feel, as something distinct and real, the presence of Christ? In our despondency, do we feel that he, the compassionate Saviour, who has tasted the weariness of life and the bitterness of death, is near, with all his divine benignity and love? While cherishing unkind feeling towards those who have done us wrong, do we realize the calm but earnest remonstrance of him who gladly gave his life for those who had done him wrong? As we shrink from the performance of some severe but acknowledged duty, do we call to mind, not as something afar off, but as very near, that voice which, with sorrowful affection, would now say, "One thing thou lackest yet; go and sell all; — give up the last lingering attachment to what is wrong, and come and follow me"? Are there not times when the thought of God, in his infinite majesty, seems too high, and we cannot attain to it, — when we shrink from it as too vast for our human conceptions, —

when we have not strength to approach the Almighty and Everlasting Creator of unnumbered worlds? Let us then turn to him, the appointed mediator, in whom the glories of his Father shine with a radiance not too dazzling for our mortal thought, and in whom is the most perfect expression we can have of God's infinite condescension and love.

IV. In the fourth place, Christ would take away our sins as our intercessor with God. Do we believe in prayer? Do we pray for those who are dear to us? Do we know that the fervent, effectual [earnest] prayer of the righteous man availeth much? Do we love to be remembered in the prayers of those we love, and whose lives of superior holiness command our respect? Let us remember that Jesus, God's own beloved Son, "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." To my mind, there is something inexpressibly touching in this our Saviour's relation to us. He ever liveth to make intercession for us; calling on God, by his own sinless life, by all that he has done and all that he has suffered in our behalf, by his agony in the garden and his anguish upon the cross, — entreating God to take pity on those for whom he has died, — to take pity on us and save us from our sins.

I know that this is a doctrine which may be carried to excess; but not with us. We are too incredulous. We do not believe enough in prayer. We do not enter enough into its spirit to understand its power. We do not know how intensely it may bind man to God, and God to his creatures. We do not see how it may be one of the established means, without which the rain and dews of the Divine mercy shall fall upon the soul

in vain. Especially are we incredulous in respect to any influence of prayer except on him who prays. But can we not take some things on trust, and believe them simply because God has declared them? He certainly has taught us to pray, by the sense of want and dependence which he has implanted in our hearts, by groanings which cannot be uttered, by the yearnings and longings of our better nature; and if there is any thing taught in the Scriptures, it is the duty and efficacy of prayer. When Peter was imprisoned, "prayer was made, without ceasing, of the church for him." "God is my witness," says St. Paul to the Romans, "whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." To the Ephesians he says, "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me." There is something exceedingly affecting in this habit, among the primitive Christians, of constantly interceding and praying one for another. And it was a practice which they borrowed from their Master. The prayers which are recorded as his were offered up almost entirely in behalf of others. "I pray for them. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst save them from the evil. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one." And on the cross, — "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We will not, then, stop here to inquire how prayer

may influence the Almighty to grant our request. We see but a little way into his vast designs. Let us in some things learn to trust his word, even where we cannot see, assured that, though "we know not now, we shall know hereafter." Let us rejoice to think of Jesus as taking away our sins, not only through his words and example and by his own personal relation to us, but by his intercessions with God. As the father for his erring child prays and wrestles with the Almighty, as the saints pray to God that his kingdom may come and his will be done in earth as it is in heaven, as the whole army of the faithful on earth and in heaven are bound together, not more by their common affections than their common prayers, so Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. And must it be in vain?

Let us join our prayers to his. By all that he has taught, by all that he has done and suffered in our behalf, by his peculiar interest in us, and his unceasing intercessions with the Father, I "pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Obey the words of Jesus. Receive into your hearts the life that was in him. Cherish the thought of his presence. Remember that in him you have an unfailing advocate with God, through whom you may have access to the throne of grace, and partake freely of the waters of life.

SERMON XX.

BY ALEXANDER YOUNG.

LOVE TO CHRIST.

JESUS CHRIST; WHOM HAVING NOT SEEN, YE LOVE.—1 Peter i. 8.

A STRONG and tender attachment to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a sentiment the most natural, reasonable, and becoming, in all who are capable of understanding his exalted character and of appreciating their obligations to him. This is no artificial or arbitrary duty, but has its foundations in our nature, and is in harmony with the best feelings and principles of the heart.

It is deeply to be regretted, that the gross and familiar way in which enthusiasm sometimes proclaims the fervor of its religious affections should have rendered this topic of *love to Christ* in any degree distasteful — as I fear it has — to the sober, judicious, thoughtful portion of the Christian community. Regarding piety as a sacred sentiment of the individual soul, and calm in proportion to its depth, they find it difficult to sympathize with that impassioned and fervid expression of feeling which seems to be considered by some the only proper evidence of sincere love to Christ. They have

too much respect for his name to mention it lightly ; too profound a veneration for his character to apply to him the extravagant epithets of human passion. The love which they feel and cherish is a tender, tranquil, abiding interest, dwelling in the depths of the soul, occasionally rising to an emotion, but never venting itself in terms of rapture and ecstasy. Of course, they look with disapprobation, and perhaps even with disgust, on the tumultuous and feverish excitement, which seems to partake so largely of human passion, often exhibited by the professed followers of him who "did not strive, nor cry, nor let his voice be heard in the streets." They dislike every thing like rant or frenzy in a matter so solemn and serious. They are fearful lest the name of their Lord should be profaned by an irreverent utterance, or his character degraded by an unbecoming familiarity.

In what I may say upon this topic, I would not render myself obnoxious to the charge of indulging a vain fancy or making exaggerated statements. I would speak with a reserve which might seem like coldness, rather than with an ardor that should savor of fanaticism. I shall maintain that love to Christ is a natural, reasonable, and becoming sentiment ; and it is my earnest wish to convince all who hear me of the duty of giving to his character that attention which is necessary to a just appreciation and love of it. In pursuing the subject, I shall inquire, first, why we ought to love Christ ; and, secondly, how we should manifest our love.

I. I remark, in the first place, that love is a sentiment naturally excited in an unperverted heart by the contemplation of goodness, or moral excellence, especially if it be exercised in our behalf and for our

benefit. Why is it that we love our parents and benefactors? Is it not on account of their goodness to us, their benevolent regard, their kind treatment, their affectionate care? What is it that awakens our esteem and reverence towards many of those with whom we daily meet in the intercourse of life, or with whom we are made acquainted by report or history? Is it not the goodness and rectitude we recognize in them,—their moral graces, their generous dispositions, their kind feelings, their deeds of benevolence and charity? This, to be sure, is not the only sentiment we cherish and express towards them. Love does not absorb or exclude all other feelings. We may admire intellectual strength and efficiency; we may be astonished at the variety and extent of one's mental acquisitions; we may acknowledge and respect his judgment, skill in affairs, bravery in peril, resolution in enterprise. But our love we always reserve for higher and better qualities, for moral excellence, for the heart and its attributes and manifestations. When we turn over the pages of history, and survey the deeds of kings and heroes, we may be struck with wonder at the recital of their martial achievements; we may do homage to the untiring and invincible spirit that goaded them on from conquest to conquest, and enabled them to bear fatigue and endure hardships and surmount difficulties almost too great for human power. But we do not accord to them the tribute of our affection, the warm expression of our love. Never. This sentiment, which is deaf to the appeals of greatness and glory, answers readily to the still, small voice of virtue and goodness. The tribute which we deny to the conqueror, returning from a victory, we bestow involuntarily on the gentle

and self-sacrificing spirit of the philanthropist. The exploits of a Napoleon may draw forth our admiration for his intellectual energy ; but the moral heroism and disinterested benevolence of a Howard elicit our sympathy and love.

So it is, likewise, when we contemplate the character and attributes of God. His eternity, his infinite power, his boundless wisdom, his universal presence, — these, his natural attributes, fill us with reverence and awe. We are almost overwhelmed by the contemplation of ideas so vast, and so much above our comprehension ; and we bow down before the Being whose glory they in part express, with deep humility, with an unspoken and unspeakable adoration. But it is the moral attributes of our great Creator — his truth, his justice, his holiness, his benevolence, his inexhaustible mercy — which kindle our veneration and attract our confidence and love. Divest him of these, represent him as false, unrighteous, malevolent, and cruel, and you cannot make us love him, though you still clothe him with omniscience, and place in his hand the sceptre of the universe, and make the whole creation but an instrument of his irresistible will. We involuntarily shrink from such a character, as the embodiment and personification of evil. The human soul, in its lowest and worst condition, loathes it, and turns from it with an uncontrollable recoil. We cannot, whilst any vestige of God's image remains in us, we cannot venerate power unless it be combined with equity, and purity, and benevolence. The divine voice within us forbids us to love any being, even the mightiest, who is not arrayed in these, the brightest ornaments of man and the most glorious excellences in nature.

It appears, then, that the natural objects of veneration and love are the moral qualities of intelligent beings, — their pure hearts, their generous affections, their purposes and acts of goodness. By this rule let us now attempt to measure and describe the love which we should give to Christ.

1. In the first place, look at his character. Examine it closely ; scrutinize it severely. I will not attempt to delineate it ; for it is a character which must be familiar to you all. If, however, there be an individual who hears me unacquainted with the character of the Son of God, I will not reproach him for his neglect ; I would not shame him by the mention of his ignorance. But I would remind him that he has hitherto debarred himself of one of the highest sources of satisfaction and means of improvement. He has neglected to avail himself of one of the strongest incentives and aids to virtue. For it must be admitted, that no one can contemplate the example of moral purity and worth which Jesus has left us, no one can explore the heights and depths of his spiritual being, and not feel a burning aspiration to attain what he beholds ; not feel a change in his desires, his fears, his hopes, and his aims ; not feel that all his passions must be controlled and subjected to the nobler part of his nature ; not feel his heart glow with the love of goodness and an irrepressible longing for its own renovation and perfection. This I hold to be a necessary consequence, not occasional and accidental, but universal and inevitable.

I appeal, for the truth of what I say, to those among you who best know the character of the Saviour, — who have studied it most attentively ; and I ask you whether the contemplation of it has not, more than all other

influences, filled your heart with heavenly aspirations and religious purposes. Whilst you follow him in his pilgrimage through a wicked world, and consider all the circumstances of his hard lot in life, — the unpropitious influences to which he was exposed, — the corrupt and corrupting society by which he was surrounded, — and when you reflect that amidst all this moral defilement and contagion he remained holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, — can you help cherishing towards him the tenderest respect and the truest love? For, be it remembered, the path of Jesus was no smooth and peaceful road from Nazareth to Calvary; his virtue was not of that doubtful and negative kind that had never passed the ordeal of difficulty and temptation. The Evangelists furnish us with one striking instance of the trial to which his fidelity was exposed in the exercise of his miraculous gifts; and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us, that “we have not a high-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, and yet without sin.” Indeed, my hearers, our respect and attachment to Jesus, viewed merely as a son of man, and the highest of the sons of men, are immeasurably increased when we reflect that he exhibited this pattern of perfect rectitude and goodness in one of the most corrupt and depraved ages of the world; that he rose up for the deliverance of mankind in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation. Yet, notwithstanding this fact, it can be truly said of the virtue of Jesus that it was solitary, unapproached, and unimpeached.

(1.) It was solitary and singular. The world, in its highest and best ages, had seen no such being, possess-

ing such an assemblage of opposite qualities blended in such beautiful harmony. The imagination of man, in its loftiest flights, in regions favored by the lights of intellect and genius, had never fancied even the rude sketch, the rough outline, of that pure and perfect character which in Jesus was completely delineated and developed. There was no single model then in existence, or traced upon the page of history, on which he might have formed himself. You will search in vain, too, among the men of that or of preceding times, for individuals from whose biographies he might have selected and gathered the single traits and qualities which go to make up his complex but consistent character. The peculiar characteristics of his mind and heart, I maintain, were not to be found elsewhere. In the degree and proportions in which they appeared in him, they were never before seen. And for this plain reason, among others, that they were not popular qualities. The humility, the meekness, the forbearance, the self-sacrifice, and the forgiving spirit of Jesus were not virtues which would command honor and glory, or advance a man in the world. Least of all were they respected or likely to show themselves in such an age and in such a nation as were those in which Christ lived, — an age of notorious profligacy, a nation dead in trespasses and sins.

(2.) But this goodness was not only singular and solitary at that time ; it has also remained unapproached in all succeeding times. The world, from the time of our Saviour to the present day, has been gradually improving. Great discoveries have been made in every department of science. The useful and the elegant arts have made rapid advances. The condition of mankind has been greatly meliorated. The human mind has

gone forward ; human character has improved. And yet, notwithstanding this great and manifest progress of our race in intellectual and moral excellence, the character of Christ is still as much a phenomenon, and his goodness continues as independent and unapproachable, as ever. Indeed, the more capable mankind has become of discerning the excellence of Jesus, the more it has been honored and admired, and the higher and more wonderful it has appeared. Nor is there any prospect that it will ever be transcended, or even reached, by mortal man. As we advance towards it, it constantly recedes, and rises before us, beckoning us upwards, and leading us on nearer and nearer towards the Divine perfections.

(3.) Moreover, the goodness of Jesus has never been impeached. This, perhaps, is not its least extraordinary characteristic. The tongue of contemporaneous enmity and jealousy could not find, — I will not say a plausible, — it could not find any accusation wherewith to reproach his virtue. It charged him, indeed, with breaking the Sabbath, with violating the ceremonial law, with neglecting the Pharisaic traditions, with employing diabolical agency, with forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar. But it never uttered a syllable against the purity of his intentions and motives, and never assailed the integrity of his character and life. The testimony of the Roman governor before whom he was arraigned is distinct and explicit : — “ I can find no fault in him.” And this direct evidence of his contemporaries and enemies has never been questioned by those who, in after times, have doubted his credentials and disputed his Divine mission. On the contrary, it has not only been admitted, but it has been augmented and confirmed. The

strongest and most eloquent tributes to the purity and excellence of his character have proceeded from the pens of infidels. I need only refer, as an instance, to the glowing testimony of Rousseau. I have never heard of a charge or surmise that implicated his rectitude or moral worth. If such have ever been alleged, they have never come to my knowledge or observation. To me the character of Christ presents itself unimpeached. And I find another reason for revering and loving him in the fact that he manifested a virtue so invulnerable and unassailable, that it has ever continued, not only above reproach, but beyond the reach of suspicion.

2. This goodness of Jesus, this pure and benevolent and holy spirit which we admire in him, it is to be added, as a further ground and reason for our love to him, was manifested in our behalf and exerted for our benefit. "We love him because he first loved us." The love which glowed in his bosom, and pervaded and animated all his actions, was of the most generous and disinterested nature. He felt a deep concern for our spiritual and eternal welfare. In obedience to his Father, he entered on his arduous and perilous mission. He came to satisfy the wants, the immortal cravings, of the human soul, to enlighten our ignorance, to dispel our doubts, to quiet our fears, to confirm our hopes, to teach us our duty, to reveal to us a Father in heaven, and to bring life and immortality to light. Do we love our earthly benefactors, because they bestow upon us favors and blessings of temporary value, and which afford only a short-lived gratification? And shall we not love with heartier devotion that spiritual benefactor who has conferred on us heavenly gifts, suited to the imperishable soul, and which can never experience diminution or de-

cay? The love of Jesus to man, every one sees, was purely disinterested; there was no alloy of selfishness in it; and on this account demands, whilst it is suited to produce, a sincere and cordial love in return. For our benefit he gave up ease, comfort, security, a happy home, the good opinion of friends, and submitted to a life of hardship, anxiety, pain, and peril, and finally to an agonizing death. This was all voluntary. His labors, his sufferings, his crucifixion, were all voluntary. He tells us, in so many words, that he lays down his life of himself, and that he might summon legions of angels to his rescue. But his death he knew to be necessary to the completion of his great work, an essential link in the chain of redemption; and he therefore cheerfully submitted to it, despising the shame. Now what stronger proof can we have of disinterested affection than that which he thus manifested? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And what more is necessary to kindle the feelings of veneration and love to him in our hearts, than to turn our eyes to his cross, and behold him there breathing out his pure and innocent spirit in agony and shame, that we might live in peace and righteousness, and die in the blessed hope of a resurrection from the dead? Is it not then natural, reasonable, and becoming, that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?

II. And now, brethren, how shall we show this love, if we feel it? Surely not by loud and frequent protestations, nor by lavishing on him the familiar and endearing epithets of human passion. This might serve to degrade rather than to elevate him in our regard. The expression of the sentiment should correspond to its character. It should be natural, reasonable, and becoming.

1. First, we should speak of him, whenever we have occasion to say any thing about him, with the reverence due to his character and office ; never lightly, or so as to convey an impression that we are willing he should be regarded as holding a relation inferior to that which he assumed ; never in terms adverse to the representations given of him by his Apostles ; never in language implying doubt or denial of the supernatural gifts he claimed and exercised, and which, if he did not possess, either he was an impostor, or his Apostles were fabulists or deceivers. Never thus, it seems to me, can true love to Christ express itself. We do not allow another to disparage the actions or detract from the reputation of a friend to whom we are really and strongly attached, without interposing a rebuke or remonstrance. Does not sincere love require us to be equally jealous of the honor and name of our heavenly friend ?

2. Again. We should evince our love to Jesus by keeping his memory fresh and fragrant in the sacred chambers of the soul, — by diligently studying his character in its elements and principles, and by meditating on the priceless benefits he has conferred on us by his ministry of love, by his gospel of salvation.

3. But the surest and the least equivocal test of our love to Christ — a test which he himself established — is an unreserved and cheerful obedience to all his precepts, as well those which relate to the heart as those which refer to the outward life. “ Ye are my friends,” says he, “ if ye do whatsoever I command you. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” Without this aspiration and endeavour after an entire conformity to the spirit and precepts of his religion, all professions of love must be accounted

vain and useless. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And yet must it not be confessed that we are all lamentably deficient in this respect? In our private transactions and in our public duties, — for all of us, however obscure and humble our position in society, have in this country public duties and responsibilities, — how few are actuated and controlled by a regard to the great, fixed, fundamental principles of the Gospel! How few rise above considerations of mere worldly prudence and temporary expediency! Brethren, let us strive to attain a better manifestation than this of that love to Christ which all of us, no doubt, seem to ourselves already to possess. Let us be ready to follow him, — leaving all else, to follow him, — by making the most rigorous application to our lives of the laws he has established for the moral government of the world.

4. Finally. If we feel the love of Christ within us, and earnestly desire some mode of giving it expression, and, at the same time, of increasing its power, here is that mode, ordained by the Saviour himself, simple, pure, solemn, — fit emblem of his own character, — the Holy Communion. Here the swelling heart of love and gratitude may come and pour itself out in the wine-cup, not of wrath, but of Divine and eternal mercy. Here, too, the soul, fasting for its sins, because it loves the Lord, may come and receive that bread which tells of life for ever renewed, of hunger for ever satisfied, in the kingdom of our Father.

If these are your feelings, my friends, the feelings of one or of many, "come, for all things are now ready. The spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come and

take of the waters of life freely." Ye who are in the morning of life, come, and testify your consecration to that goodness which was manifested in Jesus Christ, and solemnize a union with him which shall be eternal. Ye who occupy the middle space between the cradle and the grave, come, and declare your attachment to those principles of duty which are the only safeguard of individual virtue and honor, and the only true basis of social prosperity and peace. And ye whose sun is descending, whose steps are turned from the summit of life towards the vale of years, come, and renew at the altar which Christ has blessed the hopes which brighten upon you from the other side of the grave; and express, and by expressing confirm, your determination to die in the faith of the Gospel and in the fellowship of the Church. And grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

SERMON XXI.

BY EDWARD B. HALL.



CHRIST'S LOVE FOR MAN.

FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US; BECAUSE WE THUS
JUDGE, THAT IF ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEN WERE ALL DEAD.—
2 Cor. v. 14.

THE love of Christ for man is a common subject and a great one. Possibly its commonness conceals its greatness. Its familiarity is no security for our right use of it. It is spoken of too loosely, or insisted upon too dogmatically, for calm consideration and fair estimate. Indeed, its very nature, as usually regarded, may remove it from us. Such a being as Christ, coming into the world in such a way, living and dying for such a purpose, erecting an invisible kingdom, acting through a great variety of influences known and unknown, and our knowledge of it reaching us by such an imperfect medium as human testimony and mutable record, may serve to give to the theme, with all its simplicity, a kind of indistinctness, unfavorable to a clear and healthy impression. The difficulty is increased by most of the systems of theology. When viewed as wholly

or chiefly doctrinal, Christ's love for man has few of the properties of common love, and can hardly exert its best influences.

That which we need, that which all men require in order to feel a personal interest in Christ and his love, is to perceive that this love was not unnatural or preternatural, not an involuntary or mysterious sentiment, not merely a predetermined necessary part of the world's government; but a natural, free, intelligible, simple affection, differing from other affection in its purity, intensity, elevation, and comprehensiveness. Yet more, we need to feel that this love, while it had such vast comprehensiveness, had likewise a tenderness and individuality of regard, extending in its power and purpose to each of us, and now operating upon all. If men can be induced to consider this and be brought to feel it, they will find that the love of Christ "constraineth" them; that, like the love of an earthly friend or known benefactor, — a parent, protector, patriot, philanthropist, — and far more than any, it seizes the affections by a resistless power, and claims the heart. Yet let not this be expected to come without full consideration and rational conviction.

First, let the love of Christ for man be viewed as actual, a *reality*. I know not how far it is true, but I have an apprehension that there exists in many minds everywhere, more or less consciously, a skepticism as to the reality of Christ's life and love. I speak not of infidelity, for skepticism is not infidelity. It is negative, rather than positive. It is not decision, but the want of decision. It is an uncertainty of mind, a hesitation and inaction of heart, amounting often to complete apathy. And this, in the relation now considered,

may grow into an unbelieving state as to the essential matter of fact. We hear much of an historical Christ. And we are sometimes told, in the temper of complaint, that Christ has been usually regarded as only historical. There is truth in this, but it is not the whole truth. That Christ has been made too much a traditional and historical being, we all feel. But there is a right, as well as a wrong, sense in which he may be called historical. His life is history. His whole doctrine is a part of the world's truth and reality. His character has existed, has acted, does act continually, and this not simply as goodness, or holiness, or beauty, but as fact, individual and actual history. If, therefore, in opposition to the historical, we are taught to receive only a sentimental Christ, to regard the Saviour merely as the true or beautiful in creation, we entirely dissent. We decide not for other minds, nor would we make the name or character of Christian to depend upon our own views. But for ourselves, we desire all that we can have of distinctness, reality, and personality in the thought of Christ. We need it, we crave it. We want a personal Saviour, not an essence or an idea. We want to see and know that Jesus Christ, a teacher from God, did live and preach and die, as really as Fenelon or Wesley; that he trod this earth; that he walked through villages and cities of that land, which, of all earthly spots, was thenceforth consecrated; that he entered the dwellings of men, that he sat with them at their tables, that he noticed and embraced their children, that he mingled in their scenes of domestic endearment, and smiled upon their loves, and pitied their sorrows, and healed their diseases, and went with them weeping to the tombs of their friends, and prayed for them there, and prayed,

not in vain, that the dead should come forth, and life and love be immortal. We would see these places and events, in faith and heart, if we may not in literal presence, and feel that it is literal, that it is all passing before us, and coming over us, subduing and thrilling, with a like indescribable power to that which many of us have experienced in visiting the peaceful shades and hallowed dust of Mount Vernon. Whose is the heart that can rest on that sacred mound and not swell and glow with new and higher life? Then why is it that we do not feel at least as much, at least as truly, when we think of an event, and bring around us the reality of a scene, infinitely more sacred? Why is it, that when we follow Him who went about doing good, follow him by a living faith through all the passages of his life to its end, and there stand in the very garden which witnessed his agony, and kneel at the cross on which he bled and died for us, — yea, for us, for ours, for all, — our hearts do not throb and glow with as deep emotion and fervent love as when we look upon the graves of our own departed?

