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Cumming's Minor Works.

THE FINGER OF GOD.

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CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

THE COMFORTER.

BY

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MIRACLES, PARABLES, DANIEL, ETC. ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the first of these little volumes, I have tried to trace the hand of the Everlasting Father. In the second, I have endeavoured to set forth the work of the ever-blessed Son. In the third treatise, I seek to unfold the precious influence of the Holy Spirit. The first is God in Providence; the second is God in Redemption; the third is God in the human heart.

The Finger of God.

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The Finger of God.

I.

In Creation—Providence—Revelation.

THE expression, "Finger of God," was used by the Magicians of Egypt on witnessing one of the miracles of Moses. It is elsewhere used in Scripture, and where so used, it represents either the active and personal power of God, or the operation and presence of his Holy Spirit. Thus we read in the Gospel according to St. Luke that Jesus said, "If I with the *finger of God* cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." (Luke xi. 20.) In the parallel passage, namely, in Matt. xii. 28, the words apparently used on the very same occasion are—"If I cast out devils by *the Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." We thus see the finger of God, the power of God, and the Holy Spirit, identified by the sacred penmen.

On the part of the sorcerers of Egypt on this occasion there was the direct admission of the existence of

a God. There was in this instance apparently a momentary rise above the level of their own wretched mythology, and the recognition of the existence of that very God whom Aaron preached, and of whose power Moses was the delegate and exponent. They recognised, in other words, the existence of the true and the living God. One indeed wonders how any can live without God. Atheism is the last retreat of the human heart—the aphelion of humanity. It is the most unnatural, freezing, and horrible chasm in all God's created, moral, or intellectual universe. The man who has made up his mind to the awful conclusion, "There is no God," must be of all creatures in the universe the most miserable and the most deeply to be pitied. He can surely never be happy. When and where amid tumbling accidents can he have repose? If I had reached the belief that there is no God, this creed—if creed it may be called—would be to me absolutely intolerable. I could not anywhere rest from inquiry if peradventure I might find Him. I should ask of every stone, I would inquire of every flower, I would study every fact, and analyse every phenomenon; I would listen to every oracle, I would trace every acre of the globe, and descend to all depth, and climb to all height, watching if I might hear a single tone of the grand voice of my Father, or detect a solitary yet unobliterated foot-print of the presence of my God. I would ask sun and moon and stars, "Have you, in your journeys through illimitable space, never seen a shadow of God? Are your ceaseless hymns unheard? Were your fires kindled from no source? Or are you worse than empty? Are you, like this orb of ours, peopled by a race who have the awful prerogative of feeling, and

wishing and desiring life, and the painful certainty staring them in the face that annihilation is eventually and eternally before them?" Atheism seems, in proportion as it is realized, a burden intolerable to man. One, however, rejoices that the utmost that the Atheist can reach is Atheism; he can never reach the point of Anti-theism — that is to say, all that he can assert is, "I have never discovered the presence of God." He proclaims his weakness, not disproves God's being. But what are you? Because you, the worm of a day, have been so blind as not to see the presence of a God, surely you dare not say there is none; for how do you know that the place you have not pierced, that the height you have not soared to, that the depth you have not descended to, may not be the scene of the lesson-book that has inscribed upon it, luminous and indelible, "There is a God?" Therefore, for you to say, "There is no God, because I cannot discover him," is equivalent to stating that you are God, and have been everywhere in the universe, are, in fact, omnipresent and omniscient; and thus in your denial of God, you have proved that you are God yourself, which is absurd.

But there was, also, the admission, on the part of the Egyptian magicians, that God is and acts. Many people admit that God was, but how few of us feel, as we ought, that God is! Many have the notion of God, that he launched the earth in its orbit, and left it to make the best of its way home. Their idea is that God created us at the first, gave us a certain supply of vital power, just as a locomotive has a certain available amount of steam, and then left us. This is not true. God is, as well as was. God is in every one of us, acting, controlling, governing, helping,

comforting, strengthening, according to the hour and power of our need. It was no slight admission for the magicians to make, that God's finger was in one miracle. At the same time, there was no less power in their daily experience, though they could not see it. In the sweetness of the waters of the Nile, in the flow of its beautiful current, in the lotus that floated on its surface, in the beasts of the hills that came to drink of it, in the sunbeams that entered the casement of Pharaoh's palace, in the rains, if rains there were, that refreshed the parched earth, in rising and setting suns, in all that was grand as the Pyramids of Egypt, in all that was elegantly minute as its most exquisite textile manufacture, God equally was; only they were so blind that they could not see Him. The miracle startled by its violence, but it no more effectually proved the presence of God than it did the rising and the setting sun, the opening flowers and ripening fruits, or the flowing and falling of the river Nile. God's power is as much exerted in scattering the dewdrops every morning on the flowers of the field, as in upheaving the everlasting hills. God's finger is as truly in the buds of spring bursting from the withered stem, as it was in the blossoming of Aaron's rod, or in the miracles and wonders that were performed before Pharaoh. It is familiarity that makes us forget Him; the very commonness of his presence, the very prodigality of its proofs, makes us fail to see Him; and hence the incidental miracle that startles by its sudden grandeur, like a thunder peal, tells man that there is a God, when the still small voice, from its ceaseless utterance, has failed to be heard by him. So far we see in the creed of the sorcerers the admission of the existence of a God, and, secondly, the

admission of the acting, or presence, or imminent power of that God in the world.