Is it not partly, ascribing what you will to other causes, — is it not chiefly, to be ascribed to a want of faith, or the vagueness and weakness of faith, as to the reality of those events and this character, — the reality of the love of Christ in life and death? Wherever there is such weakness or want, it is clear that it goes to the very root, and may prevent or stint all growth of the sentiment which we desire to create. Let this, then, be considered the first requisite; and let every one feel that it is in his power, and therefore his duty, to build up in the understanding and the affections this foundation for a right appreciation of the love of Christ. Let

him make the history of Christ, the reality of his being and words and works, so familiar, so present and near and personal, that in the place of doubt and distance, cold theory or ideal beauty, there shall be the simple fervor of a warm and grateful heart, clinging to the truest, kindest, best of friends. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

In the second place, we may help this, and understand yet better the love of Christ, by considering and remembering that this love was *voluntary*. This is another sense in which it may appear and be to us real. It is essential to its reality. You cannot conceive of true love in Christ for man, unless you regard him as free and acting freely. Yet all do not so regard him, if we understand them. Many suppose Christ to have acted under a kind of necessity, a foreordination, a binding contract, or some mysterious and altogether peculiar influence. Those who make him God, the Almighty Creator and Governor of all worlds, must view him as only continuing in Christianity those works of power and mercy in which he has always been engaged, and which fail to give him the personal and visible nearness which the Gospel gives to Christ. In most schemes of doctrine respecting the Messiah, there seems to be a strangeness and confusion in the views taken of his nature, such as deprive his love of the character of natural, free, voluntary affection. In the thought of his relation to the Father and the universe while he lived on earth, and yet more, in the thought of his present relation to God and to us, his present love and personal influence, there is mystery and painful perplexity. If he is in any way different now, in person or relation, from what he appeared here, it becomes

difficult, if not impossible, to bring him near to us, to commune with him as we would commune with a friend and brother, to compare his affection for us with that of any other of which we have knowledge, and thus feel its power and revere its holy beauty.

This is one reason why we value our own views of Christ, and attach to them the highest spiritual and practical value. They make the Saviour to be a being of human sympathies and tenderness, single, simple, divine. He comes to men as his brethren. He calls them brethren, and his intercourse with them is strictly fraternal. He calls them friends, and he lives with them in a kind of friendship and fellowship which I cannot imagine between men and their Maker. With Christ, the Son of God, the Son of man, it is natural, intelligible, beautiful. It accords with my reason, it addresses and moves my whole being. I see Jesus of Nazareth visiting the people of Judea, and blessing all whom he visits, not because it is right or necessary, not because it was foretold and must needs be fulfilled (though the fact of prediction and fulfilment is seen), but because his heart prompts it. The benevolence of his soul moves and melts him in human and divine love. I see him going over the towns and villages, in the exercise of spontaneous, ever-fresh, never-wearied beneficence. I see him enter a house, and sit down to meat with a proud Pharisee, who had condescendingly invited him, — and lo! a humble woman, whom others called “a sinner,” and would have recoiled from her touch, approaches his feet, and washes them with her tears, and wipes them with the hairs of her head, and kisses those feet, and anoints them with costly ointment; and I hear him declaring her sins

forgiven, because she "loved much." I see him visiting another Mary, when she and her sister mourned the loss of an only brother, whom Jesus had loved; and nothing can surpass the sympathy and tenderness with which he ministers to their comfort and restores their treasure. The miracle of power is astounding, but it is almost swallowed up in the miracle of love. Again, I see him weeping over the magnificent but doomed city, in the anguish of a soul that knew the suffering which that city was to inflict upon him, but thought most of the woes it was bringing upon itself. And yet again, as I follow him, he is stopped at the entrance of another and more obscure city, where

"From out the city's gate there came a bier.

A mother's only son upon it lay,

A widowed mother, who for many a day

Had him alone to love; — and oft the tear

Of bitter grief she poured, as at his side,

With sorrow's trembling step, she slowly went.

The Saviour came; with mercy's blest intent,

He gazed upon the hearse, beheld the tide

Of anguish which flowed forth; compassionate,

'Weep not,' he said, and touched the bier. 'Arise,

Young man, to life.' — The dead unclosed his eyes,

And the blest hand which raised him from the grave

Him to a mother's throbbing bosom gave."

But we cannot multiply instances. Open the Gospels, and they meet your eye wherever it turns. They make the life of the blessed Saviour. And that which we now particularly observe is their simplicity, quietness, and perfect naturalness. They keep before us the Saviour, yet not so much at the time the Saviour of the world, as the friend of man, of social man, man the sufferer, the sinner, the mourner, the disconsolate. We

do not see even the Teacher so much as the Comforter. We do not think of a Being to be worshipped and served, but one who loves and serves others. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He seeks the lost. He blesses those who persecute him. He gives himself for the world.

Thirdly, the love of Christ is *visible*. Not only is it real and voluntary, it is visible to all, here and everywhere. We need not go back to remote times to see this love. If those times seem to any too remote for vision, and their alleged character undefined and dim, there are nearer, distinct, and indisputable traces. The scoffer cannot escape, the doubter need not be perplexed by distance and vagueness. Men of the world, wise and practical men as they are called, need not and should not think that they have no concern here, and cannot take any intelligent interest in the love of Christ. Nothing can be more practical, more present, than this love. Its effects are everywhere seen, and all men share them. Its influence is universal, and every one feels it, whether grateful or scornful. What is Christianity but the expression of that love? What is philanthropy but its effluence and image? How constantly and beautifully has the love of man for his brother, his country, the world, warmed and expanded, as Christianity has advanced! Who will say, that he does not feel the power and blessing of this love, in whatever form or measure he accepts the religion? The institutions of benevolence which it has reared, the offices of mercy which it has prompted, the treasures of knowledge which it has made free as air, the moral equality which it has created and is extending, the principles of peace it is quietly diffusing, the forgiveness of enemies, the recom-

pense of good for evil, the high-minded endurance and more than heroic valor which it has substituted for brute force, the true manliness which it has given to man's daring, and the elevation, devotion, unfading loveliness, and heavenly charity with which it has invested woman, — what are all these but the fruit of that love which poured itself out for a world lying in darkness, sunk in wickedness and woe ?

Once more, measure, if you can, the result of this love, contemplate at least its greatness and nearness in regard to death, — natural and spiritual death. It is in this, not least, that the love of Christ shines out from the thick darkness which it penetrated and scattered. It is by this especially that every one, whatever his views or conduct, is sometimes constrained to feel the presence and own the blessing of this love. “The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” All were dead, — dead in heart, dead in hope, seeing and suffering death in its worst terrors. For Death then was not the messenger he now is. Sterner was his visage, darker his form. His iron hand closed with a more merciless grasp upon the trembling subjects of his power, and the prison into which he threw them swung its heavy doors with a sound that sent desolation into every sorrowing soul. It has enough of desolation now ; but little can we know of its awfulness then. The earth was full of evil, and to most minds earth bounded their being. Many had hope, but there was a faintness at the heart, and when it was stricken it died within them.

Jesus looked upon them. He saw their sorrows, he saw them go to the grave only to weep there. He heard even those who believed in him express their fear

and almost despair. He thanked God for the power given him to dispel this gloom; and while tears of sympathy attested the energy of love, and mingled with the prayer of faith, he poured into those saddened hearts the oil of joy for mourning, and for the spirit of heaviness clothed them with a garment of praise. The Revealer, the Conquerer, the Comforter, is seen; and the deepest darkness of earth is broken. From that hour, what blessing, what solace, what immortal hope, has this love diffused! No imagination can number the hearts it has soothed, the homes it has cheered. Proof of this love do you need? Uncertainty is there, distance, and doubt? Say rather, what a cloud of witnesses to the reality and the blessing! What a band of believers, sorrowing not as those without hope, do we everywhere see! The dread messenger still walks among us, but how changed his aspect! Not a sufferer with any faith, scarcely those without faith, when the trial and the need come, are unaffected by the change. The face of society, the expression of the world, is renewed. The voices of the dying and the surviving take up and send out, not their old, but a new song. "Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. The victory is ours. It is the victory of faith. It is the triumph of redeeming love."

Redeeming. For not natural only, but spiritual death is subdued by the power of Christ. His love warmed toward the sinner, as well as the mourner. It saw that men were dead in sin, and that this death was infinitely the most dreadful. It yearned to abolish it. It counted its own sorrow and suffering as nothing, — to be rejected of men, to be scorned by the many, to be doubted by the chosen few, to be understood by none, to be all

alone in the world, filled with faith and glowing with love yet knowing that this was unseen or despised, forsaken in the hour of bitter trial, scourged by those whom he had blessed and would save, left to die on the cross of ignominy, — all this was dark, it was harrowing, it wrung blood from the aching heart, it caused the cry of agony to go up in the awful struggle, — “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” But it could not quench the power of love ; — “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It prevailed. He lived again. Again he blessed his friends, spoke words of comfort, gave promises to all, and sealed the reconciliation to God, ascending to him as his Father and ours, imparting, in every age since, light, peace, and immortal life to the captives of sin and the prisoners of hope.

In all this, how clearly may we discern and feel the power of reconciliation, the great and gracious object of the Saviour's death ! He died to redeem from iniquity, to save from sin ; and all who cease from sin are saved. “ For we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live ” — here is the declared purpose, here is the moral efficacy — “ should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.” Thus does the love of Christ, in death, constrain us. Thus only does it aim to constrain us ; by no mysterious power, independently of our will, apart from our communion and coöperation, but by addressing and securing these ; by appealing to the heart, quickening the conscience, touching the springs of gratitude, making us humble, reconciling us to the Father, filling us with love to God, to Christ, to

man ; leading us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, — to live and die in the fellowship of his spirit, and the diffusion of the holy influence of his religion.

In a word, Christ lived and loved, taught, labored, suffered, and died, to raise a world from death, to life and liberty. A world ! — all that then lived, all that should live and believe through the coming ages. He knew no narrower limits, no lower or feebler purpose. From that little spot of the globe called Judea, from the bosom of the narrowest and most selfish people, from the heart of a city the proudest on earth but already reeling to its ruin, from the midst of enemies and revilers, nay, from the very tree accursed, as he hung in its death of agony, his eye of faith and affection looked forth upon nations, worlds, and countless ages, all to rejoice in the light of his truth and the salvation of his love. God, of his great goodness, help us so to rejoice ! Spirit of truth and love, manifest in Jesus, visit us again, and abide with us all, in thy near presence, thy glorious power, thy gracious and eternal communion !

SERMON XXII.

BY STEPHEN G. BULFINCH.



THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

HE WAS OPPRESSED, AND HE WAS AFFLICTED, YET HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH: HE IS BROUGHT AS A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER, AND AS A SHEEP BEFORE HER SHEARERS IS DUMB, SO HE OPENETH NOT HIS MOUTH. — Isaiah liii. 7.

THAT the passage from which these words are taken is prophetic of our Saviour has been the belief of his church from its earliest ages. To whom else, indeed, the words could relate, of whom but of Christ it could be said that he was cut off from the land of the living, that he was stricken for the transgression of the people, and that after this suffering he should prolong his days, is a question of exceeding difficulty. Well might the servant of the Ethiopian queen be bewildered as to the application of the passage, and well might he, when Philip explained its reference to the crucifixion of Jesus, embrace with gratitude and joy a religion attested thus by the sure word of prophecy.

In that inspired description of the Redeemer, his sufferings and his glory, bearing date so many centuries before his birth, the most touching words are those of our text, predicting the patience with which his trials

were endured. That patience we would now contemplate in connection with the circumstances that called it forth, and the other glorious qualities with which it was allied.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us, that it became our Heavenly Father, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Not, indeed, that the Saviour needed this fiery trial to purify that gold which was already without alloy. It was not that his character might increase in excellence, but that its excellence might fully appear. Already had he exhibited, in his life of toilsome and unceasing beneficence, in his fearless and energetic attacks on the vices and prejudices of his most powerful countrymen, in every laborious journey, when he went about doing good, in every gracious miracle, and every kind word and look, the moral proofs of his Divine commission to guide and to bless mankind. Nor had the passive virtues failed to appear in his meek and steadfast endurance of toil, reproach, and danger; but to these and to all the crown was now to be added, in the sacrifice of his life. By a most painful, and, as then considered, most disgraceful public execution, was the divine martyr to close his trials.

Of actual bodily pain we need not say much. True it is that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Yet there is no doubt that others have met death with firmness, in a good, or even in a questionable cause. Some few have met it with that firmness in forms as agonizing as that in which it was endured by our Saviour. But it was in the circumstances of his crucifixion that its peculiar terrors consisted. On other martyrs, death has come

unexpectedly and unavoidably, or they have been supported in the last hour by the gaze of admiring and sympathizing friends, or human pride has checked the tear, and stifled the groan, which would have burst from human agony. With Jesus it was not so.

To other sufferers, I have said, death has come comparatively unexpected. They have known of their fate but for a short time, a few weeks, perhaps, before it overtook them, and then there was something in the sudden approach of the dark hour which called up at once every energy of the soul to meet it. It was not thus with Jesus. He had known of that coming hour from the very first. He had spoken of it to his disciples at times when they could not understand and would not believe him. The dark image had been constantly before his soul, and he had had time to see it in all its horrors. There is in the hour of death itself, there is in the immediate anticipation of it, a feeling of such high excitement as renders man almost insensible to pains which at another moment would be felt with agonizing acuteness. It is not on the battle-field that the soldier is fearful ; it is in the silence of his tent, when imagination presents to him the plain covered with the dying, the burning wound, the torn limbs, — every horror that follows in the train of war, — but without that fever of the moment, through which, in the hour of action, these things are unseen and unregarded. Thus it was with Jesus. In the midnight silence of Gethsemane, with no one near but his unconscious, slumbering Apostles, he had a foretaste, in its full bitterness, of that cup of woe which awaited him on the morrow. To die is the common lot of man ; to anticipate a death of the most painful kind, with a per-

fect knowledge how and when it will come, is a trial which few are called to bear.

But this was not the only, nor the most remarkable, circumstance of pain which distinguished the close of our Saviour's life. No other, indeed, has had for so long a course of time his complete foreknowledge of his coming doom. Yet many have been placed in circumstances where a violent death must have appeared as the probable, nay, certain termination of their course. But in another peculiarity of his situation the Saviour was equally without a parallel. He was alone. There is a pleasure among the noblest of which man is capable, when a mind of large conceptions and extended views can meet with others, with but a single other, like itself. The origin and the crown of the noblest friendship consists in this, — in two high souls being able to share in the same great ideas ; and such enjoyment would have been our Saviour's, had there been a single one of his followers who could entirely enter into his views. But there was not one. Their modes of thought, their motives, their hopes, were different from his. He aimed at the reformation of the world ; they, at the reëstablishment of the glory of Israel. He was preparing for death, and through death for a moral victory ; they, for earthly conquests and earthly power. There was not a being on earth whom he could cause to understand his destiny, his true character, or the object of his coming into the world. Often did he tell his disciples, often, and as it seems to us with the most entire plainness of speech, that the Son of man was to be delivered up of the chief priests and scribes, that he was to be put to death, and that the third day he should rise again. But they understood him not. So firmly was the idea fixed

in their minds that he was to abide for ever, and to free Israel from its enemies, that they did not imagine his words could have their common, literal meaning; and when it occurred to them that their Messiah really expected to die, "Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." Yet these were his friends, his intimate, his bosom friends; and these understood not his character sufficiently to yield him their sympathy. See him the very night before his crucifixion. He has told them that one of them should betray him, that the Son of man was going, as it was written of him. Accompany him and them to the garden; see those very disciples sleeping; and hear his melancholy reproof,—"Could ye not watch with me one hour? Rise up, let us go: behold! he that betrayeth me is at hand." There was but one Being in the universe to whom he could look for aid or consolation; and to Him he directed himself in that memorable prayer,—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

And how was it when he had been taken prisoner? Then the connection between him and all who had held him dear seemed broken at once. See him as he stands in the hall of the high-priest, listening to the false witnesses who give against him their contradictory evidence. Where are the multitudes who, a few days before, greeted with their hosannas his entrance into Jerusalem? Some of those voices are mingling in the cry for his death. Where are those Apostles, with whom but last night he affectionately partook of the social meal and of social converse? One of them has betrayed and the rest have forsaken him. But there was one

louder than all in his protestations of friendship. Where now is he, the devoted Peter, who at last night's banquet would hardly permit his Master to perform for him that emblematic service which his fellow-disciples had accepted, — who said, that though he should die with him, yet would he not deny him, — who drew his sword to prevent the seizure of his Master, — where is he now? With his fidelity not quite extinguished, he has followed alone, afar off, to the palace of the high-priest. But where, in those halls, does he take his station? By his Master's side, to claim a portion in his trial and in his sufferings? Alas, no! In the outer room, among the servants of the high-priest, now affecting indifference to the passing scene, now shrinking from the too searching glances of the by-standers, he casts from time to time a cautious glance toward his friend and Lord. Can it be, he asks himself, that our scribes are right, and that Jesus is indeed an impostor, that his mighty works have been done by the aid of the powers of darkness? If not, why is he here, — bound, tried, and at this moment condemned by those who sit in the judgment-seat of Moses? But his pale and agitated countenance attracts attention; he is questioned as to his connection with the prisoner. And now that his mind has lost the balance of its powers, fear, personal fear, the lowest of motives, to which at another moment he would have scorned to listen, takes possession of him, and friendship, duty, truth, are forgotten. "I know not the man!" He repeats it, he confirms it with false oaths. Jesus knew that at that moment the most ardent of his followers was denying him. He turned from his enemies to cast one sad look on the desertion of his friend; and now he stood alone, with no reliance but upon his God.

Before we pass to the scenes that followed, we may pause to notice another fact, which, while it rendered more intense the trial experienced by our Saviour, adds proportionate glory to his noble endurance. These sufferings were voluntary on his part. What power, other than a sense of duty, compelled him to visit Jerusalem, with the fatal result of that visit full in view? What power compelled him, after the supper, to resort to the place where he knew that Judas would conduct his captors? Nay, even when surrounded by the guards of his enemies, what was his language? "Thinkest thou," he said, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" We see in this the confirmation of what is elsewhere said, that "God gave not the spirit by measure unto him." He might have delivered himself by a miracle. Had not this power been conferred upon him, his trial would not have been complete. He had the power, but he knew his Father's will, and he used it not.

We have taken a view of the circumstances under which our Redeemer laid down his life. Unsustained by the excitement arising from an unexpected danger, uncheered by the sympathy of kindred minds, he calmly, voluntarily submitted to die. Let us pass on to the contemplation of the closing scene.

In the palace of the high-priest, he appeals to the evidence of those who had heard him. When one of the by-standers answers by a blow, he says, with mild dignity, — "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" He takes but little notice of their accusations; but when, by competent au-

thority, and in the name of God, he is asked whether he is the Messiah, he replies in the affirmative. His predetermined judges exclaim, "What need we any further witness? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy." Now is the tide of malignity freed from all bounds. Abuse is heaped upon him. "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ," they exclaimed, "Who is he that smote thee?" They lead him unresisting to the Roman governor, without whose sanction they have not authority to put him to death. He is charged with sacrilege, as an offence against the Jewish laws, and with treason against the Roman government. The proconsul, too clear-sighted to believe in his guilt, still gives him up, and with him justice and duty, to the calls of a timid and cold-hearted policy; and now commences another scene of cruelty and ingratitude. Arrayed by the soldiers of Herod and Pilate in the mock emblems of royalty, — then, faint from scourging, bearing the heavy cross through the city and up the fatal hill, — what is his deportment? Hear his words to that crowd of lamenting females. They are words that flowed from a heart even then full of anguish at the thought of his ungrateful country's approaching doom: — "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

He has passed on; he is nailed to the cross!

Others have been supported in the last hour by pride, or have been overwhelmed with fear to such a degree as to produce a partial suspension of the power of feeling. Jesus felt death in all its bitterness, and, all dignified, all patient, as he was, there was no artificial heroism in his conduct. A stupefying draught, wine mingled with myrrh, was offered him to allay the agony he must endure. He turned from it, for he felt that it became

him not to diminish his suffering by such means ; and even thus did he reject every mental support which others have derived from pride or from earthly wisdom. The firmness he showed was that of true humility, and confident, filial dependence on God. He suppressed not altogether those sighs of pain which nature demanded, for it was not his object to seem patient, but to be so.

The passers-by are mocking him in his pain, and he is praying that they may be forgiven. There are two, however, who stand near him, far differently disposed from these. One is a mother. She sees her child, her loved, her holy child, the expected Redeemer of Israel, dying in torture. What are her thoughts ? Is there one among them, at that moment, fixed on herself ? O, no, no ! They are with him, they dwell on his wounds, his distorted, agonized features. But though she thinks not of herself, he in his last hour has a thought for her. The words which pain allows him to pronounce are but few. "Woman, behold thy son ! Son, behold thy mother !" The affecting charge was well understood, and faithfully obeyed. "From that hour, that disciple took her unto his own home."

The centurion, we are told, when he saw the earthquake and those things that were done, said, — "Truly, this was the Son of God !" In the record of the Evangelists we also see these things ; we hear the voice, we see the feelings, of the holy sufferer. Shall not our hearts unite in the same confession ? He who was thus led as a lamb to the slaughter, — whose holy patience and unbounded love shone the more gloriously, the more the clouds of sorrow gathered round him, — who thus, through death, overcame death, — he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

My brethren, there are some who appear to think that the Christian religion, even if it be true, has no claims on them. To such, the language of the Gospel is, — “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.” The gracious Redeemer hath shed his blood for you. For you he bore the rejection of friends; you are of those for whom he prayed when he committed to his Heavenly Father all who should believe on him; for you the iron entered into his soul when Peter denied him; for you he bore the harsh blows and bitter taunts of enemies; for you he submitted himself even to the death of the cross. For all these sufferings he claims your service; he claims that you should be and own yourselves his disciples, receive his light yoke, and bear his easy burden. Can you view unmoved the agony in the garden? Can you enter the hall of Caiaphas and that of Pilate, can you stand with Mary and John at the foot of the cross, and then turn coldly away? In the delineation which has been given, I have not attempted to place before you every touching incident of that event, so important to the human race. Time would soon fail to comment satisfactorily on all the particulars of the final scene alone. But let any one who feels an interest in the subject peruse for himself the closing chapters of the four Evangelists, from the conversation recorded by John to the time when Jesus said, “It is finished!” — “and bowed his head and gave up the ghost,” — let any one examine these with a candid mind and a feeling heart, and then deny, if he can, his allegiance to the cross of Christ.

How, then, is that allegiance to be manifested? The rite which commemorates the Saviour’s sufferings is its outward sign; and, as such, the feelings of the disciple

will prompt him to its use. But there is a holier service than this. Ye are my friends, said Jesus, if ye do whatsoever I command you. He calls you to obey his laws; he calls you to tread in his steps, to own him in your hearts and lives as your Master, to take up his cross and follow him. Are there difficulties in your way? Is the cross even yet heavy to be borne? Think how he endured it, and ask if you can plead exemption from the trials that attend it now.