Here was also the belief that there is a province in which man's finger can do much, but that there is a higher province in which man can do nothing. As to some of the miracles they said, "This is the finger of man. We have done these ourselves;" but, in one miracle they were constrained to exclaim, recognising the sphere in which God is all, "This is emphatically the finger of God."

Let us look into three great provinces — Creation, Providence, and Revelation — and we shall see in all their grandest and noblest developments, the finger of God, and in each of them a province also where man's strength is absolute weakness, and where, if God's finger do not act, there will be no result at all.

Man's finger can arrange and shape the productions of creation in the most wonderful and exquisite manner. Some of his creations approach apparently, though not at all really, the works of God. That beautiful flower, with its exquisite scent, the tints so profusely lavished upon every petal, that it looks as if God had never anything else to do in the past, than to beautify and scent that flower—this is the finger of God. The seedless, scentless thing that you see in the shop-window—vain mimicry of the original—that is the finger of man. The primrose of spring, the snowdrop starting from the snow-wreath, the camelia — these are the finger of God. There is a province where man's finger can do much, but there is a province beyond it where man's finger can do nothing. Take the humblest field-flower that is covered by the rank grass, and of it a higher Judge than we has said, "Solomon in all his glory was not

arrayed like one of these." Study that marvel — life; a bird, its exquisite structure; a bee, its peculiar and beautiful habits — any living creature that you like — see how man could construct an automaton almost to rival any of these in the exquisite beauty of its mechanism, but still it wants, and must ever want, that great and glorious inspiration — life. Man never has been able by any combination of mechanical forces, or by any arrangement of chemical powers, to originate life. A philosopher thought he had done it by galvanism, but a little more philosophy told him that he had only discovered what God had done there before. The automaton exquisitely made, capable of playing a tune upon the flute, and giving striking proof of man's genius — is the finger of man, and is no doubt very wonderful; but the bee, the bird, the eagle on his outspread wing, or the sparrow on the house-top — oh, what a gap between them! — this last is the finger of God. Study man's inner being — conscience, that wonderful power, that seat of justice, that court of righteous and holy decisions, the chancel of the soul, the sanctuary of human nature. No artist can make that, he can barely paint it. Intellect, moral feeling, all those glorious powers that are folded up in the bosom of the humblest — we can wield, we can study, we can imitate, but we cannot create them; — these are each the finger of God. I am not depreciating man; I admit that he can do a great deal. To revert to a vision that has passed away, and left on its site not a wreck behind — the beautiful Crystal Palace of 1851, with all its grandeur, and it was great; with all the beauty of its contents, and it was unrivalled; yet what was it but a dim shadow, a tiny microcosm, of that grander palace,

whose tessellated floor is the earth we tread upon, whose dome is the outspread and all-enveloping sky, whose lamps are suns, and moons, and stars, and in which there is an anthem ceaselessly offered and universally heard by all created beings — that palace described by the Psalmist when he says, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Ps. viii. 3.) We see man’s finger in the origination of much that is beautiful, but God’s finger in the creation of what infinitely excels it. All man’s works are but mere attempts to copy God; and that should humble man. We are very prone in this present age to become proud. Science is making great progress; discovery is bringing from the depths and from the heights wonderful things, no doubt; but what is all that man is able to achieve? Just an imitation, and a very distant imitation, of God’s great creations. Examine the most exquisite texture that ever came from the looms of France, apply a microscope to it, and see how coarse it is. Apply the same microscope to the wing of a beetle, or the petal of a flower; and the contrast is between the finger of man and the finger of God. What is the grandest cathedral but an attempt to imitate a scene by God? Go into a magnificent grove or forest, and you will see that the noblest cathedral that the architect can erect is but a poor and feeble imitation of the primeval house in which the Druids worshipped in ancient days. It is but making the stone imitate trees, seem to forget its nature, and burst into blossom, flower, and fruit.

All God’s works need no interpreter. Eloquently

themselves declare they are the works of his finger. Study a steam-engine, a railway locomotive, and you at once see that no chance made that. You would say that the man was only fit for a lunatic asylum, who should assert that that locomotive grew up in its shed, and started on its own account. You would think him deranged who should say that a steamboat originated itself at the wharf, and set out upon its own travels. You at once see that there is in these things an end and object to be achieved, and, therefore, that a designing mind must have originated them. So, you have but to lift that thought to a higher region, and ask, "What keeps the sun, like a glorious monarch, in the midst of his subject orbs, without one revolting or doubting his sceptre or his sway for a single moment? What is it that causes worlds to move in their orbits with a precision that our most exquisite chronometers can only faintly and dimly approach? What is it that makes seed-time and harvest so regularly return? Who gives us spring? From whose urn is poured the lavish summer?" The answer is obvious. If the steam-engine and the locomotive preach man the maker, lift thine eyes to star and sun and moon, or cast them down on fruit and flower; and they demonstrate with still greater eloquence, "The hand that made us is Divine."

I have admitted all along, and I do not wish at all to be supposed doing otherwise, that man's finger can do a great deal. Man can make all the rivers of the earth to be his servants, he can make the great ocean to bear his heavy loads, like a subject slave, from strand to strand; he can summon even the red lightnings from the skies, and make them carry thoughtful messages

this point, that in the turning of water into wine at Cana of Galilee, we had not a greater evidence of the presence of God than in the growth of a vine, the ripening of its fruit, and the turning of that fruit into wine. I noticed that the one was simply more startling, because more speedy than the other. When our Lord turned the water into wine by a word, he simply shortened the process; for when you plant the vine, and expose it to sunbeams and dew-drops, gather the grapes, and have them pressed into wine, the same result is reached by a longer process. God is as much in the turning of that fruit into wine, as in turning the water into wine. We are so accustomed to the former process, that we lose sight of God; but it is not a greater expression of power. If I were to see the water rise from the river, and rush upward to the skies at the bidding of some one, that would not be a greater manifestation of the power of God than my witnessing the descending dews that cool the heated pavement, and refresh the flowers, and baptize the earth with as true an expression of omnipotent presence, as any other process to which the earth was ever subject. God is in the tiniest seed-cell of the tiniest moss, just as he is in the great halls of the universe. God is as truly and really in the beating of my heart, as he is in the movements of Arcturus and the Pleiades. His presence is as real in every atom of dust as in every orb of the skies. And the Christian differs from the natural man in that the latter sees only laws, chemical arrangements, and processes, whereas the former, while he sees all that the natural man sees, ever feels, "Thou God seest me."

Let us learn from this, that the great want of every

country in every age, is the finger of God on it. The longer one lives, the more one preaches, and comes into contact with the difficulties of social life, the more one is constrained to feel that a second Pentecost ought to be the fervent prayer, as it is the great demand, of the age in which we live. One also delights to see in these last days patches of its glorious sunshine anticipatory of that blessed and lasting morn. Look across the channel to Ireland, and watch what is taking place in its western districts. Bishops who once smiled with thorough episcopal contempt at every effort to save, sanctify, and convert, are now its enthusiastic admirers; and statesmen, who looked at the conversion of Ireland as an absurdity, thinking that Ireland was a hunting-field of the Pope, and to be dealt with as his perpetual preserve, are now constrained to acknowledge that a work is going on there so successful, that they venture to predict Ireland will in a few more years be as Protestant as England, and will make up nobly for all the losses that we have sustained by perversions to the Church of Rome. Now, how do you account for it? It is not man. Statesmen have tried to cure Ireland, and they have been found to be empirics. All sorts of panaceas have been applied, and they have all been failures. At last, a few pious men, headed by that distinguished minister, Mr. Dallas, set out to preach the Gospel, holding all places holy where the foot could stand to bring glad tidings of great joy; and the result has been, that by the foolishness of preaching a transformation is taking place so great, that Ireland, which was the difficulty and perplexity of statesmen, is likely to be the most manageable portion of the three kingdoms. Depend upon it, the gigantic attempts to under

mine this work by sarcasm and derision made by the priests of Ireland, and by those who represent them, are the strongest evidence of the grandeur and reality of what is taking place. Let us herein hail the finger of God, and help as often as we can. Let us rejoice in this blessed thought, that all the enemies of Christ will one day, when they see the fruits of Christianity, say what the sorcerers owned, "This is the finger of God." The whole earth shall be filled with His glory; all shall bless Him, and be blessed in Him; and all who now despise, deride, deny, will be constrained, either by honouring what once they denied, or by recovering what they have lost, to say, "This is the finger of God."

II.

In the Spread of Christianity.

IN the previous chapter I noticed the interesting fact that the magicians in Egypt admitted the existence, and also the active presence of God. I also showed that they recognised a distinction between some things which the finger of man can do, and other things which the finger of God alone can perform. This distinction, which is of vital importance, runs through creation, through providence, through redemption, through the kingdom of grace. I showed that our Lord refers, in the very same phraseology, to the Holy Spirit; for he says in one passage, "If I by the finger of God cast out devils;" and in the parallel passage, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils;" evidently showing that the finger of God is his Spirit. I referred to Creation as exhibiting the finger of God, in contrast with the finger of man. I said, the scentless, lifeless, almost colourless flower in the window is the finger of man; the rose, the camelia, the lily, in comparison of which Solomon in all his glory had no beauty,—these are the finger of God. We have in the automaton the finger of man, in the living being the finger of God. You see in man's works the humble mimicry; you see in God's the great originals. I showed how much we can trace

the finger of God in Providence. In all the windings, currents, and corners of individual biography, who cannot trace the finger of God? Who, when he takes a retrospect, does not see that some unseen and mysterious finger stopped him at the brink of a precipice, and brought him back,—changed the route he was pursuing, which if finished would have been his destruction, and started him mysteriously in the opposite way, which opened on an avenue of beauty and of progress? Who that looks back upon his past life is not constrained to own that the purposes he formed when young have not one of them blossomed, that the designs which he sketched in outline have few of them been realized, and that an influence greater than human has shaped, moulded, and directed his whole life? This is the finger of God. I noticed also how much we owe to the finger of God in Grace. Accidentally you stumbled into a place where the Gospel was preached; accidentally a certain book was placed before you, and you were tempted to read it; accidentally in a railway carriage, a steam-boat, or at home, you conversed with a friend, and the subject of conversation took accidentally this turn or that; and upon these slight movements the whole of your present life and everlasting glory were contingent. It was as necessary that these incidents should be, as that Christ should die. It seems a very strong saying, but it is a very just one,—The accidents of man are the missionaries of God. What we call “chance” is inspiration that we cannot follow, comprehend, or unravel.

After having shown upon the individual scale God’s finger, I wish to trace the same finger-writing upon a broader and wider scale,—the history of the race of

mankind. I can only touch on a few incidents, which prove that God not simply was, but that God is; and that He not only is, but also reigns and acts everywhere, and that his influence is controlling, arresting, or directing, by a universal presence and a universal law.