How different is the view of life which is presented to us when we contemplate it from the hill of Calvary, from the foot of the Saviour's cross, compared with that which greets us illuminated by the bright but deceitful radiance of selfish hope! Life, to the man of the world, especially to the young man, appears as a scene where the great object is enjoyment; where evil indeed exists, — by some strange mistake, as it would seem, in the first constitution of things, — but where this evil is to be guarded against as carefully as possible, and pleasure in one or in another form is ever to be held in view. But when we contemplate Jesus, we learn a higher lesson. We discern the beauty, the holiness, of suffering. We see that pain of body and distress of mind, sustained in a noble and a holy spirit, have something brighter in them than the gayest hues of earthly enjoyment. The existence of sorrow in the world is no longer regarded as a blot on the bright creation of God; nor does enjoyment alone seem worthy to be viewed as the object of our existence. Sorrow appears to us the glorious and glorifying messenger of our Creator, and we discern this earth, this checkered scene of pleasure and of trial, as that wherein we are to work out our Father's will, now with humble gratitude, and

now with patient, cheerful endurance. Happy shall we be, if we learn thus to imitate the holy sufferer. Happy shall we be, if we thus receive those trials with which our Father sees fit to exercise us. Happy, if the love of our Saviour is in our hearts, and his own pure, fervent love to God and to mankind is transferred to our characters. Happy, even if we are called to suffer with him here, for we shall be like him in the spirit of our minds ; and when we come to share his glorious companionship on high, the rapture of sight, if that be granted, will be surpassed by the rapture of conscious resemblance to our holy Lord.

SERMON XXIII.

BY ORVILLE DEWEY.



ON THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST.*

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.—Luke xxii. 19.

THE point upon which I lay stress at present, in this passage of Scripture, is the remembrance. Jesus prayed his disciples to remember him. Not celebrity, not fame, did he ask, but remembrance. It was a prayer of friendship. It was the desire of an affectionate heart, the depth of whose tenderness, I think, we have scarcely yet learned to appreciate. The majesty of the Son of God has overlaid to our view the gentleness of the Son of man. If we would dismiss the thoughts of that wide dominion which his name has gained in the world, if we would forget the triumphs of the cross in its original ignominy and sorrow, if we would go back in our thoughts to that last Supper, over whose affectionate communings was already spread the shadow of coming danger and sorrow, — death, desertion, betrayal at hand, — we could better understand the pathos of that touching request, “Remember me.”

* Preached on Good Friday.

We are assembled this morning in obedience to this request ; we are assembled, with multitudes in Christendom, to consecrate these hours to the great Christian remembrance ; to the memory of Christ, to the memory of his passion and patience. We have thought it good so to assemble ; and this conviction of ours, this unusual gathering, is one of the many significant indications which the present day furnishes, of a great reaction in favor of the past. Protestantism seems nearly to have fulfilled its mission to destroy, and is showing many signs of a disposition to rebuild the waste temple of the old worship. It has run the length of its departure from the ancient Church, and is inclined to retrace its steps, not to the communion of that Church, as at present constituted, but to some of its venerable usages. And that will be a good time, I must think, when the present, not receiving, indeed, the errors of the past, shall nevertheless gather up the wisdom of the past, and profit by it. And in particular, I cannot doubt that that economy of old, still retained, too, in some of the Protestant communions, by which certain eras of the Christian year are signalized by special observances and meditations, is suited to our nature and fitted to be profitable. The *Christian* year ! Yes, there is such a thing. There is a solar year, which marks out the simple progress of time. There is a Christian year, which invests that time with sacred associations ; which marks out the seasons and points the instructions of the Christian dispensation ; which tells, as it passes on, the story of redemption. This view of the year helps to impart to time the spiritual character that belongs to it. I would have days and months, times and seasons, remind me of the solemn course of my life ; and I cannot consent any

longer, with ultra-Protestantism, to confound the use of ceremony with the abuse of it. Protestantism, in its prevailing forms, is certainly too naked and bare of all spiritual associations. It is remarkable that it stands apart, in this respect, from all other religious communions of all ages, whether Christian or pagan.

It seems naturally to have fallen to the charge of the Roman Church — the oldest form of Christianity that arose after the primitive time had passed away — to keep alive more of symbolic usage, and to clothe itself with more of venerable, ritual association, than any other. In its most ancient seats, life, the special religious life, is wrapped up in religion, is surrounded and clothed with spiritual emblems, to an extent of which, in our practical, working-day world, we can scarcely conceive. At every corner, at every step almost, there is a church, or shrine, or image, or picture, before which prayers are said or the sign of the cross is made. So constant is this, that prayer seems to be the very breath of life ; the sign of the cross seems to be pictured in the very air. Time itself is divided into hours of devotion. Nay, it dates from the *Ave Maria* ; it numbers the hours of the day, not from the morning, or noontide, or midnight, but from *vespers*, — the hour of evening prayer. The different religious orders make arrangement to offer their devotions through every successive hour of the day and night, that prayer may never cease. Some of those orders, too, are clothed all over with sacred emblems, in their ordinary habiliments. The three-cornered hat is regarded as an emblem of the Trinity ; the hair left around the shaven crown is the sign of the crown of thorns ; and the cross is often

wrought upon the robe, and so is carried upon the person as a perpetual memento.

Of course I do not mention these things as approving of them ; but I think it not useless for us, who stand on the one extreme, to know what is done at the other extreme. Nay, the excess of usage in the past is the precise explanation of the neglect of it in the present.

But the Holy Week, as it is observed in that ancient communion, is more worthy of our attention at the present moment, as it is the commemoration of Christ in his sufferings. It seems to be the great consummation of the spiritual year, to which, especially in the previous season of Lent, all things are tending. Preachings, catechizings in the churches, — in some of them twice each day, — the communion partaken of by the entire population ; and ceremonies and means of every kind are multiplied ; and the week itself is crowded with symbolic and commemorative rites. Palm Sunday, that which precedes the crucifixion, is the occasion of a solemn and appropriate ceremonial. The successive days of the week are occupied with services bearing reference to the passion of Christ. In every church a sepulchre is prepared, — a small sarcophagus, placed upon the altar, to receive the *host*, the emblem of Christ's body, on the day of interment. Priests are seen passing in all directions, with vases of holy water, to bless the houses ; they enter all houses and shops, and with sprinkling and a form of holy words they bless the utensils, the furniture, and all things within. And when the hour of the Resurrection arrives, it is announced by a burst of cannon, and ringing of bells through the city. Many, indeed, regard it as a mere pageant familiar to them, and go their way, to their

merchandise or their pleasure ; but others fall upon their knees in the street, in homage to that solemn hour.

In all this there is something with which to sympathize ; in the solemnity of this season ; in the remembrance of him who in his sorrow asked to be remembered ; in this great “ worship of sorrow ” ; and especially in that solemn and awful *miserere*, sung in the hour of his crucifixion, — the lights one by one extinguished, as if the world were to be left in utter darkness, and prelates and priests all fallen prostrate around the altar, — then slowly rising and swelling through gloom and silence that mournful and monotonous burden of sound, like the blended and softened, but heavy and deep, moan of a world’s calamity ; and yet one voice and another from time to time parting off from the deep under-tone, in soft breathings, in plaintive wailings, sighings, and sobs of music, that come out from the low burden of melody as if each one, in some general calamity, were giving way to his own individual grief ; and yet not one single strain, nor any filament of sound, but is woven into the wondrous harmony, — all this surely is fitted to touch the heart, and I can well conceive that a heart attuned for this mournful service might be buried for the time in a trance of sorrow.

So is Christ remembered in the most ancient seats of his religion. What is the proper remembrance of him for us ?

I can conceive that the question may arise in some minds, Was it designed that Christ should hold this place in the memory and commemoration of mankind ? Did he himself expect it ? Is there no danger that the religious life will be confined, contracted, by this constant and almost exclusive reference to Christ, — that it

will be apt to lose freedom, self-unfolding, self-subsistence, naturalness, and manliness ?

I answer, in the first place, Do not the Scriptures evidently assign to him this place in the memory and affection of Christians ? Is he not made, by God's appointment, the perpetual Head of this community, this spiritual creation, the Church, — Head over all things to the Church, which is his body ? Is it not written, that " at his name every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father " ? And did he not himself expect this ? Did he not say, " And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me " ? Did not his last solemn prayer for his disciples extend to all who should believe on him through their word, — that they all should be one in him ? And, in the second place, I say, Can we not see the fitness of all this ? Is it not a part of the great social and spiritual order established in this world, that good influences should flow out from one to many, — from the parent to his children, from the master to his pupils, from certain great lights in the world to communities and nations ? And who shall shed a light over all communities and nations, but he with whom none on earth may compare ? It is the light of teaching, the power of example ; and these are ordained in the very constitution of our nature to be the means of healing and help. How do we ever know any thing but by learning it ? How ever know what lofty virtue, what perfected goodness, is, but by seeing it ? We have, indeed, the primitive conception of it in our own hearts. But how is this ever trained up to high and matured excellence, but by just that means which is provided in the Gospel ? It is appointed in the strictest conformity with the system of the world.

The Gospel plan is no mysterious nor arbitrary arrangement ; it stands upon a perfectly rational basis.

But this question which I am answering has its origin, nevertheless, in something that is worthy of notice. There has been much that was mechanical, much that was forced and unnatural, much of the mere gushing out of an unspiritual sympathy, much of irrational and unimproving excitement, in the commemoration of Christ. Nothing in the Church seems to have so failed of being simple and rational as the love of Christ. The greatest sentiments are liable to the greatest perversion. They take the strongest hold of our nature, and through error they most distort it. All this we must learn to correct. That simple and touching scene, presented in the Gospel, — Jesus sitting with his disciples at that evening repast, himself knowing that it was the last that he should ever partake with them, and saying, “ Do this in remembrance of me,” — seems to rebuke the extravagance and superstition of his followers in later times. In this simplicity of thought and feeling, in this simple communing with him, we may learn what is the proper remembrance of him.

It is a remembrance of him in his sorrow, his agony, his patience, his forgiveness, his love ; and of all these as blended one with another. It is a remembrance of him in his agony. I do not exclude from my thoughts that awful and torturing pain. I do not wrap it up in Divinity, and forget that it was human. I do not know, indeed, altogether what was the constitution of his mind and being, but I know that he was clothed with this sensitive and suffering veil of flesh, and that his pain, his agony, was human. And what an agony ! No such torture was ever devised by man as that of crucifixion.

Pain, when it attacks some vital part, or wraps in a sheet of flame the whole body, soon benumbs the sensibility and extinguishes life. But nails driven through the hands and feet, the cross upreared, and the body sustained by those torn and lacerated fibres, — I can think of nothing beside so dreadful! Martyrdom by fire, by sword, by wild beasts, — nothing is so dreadful! And One there was, — it is long ages since, and yet it is kept fresh in the heart of the world, — One there was, when the mid-day sun was pouring its beams upon the hills of Judea and upon the towers of Jerusalem, who hung upon that cross, from the sixth hour until the ninth hour; and then the agony of his heart burst out in that cry, — “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” O, how natural, how human, was that cry! How, when the awful hours come of pain and loneliness and desertion and death, does the shadow seem to rise and spread itself before the throne of God! How natural is it for us then to feel as if God had forsaken us! How natural to feel, when earth deserts us, when all human sympathies and affections desert us, as if heaven deserted us too! And yet some there were who would have ministered to his relief; and one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar (a kind of wine), and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. But it was in vain; and Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, said, “It is finished!” “and he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost.” “And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the earth did quake and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.”

I have no design to draw a picture of this scene of suffering, but I think we should know and consider, and

especially this day, what it was ; that we should not wrap it in mystery, but see it as real, human suffering ; as reviled, deserted, bitter, awful agony. It was this which Jesus foresaw in the garden of Gethsemane ; and in proportion, doubtless, to the gentleness and tenderness of his nature did he shrink from brutal outrage and agonizing pain.

But what is it that has made this pain a hallowed thing through all the world ? It was the spirit and intent with which it was endured. The consideration is familiar to you, but let us dwell upon it as the fit and humble offering of our remembrance this day. Yes, it is all familiar to you. O, were it portrayed to us now for the first time, with what wonder and veneration should we not gaze upon it, and how many of us would there not be who would go to our homes in wrapt meditation, saying, “ This shall be the burden of my memory, the model of my conduct, and the swaying power over my soul, in all the weary walk through the changes and trials and sorrows of this life ! I, too, am a sufferer ; and, alas ! — bitterest of all, — there is sin in my sufferings. In daily thought and prayer, I will draw nigh to this wondrous cross, for healing and help.” So let us say now !

Jesus shrank from cruelty and wrong and pain. But how perfect was his submission. He comes to the garden of Gethsemane. He had been wont to resort to that lonely spot in quiet and peaceful hours ; but now is it overshadowed with gloom and danger. “ And he began to be sorrowful and very heavy. And he said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And he went apart, and fell upon his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou

wilt. And he went away the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done! And he went away again the third time, and prayed, saying the same words." And now his soul is strengthened; and the betrayer approaches, with an armed band. What patience and sweetness in his address to him! "Friend, wherefore comest thou?" The traitorous kiss is given. And he says, "Judas, betrayest thou me with a kiss?" One of his disciples, Peter, draws a sword to defend him. He says, "Put up thy sword; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He is taken and borne to the seat of judgment. What calmness and grandeur there, both in his silence and in his speech! He is silent, because he knows that it is in vain to speak before that hostile and prejudiced Sanhedrim, or that false and wavering Roman governor. But when adjured to speak, he announces his high commission. And then, amidst muttered rage, and rent garments, and blows and spitting and reviling, as if his cup were not yet full, lo! Peter, the faltering, unhappy disciple, is heard amidst the throng, denying, once, and again, and again, that he knew him. "And the Lord turned and looked on Peter." What sorrow and pity do we not see in that look! It was enough; and the poor, boasting, fallen disciple went out and wept bitterly. O, better were those tears, stricken and sorrowing Peter, than the gloom and horror of Judas, who went and hanged himself in utter despair of God's mercy! Thou shalt return to the dear Master whose look penetrated thy soul; thou shalt be a brave and noble Apostle of his cross many days; thou shalt die in imitation of him; and yet, not

deeming that thou art worthy to die even on the cross, with thy head lifted to heaven, thou shalt demand that thy head be pointed downward in shame and agony to the ground.

The judgment scene is past ; and they lead him, amidst mocking homage and blows and revilings, to be nailed to the accursed tree. Yet did not that dread agony absorb him ; yet did not the infinite tenderness of his nature forsake him ; but seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he pronounces those simple and touching words, — “ Behold thy mother ! behold thy son ! ” Yet again from out of the infinite treasures of his love and pity flows, with his flowing blood, the prayer for his murderers, — “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. ” Nay, and those hands which were nailed to the cross did he stretch forth to a world’s sin and misery. And for his love has there been such return of love to him, as was never to any other being on earth. His memory is spread through the ages as no other memory ever was. Memory, do I say ? Nay, it is the living, dying Christ, whom we embrace in our hearts, saying, “ Be thy death our life ! be thy cross our refuge ! be thy patience our example, thy suffering our saving, and thy victory our redemption ! ”

Such, then, is our remembrance of Christ, as what he was, and did, and endured ; as the incarnation of suffering love, patience, and forgiveness ; as the revelation and surety and seal of God’s pity and pardon.

And now again I ask, what is the remembrance of him which it is meet for us to entertain ? And again I answer, our remembrance of him must needs be in sorrow and contrition. If happy and sinless worlds were to

commemorate him, it might be a different thing ; but ours is not a sinless world, nor is it happy. No, not sinless, and therefore not happy. Almost ever, our conscience, if it be not dead, is pained and wounded and ill at ease. Strike off all the grosser sins of sense and passion and mutual wrong ; say that we have blighted no one's innocence, crushed no one's interest, and bowed our own soul to no base deed ; yet, alas ! how much is left to afflict us ! Coldness of heart to the wants and sorrows of humanity ; not absolute, — I trust not, — but, alas ! too great ; dark and mournful ingratitude to the infinite Benefactor ; fear of man, bondage to the world that will not let us be free ; selfishness that coils itself about our heart, with its cold and serpent fold, and envy that shoots through it as with serpent fang ; anger that flashes out like scathing lightning upon our nature, and leaves its “ scar, its frightful scar,” upon our soul ; perverse imaginations of evil that steal again and again into the mind, though they never come out into open act ; some dark and heavy weight upon us, — we hardly know what, — that ever drags us down from the high and heavenly path in which we might walk ; and our life itself, not the lofty and sacred course we dream of, but a poor, faltering, erring life to its very close ; — all this casts a shadow upon our lot, and makes of our existence here a shaded picture. O, there is such a difference between what we are and what we might be, between the angels we might be and the grovelling creatures we are, that to think of it is a perpetual affliction ! It cannot be hard for such a nature, itself sorrowing, to commune with sorrow ; and above all, with the pitying sorrow that was endured for its redemption.

I acknowledge the great and blessed gifts of God to me. I cannot bear that this life should be represented as a worthless life, or this world as a mean abode. When I look upon the glory of the heavens and the earth, when I behold God's goodness enthroned amidst the brightness of day, I feel as if my being were made to float upon a sea of light in a trance of joy. Earth, too, brings around me ten thousand things gladdening and good, fair and lovely. I am oppressed, at times, with the beauty and charm of society. The affections that weave this wonderful vesture of social life, in colors brighter than golden dyes, reveal to me a new sense of what God's love is to this nature, — offspring of his love. But still, — still there are saddening shades upon all this brightness; there are dark threads interwoven with this splendid vesture of life. Still the everlasting cry breaks out from the heart of the world, for some one to pity, for some one to save. And none *can* save but *God*. And how could we know his mercifulness but by its manifestation? and what manifestation is there like that which appears in Christ, — in Christ crucified, the image and pledge of God's pity? No mystery is all this, but simple truth. The sorrows that once breathed out a sacred life on Calvary are echoed from all ages; and in the spirit and meaning of those sorrows alone can the sorrowing ages find relief. Hast thou sorrow, whoever thou art? Believe thou in Christ, be thou like Christ; believe in God's forgiving love, sealed in his blood, won by his sacrifice, and breathe in thy soul the spirit of that sacrifice; and thou shalt be saved; the balm of infinite compassion, the stream of boundless joy, shall flow into thy soul. Still, I say, it is no mystery. God's love for us, — our salvation, in other words, — won by that sacrifice, is no

mystery. Is it not the generous incentive, the glorious instrumentality, held out to all the world by that God who loveth the righteous? Does not the patriot's death win from God's providence the salvation of his country? Do not the philanthropist's toil and sorrow and sacrifice win from God's approving love the rescue of the miserable? Does not the martyr's blood win the triumph of the righteous cause? Is it not the seed of the Church? And that great sacrifice on Calvary, the holiest and dearest ever offered in the world, shall it not save the world?

And I say again, does not the world need that salvation? Even to-day, the burdened and bleeding heart of society, in its poverty and prostration and its unuttered and unutterable sorrow, — its stroke, like Job's, heavier than its groaning, — must it not look to the cross of Christ for relief? The lacerated wounds of private affection, — in how many homes wasting and wearing away the springs of life, — must they not, dumb mouths, pray to the Crucified? — must they not open their anguish to the breath of God's pity? The deep pains of human sensibility, which have no cause but man's infinite nature, which stretch their sensitive fibres through all man's life, from youth to age, which no one has ever described, into which no preaching, perhaps, ever looked, nor ever can look, — must they not lift their sighing voice to him whose whole being was penetrated by tender sympathy, whose life was poured out in one all-healing sacrifice of pity, — God's pity for the miserable?

My brethren, we are assembled for a week-day service, though it be a solemn commemoration; and you did not expect, perhaps, that the great and pressing call

of the highest religion would come so near to you. But how, and where, and when, can it be avoided? If I looked upon life as the coldest observer, — if I but saw what it is, and then knew what the Gospel, what the cross of Christ, is, — I should say, there is the relief. If I had critically read all the philosophers and sages in the world, and then as coldly read the words of Christ, I should say, here is help; nowhere but here. But we are not cold observers of life; we are not cold spectators before the cross. We do not stand by it as the hardened executioners, but, I trust, as the loving disciples. Let, then, that cross speak to us. Let it set its seal upon us, that we may bear it hence with us. It is not strange for us to commune with death; for we are all dying creatures, and our friends are dying — or dead! It is not strange for us to commune with sorrow; for we are all oftentimes sorrowing. Let it not be strange for us to commune with the spirit of Jesus in his sufferings, and with the mercy of God in his sacrifice; for that spirit is our life, and that mercy is our hope.

SERMON XXIV.

BY SAMUEL OSGOOD.

HOURS WITH THE COMFORTER.

AND BE NOT DRUNK WITH WINE, WHEREIN IS EXCESS; BUT BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT; SPEAKING TO YOURSELVES IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING AND MAKING MELODY IN YOUR HEART TO THE LORD; GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS UNTO GOD AND THE FATHER IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. — Ephesians v. 18–20.

OUR God has not created us for a life of dull, plodding routine. He has not commanded us to be content to drag a heavy load of care along the same dusty road. By our very nature we crave excitement and must have recreation. We must in some manner be lifted out of the monotony of toil, and enjoy what seems to us a higher state of life. This craving exists in all men, and leads many sadly astray. It shows itself in the sensual man, whether the rude boor or the fastidious voluptuary, who resort to the intoxicating cup that they may forget toil or drown anxiety, whilst they revel in fond visions that have enough of the show of nobleness and enjoyment to beguile, in order the more to imbrute, the soul.

The world not only offers this form of temptation, under the plea of meeting an essential human want, but

presents a thousand inebriating influences, all of which may be embraced in the prohibition, — “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.” Some of the means of exhilaration which worldly circles hold out appeal so insidiously to real wants of our nature, that a thoughtful man, whilst he condemns their excesses, will learn from them the need of remembering how plainly God has moved us to yearn for relief from drudging care, and of providing some proper means of refreshing and exalting our hearts amid the turmoil of daily labor.

The Apostle seems distinctly to recognize this principle; and whilst he warns the Ephesian church against all ungodly dissipation, points out the highest source of mental refreshment, — “Be ye filled with the spirit.” For where the spirit of the Lord is, there is not only liberty, but also peace and joy. Be this our theme, — “The joy of the soul when refreshed by the spirit of God.” The subject carries us back to the time when the disciples of our Lord first felt the meaning of his promise of the Comforter, — the season when they, almost paralyzed by the death and overwhelmed by the resurrection of their Master, were moved by a new influence from above, and with them thousands were made to feel their communion with God and their heritage of heaven, and gave thanks unto the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will not try to recall the particulars of that great birthday of the Christian Church, but would refer to them only to illustrate the hours of comfort that every soul may enjoy by the power of that same Holy Spirit.

Was Luke, do you suppose, romancing when he wrote his description of that happy time? Was Paul jesting when he addressed that counsel to a church that

he himself had established? Men are not ready to suffer and die for romantic stories or playful jests. If there be any truth in the Bible, it is true that, through the Gospel, the spirit of God is brought to act upon the soul of the believer, and the soul of the believer is brought into a nearer communion with heaven. The prisoner at Rome, and the Evangelist who was the sharer of his captivity, knew very well what they were saying, and were not, either in mind or heart, the men to be the dispensers of rhetorical deceits or the dupes of vain superstitions. They knew what they were about; and the best wisdom and experience of the ages since have justified their words. The hours of peace that the faithful have ever enjoyed well prove that the spirit of God still works on the soul, and still confirms the sacred record.

How may we win the blessing, — be filled with the spirit, and have a joy exalted and not of this world? Shall we act upon the principle of worldly dissipation, by running away from our duties, and shutting our eyes to stern realities? Shall we seek a blind, delirious rapture, like that of the wild revel or the midnight dance? Not such the apostolic doctrine nor practice. The Christian joy is sober and serene even in its heavenly fulness and holy rapture. Away with every thing that dazzles the senses and dizzies the mind. Be not drunk with wine, nor with any excitement wherein is excess, if you would know the peace of God and be filled with the spirit.

It is not remarkable what intellectual calmness prevailed, on that birthday of the Christian Church, among those who felt the new life, and were visited with tongues as of fire. Some mockers, indeed, — for mockers there always are, — said, “These men are full of new wine,” or, “Surely they must be drunk, to appear so strange-

ly!" But they who thus confounded deep emotion and holy joy with inebriate madness were rebuked at once by the Apostle who stood, as ever, at the head of the twelve, — not Pope, but foremost among brethren, — and delivered a clear and connected argument upon the foundation of the Christian faith and hope, exhibited Christ as the crucified and risen Saviour, sent to fulfil the law and prophets, heal the diseases of the mind, give new life to man, and pour the spirit of God upon all craving souls.