A decree went forth one day from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be taxed. This was the decision of his cabinet or himself, and was instantly carried into effect. Nothing could be more purely political in its origin, nothing apparently more detached from the purposes of God. That decree made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to go to their own village, according to the laws of the empire. This was long ago decreed; and so the law of Cæsar, the finger of the prince, led to the fulfilment of a prophecy written by the finger of God: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah v. 2.

On the day of Pentecost a crowd assembled at Jerusalem — civilians, ecclesiastics, soldiers, politicians, tradesmen, lawyers, scribes and pharisees — some to celebrate the feast, some to sell goods, others to make merry, each for personal purposes of his own, and all in pursuit of their own happiness. But there were also, from the nature of the festival, Medes and Persians, Greeks and Latins, and dwellers from Mesopotamia and the ends of the earth. They came from afar for purposes of gain, custom, or self-righteousness. While this huge mass was assembled in the eastern metropolis, the Spirit of God descended on the Apostles,

and they spoke in the tongue of every man there, and to their amazement all heard, each in his own language, the unsearchable riches of Christ, spoken probably without the least provincialism, and conveying to them in all their fulness the glad tidings of a Saviour and Salvation. All these met together accidentally, as the world would call it, but it was really no accident, there appeared manifest in the midst of them the finger of God; under its controlling influence they met, and they returned each to his distant capital to relate the wonderful scenes they had witnessed, and to circulate the glad tidings they had heard. Thus one sees in Pentecost the side purposes of man so controlled and shaped by the immediate presence of the finger of God, that they accomplished a divine and no human end.

The Apostle Paul preached in Judea and in Jerusalem with such fervour, and with so much success, that, while thousands believed and were happy, the scribes and pharisees were the more exasperated against him. They, therefore, laid wait to destroy him; they hired assassins to put him to death; he was brought before some of their courts at their instigation, and accused of crimes by false witnesses suborned for that purpose. Paul at length said, under a sense of unjust treatment, "I appeal to Cæsar." The whole known world was then under the Roman sway, and Cæsar was the Emperor and head and ultimate appeal for all. One would at first sight say that this was a very unhappy step; for what would Palestine do without its great preacher? how was his creed to take a permanent root in that land where it arose, and where there was so much opposition? Would it not seem that Paul was deserting the place where he was wanted, and going

where in all probability he would be immured in the Mamertine, or some equally dark dungeon or prison, and that thus would be hushed that voice which carried on its wings so widely and so well glory to God, and salvation to man? This indeed seemed the issue according to all the probabilities of human calculation.

Paul having appealed to Cæsar was carried to Rome, the capital of the wide world; and when he landed there, what did he first do? He was a man of taste and of high intellectual attainments, and I dare say he gazed at the glorious capital, and admired as memory recalled a thousand historic recollections. No doubt, he walked with thoughtful admiration in the Senate and in the Forum, that had rung with the accents of Rome's most gifted orators, for he was capable of appreciating the glories of either. But this was only in passing. It was the employment of a minute. He was a scholar, and no common scholar, but he came there not to gratify a thirst for learning. He was a Christian, and an Apostle, this was his great office and mission, and therefore the haunt of the hated Hebrew becomes the place of his frequent resort. The pallet on which fever burned, the dungeon in which penury pined, wherever he could create a sense of brotherhood that was lost, wherever he could teach the prospect that had vanished of a glorious home, there Paul the Apostle went, and there beautiful were the feet of him that brought good tidings of great joy, and published peace. But how does this compensate for his seemingly mistaken surrender of Palestine to Rome? Let us see. Rome was the very metropolis of the earth, the resonant centre of the world; a word spoken there was like a sound uttered in a whispering gallery; it was repeated and

re-echoed to the utmost bounds of the Roman Empire. From Rome went forth the great military roads, which could carry the missionaries of God as well as the soldiers of Cæsar to the ends of the earth. Christianity, therefore, appearing in Rome would be sure to be heard of and talked about throughout the whole length and breadth of the civilized world. It was the focus of greatest power. And thus, the appeal that seemed a blunder when first made, or rather the unhappy result of the persecution of man, was overruled by an impulse from on high, and in its issues we can trace the finger of God.

But let us look at the progress of Christianity as a whole. I have always felt, what, indeed, must be apparent, that the progress of Christianity during the first hundred years of its existence, is the most triumphant proof of the presence with it and in it of the finger of God. Let us recall some of the interesting facts of its early struggles. Thirty years after the ascension of our Blessed Lord we read in the pages of Tacitus, the accomplished Latin historian, who was a Pagan, and hated, not merely tolerated, Christianity—"This dire superstition," that is, Christianity, "was checked for a while, but it again burst forth, and not only spread over Judea, the first seat of mischief, but even introduced itself into Rome. The confessions of those who were seized discovered vast multitudes of accomplices. They were convicted of hatred to the human race." Such is the statement of Tacitus.

Another Roman writer, Pliny the younger, who was Governor of Pontus and Bithynia, writing to his royal master, says, "The number of Christians is so great as to call for serious consultation. The contagion of this

superstition has spread, not only through cities, but through all the villages of the country." This was seventy years after the ascension of our Blessed Lord, and is a triumphant proof from the mouth of one of its enemies of the rapid spread of the Christian faith, in spite of every obstruction that political ingenuity could devise, or malice could invent.

Justin Martyr, a Christian Apologist, who was born in the year 106, says, "There is not a nation, Greek or barbarian, even those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father in the name of Jesus crucified."

Clement of Alexandria, writing in the year 160, says, "The doctrines of Christianity are not limited to Judea, but are spread throughout the whole world, into every nation, village, and city, Greek and barbarian."