If we would be filled with the spirit, we should seek a like sober conviction. We must have a faith founded upon a knowledge of the truth. Our trust must be in God, — not in the unknown, but the revealed, God, — revealed not merely in the whispers of conscience and the voices of nature, but also in Jesus Christ his Son, our Saviour, who came to show us the Father and bring to us the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. Believing this, we rest upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Believing this, and rightly apprehending the relation of God, through the Gospel, to the sins, needs, and aspirations of our souls, we lay hold of the noblest of realities, and are ready for a joy exalted and not of this world, — a joy springing from no blind inebriating, but from the witness of the spirit. It was only when the revelation through Christ was completed by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the chain of connection between man and God, earth and heaven, was thus restored, that the way of mediation fully appeared, the believers saw the Gospel in its fulness, and belief became faith, and faith hope, and hope love, and love joy.

Sober truth, then, as to the relation between God and

ourselves, established by the Gospel, must be regarded as an essential condition of Christian joy in the spirit, or of true hours with the Comforter. "Give me a great truth," said Herder, on his death-bed, "to refresh me now that I faint." That truth he found in his own soul. What truth, to make us strong whether for life or death, like the crowning truth that God was in Christ, and, through faith, ever offers consolation and communion!

But, obviously, it will not do to trust in any merely speculative study of God's works and word for acceptance and peace. One great question is, What is the truth as it is in Jesus,—how do God and eternity appear in his Gospel? And another question, equally important, is, What is that truth to us, or how do we personally appear in our relation to God and the eternal world? The latter is the practical question to be settled, before we can know any thing of religious peace. That God in Christ calls us to himself and heaven is one thing, and it depends not upon aught that we do. Have we obeyed the call? this is quite another thing, and it depends entirely upon ourselves. There is balm in Gilead, a physician there; this is one thought. Have we sought the balm and gone to the physician? this is quite another thought. There is healing virtue in Siloa's brook is one consideration. Have we carried our urns thither, and with joy sought to draw water from the wells of salvation? this is another consideration. That the Father is ready with open arms to receive the prodigal, nay, with open arms will come forth to meet him; this is one truth. But it is also true that the prodigal pines in poverty and exile, until he will arise and go unto his father. The soul can

never know the joy of the spirit, — can never have its hours with the Comforter, — until the practical step is taken, and in repentance and filial faith turns towards God revealed in Christ. Then the way of communion is complete. Man meets God, earth borders upon heaven. Then the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, reaches to us, and its blessed waters do not disdain to flow into our dry and thirsty lands, moistening the whole soil, causing blade and flower and fruit to appear, and filling with a heavenly fulness those empty wells which, though formed of earth, may yet hold the sweet affluence of the skies. It was not a vision of fancy, or of some merely future paradise, which the divine St. John saw, when he spoke of the New Jerusalem : — “ He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.”

What the entire nature of spiritual influence is we do not profess to know, although we know as much of this as of any work of God. We do not feel authorized to speak of the Holy Spirit as in any just sense a distinct person in the Godhead ; for the neuter gender is generally used, and the influence is generally exhibited in the Scriptures as from God, and as sustaining the same relation to him that the spirit of man sustains to man, and no more a person other than the Father than the spirit of any man is a person other than the man himself. But we aim not at controversy. Our doctrine of the spirit is such as to bring us into communion with the great body of Christian believers, whilst it saves us alike from being identified with the dogmatism of creed-makers or the laxities of rationalism. We would urge the Gospel idea of divine influence, so as to be

saved alike from the superstition that regards the spirit as a spectral ghost, and the skepticism that confounds it with the mutable feelings of man. From this latter error, so prevalent in some quarters, we pray to be preserved. We hope ever to be able to repeat that article of every truly Catholic creed, — “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” — the spirit of God, that is to be known by the faithful soul, but no more to be confounded with the soul than the vital air which insures to us breath is to be regarded as having its being only in our feeble breath, as if its life-giving tide must perish if we cease to inhale of its fulness. The vital atmosphere around us is but a faint emblem of that universal spirit in which we live and move and have our being, and which was before man existed, and shall be when earth exists no more.

God is incomprehensible. So is his spirit. Yet what baffles the speculative understanding may present few practical difficulties to a docile heart. The revelation of God through Christ and in the soul of man is in analogy with his revelation through nature. The God of nature is above us in sublime mystery; yet he that will study the laws of the natural kingdoms, and follow their direction, shall win a blessing. Even now as we write, over the teeming earth myriads of gardens and fields are showing how God will bless those who seek outward blessings according to the appointed order, and how man may be filled with good, — what was once a wilderness now blooming with the promise of fruit, flower, and grain. Be ye filled with the spirit. To win this fulness we are to follow the appointed way. Look to God, as he appears in his works and word, with obedient, humble, trusting hearts, and who will say that

the Father of our spirits is not, — nay, is not near us, with us, and ready to fill us with uncreated good ?

May we not appeal to our own consciences for testimony ? Frail, feeble, sinful as we are, who of us is so lost to heavenly things as to have enjoyed no refreshing seasons when God has been near to us and breathed a better life into our souls. With too many of us, alas ! these times have been very transient, and the good seed has been choked by thorns, or eaten up by worldly cares, or come to naught for want of depth of soil. We have sometimes had intimations of God's presence in the fair scenes of nature, when with the hopeful verdure of spring, or the rich harvests of autumn, with sweet landscapes, or gorgeous skies, majestic seas, sublime mountains, the Divine Being has seemed to approach us, and his voice from the holy temple has thrilled through our hearts. But too often the feeling has gone with the sight, the voice passed with the occasion, and, like the base herd feeding in orchards, we partake of the bounty around us without looking up in gratitude to its Source.

“ For swinish Gluttony

Ne'er looks to heaven, amidst his gorgeous feast,
But, with besotted, base ingratitude,
Crams, and blasphemés his feeder.”

But it is not so bad with us always, in our views of creation, nor can many, if any of us, deny that we have had convictions of the Divine love deeper than nature teaches. Have we not had yet nearer visitations of God, and owned his glory in Christ as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ? We have been near enough the Gospel mediation to feel some of its power, — enough of it, surely, to disturb our torpor, and

give us some pulses of the spiritual life. Why did we permit the influence to be so fleeting? We have been disappointed, — who that has hoped has not been disappointed? — and have turned to one who will not fail us, if we put our trust in him. We have been tempted, and have yielded, — who has not been tempted, and in some point yielded? — and have sought, not without some return, a power that can keep us from falling. We have been startled, — startled by the decay of all human things, — as the death of a friend has broken in upon our worldly routine, given us a new sense of mortality, and shown us what a world of graves this earth is, and how vain is all its beauty and promise without the immortal hope. We have seen the fruits of pure religion, — sometimes in a life of blessed charity, sometimes in a death of triumphant faith, — and then a holy spirit has stirred us, and God and heaven have been near. Hours of retired meditation, of sacred reading, of hallowed conversation, of prolonged public worship, have been blessed with a peculiar power. In some of these hours with the Comforter, we have been ready to exalt meditation into jubilee, and break forth into joyful praises of the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. O, we have had such hours! Why will they not stay, and not only stay, but brighten in beauty and deepen in joy? Why may we not cry out with the Apostle, — “ We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord ” ?

Why not, — except because we neglect the means of true life, and slight the path of fidelity and peace to

which the Gospel calls us? The ecstasy of spiritual joy we may not, indeed, expect to have always. On the Mount of Transfiguration, or in the day of Pentecost, the disciple cannot always live; but surely its meaning should never be forgotten nor its spirit lost. It need not be amid the cares of the world; we cannot expect to live always as in the brightness of our Heavenly Father's countenance. But if we only remember his holy law amid worldly cares and trials, his face will have a more cheering smile when we seek his mercy-seat again. The subject may not always enjoy the intimate presence of his sovereign; but only let him show allegiance to the royal law, and all life becomes service, and absence in form is presence in feeling. So when we are inclined to lament that our frame of mind is cold and unspiritual, and we do not enjoy the religious comfort that we have sometimes known, let there be no repining, no murmuring at God, no quarrelling with ourselves or the world; but let us only strive to do right in God's name and for Christ's love, and we shall find the humblest obedience is the best recovery, and the spiritual pulse is quickened as the work of life is faithfully done. The influence of the favored hours is thus exhibited, cherished, and strengthened by plain duty, and works of fidelity sometimes kindle into prayers of faith and jubilees of praise. We may say, — "True it is, I have known a holier mood and a happier frame of feeling. Now, I am dull, desponding. But something must be pardoned to our nature. The good spirit moves me not now as sometimes. But what of that? So was it of old with holier men. Now is the time for a peculiar fidelity. Now is the time to refresh the root of the tree whose bloom is so fair and fruit so desirable. This cup in the

name of a disciple I can give ; this work of strife I can check ; that word of charity I can speak ; this fault I can control, and that grace I can cherish. Now is the time for sober obedience ; and if I am faithful now, my Lord will have for me yet a new blessing, when next I am in his nearer presence and see his face."

In this spirit we learn the sacredness of persevering fidelity, and the connection of righteousness with peace and joy. We shall thus be able to recognize the connection between practical obedience and heavenly communion. The hour of devotion will be the happier for the work of duty. The practical and the spiritual will agree in one. Life will wear a diviner charm without losing its sedate virtue. It will not be hard to understand the words of the Apostle, — "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus the whole compass of devotion is brought before us by the text, — devotion in private and public, by psalm and hymn, by prayer and thanksgiving. Never, without earnest devotional habits, can we hope for religious peace. The same exercises that express whatever of spiritual life may be in us add to that life, even as the juices that rise in the tree at once indicate its vitality and insure its growth. Why are we so reluctant to follow whither the spirit calls ? Why so languid in prayer ? Why so slow to seek in the home and at the altar the heavenly companionship offered us ? O for more of God, more of his holy breath,

giving life to our souls in hours of retirement, fervor to our sanctuaries of worship, joy to the table of communion, granting us a living witness that the spirit of truth is the same in all ages, and we, too, may know the love of God !

SERMON XXV.

BY ALONZO HILL.



THE PRIMITIVE SUPPER.*

THESE ALL CONTINUED WITH ONE ACCORD IN PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THE WOMEN, AND MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, AND WITH HIS BRETHREN. — Acts i. 14.

NEVER before since the world began was there an assembly like this of the disciples in the upper chamber in Jerusalem. The great drama in which they had taken so prominent a part was now over. Jesus, who had been crucified and slain, was arisen and ascended to the right hand of God. They had just come from the Mount of Olives, where, amid the beautiful and serene aspects of nature, they had seen him taken from the midst of them and majestically borne into heaven. They had entered Jerusalem with great joy, and were now assembled in their customary place of retirement and devotion, — the very room, it has been thought, where, a few weeks before, the Master had eaten his last supper with his disciples. How many solemn and touching associations gather around this, the place of their first meeting! There were the eleven, whose names are given, — each

* Preached at the Anniversary Communion Service, May 27th, 1847.

familiar face and form, — all were there save one, and he, — his habitation had become desolate, his bishopric was given to another ; he was no more to be mentioned but as a beacon and a warning. They had survived the terrible shock, the fearful and heart-rending events which had followed each other in quick succession, and were now collected from their dispersion to engage in the most momentous work of recorded time, the regeneration and salvation of the world. The women also were there, “last at the cross, and first at the tomb,” — the daughters of Jerusalem, who had wept as the victim went by to the slaughter, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, who had pondered in her heart the sayings at his birth, and whose bosom a sword had pierced at his death. What deep and hallowed emotions must have pervaded that little assembly ! How intimate their communion, as with one accord they continued in prayer and supplication ! How sublime, too, when we regard them as the *first* of those assemblies of believers, gathered together from age to age, in every clime, under every circumstance of joy and grief, — drawn by a common faith, in sympathy of affection, and by devotion to the great Head of the Church.

In what striking contrast with that little assembly is a meeting of disciples like the present ! They were few in numbers, seeking the retirement of an upper room that they might escape the prying eyes of enemies. We are many, and open wide our doors and invite all to enter, and have no enemies to fear but our own habits of sloth and selfish indulgence and deadly indifference. They were the first called, — the first in the mighty enterprise by which the world was to be regenerated. They went forth on paths which had never been trod-

den, and on seas which had never been sounded. We, the humblest of us, are sharers in the same great work, — matured by the experience of ages, and sealed by the blood of martyrs. And yet they were strong in their weakness ; for their minds needed no refreshing. The image of the great Master was ever present to their hearts. Their mutual affection needed no quickening ; for it had been nourished from a common source. But we, — how weak in our strength, — how prone to forget, — how frequently and much do we need to be reminded of our spiritual relationship, of our allegiance to the great Master of us all !

And is it not a happy arrangement in the business of the week that we should come and share together in this festival of love ? Since we met, we have stood in the midst of the monuments of Christ's power. We have contemplated anew the mighty spiritual agent that has been brought to bear upon our destinies. We have seen what it accomplishes, how it brings light and beauty and peace, changing like the breath of spring the whole aspects of nature. We have taken counsel together, and sought to give new energy and activity to our faith. As of a common household, we have remembered our brethren abroad and our children at home. We have given our alms, and provided for the widow and orphan, and the stranger within our gates. And now, what remains for us but to turn aside and pause a brief hour before the altar of commemoration, that we may revive our languid affections, and pour out our hearts' gratitude before the Author of our spiritual blessings ? When the disciples came down from the mountain, they entered Jerusalem with great joy, and continued with one accord in common supplication. Having come from witness-

ing the miracles of love and mercy which are yet done in the name of Jesus, let the hour be hallowed by holy thought and humble prayer and a spiritual communion.

And what object at such a moment should occupy the attention and engross the affections, but the Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the personal benefactor and friend of the believer? For this end was he born, that by his personal mediation he might bring us unto the Father. Why else come not our spiritual blessings like the gifts of nature around us, in spring showers and summer breezes? Why, but that receiving them through the ministry of the Redeemer, our minds might the more clearly perceive and our hearts be the more deeply touched by the greatness of the blessing? And can we, brethren and friends, bring before us the image of that Being as a great and blessed reality, can we in the still hour of our meditations contemplate him as the personal benefactor, the friend of our souls, without perceiving in his truth a solemnity, a winning and subduing power, as when it was first heard by the rapt multitudes on the hills of Galilee, — without feeling towards him a profound tenderness which we feel towards no other?

Think what he was and did, — a being of such gentleness and benignity, such purity and sanctity, that the like was never seen or ever dreamed of. Though all we know of him is contained in a few brief pages, though there is no description of his person, no hint by which we may draw a picture to the mind, except, perhaps, when the Jews said to him, “Thou art not yet fifty years old” (from which we may infer that, although not yet reaching the maturity of manhood, through his excessive labors there was a look of age beyond his

years, — that his delicate frame was already sinking beneath the energies of a divine spirit); yet what an impression of his spiritual mightiness has he left upon the face of the world! Walking in light and with divinest beneficence, bearing with him the power of God over the agitated elements, yet pressing to his bosom the humblest and frailest of his creatures, he hallowed each spot of earth on which he moved. For through him Palestine has become a holy land to all nations. A sanctity invests her barren hills, the waves of her lonely lakes, the soil of her ruined cities. His serene countenance once looked on them; his hand waved in blessings over them; he once with weary step trod them; — and they are sacred to the hearts of all people. For what a character has he left to gaze on and reverence and love. As a proof of its surpassing dignity and glory, let us record, that while men, pagan and infidel, have made war upon the pages of his Gospel and the institutions of his religion, and persecuted and hunted down its professors, they have left that character untouched. It filled them with a divine emotion. It inspired them with an awe too profound to be resisted, as did the holy temple in Jerusalem when the Roman armies were gathered around as eagles for their prey. They beheld it rising in magnificence, glittering with its marble columns and pinnacles of gold in the morning sun; and while they carried havoc and ruin through the streets, sparing neither old nor young, they had no heart to touch a thing so wondrous beautiful. They would have spared that.

And what is the image which rises before the imagination as we contemplate the Saviour? It is chiefly of the great Sufferer. And this it is that has given so much

interest to the piece of marble or ivory in which genius and devotion have embodied the conception of it. There is the form hanging on the cross, composed and relaxed, — the witness of the great strife that had been passed, — the agony now over. There is that countenance, with its unsounded depths of gentleness and love and majesty ; and who can gaze upon it, — so expressive of the deep peace of that soul which breathed accents of forgiveness and tenderness, — who can contemplate the great Sufferer in the hour of his triumph, who can ponder his life and death, — such a life and such a death ! — and not feel that he must needs turn away and weep ? Where are our hearts, if they are not melted and won ? If there be such things as reverence, gratitude, and affection, if the fountains of good feelings are not dried, if the last drop of sympathy be not wrung from us, we cannot fail to be drawn towards him by cords of tender and reverential emotion.

It is not enough, then, that we contemplate the institutions and the wonder-working power of Christianity. It is good for us, it is for our soul's welfare, to commune with the great Author himself. He is the source of our best inspirations, the fountain whence life and nourishment must be drawn. Travellers tell us of a tree that grows full and vigorous on the desert wastes of Africa. No green thing is near, all is barren and parched around ; and yet this tree every year grows in beauty and strength, every spring puts forth its tender leaves, and every autumn is laden with its fruit. " And how is this ? " inquired the traveller of an aged inhabitant of the desert. " The soil is barren and parched, I see no water near, and yet the tree stands green and fair under scorching suns and amid sandy wastes." " The expla-

nation is easy," was the reply. "It is of a kind whose roots extend far, and the delicate fibres have stretched forth in silence and beneath the ground until they have reached the river's banks. There they find perpetual and never-failing nourishment. And thus the tree stands in the pride of its beauty and strength; and suns pour upon it and winds strive against it in vain." So, my brethren, let us draw from the hidden fountains of living waters; let us be united to Christ as the branches to the vine; and our better affections shall not languish, we shall not be cast aside as withered and dried.

But this is not only an hour for tender and grateful memories; it is an hour also for renewed self-consecration to Christ and his truth, to the cause of God and man. Can we approach this table and call up the image of him in whose name it is spread, and not feel that the spirit of self-sacrificing love is the genuine spirit of his religion? When the Apostles stood together in that upper chamber in Jerusalem, what was their first work? They did not dwell on their privileges; they did not pause on the heart-inspiring vision which they had seen on the mount; but forthwith girded themselves for the great duties that were before them. They filled without delay their broken ranks; and they were already gone forth on their mission, eastward and westward, some with toilsome feet climbing distant mountains, and crossing strange seas, — some fleeing from city unto the wilderness, — some pining in prisons, — some wetting a foreign soil with their blood. They were with the Master when he passed on to die, and witnesses of his serenity and peace; they saw him as he ascended, and gazed upon his countenance of unutterable tenderness. He had revealed to them the Gospel in its ineffable

dignity and grandeur, and could they sit down in the possession and indulge in the solitary and selfish enjoyment ?

So at a later period. When the disciples roused the jealousy of emperors and kings, they repaired to the solitary field at early dawn, or the catacombs at midnight, not merely that they might sing their hymns, not that they might indulge in selfish gratification, but that they might renew their vows of fidelity, and by spiritual communion gather strength for the conflict. And so when they were dragged forth on the morrow before the tribunals of justice, and put to the trial of their faith, what noble proofs did they give of the strength of their convictions ! Men were there, humble, peace-loving men. "Are ye Christians ?" was the inquiry of the stern magistrate. "Place your foot upon that cross, the shameful emblem of the Christian's faith, — trample on the accursed thing." But they would not do it ; they would embrace it with tears of affection, and welcome its lingering tortures as if it were the repose of a soft bed. Tender and delicate females were there, just on the verge of womanhood. "Bow at this shrine ; scatter a few grains of incense before this altar of Jupiter." A single inclination of the head, a single motion of the hand, might do it. "Not for worlds," was the reply ; "our religion forbids it." Meekly and cheerfully they encountered the flames that consumed their bodies, and mounted the fiery chariot that was to bear them upward. And is not this to be regarded as an altar of refuge, a sanctuary of peace ? and are we not here to give pledges of undying fidelity and affection ?

If there were here, in this assembly of believers, some

devoted missionary who was about to tear himself from a New England home, to bid adieu to his native soil, the familiar scenes of his childhood, and the graves of his fathers, and after a long voyage to disembark on an unhealthy coast, there to take his lot amid heathenism and every social discomfort ; if for Christ's and the Gospel's sake he had resolved to raise there his solitary tent, and encounter every species of privation, — a burning sun by day and unhealthy dews by night, — and to toil on in sickness of body and sickness of heart, and, it may be, sink at last into a lonely grave, — no voice of kindred or friends near, and no gleams of success to cheer a dying hour ; or if there were one present to embark on the morrow, to wear out his young life on the Western prairies as our brother has just done, — who of us would not urge him to lay his heart on this altar of sacrifice, nourish his spirit with high thoughts, and consecrate himself anew to the service of his Saviour and his God ?

But, my brethren, this is not the severest peril to which a Christian man may be exposed. There is an idolatry worse than heathen, a spirit more to be feared, more deadly, than the disease that burns under tropical suns, and descends in the night-dews and lurks amid gardens of beauty there. It is the spirit of society, politics, trade, fashion, the unmitigated spirit of selfishness in every shape and in all places. We part to-night and go our several ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise ; some to pulpits beset with temptations to indolence and unfaithfulness, and some to pews obstinately shut so as not to receive the whole counsel of God ; some to the market-place, where, amid the prevailing worldliness and the pursuit of unrighteous gains,

the best thoughts are dissipated, and the best impressions worn away ; some to social circles, often so frivolous and heartless ; some to homes where there is no domestic altar, and some to retired chambers, which never witnessed for a single hour a faithful self-inspection and discipline. The temples of worship stand among us, the Gospel is preached season after season, and there still is the turbulence of ambition, the greediness of gain, and the excesses of sensual indulgence. There is the tempter, subtle, plausible, insinuating. There is the prodigal son wasting the wealth of intellect, affection, and opportunity, — the rich man sitting at his feasts and Lazarus at his gates. No, my brethren, it is not savage cruelty, it is not the slow-wasting pestilence, it is not loneliness, nor distance from friends, nor death in strange lands, that is most to be feared. It is the low worldly influence all around us, the spirit of irreligion in the midst of us, like some dread presence, invading our sanctuaries and our homes, our public and our private walks, and laying waste all that is loveliest and best there. This, this we are to fear with the whole energies of our souls. And in such a peril, can we fail, as we stand at this altar, once more to refresh and invigorate ourselves with the spirit of the Master, — once more to record our vows of fidelity, our deliberate purpose, whatever may come or whatever may threaten, to be true to ourselves, and to live for God and Christ and heaven? This night and these elements witness the resolution. Let to-morrow find us in the way of improvement and safety and peace.

We go our ways. We engage in the conflict and encounter the peril. But, for our solace and encouragement, let us remember we do not go alone.

God and Christ and all good men are with us. When the disciples descended from the mountain, they were but an hundred and twenty; and though the whole world was arrayed against them, and peril attended all their steps, they ate their bread with cheerfulness and went to their work with good hope, upheaved the earth by their energy, changed the face of empires, and saved the family of man. We are a multitude whom no man can number, and tokens of sympathy everywhere attend us. Hands that never clasped are engaged in the same great work, eyes that never met are turned towards heaven for succour in the same great cause, and hearts are warmed and bosoms throb with kindred hopes. Nay, more; can we come into this place of our solemn gathering, and not feel that we belong to a still larger communion? We are associated with the innumerable company of the departed, — with those who have entered within the veil as well as with those who still linger without. One family there is on earth and in heaven, —

“One church above, beneath,
 One army of the living God;
 To his command we bow;
 Part of the host have crossed the flood,
 And part are crossing now.”