Thus we have from the mouths of friends and foes, evidence the most irresistible, that Christianity spread most rapidly during the first hundred years, after the ascension of our Blessed Lord.

Let us ask and answer the question, How did it so spread? Was it by the aid of men, by the patronage of princes, by the eloquence of its advocates; or can we trace in its majestic progress, as I believe we can, the finger of God? Let us see what it had to overcome, and what weapons it could or would wield in overcoming; and then, I think we shall conclude that it is impossible to account for the early spread of the Christian faith upon any other hypothesis, than that it was signally sustained, maintained and spread by the presence and power of God.

First of all, it had to overcome the Jew, its earliest, bitterest, and most unrelenting foe. The Jews, we must recollect, were disappointed expectants, and of all the passions that occupy the human heart, disappointed pride is the most bitter and malignant. They expected and prophesied a glorious conqueror; they hoped for emancipation from the Roman yoke, as their supposed only slavery; they believed that the Messiah would lead them to battles, which in every case would be victories, and enthrone Jerusalem over the nations. Therefore, when he came, and was crucified in their capital; when they found that his emissaries were not princes and nobles, but the poor fishermen of Galilee, and Jew and Gentile laid low as sinners in the common dust; their resistance became intense, their indignation irrepressible, their spite was keen and inexhaustible, and they left no stone unturned or untouched, that they could throw against the bulwarks and battlements of the Christian faith. But what was the result notwithstanding? Thousands upon thousands of these very Jews were converted in a single day. Hebrew prejudices the most inveterate melted before the warm love of the Gospel. The granite heart of the Jew, like Horeb's rock, when touched by the Rod of Jesse, broke into springs of beneficence, and love, and sympathy; and the most unconquitable of all the unconquitable tribes of the earth repented of their first cry, "Crucify him," and joined in the deepening swell of multiplying nations, "Hosanna in the highest!" Now how, I ask, was it that this religion, the origin and development of which the Jew thoroughly knew, the facts of which he was perfectly master of,—a religion which blasted his fond hopes, lowered his national pride, and placed him

upon a level with the humblest tribes of the gentiles—how was it that this religion so rapidly subdued his proud heart, so melted his obdurate nature, that Jews became the most successful preachers of that Christ, whom they and their fathers crucified? Was it not the finger of God?

If I look at its progress amongst the Gentiles, I see the same evidence of a divine presence. It was said to be a stumbling-block to the Jew, and it was proclaimed to be foolishness to the Gentile. A handful of men preaching a religion recently introduced, according to the popular notion, came into collision with the overwhelming force that sustained the religion of the Empire, the worship of Jupiter and Mercury and the gods of the Pantheon. Polytheism had struck its roots deep in the national soil. Its gods and the names of its gods were associated with their weddings, were hallowed by their funerals, and interwoven with the whole history of their domestic and social life. Poets, painters, sculptors, earned their bread by supporting the national faith. Interest, sympathy, patronage, power, eloquence, poetry, satire—all between Cæsar himself and the meanest of his subjects, conspired to beat back a religion that they felt would revolutionize the Empire, and render insecure the throne of all the Cæsars. And yet, in spite of all this, it made way, and gained converts where it seemed impossible that a single convert should be made to the Christian faith. It was a religion, too, that did not suit fallen nature. To the guilty it proclaimed, "Repent;" to the proud it said, "God resisteth the proud;" to the revengeful, "Love your enemies;" to the greedy, "Lay not up treasures upon earth;" to the rich, "How hardly shall they that

this point, that in the turning of water into wine at Cana of Galilee, we had not a greater evidence of the presence of God than in the growth of a vine, the ripening of its fruit, and the turning of that fruit into wine. I noticed that the one was simply more startling, because more speedy than the other. When our Lord turned the water into wine by a word, he simply shortened the process; for when you plant the vine, and expose it to sunbeams and dew-drops, gather the grapes, and have them pressed into wine, the same result is reached by a longer process. God is as much in the turning of that fruit into wine, as in turning the water into wine. We are so accustomed to the former process, that we lose sight of God; but it is not a greater expression of power. If I were to see the water rise from the river, and rush upward to the skies at the bidding of some one, that would not be a greater manifestation of the power of God than my witnessing the descending dews that cool the heated pavement, and refresh the flowers, and baptize the earth with as true an expression of omnipotent presence, as any other process to which the earth was ever subject. God is in the tiniest seed-cell of the tiniest moss, just as he is in the great halls of the universe. God is as truly and really in the beating of my heart, as he is in the movements of Arcturus and the Pleiades. His presence is as real in every atom of dust as in every orb of the skies. And the Christian differs from the natural man in that the latter sees only laws, chemical arrangements, and processes, whereas the former, while he sees all that the natural man sees, ever feels, "Thou God seest me."