Forms dear and venerable, long since departed, rise up before me while I speak. I hear again voices that, once familiar here, touched all hearts. I see the countenances of those we loved, intently fixed and regarding with unabated solicitude the cause of God and man. They throng around us now in our better and more blissful moments. They attend us here when we would mount up into a higher region of faith and

affection, and sympathize with every smile of joy, every gleam of success, that falls upon our hearts. How sustaining, how animating, the thought! Hour of the spirit's communion! altar of the spirit's refuge! gate of heaven! What remains for us, brethren and friends, disciples of Jesus, but to approach this spot with reverential awe, to cast from us every weight of worldliness and besetting sin and unmanly distrust, and run with patience and diligence the race that is set before us? Onward, then, in the path of fidelity and Christian duty, cheered by the presence of visible and invisible witnesses, animated by the encouraging example of the faithful. Onward until the perils are all passed, and your feet shall tread within the gate of the holy city, and the bright inheritance shall be yours. Still onward, until you join the august assembly in that magnificent temple from which they who are admitted shall go out no more for ever.

SERMON XXVI.

BY WILLIAM H. FURNESS.

A COMMUNION SERMON.

GOD, WHO COMMANDED THE LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS, HATH SHINED IN OUR HEARTS, TO GIVE THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST. — 2 Corinthians iv. 6.

THE friends that surrounded Jesus while on earth were few, and very humble, — far, far inferior to him in every respect. It might be supposed that there could be but little sympathy between him and them. Certainly they could not enter into his spirit, and appreciate his sorrows and his joys. Still, their attachment, humble as it was, was his only earthly solace, and in their society he found the only comfort which this world had to give him. And the prospect of being cherished in their hearts, when he should no more be present to their sight, helped to soothe and support him when the darkness of his fate began to thicken around him. Thus it was, I conceive, in the most natural manner, that he was led to bid his friends hold him in special and affectionate remembrance: Though it should not be supposed that, at the time when he broke the bread and poured out the wine, he was thinking of all the coming genera-

tions of his disciples who were to join in this service and be benefited by it, — though it should even be conceded that he thought only of the little circle of personal friends gathered round him at the moment, — still, what is there to prevent his being to us, what he was to them, an object of personal attachment and reverence? To honor and love him, we need to know, not his personal appearance, but his spiritual features, the divine lineaments of his inner being, and these — with what beauty and clearness do they beam upon us from the simple pages of his history! Whether he now takes note of the world which he died to save, we dare not venture to say. But if he does look down upon us, amidst all the sad sights that meet his view, it must be grateful to him to see, if we give it to be seen, as we may, that he is still remembered for his own sake, that the sacred voice of nature in our hearts still responds to that same voice of nature which spoke in him when he asked to be held in tender remembrance, — in fine, that his dying request has never been forgotten.

At all events, to associate ourselves in imagination with him, to have our thoughts turned specially to him, — to make him an object of commemoration, — will it not help us where we continually require help? We all know and admit the engrossing nature of our daily life, and our great need of every assistance to pure and upright living? And who is so far advanced in virtue as to be beyond being benefited by having his attention drawn, as it may be by this service, to dwell upon the character, the sufferings, the services, and the love of the greatest and purest being that ever dwelt in the abodes of men? The fashion of the world binds us round and round with chains none the less strong be-

cause they are invisible, and we hardly so much as dream, or we only dream, of the true life, and freedom, and enjoyment which are close within our reach even here. And yet we know full well that we are far from being what we should be. We know that we are too much under the dominion of motives, pursuits, and habits of life inconsistent with our spiritual and immortal nature. We mourn sometimes that it is so, and inwardly our hearts long for the peace and strength and liberty of the children of God. Let us, then, be adjured to listen, young and old, to that blessed and tender voice which comes to us, sounding through the long ages of the past, speaking to our inmost souls, and saying, — “Do this in remembrance of me. Like the bread which you break, my body was broken for the sake of that truth which is the life of the world. Like the outpouring of the wine, so was my blood shed.” By appropriating special and stated occasions for the commemoration of our Heavenly Friend, we may hope to remember him at other times, when we need the holy idea of him to come swiftly before us, like a guardian angel, and rescue us from the temptations of the world and our own cunning and selfish passions.

I feel it necessary to repeat what I have often said before, in regard to this observance, that there is nothing mystical and mysterious in it. To most minds a vague sacredness wraps it round, like a mist in which nothing is seen distinctly, and which imagination fills with its own frightful creations. Accordingly, men shrink from it instinctively, and cannot bring themselves seriously to weigh its claims, — to look at it as it is, and at the moral benefits which they might derive from it. Let it be understood that the bread and wine undergo no change

of substance. They have no sacredness in themselves, but are sacred only from the associations connected with them, only from the thought which they express and suggest to our minds. And the power, the moral, religious power, of a *symbol* like these does not by any means depend upon its literal, intrinsic value. The remembrances of our parents or our children who have vanished from our sight, down the dark valley, may be of the smallest value in themselves, and yet how are our hearts softened as we look at them. The memento of a departed friend may be absolutely worthless, but we may wear it as our most precious ornament when to another, ignorant of the meaning it has for us, it would be useless. Upon us it acts like a magic charm, and at the sight of it we become insensible to all surrounding things, and wander back in imagination to that distant time and spot where we took sweet counsel with our departed friend, and wept and rejoiced together. The symbol which appeals most powerfully to our love of country, which stirs the heart like a trumpet, and which has prompted men to rush with shouts of triumph into the arms of death, — what is it but a piece of painted cloth, floating idly in the air? So is it with the bread and wine. They are in themselves the commonest elements of food. But employed on this occasion, for the purpose indicated by Jesus, as remembrances of him, what holy associations gather round them, — of what momentous events, of what sacred interests, of what beauty and glory and blessedness, do they mutely discourse! Let us hearken now, brethren and friends, to their teachings. Let us consider some of the things of which this observance is the memento.

In the first place, it is a memorial of Jesus himself.

It speaks to us of what he was in himself. Here dawns upon us the vision of a character of original, unapproachable, and yet simple loveliness, — a young man in the bloom of life, endowed by God as no other ever has been, with powers by which disease and death were made obedient to his will, in the consciousness of his divine gifts exalted to a sense of unearthly dignity, and yet all the while manifesting the meekness and simplicity of a child, never valuing himself upon his power, never using it to subserve any private purpose of his own, but consecrating it to the good of those who scorned and resisted him. His heart overflowed with tenderness, but none sympathized with him, none knew him. He was a stranger in the world for which he was ready to pour out his heart's blood. He saw that all his benevolent words and acts only exasperated the passions of the selfish and unprincipled, and that the best of those about him were terrified and hardly dared to be known as his friends, yet every variety of suffering he was ready to endure that men might be enlightened and saved. As we dwell upon his character, what a majestic and tender form rises before our imaginations! Who does not see those arms outstretched in blessing, those eyes streaming with tears of immortal pity! O, if the thought of this wondrous being, so human and so divine, has ever touched our hearts, if we have been, in any degree, impressed by a sense of his moral beauty, then in this feeling we have the requisite qualification for the observance of this commemorative act! Do you reverence Jesus Christ? Do you feel how generous and sublime was his spirit? Do you ever pray in your secret heart to be made wiser and better? Would you love to be brought more nearly to Jesus, into a more intimate

knowledge of him, that his character may act upon yours? These are the only questions to be asked. If you are conscious that such *are* your desires, then come to the table of commemoration. Bring these hidden desires and aspirations with you, and Jesus will meet and welcome you here. There is no power on earth that has a right to bar your approach. Come and commune with the spirit of him in whom all the beauty of humanity and all the glory of the Divinity are conjoined and revealed. Come, not because you imagine yourself worthy, but because you have learnt how unworthy you are; not because you esteem yourself righteous, but because your heart is bursting and breaking with desires to be better. Come, hungering and thirsting after truth and holiness, after a pure mind and a tender and heavenly spirit and a Christian life. In these dispositions and aims young and old may share, and here they may understand how naturally this observance addresses itself to our simple human affections, to our veneration, to whatsoever there is in us of love for what is good and excellent.

Again, this observance is a remembrancer of the great work achieved by Jesus Christ. It is a monument, a memorial, of a renovated world, of a world created anew by his influence. Considered simply as an historical fact, the life of Jesus of Nazareth was the beginning of a new era. He has made the world what it is now. Our whole condition is as it is, because he hath lived and died, through the force of those circumstances which this table commemorates. Through him has been diffused over this land and to this generation all that there is of happiness, improvement, and hope in the state of mankind. That there is so much of

comfort and progress and security in human life is owing to him. Let it be that the principles he asserted were old as the world, that they had been asserted before, still the truth, which before he appeared hovered dimly in the speculations of philosophers, as at best only a beautiful vision, he realized. He embodied it in himself. He breathed into it the breath of life, and made it a living soul, a vital, victorious element in the constitution of the world. He proved its practicability under the most difficult circumstances. And although it has as yet had only a partial influence, still by his example men are encouraged and inspired, and there never have been, and never will be, wanting those who believe in the possibility of all that he has promised. And now that Jesus Christ has been here, there is an indestructible hope for the world, and its path is upward and onward towards a millennial glory, — to a day of universal peace and freedom and righteousness. The earth has been sprinkled by his precious blood, and old things must pass away, and all things become new. In a word, by him a new creation of the world has been commenced, — that creation which is accomplished through the instrumentality of thoughts, of ideas. He has introduced new thoughts. He has given power and diffusion to new ideas, and these are the invisible angels of God, which fly abroad over the earth, making all things new. Of these Christian principles of thought this table is the memorial, and here we are reminded of the new modes of thinking, the great truths, to which Jesus Christ gave authority and life, and by which the condition of men is transformed.

Consider, for instance, the great and universal symbol of Christendom, the cross. What an impressive

fact is this, that our most cherished, most sacred symbol, should be, not a weapon of war, not a sword, nor a spear, nor an ensign of visible power, a sceptre, or a crown, but the cross, that instrument of shame and death, which instantly suggests the image of an innocent and holy sufferer, expiring in untold agonies! Who can tell how much this simple sign has had to do, in the great process of disciplining the human heart to tenderness and humanity? The great Head of Christendom is presented to us by this symbol, not as seated on a throne, not as wielding the thunders of omnipotence, but in an attitude of extreme and yet patient suffering. I put out of view all metaphysical and theological dogmas concerning the reason and end and purpose of the death of Christ, and look only at the fact the most glorious and exalted of beings manifested in a condition that appeals to the universal heart of humanity, invoking its sympathy, its pity, and its tears, silently teaching the divinest of truths, that by suffering meekly, without revenge, without retaliation, in love and forgiveness and prayer, the most glorious of victories may be won. To my mind there is something inexpressibly interesting in the fact that Jesus Christ planted in the very centre of a great company of warlike nations, armed to the teeth, such a symbol as this. It is true, they fathomed not its significance, they saw not how it rebuked their savage contests, or what an outrage it was to unsheathe the sword in the presence of that sacred sign. Still, it has not been raised in vain. It has subdued the fury of war, and the nations are beginning to discern that great truth of which the cross of Christ is the symbol, and which Christ died to illustrate, namely, that violence is to be conquered, not by

violence, but by love, — that the final and triumphant victor in every conflict is he who suffers evil but will not do it. Not less interesting and powerful is the influence which the whole history and spirit of the life and death of Christ have exerted upon the humanizing relations of domestic life, building for man a home and wreathing it with a thousand tender associations. How large a place does woman occupy in the history of Jesus, ministering to him on his weary journeyings, following him to the cross, weeping at his tomb! Thus incidentally, as well as by the direct effect of its gentle and pacific spirit, Christianity has done much to elevate woman; and what a fact is it in the history of our religion, in the history of man, that when all Europe was clad in steel, and the shedding of blood was accounted the most honorable occupation, and the hearts of men seemed hardened against every thing truly gentle and Christian, that then the universal object of worship should be, what? — not the God of war, not some idol significant of valor and strength, not any symbol of violence, but the holy mother and her infant child, woman's purity and childhood's innocence, and united with these that most sacred affection, the mother's heart! Such were the ideas, the images, which Christianity diffused through the world, and by which the savage minds of men have been insensibly civilized, and art and genius have been inspired, and the world has been taught that there is a higher glory than the glory of arms.

Again, at this table we are reminded of the diffusion and power which have been given by Jesus Christ to the sentiment of immortality. It has been rendered, under the Christian dispensation, a familiar, household

thought. I know that this great idea is not appreciated and felt as it should be. It has but little of its rightful influence upon the conduct of men. The opinion of the world has far greater power in swaying and restraining mankind. Still it has an influence, in one way and another, that can hardly be estimated. It comforts us under the afflictions of life far more than we are aware. The idea of another life has always existed in the world, in every nation, barbarian and civilized. Yet there is a marked difference in this respect between Christendom and all other communities. Before Christ appeared, the wisest among men had no distinct thoughts of a future. There are still extant many Greek epitaphs and funeral inscriptions. They are touching and beautiful, highly poetic, but their deep, sad silence respecting another life renders them almost as chilling to the heart as the marble upon which they were inscribed. But now, through the influence of Christianity, — this religion which stands for ever pointing onwards, this religion of progress and hope, — the whole tone of human thought, the whole manner of human speech, has undergone a change, and when death invades our households, though our tears flow, yet what a host of soothing thoughts and images throng around us! A bright, invisible world rises before us. The torch of life is presented to us, not inverted, but as borne away by an unseen hand to be kindled anew at the eternal light. A thousand forms of expression occur to us which invest the departed with a new beauty. There is yet gloom resting over the grave, still over every Christian grave sound those sublime and thrilling words of Jesus, — “I am the resurrection and the life.” With the shadows of the tombs, rays of light and beauty intermingle. And

as we stoop to look down into the sepulchre, we behold angels there, and a voice addresses us, — “ Why seek ye the living among the dead ? ” Yes, ye mourning parents, ye mothers, who weep in silence for your vanished little ones, as faithful Christian women ye cannot now mourn as those that are without hope, for the image of Christ, wondrous and majestic in its beauty, rises before you, and ye behold him standing in the still eternal world, like an angel in the sun. And with outstretched arms he says, — “ Suffer your children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Let them go. They still live before God, and the almighty love, of which your fondest affection is but a faint inspiration, is ministering unto them with a tenderness of which you are not capable. Let the service of commemoration speak, then, to our hearts, for it tells us of him who died that all the burdens of human sorrow might be lightened.

Once more. This observance reminds us that, through him whose memory we cherish, we have been made familiar with the great thought of a Paternal providence. This all-animating truth has circulated like a tide through Christendom, and we know not how much even the most insensible have been elevated by it. We are all folded in the arms of a Father. Infinite Love surrounds us, and we cannot fall from its embrace. Can we shut and bar our hearts to this light ?

But it is in vain to think of specifying all the great and blessed things of which this table is the memorial, and by which this observance is justified. I ask not what you think of the nature of Christ. It is enough that we see in him our greatest benefactor under God, that we acknowledge him as the light and Redeemer of

man. If any religious service has significance and propriety, it is this. Let it not be neglected through indifference, or weak and ill-considered scruples. But be ye fully persuaded in your own minds. Whether you observe one form or another, or omit to observe it, take care that you have the warrant of your own best convictions, and that you are not timidly following the way of the world. Be true to your own hearts, and the grace of God shall be with you.

SERMON XXVII.

BY NATHANIEL L. FROTHINGHAM.

PARADOXES IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER.

HE THAT EATETH ME, EVEN HE SHALL LIVE BY ME. — John vi. 57.

YOU will hardly believe that these words could ever have been a subject of dispute and division in the Christian Church. They are so manifestly figurative, and the two parts of the sentence are set in contradiction to each other with such an obvious intention of uttering what would sound like a paradox, that we wonder how any one should have found in them a special doctrine and literal truth. Yet the Roman Church interpreted them to mean that Christ was personally present in the communion bread; and the Lutherans maintained that they indicated at least a mystical union between the communicant and his Lord. These ideas may seem to you the almost forgotten errors of a very remote age. But they appear so only because you have been accustomed to more rational interpretations. They have by no means become obsolete. Were they ever so common, however, even among ourselves, I should prefer to controvert them in no other way than by a simple statement of the opposite construction. They who are con-

tent thus to rest in the letter of the divine word show that their minds are not yet fledged for a free flight.

“He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” This passage is part of a remarkable conference between our Lord and a multitude of his countrymen in a synagogue at Capernaum, and will be best understood by referring to the circumstances under which he spoke. Those men had followed him across the lake, after the miracle of the loaves, not from their faith, but from their poverty ; — not that they might be further instructed, but that they might be further fed. Hence he took occasion to teach them, that they should “labor for that food which endureth unto everlasting life.” He proceeded to represent himself as the bread of God which cometh down from heaven. This was said in perfect accordance with that familiar form of speech, which described truth and righteousness as something that men must hunger and thirst after, as the nourishment of the soul. They misunderstood him, however, as they usually did, and cavilled at his words. He then went on in a bolder strain, preserving the same metaphor, but expressing it in stronger terms. He had already conceived the great purpose of becoming a voluntary victim in the cause for which he was sent. He joined this idea, therefore, to the other, and even went so far as to speak of his flesh and his blood as given for the life of the world, and actually to be partaken of by his disciples. This language was more than mysterious. It was offensive to them. So he intended it should be. They would not understand his plain teaching, and he therefore made his meaning darker with parables. He had been obliged but the day before to hide himself from those who would have taken him by force to make him a king ; and he would now

rebuke their false ambition by purposely affronting their prejudices, and calling up to their minds the images of humiliation, pain, and death. This seems to me, at least, the only satisfactory account that can be given of this singular discourse of Christ. Its concluding expressions must be owned to be harsh and repulsive. They were so to those who first heard them ; insomuch that some of his followers murmured at them, and from that time went back and walked no more with him. But we, instead of being perplexed or startled by them, should consider that they were designed to produce such an effect on those to whom they were originally addressed. Jesus, as he saw them retiring, turned to the twelve, and asked, — “ Will ye also go away ? ” Simon answered for the whole of his companions, — “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

“ He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” He that receives my satisfying word in the faith of an humble heart shall be strengthened by its heavenly supplies. He that is not ashamed of my cross shall inherit my kingdom. He that follows me through my reproach shall sit with me in my glory. He that profits himself of my death shall obtain life for ever. Such is the interpretation of the text. It has not been selected merely for the purpose of being explained, but because the singularity of its phrase leads us to think of many other instances in which the doctrines of the Christian faith and the facts of the Saviour’s history seem to be expressed in contradictions. Every thing is so wonderful in the circumstances of his life and the mediation of his word, that it communicates an air of strangeness and paradox to the very language in which they are conveyed. The

most opposite ideas are brought together into the same sentence, and combine to set forth one truth. Many passages might be cited as examples of this from the writings of the Apostles; especially when they are describing the lowly appearance, yet the divine glory, of the Son of man. What contrasts of humiliation and honor, of grief and gladness, of weakness and might, are made to meet in the office which he sustained! At once in the form of a servant and in the likeness of God, chosen of Heaven and rejected of men, he submitted to all the ills of nature, though he commanded its powers, saved others while he would not save himself, and selected the humble for his friendship and sought out the miserable as his hearers and subjects, though having a name above every name, and appointed to an immortal throne. His death was his triumph. The sacrifice of himself was the salvation of the world.

“He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” This he said when he was wearing himself out in labors, through which others were to find rest unto their souls. It was with the hope that they would learn submission from his meek example. He said it, also, in anticipation of that coming day, when, after his work was all accomplished and nothing was left but to die, he should address the twelve in those words which his Church was never to forget, — “Take, eat; this is my body.” This was with the hope that the remembrance of his deeds and sufferings might inspire others with a like mind. Thus the text has a clear, though a remote, reference to the institution of the Holy Supper. It will be so considered in this discourse. For us it does not contain any contradictory proposition, like that of the Romanists, who say that the broken bread is the real body of

him whom it is only intended to bring to mind. It gives no countenance to the mystical views of some of the Reformers, who imagined that the partaking of the Lord's Supper infused a peculiar virtue, and incorporated, as it were, the believing member with the glorified Head. The only further use I would make of it is to point out two singularities — we may call them paradoxes — in the ordinance of the communion, which have occurred to me as striking, and deserving of careful thought.

The first of these is, that it is an institution founded on the future. It is a commemoration of what had not yet taken place. In the common order of things, it is after a great event that men seek to perpetuate the recollection of it. They record the past. They set up their pillars of testimony, when the importance of the transactions which they bear witness to is generally acknowledged; and they do this on spots that are already sacred to fame. Nor does this commonly happen soon. The usages they celebrate and the monuments they build for the instruction and encouragement of posterity often rise after a long interval of time. They are the invention and work of the grateful minds and pious hands of a new generation, that thus seeks to transmit the deeds of a former day to the admiration of coming ages. — But what a remarkable difference is here! Jesus Christ established the communion when the facts to which it related did not yet exist; and when they on whom he enjoined its observance were ignorant what it meant. He was a living man, in the prime of his powers, sitting at a feast in the midst of devoted friends, and safe so far as appeared from any attempts of his enemies, when he said, — “This is my body, already broken for you.” The current of life was flowing steadily through its natu-

ral channels, when he said to his disciples, It is in the cup before you, already shed for many for the remission of sins. Is there not something peculiarly noble and affecting in this, — something that partakes of a divine character? To the eyes of Christ, the future to which he referred was present, — or rather was past. The circumstances of his approaching fate were discerned as transactions that were just accomplished. How must the faith of his followers have gathered ardor and strength, when they found events explaining their Master's meaning, while they confirmed his truth, and time itself revealing gradually his prophetic wisdom and sacrificing love! When they came together the day after the crucifixion, in sadness and fear, astounded at what had happened, and in utter darkness as to what was to come, the remembrance of that paschal feast must have told them not to despair. It must have filled them with the resolution to keep together at least as a distinct company, though the world should cast them out, and to profess their faith in the Master they had lost, though their solitary profession should be, like the cry of his forerunner, but a voice in the wilderness. Had the resurrection never explained to them the purposes of God in the sufferings of his Son, — had the shadow never departed from off the marvellous scenes, now so mysteriously closed, in which the late years of their lives had been spent, — even then they would have continued to celebrate his faithfulness in the little company which he had gathered, and have gone down to their graves in the hope that revelations of mercy would yet break forth, though they were not permitted to behold them, from the inexplicable darkness in which they were wrapped.

There is another consideration, that seems to me as remarkable as the one just mentioned. The institution of the Supper was to perpetuate the memorial of what was painful and ignominious. Here again is a wide departure from the usual course of things. Men do not ordinarily select those incidents which are charged with gloomy reflections to tell their story of defeat and sorrow to after times. They would rather keep such out of sight. They would fain erase them from their own thoughts, and not inscribe them on monuments. They love to immortalize by stated celebrations, or permanent signs, such events as catch the wonder of men, and are connected with ideas of glory ; — such as the winning of battles, the founding or the saving of states, surprising acts of valor or munificence, and all the palms and trophies of success. These are the subjects which they desire to hold up before their children and children's children. These are the monuments of which they celebrate the laying of the corner-stone, and the crowning of the summit, with processions, and a nation's rejoicing, and the eloquence of great men. Or if they set up those of an opposite kind, — testimonial pillars of wrong and suffering, — it has been usually for no other purpose than to transmit to a further age the animosity of the present ; to keep alive the feelings of hate or the purpose of revenge. — Mark the contrast in this rite that Christ founded. It is of a disgraceful death that he wishes to make the memory immortal. He would perpetuate the recollection of that moment which seemed to give the triumph to his foes, to overwhelm those who loved and confided in him with obloquy and despair, and to leave to utter ruin the cause for which he had lived, — the moment when his pretensions were to be cruelly

mocked in the sight of the whole people, and he was to expire as a malefactor. All this, too, in the loftiest spirit of good-will to men that was ever manifested or conceived of. Not to inspire his adherents with an imperishable dislike to those by whom that atrocious deed should be done, — not to stir up the nations to avenge his fall, — but to offer an exhibition of devoted duty and disinterested love, and establish a blessing that should be extended universally and never cease.