Let us learn from this, that the great want of every

country in every age, is the finger of God on it. The longer one lives, the more one preaches, and comes into contact with the difficulties of social life, the more one is constrained to feel that a second Pentecost ought to be the fervent prayer, as it is the great demand, of the age in which we live. One also delights to see in these last days patches of its glorious sunshine anticipatory of that blessed and lasting morn. Look across the channel to Ireland, and watch what is taking place in its western districts. Bishops who once smiled with thorough episcopal contempt at every effort to save, sanctify, and convert, are now its enthusiastic admirers; and statesmen, who looked at the conversion of Ireland as an absurdity, thinking that Ireland was a hunting-field of the Pope, and to be dealt with as his perpetual preserve, are now constrained to acknowledge that a work is going on there so successful, that they venture to predict Ireland will in a few more years be as Protestant as England, and will make up nobly for all the losses that we have sustained by perversions to the Church of Rome. Now, how do you account for it? It is not man. Statesmen have tried to cure Ireland, and they have been found to be empirics. All sorts of panaceas have been applied, and they have all been failures. At last, a few pious men, headed by that distinguished minister, Mr. Dallas, set out to preach the Gospel, holding all places holy where the foot could stand to bring glad tidings of great joy; and the result has been, that by the foolishness of preaching a transformation is taking place so great, that Ireland, which was the difficulty and perplexity of statesmen, is likely to be the most manageable portion of the three kingdoms. Depend upon it, the gigantic attempts to under

mine this work by sarcasm and derision made by the priests of Ireland, and by those who represent them, are the strongest evidence of the grandeur and reality of what is taking place. Let us herein hail the finger of God, and help as often as we can. Let us rejoice in this blessed thought, that all the enemies of Christ will one day, when they see the fruits of Christianity, say what the sorcerers owned, "This is the finger of God." The whole earth shall be filled with His glory; all shall bless Him, and be blessed in Him; and all who now despise, deride, deny, will be constrained, either by honouring what once they denied, or by recovering what they have lost, to say, "This is the finger of God."

II.

In the Spread of Christianity.

IN the previous chapter I noticed the interesting fact that the magicians in Egypt admitted the existence, and also the active presence of God. I also showed that they recognised a distinction between some things which the finger of man can do, and other things which the finger of God alone can perform. This distinction, which is of vital importance, runs through creation, through providence, through redemption, through the kingdom of grace. I showed that our Lord refers, in the very same phraseology, to the Holy Spirit; for he says in one passage, "If I by the finger of God cast out devils;" and in the parallel passage, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils;" evidently showing that the finger of God is his Spirit. I referred to Creation as exhibiting the finger of God, in contrast with the finger of man. I said, the scentless, lifeless, almost colourless flower in the window is the finger of man; the rose, the camelia, the lily, in comparison of which Solomon in all his glory had no beauty,—these are the finger of God. We have in the automaton the finger of man, in the living being the finger of God. You see in man's works the humble mimicry; you see in God's the great originals. I showed how much we can trace

the finger of God in Providence. In all the windings, currents, and corners of individual biography, who cannot trace the finger of God? Who, when he takes a retrospect, does not see that some unseen and mysterious finger stopped him at the brink of a precipice, and brought him back,—changed the route he was pursuing, which if finished would have been his destruction, and started him mysteriously in the opposite way, which opened on an avenue of beauty and of progress? Who that looks back upon his past life is not constrained to own that the purposes he formed when young have not one of them blossomed, that the designs which he sketched in outline have few of them been realized, and that an influence greater than human has shaped, moulded, and directed his whole life? This is the finger of God. I noticed also how much we owe to the finger of God in Grace. Accidentally you stumbled into a place where the Gospel was preached; accidentally a certain book was placed before you, and you were tempted to read it; accidentally in a railway carriage, a steam-boat, or at home, you conversed with a friend, and the subject of conversation took accidentally this turn or that; and upon these slight movements the whole of your present life and everlasting glory were contingent. It was as necessary that these incidents should be, as that Christ should die. It seems a very strong saying, but it is a very just one,—The accidents of man are the missionaries of God. What we call “chance” is inspiration that we cannot follow, comprehend, or unravel.

After having shown upon the individual scale God's finger, I wish to trace the same finger-writing upon a broader and wider scale,—the history of the race of

mankind. I can only touch on a few incidents, which prove that God not simply was, but that God is; and that He not only is, but also reigns and acts everywhere, and that his influence is controlling, arresting, or directing, by a universal presence and a universal law.

A decree went forth one day from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be taxed. This was the decision of his cabinet or himself, and was instantly carried into effect. Nothing could be more purely political in its origin, nothing apparently more detached from the purposes of God. That decree made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to go to their own village, according to the laws of the empire. This was long ago decreed; and so the law of Cæsar, the finger of the prince, led to the fulfilment of a prophecy written by the finger of God: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah v. 2.

On the day of Pentecost a crowd assembled at Jerusalem — civilians, ecclesiastics, soldiers, politicians, tradesmen, lawyers, scribes and pharisees — some to celebrate the feast, some to sell goods, others to make merry, each for personal purposes of his own, and all in pursuit of their own happiness. But there were also, from the nature of the festival, Medes and Persians, Greeks and Latins, and dwellers from Mesopotamia and the ends of the earth. They came from afar for purposes of gain, custom, or self-righteousness. While this huge mass was assembled in the eastern metropolis, the Spirit of God descended on the Apostles,

and they spoke in the tongue of every man there, and to their amazement all heard, each in his own language, the unsearchable riches of Christ, spoken probably without the least provincialism, and conveying to them in all their fulness the glad tidings of a Saviour and Salvation. All these met together accidentally, as the world would call it, but it was really no accident, there appeared manifest in the midst of them the finger of God; under its controlling influence they met, and they returned each to his distant capital to relate the wonderful scenes they had witnessed, and to circulate the glad tidings they had heard. Thus one sees in Pentecost the side purposes of man so controlled and shaped by the immediate presence of the finger of God, that they accomplished a divine and no human end.

The Apostle Paul preached in Judea and in Jerusalem with such fervour, and with so much success, that, while thousands believed and were happy, the scribes and pharisees were the more exasperated against him. They, therefore, laid wait to destroy him; they hired assassins to put him to death; he was brought before some of their courts at their instigation, and accused of crimes by false witnesses suborned for that purpose. Paul at length said, under a sense of unjust treatment, "I appeal to Cæsar." The whole known world was then under the Roman sway, and Cæsar was the Emperor and head and ultimate appeal for all. One would at first sight say that this was a very unhappy step; for what would Palestine do without its great preacher? how was his creed to take a permanent root in that land where it arose, and where there was so much opposition? Would it not seem that Paul was deserting the place where he was wanted, and going

where in all probability he would be immured in the Mamertine, or some equally dark dungeon or prison, and that thus would be hushed that voice which carried on its wings so widely and so well glory to God, and salvation to man? This indeed seemed the issue according to all the probabilities of human calculation.

Paul having appealed to Cæsar was carried to Rome, the capital of the wide world; and when he landed there, what did he first do? He was a man of taste and of high intellectual attainments, and I dare say he gazed at the glorious capital, and admired as memory recalled a thousand historic recollections. No doubt, he walked with thoughtful admiration in the Senate and in the Forum, that had rung with the accents of Rome's most gifted orators, for he was capable of appreciating the glories of either. But this was only in passing. It was the employment of a minute. He was a scholar, and no common scholar, but he came there not to gratify a thirst for learning. He was a Christian, and an Apostle, this was his great office and mission, and therefore the haunt of the hated Hebrew becomes the place of his frequent resort. The pallet on which fever burned, the dungeon in which penury pined, wherever he could create a sense of brotherhood that was lost, wherever he could teach the prospect that had vanished of a glorious home, there Paul the Apostle went, and there beautiful were the feet of him that brought good tidings of great joy, and published peace. But how does this compensate for his seemingly mistaken surrender of Palestine to Rome? Let us see. Rome was the very metropolis of the earth, the resonant centre of the world; a word spoken there was like a sound uttered in a whispering gallery; it was repeated and

re-echoed to the utmost bounds of the Roman Empire. From Rome went forth the great military roads, which could carry the missionaries of God as well as the soldiers of Cæsar to the ends of the earth. Christianity, therefore, appearing in Rome would be sure to be heard of and talked about throughout the whole length and breadth of the civilized world. It was the focus of greatest power. And thus, the appeal that seemed a blunder when first made, or rather the unhappy result of the persecution of man, was overruled by an impulse from on high, and in its issues we can trace the finger of God.

But let us look at the progress of Christianity as a whole. I have always felt, what, indeed, must be apparent, that the progress of Christianity during the first hundred years of its existence, is the most triumphant proof of the presence with it and in it of the finger of God. Let us recall some of the interesting facts of its early struggles. Thirty years after the ascension of our Blessed Lord we read in the pages of Tacitus, the accomplished Latin historian, who was a Pagan, and hated, not merely tolerated, Christianity—"This dire superstition," that is, Christianity, "was checked for a while, but it again burst forth, and not only spread over Judea, the first seat of mischief, but even introduced itself into Rome. The confessions of those who were seized discovered vast multitudes of accomplices. They were convicted of hatred to the human race." Such is the statement of Tacitus.

Another Roman writer, Pliny the younger, who was Governor of Pontus and Bithynia, writing to his royal master, says, "The number of Christians is so great as to call for serious consultation. The contagion of this

superstition has spread, not only through cities, but through all the villages of the country." This was seventy years after the ascension of our Blessed Lord, and is a triumphant proof from the mouth of one of its enemies of the rapid spread of the Christian faith, in spite of every obstruction that political ingenuity could devise, or malice could invent.

Justin Martyr, a Christian Apologist, who was born in the year 106, says, "There is not a nation, Greek or barbarian, even those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father in the name of Jesus crucified."

Clement of Alexandria, writing in the year 160, says, "The doctrines of Christianity are not limited to Judea, but are spread throughout the whole world, into every nation, village, and city, Greek and barbarian."

Thus we have from the mouths of friends and foes, evidence the most irresistible, that Christianity spread most rapidly during the first hundred years, after the ascension of our Blessed Lord.

Let us ask and answer the question, How did it so spread? Was it by the aid of men, by the patronage of princes, by the eloquence of its advocates; or can we trace in its majestic progress, as I believe we can, the finger of God? Let us see what it had to overcome, and what weapons it could or would wield in overcoming; and then, I think we shall conclude that it is impossible to account for the early spread of the Christian faith upon any other hypothesis, than that it was signally sustained, maintained and spread by the presence and power of God.

First of all, it had to overcome the Jew, its earliest, bitterest, and most unrelenting foe. The Jews, we must recollect, were disappointed expectants, and of all the passions that occupy the human heart, disappointed pride is the most bitter and malignant. They expected and prophesied a glorious conqueror; they hoped for emancipation from the Roman yoke, as their supposed only slavery; they believed that the Messiah would lead them to battles, which in every case would be victories, and enthrone Jerusalem over the nations. Therefore, when he came, and was crucified in their capital; when they found that his emissaries were not princes and nobles, but the poor fishermen of Galilee, and Jew and Gentile laid low as sinners in the common dust; their resistance became intense, their indignation irrepressible, their spite was keen and inexhaustible, and they left no stone unturned or untouched, that they could throw against the bulwarks and battlements of the Christian faith. But what was the result notwithstanding? Thousands upon thousands of these very Jews were converted in a single day. Hebrew prejudices the most inveterate melted before the warm love of the Gospel. The granite heart of the Jew, like Horeb's rock, when touched by the Rod of Jesse, broke into springs of beneficence, and love, and sympathy; and the most unconvincible of all the unconvincible tribes of the earth repented of their first cry, "Crucify him," and joined in the deepening swell of multiplying nations, "Hosanna in the highest!" Now how, I ask, was it that this religion, the origin and development of which the Jew thoroughly knew, the facts of which he was perfectly master of,—a religion which blasted his fond hopes, lowered his national pride, and placed him

upon a level with the humblest tribes of the gentiles—how was it that this religion so rapidly subdued his proud heart, so melted his obdurate nature, that Jews became the most successful preachers of that Christ, whom they and their fathers crucified? Was it not the finger of God?