There were points in his history of a far different nature which he might have selected for commemoration in his church. But he passed them by. He appointed no service to celebrate the day of his baptism, when that solemn introduction to his ministry was sanctioned by a voice from heaven ; — none to celebrate the night of his transfiguration, which was brightened by the visitants from another world. He did not signalize in this way any of his mighty works, any of the hopeful and brilliant portions of his life. He chose above them all the season of his betrayal, rejection, mockery, and murder. He took in his hands the bread, that he was going to turn into so mournful a symbol, and in the act of breaking it he gave thanks. What instance of devotion can you conceive of, that approaches this in tenderness and sublimity ? He gave thanks, as he was preparing to go as a lamb to the slaughter. He gave thanks, as he was teaching his disciples to remember his sufferings. Hence the ceremony which we observe is sometimes called the Eucharist, — thanksgiving. Was it not a thanksgiving wrought out of the midst of what our poor nature most shrinks from ? Was it not the very eucharist of sorrow ?

But why, some one may ask, did he choose such an

incident to be peculiarly honored in the records and ceremonies of his church, seeing it was agonizing and ignominious both? It was because it crowned his obedience and led to his reward. He saw in his death the long blessing that should follow it. He saw in his blood the seed of a great and spreading faith, and the Gentile nations coming to sit under the shadow of it. He saw his numerous followers making it their honor and comfort to recall this scene of shame and tribulation. He saw that cross, the frame for an infamous punishment, revered as a blessed sign among the most different tribes of the earth. Were not here reasons enough for his preference? And do we not thus see in every part of this institution the spirit of prophecy in which it was conceived? What need have we of further witness? See here one of those traits, such as are often found in the Scriptures when they are well pondered, which carries at once to the soul the confidence and the ardor of faith. Let the Jews demand a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. It is enough for me to look at Jesus on that memorable night; to hear him "speak of the exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem,"—if I may apply from another occasion to this the remarkable expression of an Evangelist, — and arrange a ceremonial to prevent its ever being forgotten.

Come, then, to his table, you who are of a cold and languid faith. You may derive from the contemplation of his strong love the sentiment that you need for the kindling of your affections. You who find the yoke of the Lord heavy and his commandments grievous, — you who are anxious to withdraw yourselves from every toil and sacrifice, — come to the table. Come and be penetrated with his obedience and charity. Come and learn to

love him as he loved you. You will find no difficulty in what is required of you, when you have once made yourselves familiar with the extent of his benevolence, and the trials that he passed cheerfully through in displaying it. You who are not sensible enough of the evil of sin and the fearfulness of its chastisements, come to the table. Remember what he endured, who put away sin by the sacrifice of himself ; and regard not that as a light thing which he died to remove ; and tremble at the thought of receiving the grace of God in vain. Come you, who are already endeavouring well, and hoping righteously, that your success may be the greater. And you who are self-convicted of many faults, come, that your offences may be the less. Let all come but the perfect, who have no need of improvement, and the abandoned, who have no love or thought of heaven. To the first, the Gospel was not sent ; and to the last, it is of no avail.

SERMON XXVIII.

BY EPHRAIM PEABODY.



THE LORD'S SUPPER TO BE OBSERVED.

FOR AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK THIS CUP, YE DO
SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME. — 1 Corinthians xi. 26.

IN calling your attention, my brethren, to that Christian rite which had its origin in these words of Christ, the first question to be considered is, whether our Saviour intended it to be a permanent ordinance, — to be observed, from generation to generation, by his followers. The answer to this question must of course be determined entirely by our Saviour's words. The account of the institution of the ordinance is to be found almost in the same terms in each of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The following is the account given to the Corinthians : — “The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread ; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body, which is broken for you ; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye

eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." The other passages add one or two circumstances, but this contains the substance of all which enables us to determine whether it was intended to be a rite for perpetual observance. We shall more easily come to a just conclusion by dividing the question.

Did our Saviour intend to establish a rite which his Apostles should observe after his death?

At the close of the Paschal Supper, "he took bread and blessed and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, As often as ye do this, do it in remembrance of me." "*As often as.*" Without giving any rigid rule as to its frequency, leaving this to be determined by circumstances, this phrase implies that it was to be repeated, and also that it was to be repeated after his death, since it was to be in "*remembrance*" of him. Nor this alone. He singles out the particular event to be commemorated. "This is my body which is broken," "my blood which is shed." It was to be in remembrance of his death, and his request could not be complied with till after that event. We cannot doubt that he intended that his Apostles should observe this rite of remembrance after his death.

Did he, then, intend that the rite should be confined to the Apostles, or that it should be observed by all his followers?

We must remember that what he taught the Apostles he taught for the express purpose that they might teach others. They stood to him as representatives of all who should believe on him. His words were addressed primarily to them. But what he commands them to do, unless there be something in the nature of the case or in his words to limit it to them, is addressed to all his followers.

But in the present case there is nothing to confine it to them. So far from it, the reason given for observing the rite applies not more to them than to us. He says, "This is my body broken, and blood shed, *for many*, for the remission of sins." For this he would be remembered. He did not teach or die specially for the twelve disciples. His death secured no good to them which it does not equally to us. In the very form of words he uses, it is not confined to them, but it is "the blood shed for many for the remission of sins." The reason which Christ gives for its observance applies as much to us as to his Apostles. It would seem to be the natural suggestion of his words, that all who are benefited by his death should thus commemorate him.

But this is not all. There is another consideration, which seems absolutely decisive of the question. The account of the institution of this rite is contained in a few lines. And though the Evangelists have recorded the substance, doubtless much more was said in that parting hour. If, from the brevity of the narrative, we have any uncertainty as to what the Saviour intended, we shall best learn what it was, by seeing what the Apostles did. The course they pursued showed what they understood him to mean. Their actions explain their narrative.

Did the Apostles regard the rite as one to be observed by all the followers of Christ, or did they not so regard it? There can be but one answer. Immediately after the death of Christ, some of the Apostles went east, and some west; they were scattered over the world, they were too widely separated to hold much intercourse together; yet wherever they went and planted a church, they instituted this ordinance. In Asia, in

Africa, in the distant regions of Western Europe, wherever a church of new converts was gathered, this rite was observed. We never hear a doubt raised that it was not to be observed by all. Whatever uncertainty there might be about other things, respecting this they were of one mind. The greatest perversion of the rite leads to no question of the duty of observing it. The Corinthians, just converted from heathenism, after Paul left them, turned it into almost a heathen festival. What does Paul do? Does he tell them that it was not originally intended for them, and that they had better omit it, because of its liability to be abused? Not at all. There is no intimation that they were not bound to observe it, or that its observance should cease, but he rebukes them and expostulates with them, and sets forth its true nature and intent. And in explaining it he says, what is most observable, — “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come,” — a memorial of Christ’s death through all the ages of the church, till the consummation of all things. There can be no doubt that the Apostles regarded it as a rite to be observed by all the followers of Christ. When we remember that they were appointed and sent forth by our Saviour to be the teachers of his religion, their words and example become authority for us. Remembering the nature of the ordinance, the words of Christ, the course of the Apostles, there seems to be no room for doubt that it was intended to be observed through all time, wherever there were hearts to honor the memory, or to be grateful for the love, of Jesus.

But still, many are perplexed with difficulties; and one of the chief ones arises out of the marked tendency

of the age to do away with forms. It is a mere form, it is said, — and what is its use? It is not like any moral duty; — I can observe it and still not be a better man. It is a mere form, and is a hindrance and a fetter to the spirit.

It is admitted, that to him to whom it is a mere form, devoid of spiritual significance, it is worthless, and perhaps worse. A mere form, a dead form, is but solemn, idle trifling with the holiest realities. But a form need not be dead. Let it bring vividly before me divine truth and heavenly graces, and by so doing help to awaken my mind to them, and the form has become to me instinct with spiritual life and of infinite value. It is only through outward forms that one mind becomes manifest to another, or exerts power over it. A form! What is it? A book is a mere form of words, — an outward body through which an invisible spirit reveals itself. I take up the writings of some ancient and good man. If I read the printed page with a lifeless mind, it is to me a mere sequence, a dead form, of words. But it is not this. It reveals the spirit of the author. It does something to awaken for the moment a like spirit in me. It is as a lens, which concentrates the thoughts, feelings, faith, of the writer, and brings their light and warmth to rest on my heart. Through that form, a ray of light, which else for me had been extinguished, is made to stream down through the dark gulf of ages into my soul. — So the Lord's Supper is a form. But call it not a mere form. So long as it speaks, as it has always spoken, of the holy submission, the forgiving tenderness, the divine beneficence of him whom we commemorate, so long as it has power through its associations to touch our hearts, to awaken penitent thoughts and holier resolves, it is no longer a mere form, — it is spirit and it is life.

But we may go further. We may well distrust the tendency to do away with all forms. Who stands so self-sustained that he does not need their help? Who does not need them, that they may steady his unstable thoughts, and that his holier aspirations may wind around them, as they strive feebly to rise above the earth, and find support?

There is nothing that we more need than times and rites which shall make us pause and consider. We are borne along, blind and heedless, in a hurrying throng of worldly cares and schemes. We need occasions which shall bring us to a stand, which shall draw us aside from this vain struggle of earthly passions, and make us consider where we are and whither we are going, — occasions that shall speak to us of duty, of the soul's welfare, of heaven, and of God. For this reason, the institutions of religion are to be cherished, and all customs whose legitimate influence is to draw aside the mind from this absorbing worldliness. Still let men rear churches for worship, and let anthems of praise be sung by the living, and prayers be breathed over the biers of the dead, for they recall that which should be first of all remembered, but which we so easily forget. Blessed for this be the Sabbath sun, and its hours of calm, — and welcome the sound of Sabbath bells, calling the great brotherhood of men to pray! And welcome, above all, that holy rite which brings me to the foot of the cross, which shows me him who is dying there to save men from their sins, and which compels me to think how, in his pure sight, my heart and life must appear!

We need such occasions as the suggestions of better thoughts and the reminders of duty. We are hardly conscious how very much the direction of our minds

depends on the moral influences and associations which surround us. With most men, the objects around them suggest thought and feeling. The senses rule the mind. If this be so, how important that there should be around us what may awaken our better thoughts! Consider how vast a part of the influences around us tend to make the mind worldly and earthly, how few of them, comparatively, tend to quicken the higher elements of the soul. The objects which meet the eye and suggest so large a part of our thoughts, — the crowded streets, ships, houses, lands, the pleasures of to-day and fears for to-morrow, schemes for worldly advantage, plans to avoid loss, — by ten thousand threads of association, these tend to bind the spirit down to the present moment and to the earth. We need to have around us objects which are associated with, and which shall thus call our minds up to, a higher region of thought and sentiment. We want, through their associations, by spiritualizing the world, to make it counteract its own bad influence.

How powerful over us and how precious are all objects thus connected with higher and holier ideas! The thoughts associated with such objects enter into your mind and lift you up for a time into their region. You visit a place where some act of heroic self-devotion has been done, some field once wet with the blood of heroic men, or hallowed by the prayers of the devout, — no matter where it is, it is holy ground, and every human being feels the power of the associations of the place. It is good to have been there. Remove these spots, and earth would be disenchanted. The stars would be blotted from the sky, and blank darkness alone left. How precious to you the least thing associated with the affections. On some worldly quest among the papers

and relics of past days, you meet with some memorial of affection, of a parent or child or revered friend, — it may be but a lock of hair cut from the forehead of the dead, while with sad heart and flowing tears you leaned over the unconscious corpse, — it may be but some brief line of love traced by them while yet alive, — but how, when you have scarcely taken it in your hand, it has already possessed itself of your soul! Long-forgotten memories revive, affections long slumbering are quickened, the forms of the departed float before you, your soul, losing its worldly thoughts, is with them. And you go forth a more sober and a better man for that hour's communion with the departed. For a similar reason, because of its suitableness to rouse and impart energy to the moral nature, it was the advice of the late Dr. Arnold to those who sought his counsel as to a course of reading, — “Read the lives of good men.” While we read, their spirits are present with us, their thoughts and views of life take possession of our minds, our moral natures are invigorated, and for a season we feel inspired with a firmer purpose to do and bear what God appoints. How many have felt, in this place, the power of objects once associated with the better feelings to awaken them again! Here, perhaps, in infancy, the waters of baptism were poured on your forehead. Here, in childhood, you sat with those dear to you, and listened to Christian instructions. Here you may have brought your own children to the altar. And around you may be sleeping those you loved, parents, children, kindred, friends. Here your heart may have been moved to prayer and to holy purposes. Leave the place, and for a time be a wanderer over the earth, and at length return again. These walls are not merely frozen, insensible

stone. As you sit in your ancient seat, invisible forms are around you. Memories of your best hours revive. Your youth returns. And trusting thoughts, and tender affections, and pious resolves come, like angel visitants, to the soul. You hear voices which others do not hear, speaking of innocent days, of early affection, of manhood unfaithful, perhaps, to its early hopes, — voices of sad warning, of cheering encouragement, of God and of heaven. To you the place is sacred, and it is good for you to sit silently within its shadows.

It is not all superstition, but in its origin only a just appreciation of one of the most important laws of human nature, which has made the Catholic Church cover the walls of its temples with pictures of saints and martyrs, and scenes of heroic self-sacrifice and Christian fidelity. It was not all superstition which caused it to set up the cross in the chamber and in the cell; which reared it beside the fountain that gushed from the hill-side to invite the weary traveller, who paused to drink, to kneel also and pray; which placed it above the altar around which the assembled worshippers bowed; and installed it, sculptured in stone, over the tower, there to stand immovable in the clear heavens, a perpetual symbol and remembrance to the busy throng below of him who died that the world might live.

Such, in a still higher degree, is this memorial rite. It speaks tenderly — how often with mournful warning! — of faith that rose above the world, of love mightier than the fear of death, of all heavenly excellences with which we most need to have our own souls filled. We would not willingly consent to see the desecration of the graves of the common dead, we would not witness the defacement of any monument of noble deeds or heroic men, we

load with reproaches the barbarian hands that could mar works of art, the memorials of the genius of past days. What, then, shall we say of a monument, a perpetual memorial of the world's benefactor and Saviour, of that being who alone embodied in himself and made manifest as our example those excellences which bring the soul nearest to God, — a memorial instituted almost with his last words, and preserving in our memories and affections his death. Let the temples where our fathers worshipped crumble, and let triumphal arches fall, and the monuments of past glory and achievement perish; but for our own souls' sake and our children's sake, that our hearts may feed on divine thoughts and sacrifices, we will hallow this memorial of disinterested, holy, heavenly love, such as the world has not elsewhere seen and will never again see, till the deep give up its dead, and we stand in his presence who died for us, in that world to which he has gone.

But, it is said, it is of no use. Take, then, the utilitarian point of view. What is the use of any thing? The highest good that can be done for me is to quicken my moral nature. All else is external, superficial, of transient value. But to suggest a good thought, to awaken pure affections, to rouse my moral nature so that I shall be prepared and disposed for holy purposes, — an angel cannot do more for me than this. Who will say that there has not flowed from this altar of commemoration a perpetual stream of such influences? There is never an occasion of its observance in which, in nearly every heart, there are not serious reflections on its fidelity, penitent regrets for failure in duty, resolves for amendment. How many forgiving thoughts have made this place sacred! How many, while seated here,

have said in their hearts, These feelings of enmity which I have allowed towards my neighbour I will allow no longer ! How many foes have left this place to be reconciled ! How many resolved to be more considerate in their households, more mindful of Christ's law in their daily walk ! How many have here resolved that they will no longer waver, that they will take their stand on Christian principle, and be faithful unto the end ! Remember, too, that this has taken place, not in one church, but in all the churches of Christendom, and this through eighteen hundred years, and who shall doubt its utility ? Nay, what one influence, save the spirit of God, and the truths of his word, has so awakened penitent and forgiving thoughts, disinterested affections, religious emotions, and so confirmed men in religious purposes, as this holy ordinance ?

And besides, its whole influence is beneficent and holy. The world may stir up your jealousies and inflame your passions. But this ordinance has no power save to soothe and calm and elevate. What frail creature, in this tempting world, can afford to dispense with an influence which is of heaven, and which, if it do any thing, quickens into life that which has most affinity with heaven in his own soul.

But I do not like to view it in this way. I do not like the common mode of speaking of it as a *means* even. I do not care to calculate too closely what I can gain by it. I do not wish to observe it for any specified advantage it may secure me. I would observe it this day, because of the spiritual gratification it gives me this day to do it. There is no need of weighing and measuring future advantages. It is enough that it can fill the mind with thoughts which I should be glad might have, not a

transient, but perpetual, presence there. It is sufficient that, through its associations, I can more vividly call to mind that which I desire never to forget, the life, beneficence, and sufferings of the Saviour. It was in the beginning a rite of love and tender memory, and in grateful remembrance, in devout purposes, in humble thanksgivings, let it still be observed.

It can be easily imagined that there are not a few who would gladly partake of this ordinance, who may have long desired it, but who, by different causes, are deterred from it. The most common cause is the feeling of personal unworthiness. How, then, and how far, should this weigh with us? If by unworthiness one means that he has no desire or purpose to lead a Christian life, then he properly abstains from it. But if by unworthiness he means simply a sense of frailty and sinfulness, but not a satisfaction with that state, if it be his heart's hope and wish to be a better man, if from the midst of his unworthiness he looks up and says, like the sinking Apostle, "Save, Lord, or I perish," if he sincerely desire and purpose to be a follower of Christ, let not the feeling of present unworthiness deter him from this table, but let the hope of a better state bring him to it. This ordinance is not for the perfect, — for then neither apostle, nor saint, nor martyr, could have partaken in it, — but it is for beings like us, for the frail and the sinful and the weak, who lift up their hearts in Christian resolves and in prayers to God, that they may have strength to walk more faithfully in the Christian way. The words of Christ, explaining the purpose of the rite, show who should approach this table. "Do this in remembrance of me." It is not an ordinance for the thankless, the thoughtless, or the unbelieving. But the

invitation is to all who with reverential gratitude desire to commemorate their Saviour and their Lord, who desire to be more grateful and more obedient, who desire to receive into their souls more of his spirit. You may come humbly and weighed down with conscious unworthiness, but bring a penitent, grateful heart, that longs for a better state, and he will not repel you from his table who came to save the sinful, to encourage the faint-hearted, and to uphold the weak.

There never was a more touching scene than that when this rite was instituted. It was the last time that Jesus should break bread with his disciples before his death. He left that chamber for the agony of the garden, to encounter treachery and desertion, the unjust tribunals, the outcries of the frantic and ferocious people, the death of the cross. This was his last request of his followers. He that was dying for them would be remembered by them in love. Are there those whose hearts impel them to obey that last request? Surely, it is a good impulse. It is well to obey the better promptings of the soul. We yield quite enough to the impulses of lower and more unworthy hours. When higher thoughts and holier purposes move you, for the sake of your soul's welfare repel them not, but obey them.

Come, then, and remember him who died that he might bring back the sinful and the wandering to their Father's home. Come, and while you remember him, examine your own hearts. Are you at variance with your neighbour? — while you commemorate him who prayed that his murderers might be forgiven, make this place sacred by the reconciliation of your enmities. Have you been unkind in your home? — here bind yourself

to fidelity to gentler and more loving affections. Have you been hard and inconsiderate towards the poor, the forsaken, the oppressed? — while you remember him who went about doing good, repent of your selfish ways, and let merciful thoughts prompt you to deeds of mercy. Do you mourn? — here remember the Comforter. Are you frail and self-distrustful? — remember him who said, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Is your faith weak? — come, and from this spectacle of unbounded submission, learn to trust in God. Do you fear to die? — here remember him who is the resurrection and the life. While you listen to the words, “Do this in remembrance of me,” here, at the foot of the cross, let it be your heart’s resolve, We will remember and we will follow thee.

S E R M O N X X I X .

BY SAMUEL K. LOTHROP.

FALSE SHAME AND TRUE GLORY.

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. — Rom. i. 16.

Hypocritical piety is not a prevalent sin of our times, but the hypocrisy of indifference has its votaries, who could not utter the declaration of the text with a conscious integrity of heart. Formerly, in countries where religion was in alliance with civil power, in periods when the church was a stepping-stone to authority and wealth, there were doubtless some hypocritical professors of religion, who made a gain of godliness and assumed an external piety as a means of social advancement, the chief instrument of their ambition. The reality being advantageous in a worldly point of view, the counterfeit was not uncommon.

There is some reason to believe, that, at the present day, an opposite state of things exists. There are now more persons ashamed to make a profession of religion than pretenders to any degree of it which they have not attained. Many persons love God, and fear him also, far more than they are willing to acknowledge before the world. Religious pretension is not now, here and among us, a common vice ; religious indifference — an indiffer-

ence in the manners and appearance that is not a sincere expression of the heart — is common. Timid and backward believers, persons who are ashamed to confess the strength of their faith, who have not courage to stand up before the world and acknowledge the Gospel as the rule of their lives and the joy of their hearts, are more numerous now than the hypocritical professors or the open enemies of the Gospel. There are many, of whom it may be said of them that they are “ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,” and this shame operates in various ways to injure their characters, to retard their Christian progress, and to diminish their usefulness and their influence. I propose to speak of it as it affects their conduct in relation to that holy and beautiful rite of commemoration which here appeals to their affections, is offered to their observance.

Permit me to say, first, my friends, that among those who are not members of the church, not professors of religion, to use a technical phrase, there are many of you whom I cannot but regard as religious and devout persons, every way worthy to be received to our communion. I have seen you and watched you under various vicissitudes and in a large experience of human life. In your sorrows, I have observed that the Gospel afforded you rich and abundant consolations. Its precious and immortal hopes soothed your hearts under the pangs of bereavement, and gave you strength to endure affliction with meekness. I have known you to resist pressing temptations with success, and to hold fast your integrity and purity against loud calls of passion and opportunity to surrender both. In the sacred walks of private and domestic life, I have seen some of you discharge, day after day, month after month, hard and pain-

ful duties with a cheerful alacrity, an unflinching fidelity, that could have their source, it seems to me, only in an inner principle of obedience. I cannot but think that the Gospel is dear to your hearts, that in secret you rejoice in it, and appeal to it, and reverence it. It does much to soothe your sorrows, to elevate your minds, to guide your lives. You do not openly and avowedly profess it, but no power on earth could make you deny it. All that the world has to offer could not induce you to resign your faith and your hope in it.

I believe, also, that to you the first Sunday of every month brings with it something of regret and reproach. As you then turn away from this ordinance, you do so with a heart and conscience ill at ease. You are not quite satisfied with yourselves. You feel that you are neglecting both a duty and a privilege. You feel that you ought, you wish that you were, to remain and unite in this sweet memorial of that crucified Redeemer, upon whose instructions you have dwelt with so much benefit, whose death and resurrection have inspired your hearts with holy and everlasting hopes. And why do you not remain? Why are you thus almost, but only "almost, persuaded to be a Christian"? The answer that rises to your lips is, that you are not good enough. Is it the true answer of your hearts? You calm your consciences with the idea, that it is a feeling of reverence and humility that keeps you back, that withholds you from participating in that communion, which bringeth condemnation upon every one that eateth and drinketh unworthily. I dare not undertake to deny this; nor would I say aught that should tend to check that deep reverence, that holy veneration, with which religion, in all its truths and in all its services, should be regarded.

But I ask you, my friends, — I put the question in all respect and kindness, and I beseech you to put it to your consciences in all sincerity before God, — is there not, mingled with this just sentiment of reverence, some feeling of another kind, less worthy and less Christian in its character? Is not this other feeling the real obstacle? Could you overcome this, would the other keep you long away? Do you ever feel too unworthy to pray? Are you ever oppressed with such a deep and profound reverence toward God, that you cannot lift up your heart to him, whose ear is ever open to his children's supplications? The more unworthy you are, the more you feel the need of prayer, and the more profound your reverence, the more humble, but the more earnest and trustful, your devotion. Do you ever feel too unworthy to come to church, too sinful and ignorant to wait upon the Lord in his temple? The more unworthy, sinful, ignorant, you are, the more you feel the need and seek the aid of the instructions and influences of the church. Prayer and attendance upon church attract no particular attention. The one can be offered in private, the other in the general custom of the community. But such is the constitution of the Christian church, and the very nature of the act, that to come to the communion table is a step by itself. It is something peculiar, something that necessarily directs more or less attention to the individual, and implies that his heart is moved by a deep religious impulse to an important and decided act. You shrink from this important and decided act because it is decided and important. You do not like to say to the world all that is implied and comprehended in it. Upon religious subjects, upon your responsibilities as an accountable, your destiny as an immortal being, you really

feel more than you are willing to let others know that you feel. If you could come to the communion table, and use this great means of spiritual culture, enjoy this precious season of devout thought and grateful commemoration, without others observing it or remarking upon it, you would not hesitate to do so. If this be so, it is shame, and not humility, — a fear of what others will say, and not a reverence for the ordinance and a dread of unworthy participation, — that keeps you from observing it.

The ordinance itself is beautiful, simple, impressive. It has a solemn purpose and meaning, a mighty, I had almost said, a mysterious, efficacy. I will say that it has a power peculiar to itself to touch the deepest places of the soul, to invigorate the conscience and to quicken the whole moral nature of man with a divine energy. In the shadows of the past, in the great and wide providence of God as unfolded in the history of the world, there is nothing that has left upon the human mind an image of itself so vivid and divine, nothing that has exercised over the human heart an influence so holy and elevating, as that brief tragedy, “brief in act, infinite and everlasting in blessing,” of which this ordinance is the appropriate and significant commemoration. It speaks through the senses to the soul. It makes the distant to be near, the old to be new, and converts a familiar fact into a living power in the heart and conscience. We all need the influence that flows from this “showing forth of the Lord’s death.” You, my friends, whom I meet with pleasure and satisfaction in all the social walks of life, in whose houses I am welcomed with an affectionate respect and confidence that I gladly reciprocate, whom I behold here every Sunday, uniting with exemplary regularity in these services of prayer and praise,

instruction and worship, but whom I do not see around the table of commemoration, where, for your own sakes and for ours, I should rejoice to meet and welcome you, — you need it. It would strengthen and comfort, it would guide and guard, it would refresh and sanctify, it would inspire your souls with a more than mortal energy to tread the narrow and rugged path of duty with firm and unfaltering step. Ask your hearts why it is that, meeting everywhere else, we meet not here in this rite, so interesting, so impressive, so instructive. Determine that question only after the most thorough and searching examination; and if conscience intimate, by the faintest whisper, that you are ashamed of the Gospel, that you are unwilling to acknowledge before the world that deep interest in religion which in your innermost soul you do feel, and cannot but feel, strive to dismiss the unworthy sentiment. Be not ashamed to appear, be not afraid to profess, to be religious.

Of what, let me ask, are you ashamed, of what are you afraid? Do you fear that baseless opinion entertained by some, that a deep personal interest in religion is a proof of intellectual weakness, an evidence of a defective understanding, of a narrow and limited mind? Nothing can be more false or more absurd than this idea. No great mind ever admitted it, because every really great mind is and has been religious. Indifference to religion, insensibility to the immortal interests of the soul, can claim no alliance with high thought, with intellectual greatness, with profound reflection. The rare exceptions which infidelity can produce only go to confirm the fact, which all history and biography prove and illustrate, that the most eminent men — those most distinguished for their genius and learning, for the gigantic grandeur of

their intellects, the vastness of their mental acquisitions, and the important influence they have exercised upon the world — have been religious men, have cherished in their hearts, professed with their lips, and often gloriously exemplified in their characters, a deep religious faith, an intense religious feeling.

Of what are you ashamed, of what are you afraid? Do you fear the laugh of the scoffer, the sneer of the profane, the ridicule of the weak and wicked? Alas! it is a sad thought, that all things are susceptible of ridicule just in proportion to their dignity and grandeur. Religion, — the noblest and the grandest thing on earth, the only thing that gives real dignity and grandeur to man, “changing the worm into the seraph,” — religion is consequently of all things the most susceptible of ridicule. Impiety and skepticism find in this the great instrument with which to smother and suppress in thousands of hearts the most ennobling thoughts, the most solemn and elevating aspirations.

Brethren, remember that nothing is easier than to convert this ridicule into respect, unless it be to increase the number and the venom of its shafts by exhibiting a susceptibility to be wounded by them. The sneer of ridicule will be more bitter and frequent, if it have power to penetrate your heart and hold in bondage your conscience; let it be unheeded, and it recoils with destructive force upon him who utters it. There is nothing on earth so respectable, or that men feel so compelled to respect, as genuine and sincere religion, — a religion that is neither superstitious nor fanatical, neither canting and boastful nor timid and timeserving, neither the cloak of selfishness nor instrument of ambition, but the offering of the heart, the rule of the life, the all-

pervading element of the character. Cultivate and exhibit such a religion, confess Christ before the world, not with the ostentation of a Pharisee, but with the modest firmness of a true disciple ; be willing to say to the world, and to say it decidedly, that you are and mean to be religious ; that, conscious of the weakness and frailty of your nature, of the peril and the temptation of life, you feel your need of the aid, and are seeking the protection and mercy, of the great God of the universe ; that you believe in the Messiah whom he has sent to be a Mediator and Redeemer, through faith in whom you have an immortal hope and are preparing for another world more blessed and glorious than this. Do this modestly, yet firmly, with a thorough, genuine purpose of heart, and they who were disposed to sneer shall be the first to honor your courage, and respect your fidelity, and to put confidence in your character ; and in that great and perilous season, when the secrets of all hearts are to be judged and the issues of life awarded, Christ shall confess you before the Father in heaven.

But why confess Christ in this manner ? Why make an open, public religious profession at the table of commemoration ? If the Gospel be dear to our hearts, if its hopes impart comfort in the hour of sorrow, and its truths guidance amid the intricacies of duty, of what importance are the opinions which the world may form of us, of what consequence is it whether others know that we are religious or not ? Is not religion a strictly personal matter ? The answer is obvious. It is our duty, not only to be religious, but to be religious in such a manner as shall help to make others religious. We are bound to aid in sustaining the faith of the Gospel, that it may appear honorable among men, that the timid may

have courage to profess it, that the wavering and irresolute may perceive the firmness and loftiness of character which genuine piety inspires, and be induced to drink at the same fountain of living waters.

In one of its aspects, religion is, undoubtedly, a strictly private and personal thing, having its altar and its holy of holies in the heart, never to be profaned by exposure to the public gaze. In this aspect the Apostle speaks of it, when he says, — “Your life is hid with Christ in God”; that is, the seat of religion is in the heart; there lies its hidden root and power, and thence, like the physical heart, quietly, silently, irresistibly, it sends the life-blood of a quickening faith and a practical godliness throughout the whole being. But there is another aspect, in which religion is a social, public concern, a matter in which the community is interested, in respect to which we hold relations to our fellow-beings as well as to God, and are bound to honor it openly, to uphold it strenuously, to profess it publicly. Our Saviour speaks of it in this aspect, when he says, — “Let your light so shine before others that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” These words enjoin a solemn duty. They make it obligatory upon us to set a good example, and to put the weight of our influence, openly, decidedly, unequivocally, upon the side of religious truth and virtue. Unless we do this, our hearts are not right. Religion does not reign in them with supreme power, it does not impart its richest comforts, or exercise a controlling influence, so long as, from any worldly motive, any feeling of timidity or shame, we shrink from an open, manly, meek, but decided avowal of our religious convictions; a clear expression of the fact, that we wish to be, that

we are using all the appointed means and aids to become, truly devout.

I advocate not a religion of display. It is of all kinds of display the most offensive and repulsive. I advocate not a religion tinged with arrogance and self-conceit, and whose outward manifestations seem to say continually, — “Behold my zeal for the Lord. See how much I love him, and how faithfully I serve him. There are few in this world so good as I am.” But I do advocate a religion so conscious of its own dignity as to be superior to all influences of worldly fear or favor; too meek to obtrude, too firm ever to shrink from, its honest convictions of duty and right; prompt on all occasions to obey conscience and maintain holiness, and exhibit the fruits of a deep and serious piety, — a religion never presumptuous and pretending, yet never timid and seeking concealment. Such a religion is truly Christian, corresponding to the character and instructions of that Master, who has never required of us to be so humble as to yield up the dictates of conscience and the holiest feelings of the heart to the fear of ridicule and the sneers of the worldly, but, teaching us in all things to be meek like him, has also taught us to be firm and true like him.

That Master has said, — “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.” There is a solemn meaning in these words. The broad, general application that is to be made of them embraces this ordinance, as well as all other modes in which we can confess Christ before the world. Let them have more power over you than the fear of man. See that you

confess Christ here, after the manner of his appointment. Say not that you have no need of this ordinance, that you can do without it, that there is little efficacy in it, little importance to be attached to it. Observe it before you adopt this conclusion, and when you have observed it, you will never adopt it. I have seen many a tear shed, and have heard many a bitter and unavailing regret expressed, for its neglect ; but I never yet heard a murmur of penitence for its observance, or found any one ready to confess its inefficacy or to admit that it gave no guidance or comfort, strength or peace. It gives a large measure of these. There have been eloquent words uttered in this pulpit in years long gone by. Noble and saintly men, rich in the highest gifts, full of the inspiration of genius and the fervor of piety, have stood here, and their lips seemed touched with living fire from the altar of God, and they felt the majesty of truth, and uttered it with all the earnestness of conviction and in thrilling and persuasive tones ; yet I believe that the mightiest words that ever fell from mortal lips in this desk were powerless in comparison with the strong appeals which this ordinance makes to the heart and conscience, and the quickening, invigorating, sanctifying influence it carries down into the depths of the soul of him who observes it in sincerity and truth. Men have come up hither in their sin and sorrow, weak and wearied from the moral conflict of life, their hearts fainting within. Kind words and soothing words were spoken to them. Language full of tender sympathy, and wise counsel, and earnest admonition was uttered, and it had its effect ; but not till they had gathered around this table of commemoration, not till they had partaken of these symbols of the great sacrifice, these tokens of the love divine

and stronger than death,—not till then were they fully comforted and strengthened, not till then did their hearts burn within them with the sweet conviction of pardon and peace.

Be not, therefore, ashamed to use what Christ's wisdom appointed and God's blessing maketh effectual to your virtue. Come to the table of commemoration, not hastily, not irreverently, but with a serious and settled purpose, in holy faith and deep humility, and you shall find in it a blessed fulfilment of the Apostle's declaration,—“I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.”

S E R M O N X X X .

BY CYRUS A. BARTOL.



THE SAVIOUR'S JOY.

THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN IN YOU, AND THAT YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL.—John xv. 11.

THE Saviour's joy ! The great burden of religious thought, exhortation, controversy, has been the Saviour's grief and agony, and the moral significance of his sufferings. His image in the Christian's heart has borne the aspect of pain, — the stretched limbs, the bowed or helplessly swaying head. And many a Christian might be surprised that any other aspect should be presented.

What, speak of his joy, who was friendless, homeless, persecuted, crucified ! Yes, the Saviour's joy is my subject. Perhaps reflection may convince us that a too exclusive attention has often been given to the unhappy circumstances of his lot. Let us attempt to throw a single beam of light on that part of the picture so frequently kept in the background.

And, first, it is natural to remark that he was not utterly excluded from common, daily joy. He turned water into wine, and himself joined in the marriage festival, at Cana of Galilee. Doing the greatest work ever intrusted

to human hands, he yet smiled under the burden. Though he walked in the wilderness, yet was not sweet nature robbed of her richness and grace, for he delighted more in the lilies of the field than in all the glory of Solomon.

Nothing, indeed, is more observable in Christ, than the cheerfulness, and, if we may so speak, healthiness of his mind, — the ease with which he partook of the fortunes of those with whom he found himself, the freedom with which he mingled in social life. Still, it must be confessed that these joys sometimes failed. Those outer cisterns of the soul, in which we catch the rain of common blessings, were, indeed, with him sometimes exhausted, and utterly broken at last. But we are not obliged to trust for refreshing waters entirely to what may drop from the eaves of our dwelling. There are fountains in the earth's heart, and their sweet streams spring up to make the most desolate wilderness blossom as the rose. So, too, there are fountains deep sunk in the heart of man, that revive him with richest draughts, when the world may judge he is scorched to the centre by pain and persecution.

So was it with the Saviour of the world. Let us speak of some of these exhaustless sources in his mind. He was a homeless wanderer ; but beneath this sorrow, a joy lay hid in his heart. It was the joy of beholding, in the distance of futurity, the time when he should dwell among a great company of friends and kindred, in the noblest temples which humanity could rear to his honor. He could bear to be houseless, in anticipation of the vast abode which, firm as the "earth's base," age after age should for ever rear and widen. Again, Jesus suffered persecution. Wherever he went, the

shadow of the cross fell athwart his path. But beneath this sorrow also, a joy lay hid in his heart. He knew this was not to be the end. He knew the cross would not always be the mark of withering scorn, the symbol of the whole world's contempt. He knew the hammer would not always be heard driving it with nails through the quivering flesh of the malefactor. He knew it would not for ever flow with the blood of infamy. In spiritual foresight, he beheld that millions would come to "bow before it, as if it were a shrine of the Divinity."

But all of these deep, spiritual joys, which we speak of as distinguishing the Saviour, were not borrowed from his future glory. He drew deeply from sources already open and freely flowing. He had great present joys. One of these was his love of mankind. He showed the sentiment in its universal character. Friends and foes, countrymen and aliens, kindred and strangers, — the arms of his affection gathered them all into one large embrace. Well might Jesus be born in a manger, which was no man's particular home; for the whole earth seemed his birthplace, and all human beings the members of his household.

But our Saviour's love was not a vague philanthropy, caring for all men in general, but for no one in particular. There are those, whose love of the human race seems consistent with intolerance and hatred to individuals. So was it not with the Saviour. He had affection to bestow, and sensibility to expend, on the humblest creature he found by the way-side. The affection of Jesus was also impartial. We might think he would weakly dote on one in preference to another,—upon John, for instance, the disciple whom he loved, and who lay in his bosom. But no; warm as was his human heart,

yet his divine affection flowed in one sober current round the whole table of communion. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Moreover, the Saviour's love was enduring. Our affections are often misdirected and lawless, and therefore they are so often wounded and mortified. But the Saviour's were calm and true; fixed on that in the soul which is lofty and abiding, earth's fiery darts could not reach them.

Such was the Saviour's love for humanity, universal, individual, impartial, immortal. Was not such love a great joy? Is it a joy to you to love your parent, your child, the partner of your life? and a greater joy as you love them more generously and purely? Does the joy of this love make you happy in labor and peril, in the beating of the elements, and even in the unkindness of wicked foes? Multiply, then, and widen your own consciousness in this matter, till it shall reach the feeling that swelled the Saviour's bosom. Conceive of him as loving many more intensely than you love one, and then decide whether his affections were not one of his joys.

. Another of the Saviour's joys was his piety to God. With some persons communion with the Infinite seems narrowed down to a mere asking for some particular blessing, and its whole efficacy comprised in receiving that blessing. Such minds would understand no more the joy of prayer than the delights of penance. Indeed, it is to be feared that Christians generally do not apprehend strongly as they ought the bliss of true devotion. We speak almost in the tone of compassion of our Lord's spending the whole night communing with God. But could we, with a clear discernment, see

his soul at such seasons, as full of transport as a calm soul can be, we should not weep over his lonely prostrations.

“ Cold mountains, and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer.”

But they witnessed a rapture, also, almost too vast for the over-arching sky to give it free ascent unto God. A certain astronomer could gaze the whole night, unconscious of time's passage, at a remarkable phenomenon in the heavens ; and shall we wonder that the vision of God could so entrance the soul of his only begotten Son ? The vision of God ! the full beamings of intellectual light, the disclosed image of all-perfect beauty, the unshadowed idea of spotless holiness, the streaming fount of everlasting love ! Who will attempt to describe such joy ? Who will not bow down and confess himself weak and miserable in comparison with him to whom the spirit of such felicity was given “ without measure ” ?

I will mention but one other of the Saviour's joys, — his consciousness of his own immortality. He does not so much seem to feel that he was to enter on a fresh existence beyond the grave, as that he already had eternal life. Immortality was his possession rather than his hope. In the same breath he speaks of glorifying God on the earth, and of the glory he had with him “ before the world was.” And how simple, yet sublime, the language in which he spoke to his Father of his approaching departure from this world ! “ And now come I to thee.” What a grandeur does this reveal in our Lord's view of existence ! Life with him was not a contracted space, marked with such boundaries as the cradle at one end, and the tombstone at the other, with

the blue sky bending and the light clouds spreading between. No binding cope above, no narrow arc around, gave limit to his views and hopes. He stood as on a narrow passage-way, with the Infinite and Eternal behind and before him ; and, to his inward eye, the great globe itself must have fled away, and appeared as a dim point in the depths of immensity.

And can it be questioned that this consciousness of immortal life, of entire superiority to change, to accident, and death, was one of the Saviour's joys ? Human language cannot set it forth. Human conception cannot fully embrace it. Human character has never reached such a height, as very largely to share it. No earthly calamity could break into the depths of so divine a joy.

How small and pitiful, in view of such things, seems the triumph of the Saviour's enemies around his cross, and how do we learn to look on the Saviour's agony unmindful of our own tears ! They had, it is true, something like triumph for a short time ; what with the sympathy of the crowd, the glittering ensigns of power, and the violence of armed men, joined with their own vengeful shouts and eager thirst for blood, they had, no doubt, a season of insane delight. But the tumult was soon hushed. The sun rose again on the scene of slaughter, and the pomp of execution had rolled away. While the earth was drinking up the blood of innocence, the reflections of the night had calmed their turbulent rage. And as they revisit the scene of their dreadful crime, in morning's cool and noiseless air, they see only the uneven prints of angry feet, the blood-stained tree, from which the body had been removed, with perhaps some remnant of the robe of scorn, or forgotten instru-

ment of torture, unless, perchance, lifting their eyes, they behold a rock that had been rent, or grave opened, when Jesus, having "cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."

O, how torturing at this moment the memory of their guilt! How must their own horrible imprecation have commenced its fulfilment, — "His blood be on us and on our children"! But while retribution thus already began to wave for them her scourge, dipped in the gore they had shed, what, O, what, on the far heights of the heavenly region, must have been the Saviour's joy!

Our subject gives us two lessons. One for the Christian, the other for the unbelieving man of the world.

First, it gives a lesson for the Christian. The Saviour does not speak of his joy as something necessarily confined to his own breast. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The true Christian, then, is a happy man, as Christ was happy. No word is strong enough to describe his happiness but the word *joy*.

Wonder not that he is cheerful. He that feels himself immortal, a follower of Jesus, and communicant with God, has a right to be cheerful if any body has. An unhappy temper proves a wrong state of the heart, a state not in sympathy with the Saviour's spirit. And here is the lesson. The incorrect view of the Saviour's earthly lot, alluded to in the introduction of this discourse, is not simply a theoretical view. It has gone with a sad and fatal energy into practice. Men have thought they could not be the followers of Jesus, without first making themselves miserable. So we are informed abundantly in the history of the church. Witness the cold water and dry roots of the anchorite,

his sharing with the wild beasts their dwellings, his voluntary exposures to heat, and cold, and storm, his self-scourgings, his wearing of chains and bands till the living flesh has grown over them. Things so monstrous may not exist among ourselves, but the spirit of the old error and superstition is not extinct. There are many yet who seem to think religion consists, not in being bravely nerved for present duty, and pressing on with exhilarated will to future achievements, but in being ever burdened with sad memories of the past, pouring out extravagant confessions, and beholding nothing around them but guilt and misery. The earth is clad in mourning to them. The sun rises in darkness and sets in blood. These characters sometimes become fanatical, and sometimes fall the pitiable victims of insanity. And even when they retain the health of their minds, they are both miserable themselves, and the cause of misery to their friends. They are ever thrusting gloomy fancies and solemn forebodings into the midst of life's common labors and wholesome recreations, till at length they are avoided by those they seek, and bring reproach on the cause of religion in the world.

How sadly they mistake their Saviour's example and violate his spirit! He mingled religion with all things, it is true, but with what freedom from formality or sanctimony, in what consistency with his joy!

Our subject also gives a lesson for the unbelieving man of the world.

Many think they gain greatly, for this world at least, by getting rid of every thing in the shape of religion, because it is something so dark, austere, and morose. Let such persons understand their grievous mistake. Let them be well aware that the bargains they drive,

the exchanges they negotiate, in this temper and tone, are bringing them to ruin, as well as to shame. Let them clearly see that they are bartering the birthright of more than earthly felicity, for the mess of bitter herbs. O, let us strive to recall them from the dark vales and poisonous streams of sinful indulgence, by revealing in its heavenly lustre the Sun of the Saviour's joy!

Finally, my friends, let me ask, have you the Saviour's joy? Alas! the melancholy thought comes darkling over my mind, that there may be some whose situation is exactly the reverse of his; who, instead of having outward suffering and inward joy, find all their delights to be outward, while their secret heart, though it beat beneath golden vesture, rankles with many a wound. What matters it that the gay throng presses about you, that mirthful sounds fill your ear, and varied splendors flash upon your eye? Confess!—in your present state is not the throng itself a solitude? Is not the mirth a heaviness? Is not pompous show a very cheat, whose thin tinsel glitters but to hide its utter hollowness? We may *call* the proud happy, and they may be pleased with the sound of adulation; but as they taste the extract of gall condensed upon their lips, from guilty recollection and remorse, must they not at the confessional of their own hearts acknowledge the falseness of our judgment?

And one word let me say to those whose outward fortune is severe. Do you complain of your hard lot? And would you, then, refuse to walk the same path which was trodden by the Son of God? Brethren, if you have his sufferings only, I do not blame you for being unwilling. I find no fault with the burning words that express your misery, nor even with the paleness and

stillness that mark your despair. But I say to you, and may the spirit of all grace bear the words even to the piercing of your souls, you may have the Saviour's joy. He himself offers it to you, — his own divine, eternal joy. In his exceeding compassion he entreats you to accept it. Listen to his invitation, and the words thereof you shall not find vain, — “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

SERMON XXXI.

BY ARTEMAS B. MUZZEY.



CHRISTIAN UNION.

THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE. — John xvii. 21.

THESE words were among the fervent supplications offered by our Saviour in his last prayer for his disciples. As his mind was brooding over the eventful future, he saw that their situation would expose them continually, not only to persecutions and enmities from abroad, but to dissensions, coldness, and alienations among themselves. Touched by this prospect, he lifted up his soul to the Father, and uttered an earnest petition for the unity of his disciples. It is usual to suppose that he referred to differences of religious belief, as an evil to be feared and deprecated. It is thought that he regarded unity of opinion on all points as most important, if not essential, to the establishment of his kingdom upon earth. The Catholic maintains, that, from the hour when the keys were given to St. Peter down to this day, his church has been so united; that it has held exclusive possession of the truth, and is, on this account, the true church; and hence, that the slightest departure from its doctrines is disloyalty

to Christ and a fatal error. There are other denominations who call themselves the true church, on the ground that their articles of faith embody the entire and essential doctrine of the Gospel. They believe the time will come when the whole Christian world will bow to their standard, and be precisely of their creed.

But was this the event to which our Saviour referred when he prayed that his disciples might "all be one"? Is it reasonable to anticipate such a consummation? Will the period at length arrive in which we shall agree perfectly in our theological speculations? I cannot believe that it will. We are taught, I must think, by our Saviour himself, that it is unity of spirit, oneness of heart, a communion in worship, and a fellowship in the great works of philanthropy, not an identity of speculative opinions, for which he prayed, and to which we should aspire.

Let it be premised, however, that by the phrase "unity of opinion" I mean unity on all minor points of belief, in every article which belongs to the thousand creeds and formularies set forth as essential, each for itself, by the various denominations and sects of Christendom. In nearly, if not quite, all that is fundamental, we do now agree. Every church believes in a God, the Creator of the universe, the Father of mankind, and in his paternal, never-sleeping providence. All believe in Jesus Christ, and regard him as the Saviour of the world, reconciling men to themselves and to their God and Father. All believe in man's immortality, and that we are moral and accountable beings, destined to reap as we sow. Thus far we are one now; in all these vital and saving truths we are perfectly united. But here we part; the trunk is undivided, — its roots send up life and health

into this one body. Rise above the trunk, and immediately division commences. First we have branches, schisms, an Eastern and a Western church, a Catholic and a Protestant ; then we have boughs, sects, spreading forth and differing more and more widely from each other ; and lastly come the slender twigs, subdivisions innumerable, bearing clusters of blossoms that terminate in single and separate fruitlets.

I. Now these divisions on matters of opinion are not likely, I believe, at any future period whatever, to come to an end. There are causes deep laid in our nature, and in the nature of things, which must prevent such an issue.

1. The progress of society is unfriendly to an entire union in theological speculations. In periods of ignorance and barbarism, there are comparatively few varieties of doctrinal belief. But in an age like the present, marked by a growing civilization, intelligence, and culture, the mind indulges itself in the utmost diversities of speculation on the subject of religion, as on all other subjects. We see the Christian sects accordingly multiply around us. If old names are retained, old opinions are not ; a spirit of innovation trenches daily, here a little and there a little, on the accepted creeds and systems of faith. Sometimes an open rupture takes place, and we have Puseyism in the Church of England, the Old and the New School of Presbyterians, schisms among Methodists, and even controversies, alienation, and dismemberment among the Friends. Brother parts from brother, and they join hands no more.

This condition of the various denominations will doubtless continue. Doctrinal opinions will probably diverge still more from one another. A thirst for independence

will possess Ephraim ; Judah will indulge unwonted aspirations for power ; some rigid Rehoboam will issue stern proclamations, to which the enlightened and free-spirited will refuse obedience ; and from these and ever fresh causes, the twelve tribes will be sundered, and Israel retain at length but a fragment of her once compact household.

2. Especially does this event seem credible, when we consider the uniform tendency to produce it in free institutions. In many foreign lands, the established church extends the mantle of its charity with reluctance over all who subscribe to its articles, so boldly do some among them think for themselves on points of doctrine, ritual, or reform. The atmosphere of civil and political liberty must increase the disposition to speculate, and frame theories, and set up new landmarks, in the name of Christ. No people, it is found, innovate and dissent and divide from one another, on the subject of religion, as we in this country do. This comes inevitably from our boundless freedom. So it must always be ; we may not, it is true, continue to regard our distinctive points as important enough to part us in our worship, and hence religious societies may be less numerous hereafter than they now are ; but differences of opinion on unessential doctrines will doubtless increase rather than diminish. If true religion, love, forbearance, and charity prevail, as we trust and think they will, then the fellowship which marked the primitive church will be restored ; unity of spirit will return, but identity of belief never.

We delight in the anticipation, that, one after another, the nations are to emancipate themselves from civil bondage ; and sure we may be, that with it must come religious freedom, and with that a growing diversity of

doctrinal opinions. As we call up the ages before us, and see one and another advance to the liberty of the sons of God, it is to us no cause of sorrow that they will manifest more and more independence in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and in the views they will draw from them. No, believing rather, as we do, that knowledge tendeth to charity, we welcome the prospect. We see them, the generations to come, as they rise to their spiritual labors, a host that no man can number, marshalled under that glorious banner, inscribed "Light and Love," conquering, under the Prince of Peace, foe after foe, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, varying in opinion, yet none the less emulating each other in the noble strife of love and good works.

A perfect unity of belief is incompatible, we observe next, with the nature of the human mind. Every one, when his thoughts move freely, pursues a course of speculation more or less peculiar to himself on questions where diversity is possible; and such are all moral questions. On these questions we cannot precisely agree; not a day passes in which any two individuals have not more or less difference in their views of right and wrong. On the many political subjects which agitate this community, how very few, even in the same party, do in their secret hearts think exactly alike! On the great topics of political economy and civil polity, how various are men's opinions! There is no subject, indeed, touching business or recreation, duty, culture, interest, honor, or merit, which we do not daily discuss, and on which we do not continually dissent from one another.

Now why should we not differ also in regard to the speculative truths of religion? Is it a less difficult task to form an opinion on this than on secular concerns?

Nay, is there rather any theme on which mortal man is so often and so sadly perplexed as on this? Multitudes have

“ Reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute ;
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.”

Such, indeed, is the intrinsic abstruseness of theology, that, when large denominations profess to believe, article for article, precisely alike, they either do not think at all on the subject, or they deceive others, or deceive themselves, at best, by the profession they make. Be sure that any number of men really use their understanding in the case, and they can no more interpret every passage of Scripture — no, nor every event of Providence, or all the teachings of Nature — exactly alike, than they can create a world.

II. The Bible itself, I now remark, nowhere inculcates entire unity of opinion as essential among the followers of Christ. If we look at the prophecies of the Psalmist, of Isaiah, of Daniel, and others, which speak of a future union and peacefulness on earth, we find they have no reference to a unity of opinion ; they relate exclusively to the general spirit which would be diffused by the coming of Christ, and predict that, so far as that spirit prevailed, all men would become one, — Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman, bond and free, high and low, rich and poor, all would be one in Christ. There would be diversities of belief, but one heart, — many altars and many names, yet no envying, bitterness, or strife ; every church and every individual would be bathed in and vivified by a sea of love.

The nature of the union intended by our Saviour may

be learned from his own exposition of it ; — “ As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” Now in what sense was God in Christ, and he in him ? It could not be that they were one in knowledge ; our Saviour himself denied that he was omniscient, like God. The Father, he affirmed, knew all things ; there were some things which the Son did not know. It was not, then, unity of belief he referred to. It could not have been, even if Christ was omniscient ; for *we* are not so, and he calls us to be one with him as he was one with the Father, that is, in such a manner as we *could* be one with him and God. Jesus interpreted his own words at the close of his prayer, — “ that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” Here is a ground on which we can unite even with God himself. His spirit, — love to all mankind, forbearance, good-will, gentle and generous deeds, — of these we are all capable. Our opinions may differ earth-wide from each other, while our hearts are one. This is the true millennium, the aspiration of saints through the elder covenant foreseen in the Apocalyptic vision, the aim and end of every true heir of that dispensation which is new and everlasting.

The spirit of the Saviour was always liberal and free ; its language was, — “ Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ? ” There was one doctrine, it is true, in which he required all to unite. They must believe that “ Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ” ; beyond that, nothing was laid down as of fundamental importance. He forbade his disciples to receive one from any other creed, to take for doctrines the commandments of men. Every individual was enjoined to “ search the Scriptures,” and form his own opinions in relation to

God and duty, and to allow the same generous liberty to every one who took the name of Christ.

Turn now to the Apostles ; their instruction on this subject is summed up in this one sentence, — “ Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.” The utmost freedom of opinion beyond this is everywhere allowed and encouraged by them. They differed, indeed, among themselves ; Peter and Paul had a warm controversy, and Paul and Barnabas at one time separated from each other. When his Corinthian converts were departing from Christ, to follow human guides, Paul boldly rebuked them, but not for a variance of belief ; “ envyings, and strife, and divisions ” are the sins he speaks of. We find no reproof because they thought not alike on debatable, unimportant points. He censures only “ a contentious spirit,” — their separating from, and treating with harshness, those who dissented from their views. Whom did Paul bid them mark ? Those who differed from them merely in opinion ? “ Mark,” said he, “ those that cause divisions and offences,” that is, sins, “ among you.” He exhorts his converts to “ prove all things,” and “ every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind ” ; a course which must lead to a diversity of opinions on unessential points.

In all this Apostle has written concerning “ heresies,” the intelligent reader perceives that by a heretic he means, not one who differs from the majority in doctrinal belief, but one who occasions strife and unchristian feelings between brother and brother. “ One of Paul’s favorite notions of heresy,” says Arnold, “ is a ‘ doting about strifes of words.’ One side may be right, in such a strife, and the other wrong, but both are heretical as to Christianity, because they lead men’s minds

away from the love of God and of Christ, to questions essentially tempting to the intellect, and which tend to no profit towards godliness." And again, — "I think you will find that all the 'false doctrines' spoken of by the Apostles are doctrines of sheer wickedness, — that their counterpart is to be found in those who make Christianity minister to lust, or to covetousness, or to ambition; not in those who interpret Scripture to the best of their conscience and ability, be their interpretation ever so erroneous." When Peter warns the church against false teachers, it is their corrupt motives he most loudly censures. John denounces the "Antichrist" who shall come; but it is a deceiver, one whose heart is impure; he expressly terms him a "liar."

So is it that the Apostles join with their Master, when he prayed that they all might be one, in making this unity consist in mutual kindness and forbearance. They, like him, would that good offices be performed towards all believers, whether they agree or disagree in opinion with ourselves; their prayer is, that the hearts of their converts may be knit together in love; their steady aim and their unremitted endeavour is "to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace."

I remark, in passing, that a service in the sanctuary, conducted on this broad principle, would accord beautifully with the temper of Christianity; it would be congenial with those great doctrines which it makes prominent and essential. What is the creed of the New Testament? So brief and so simple that all may subscribe to it, and yet so comprehensive that any worshipper can find in it truths "able to make him wise unto salvation." Were it abstruse and complex, then it would raise barriers in our houses of worship, and they only who be-

lieved, article for article, alike could mingle at one altar. But how few are those truths which the New Testament erects as pillars of an acceptable service and a Christian life ! There is one God ; he is the moral Governor of this world ; his providence is over all his works ; he is our Judge, and yet he is our Father, full of compassion to the penitent, and yearning towards us with unwearied patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and love. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all who receive him as the Son of God, and who through his life, his sacrifices, and his death on the cross are brought nigh unto God, brought to repent of their sins, born of the spirit, and led into the life of Christ. Man is a moral, spiritual, immortal, and accountable being, destined through all ages to " receive according to the deeds done in his body." Who could not unite with his brother in a service based upon these few and simple truths ?

III. But we still hear the wish frequently expressed, — " O that there were but one path to heaven, one church and one doctrine for all ! " What a blessed state this would be ! Now if this be a prayer for harmony of temper and mutual good-will, we heartily respond to it. But that is not all usually intended, I think, by this and similar language. It is imagined, that, could we all believe, article for article, in the same doctrinal tenets, the golden age would return upon earth.

Would it indeed be so ? We forget, in taking this ground, the benefits of theological discussion in awakening a spirit of inquiry, in clearing up our views of divine truth, and enlarging our mental horizon. We lose sight of the measureless good that springs from the Reformation under Wickliffe, Luther, Knox, and Zwingle ; we forget that rational Christianity owes its life-breath, both

in this country and abroad, to religious controversy. We are insensible, too, of the value of that spirit of watchfulness which is fostered by the division of the church into various denominations, by which each is made more circumspect as a body ; the Bible is searched more faithfully by all ; and, though the motive is not the highest, yet it still exerts a vast influence over individuals, — our personal character is made better by this sleepless vigilance of our neighbour.

We are admonished by the experience of past ages, that periods of the greatest unanimity of belief have not been those when vital, practical religion has most flourished. Take your stand in almost any period between the sixth and sixteenth centuries ; you see the Church of Rome in the fulness of her strength, uttering her unresisted mandates over nearly the whole civilized world. Look now at her internal condition ; her adherents are all of one mind, scarcely a whisper of dissent can be heard. But this unity of belief, instead of purifying her worshippers, is accompanied, the more it prevails, by worldliness, ambition, sensuality, and corruption. The din of controversy that had rung through the life of Arius, and subsequently between the Greek and Romish churches, was gradually hushed. The war-note died away on the battle-field, but the ranks of the victor were filled with more of death, a moral and spiritual death, than with any true life. None questioned the decrees of the Pope ; all was submission, all peace, but it was the peace of a midnight sleep. There prevailed an ignorance of the Scriptures, a profitless monastic seclusion, a stagnation of social improvement, a blind devotedness to forms, the worship of relics and images, papal indulgences, that mother of abominations, a con-

stant accumulation of unmeaning ceremonies and as constant an increase of moral obliquities and of religious indifference, not to say hypocrisy. These were *dark* ages indeed, such as we trust in God will never return. We rejoice to bear witness to the improvement in the Catholic Church, both outwardly and inwardly, since the rise and the action upon it of the Protestant faith, and we can never more sigh for an entire union among Christians in theological opinion.

IV. Having thus shown that identity of belief is inconsistent with the progress of society and the prevalence of free institutions, that the nature of the human mind forbids it, and that it is not inculcated either in the elder revelation or by Jesus and his Apostles, nor is even desirable in itself, the question now arises, What unity should a Christian seek, and what may we reasonably anticipate ?

I answer, it must be a practicable union. We cannot all think alike ; diversity is the law of nature ; no two pebbles on the sea-shore are precisely alike, no two leaves on the rose are identical in their form, color, and fragrance. Of the hundreds of millions of human faces on the globe, not even two can be found whose features and expression are precisely the same. Neither are our minds all of one structure ; that evidence which to one gives satisfaction, knowledge even, affords another only ground for probability, or perhaps but for conjecture.

Now Christianity provides for this constitution of the mind by making its main purpose, not doctrinal, but practical. Of course, truth is essential in its place ; every individual must form some opinion of the character of God, of our relations to his Son, Jesus, and

of the nature, capacities, and duties of man. But the Bible does not require all men to think precisely alike on these topics ; on the contrary, it calls every man, in the spirit of candor, and looking to the Father of Lights for assistance, to form his own creed and give account of it to God alone. The great idea of the church, according to the New Testament, is not that of a body of men who believe theoretically and on all points alike ; it is that of a society for moral and spiritual improvement, — a society, in the language of Arnold, “ for the purpose of making men like Christ, earth like heaven, the kingdoms of the world the kingdom of Christ.”

Such being the end of Christianity, it presents a platform on which all who receive Christ as the Son of God can stand together. This is the true “ Evangelical Alliance.” It is the unity, not of creeds, but of “ spirit,” — the only unity that ever was, or that ever can be, a “ bond of peace.” Make practical religion — that is, love to God and love to man — the essential thing ; in other words, make *religion*, and not theology, the test of discipleship, and you open an avenue in which every denomination and every sect — that is, all true Christians — can walk together in fellowship. Let the standard of soundness be the state of the heart and its affections, and not that of the intellect and its speculations, unite the followers of Christ, not by outward compacts, formularies, or confessions, but by inner bonds, a living faith and a loving life, and you at once remove that rock of offence against which multitudes have stumbled, and by which the church of the Prince of Peace has been so often converted into a scene of strife, bitterness, and dissensions.

We all prize freedom of thought ; but the only con-

dition on which the freedom of the individual can be reconciled with that union inculcated by Christianity is, that we make the life greater than the doctrine. If Christ's prayer that his disciples might be one shall be ever fulfilled, it will be, not by their unity of speculation or of intellectual perceptions, but by their unity of spirit. Through this method "the union only is perfect," as one has well said, "when the uniters are isolated." The more enlarged and liberal the mind is, the more easily it harmonizes with all others. Toleration moves hand in hand with intellectual expansion; he who is a freeman in Christ never strives, never wishes, to abridge the freedom of his brother. He respects, on the contrary, the honest non-conformer far more than the timid conformer. He honors manly, independent thought, let its conclusions be what they may. The humble, prayerful seeker for truth is the man he can trust, — the man, above all others, he loves, and would take to his bosom's confidence. This, if I mistake not, is the spirit of Christianity; it is the root of that healthful tree planted by Jesus Christ, whose trunk will resist the storm-blasts of the ages, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Let us, then, come to this conclusion, and abide by it, that, as on every other subject, so on that of religion, we must differ, more or less, one from another in our speculations and in the results at which we arrive.

1. This being settled, what union remains within our reach? I answer, in general terms, a unity of spirit, giving others the same liberty we ask for ourselves, — never disliking another for his mere opinions, — never desiring any one to profess our own belief, unless he do it from conviction, — bidding every man God speed in

whatever faith he holds sincerely, candidly, in charity, and with an inquiring temper. Similarity of views is often the parent of friendship, it is true ; still we can be friends, — how often is this illustrated in political life ! — we can be friends, although our views are unlike. There is a fellowship of hearts consistent with, nay, often strengthened by, a diversity of opinion. We can hardly conceive, indeed, what a spiritless scene life would be, did every mind echo, thought for thought, the mind of its neighbour. Variety is borne upon us by the myriad forms and sounds and odors of creation ; variety runs through all history, and is the commentary of the checkered providences of God ; variety of evidence, premise, and conclusion, variety of knowledge and belief, as on all other subjects, so in that of theology, is the law in which we should cheerfully and lovingly acquiesce.

2. We can be one in purpose ; every Christian may desire the spread of spiritual life and inward purity and mutual love. We can and we ought to strive by example and inculcation to increase in the church of Christ a generous consideration toward those who differ from us in opinion. Encourage, I would say, independent, honest thought, and favor a frank expression of views, by treating him who disagrees with you in doctrine just as though you thought precisely alike. Cherish a sympathy for all piety, all integrity, all benevolence, for every Christian virtue, let him who exhibits it bear what name he may. Do all you can to spread your own views of divine truth, but meantime rejoice to have Christ preached, and his spirit disseminated, and his work carried forward, let who will perform the labor and receive the honor.

3. In this age, we can be one in philanthropic plans and benevolent enterprise. Though our opinions on minor points may vary, our hearts may be united in the noble sentiment of Christian love, and our hands may be joined together in doing good to man. It is a cheering thought, that the spirit of the times is doing much in this way to bring together those whom theological dogmas have hitherto separated. Thanks, that we can all unite in the circulation of the Scriptures, in the great work of education, in prayers and efforts for the suppression of war, slavery, and intemperance! Thanks, that we can coöperate in behalf of the imprisoned, the poor, and all the less-favored classes of society! It cannot be that our intercourse in the cause of humanity will not do something to soften those asperities, and subdue those sectarian prejudices, and break down that high wall, which still separates so many who call themselves after the same Lord and Master.

4. It will help forward a Christian union to consider the causes of our present disagreement. We are apt to ascribe this disagreement to voluntary error, and determine resistance of the truth. Nothing would more promote harmony among the various denominations, than to see, as they might, how little blame should attach, after all, to those who embrace opinions opposite to our own. There are comparatively few who shut their eyes obstinately against all new light. How many of us believe as we do because of our early education! how many have been biased by our associates, and by the circumstances, none of which we could control, amid which we have been placed! Our physical constitution gives a cast to our creed; we believe in matters of religion according to our general culture, and the number

and character of our ideas on other subjects. Language, so limited, and comparatively incapable of defining such difficult conceptions as those of theology, misleads multitudes. We cannot understand the language of the Scriptures, their commonest words, — such as God, Christ, grace, salvation, faith, — precisely alike.

I must think, that the involuntary causes of our difference are more numerous than the voluntary. There are fewer who are actuated by prejudice, passion, uncontrolled feelings, self-interest, or an habitual indifference to divine truth, than there are who believe as they do from associations, influences, and circumstances for which they are wholly irresponsible. Did we reflect on this fact, our affections would become enlarged; we should “agree to disagree”; charity, that heavenly plant, would be rooted in our hearts, and send up branches arrayed in bright leaves, and crowned with clustering flowers expressive of the manifold virtues.

5. Another bond of union is the habit of dwelling, as far as truth and conscience will permit, on the ground which is common to all sects and all individual believers. We differ, it is true, on many doctrines; but on how many more do we agree! Suppose your neighbour believes God to exist in only one person, while you believe he exists in three. What is this difference compared with what would exist between you did he believe in no God at all? On this momentous question, the being of a God, he and you are perfectly agreed. He regards Christ as a created being, while you consider him as “very God of gods.” Suppose he denied that such a being as Christ had ever existed, or contended, instead of exalting him, as he now does, to a place nearest the Father, that he was a sinful man,

no better than ourselves, — imagine that he denied the very doctrine of immortality, — would not this separate him immeasurably farther from you than the mere circumstance that he believes future punishment is to be disciplinary and restorative, while you hold it will be everlasting? Thoughts like these may well make us blush for the sectarianism of the church of Christ. Let there be one denomination, if we can have no more, which shall delight in this common ground of Christianity; and let us bring all we can to enlist under the star on its banner, for it is “the star of Bethlehem.”

V. The view I have presented involves the performance of two most important duties. 1. It should awaken us to new zeal for the discovery and diffusion of the essential truths of Christianity. Because men contend on minor points of belief, it is not the less, but the more, needful that *we* contend earnestly for what we regard as the faith once delivered to the saints. If the Gospel places unity of spirit above unity of opinion, let us contend earnestly for that doctrine. And then, for ourselves, whatever views seem to us adapted to exalt the Father and to honor the Son, whatever faith promises to do most in making men holy, virtuous, and happy, for that let us earnestly contend. Jesus Christ “was born and came into this world,” as he himself affirmed, “to bear witness to the truth.” No man can think of this, and call to mind the toils and tears and death-agonies of apostles and martyrs and confessors, without feeling the value of the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. But be it written on our frontlet, and bound to our hearts, that we must speak the truth in love. Let this be the anchor that shall hold us to our moorings, amid

every wind of doctrine, and amid the waves of controversy. If we would enlighten or reform our fellow-men, we cannot take the first step toward it without the spirit of Christ. The church can present no satisfactory evidence to the world of its divine claims, unless it begin, continue, and end its efforts in the Christian spirit. "By this," said our Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"; — "I pray that they all may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The great rock of offence in all heathen lands, the stone of stumbling to infidelity, has been the virulence of our sectarianism. When shall we come to think kindly and to speak kindly of every professed church of Christ, and every sincere and honest believer?


We are summoned to give our aid towards this high consummation, not only by the wants of the living, but by the counsels of the dead. How often do the dying disregard all merely speculative opinions, and become absorbed in the great sentiment of practical piety! Baxter often expressed himself in the spirit of these words: — "The churches must be united upon the terms of primitive simplicity; — we must have unity in things necessary, liberty in things unnecessary, and charity in all." In the latter part of his life, he said, — "I am much more sensible than ever of the necessity of living upon the principles of religion which we are all agreed in, and uniting on these. I find in the daily practice and experience of my soul, that the knowledge of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the truth of the Scriptures, and the life to come, and a holy life, is of more use to me than all the most curious speculations."

An eminent professor in one of our universities of the Baptist denomination, recently deceased, but a few days before his death observed, — “ The longer I live, the more dearly do I prize being a Christian, and the more signally unimportant seem to me the differences by which true Christians are separated from each other.” A multitude now gathered above unite in this testimony. However parted on earth, they bend over us from their common dwelling-place, — Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Penn, Fenelon, Watts, Swedenborg, Channing, and how many others, their illustrious compeers ! — and bid us listen to the prayer of the one Redeemer of them all. Memorable are its words ; in the language of another, — “ The last note of this divine strain breathes love and union, and sweetly closes the most fervent production of any spirit that has ever tabernacled in the flesh. Let us catch with loving ear this music of his dying voice, as it rises and swells with the ecstasy of gratitude and hope, trembles with anxiety for his little flock in the midst of an angry world, and sinks away in a joyful cadence of eternal glory, love, and blessedness, in which hover images of peace and union between himself, his disciples, and his Father, in the everlasting home of heaven.”

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