If I look at its progress amongst the Gentiles, I see the same evidence of a divine presence. It was said to be a stumbling-block to the Jew, and it was proclaimed to be foolishness to the Gentile. A handful of men preaching a religion recently introduced, according to the popular notion, came into collision with the overwhelming force that sustained the religion of the Empire, the worship of Jupiter and Mercury and the gods of the Pantheon. Polytheism had struck its roots deep in the national soil. Its gods and the names of its gods were associated with their weddings, were hallowed by their funerals, and interwoven with the whole history of their domestic and social life. Poets, painters, sculptors, earned their bread by supporting the national faith. Interest, sympathy, patronage, power, eloquence, poetry, satire—all between Cæsar himself and the meanest of his subjects, conspired to beat back a religion that they felt would revolutionize the Empire, and render insecure the throne of all the Cæsars. And yet, in spite of all this, it made way, and gained converts where it seemed impossible that a single convert should be made to the Christian faith. It was a religion, too, that did not suit fallen nature. To the guilty it proclaimed, "Repent;" to the proud it said, "God resisteth the proud;" to the revengeful, "Love your enemies;" to the greedy, "Lay not up treasures upon earth;" to the rich, "How hardly shall they that

have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven ;” to the ambitious, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ;” to masters, who had half the population as their slaves, “Forbear threatening ;” to the slaves, who formed a vast proportion of the population, “Be subject to your own masters for conscience sake ;” and it told all its converts, “Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. They shall persecute you, and cast you into prison, and put you to death.” The resistance or treatment it received was just what might have been expected. The dungeon—the cross—the wild beasts—these were the arguments employed by imperial Rome, to put down a religion that Jew and Gentile equally detested. And hence, Tacitus, the pagan historian, records, “The Christians died in torments. They were nailed to crosses, or sewed up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs, or smeared with combustible materials, and used as torches to illuminate the darkness of Rome.” This was the treatment Christians then received. And Gibbon, generally an impartial historian, says, “If the Empire was afflicted by any calamity ; if the Tiber overflowed, if the earth shook, or if the temporary order of the seasons was interrupted, the superstitious pagans were convinced that the crimes and impiety of the Christians had provoked the Divine justice.”

I ask, how can you believe that by its own, or by any human power, a religion that repudiated fraud and force, and rolled back the current of morality and belief, and reversed the inveterate instincts of man, made so great progress ? It was met by sword, and faggot, and all that ingenuity could suggest, and all that power could achieve, in order to repress and put

it down—yet it gained speed at every stage, and attained increasing popularity; it subdued the wills, and conciliated the affections of its bitterest foes,—made converts in the shops of Italy, and proselytes amongst the soldiers of the imperial army,—raised up its advocates from the orators of Rome, penetrated the palace of Cæsar, and literally had its detested symbol at length emblazoned upon the Roman *labarum*. Is it possible to suppose that such a religion, so opposed, so fitted to humble the proud and to rebuke the sinful, nevertheless spread in the face of all persecutions, using no policy, disdaining fraud, never employing carnal weapons, wielding only spiritual ones—owing to any other presence than a divine one, or that this is explicable on any other hypothesis than that it was the finger of God himself?

But perhaps you will say there are elements that will explain its progress of a purely human character. I shall not take such elements as I might suppose, but I will refer to an historian I have already mentioned—Gibbon, an infidel but a very faithful narrator of facts, who assigns what he thinks satisfactory human reasons for the spread of Christianity. He was so startled, I may add, with its rapid progress, and felt it to be so much an argument in its favour, that he exhausted his brilliant and inventive mind, in order to find reasons for it without admitting that it was the finger of God. Let us see what the reasons were, and we may depend upon it they are the very best that can be invented to account for a so very extraordinary phenomenon.

First, he says that the progress of this religion is to be accounted for by the “inflexible zeal of the early Christians.” In answer to this, we ask, had the Jews

no zeal? We read of their untiring and earnest attempts to repress Christianity. Had the pagans no zeal, who kindled the martyr fires, and who made such efforts to repress and put down Christianity? We well know that zeal that has not good fuel very soon goes out. Zeal in a bad cause is generally the effervescence of a day, or of a passing hour; but the zeal of the Christians seems to have had with the fervour of a passion the fixity of a deeply-rooted principle; and instead of disposing of our assertion that the finger of God alone explains the progress of Christianity, it appears rather that zeal, so pure, so sustained, so unpolluted by any earthly element, must have been kindled from the altar of Heaven; and thus what Gibbon regards as a disproof, is a positive proof of the presence of the finger of God.

But the second reason, he says, would be, "the more complete manifestation of a future state," which the Christian religion revealed to its followers. I reply, both the Jews and the pagans believed in a future state. Christianity in this respect could have no pre-eminence. But the future presented in the Polytheistic creed—the Pagan Elysium—was far more powerfully fitted to captivate the depraved nature of man; for he was taught to believe that he would be there admitted into all voluptuous and sensual enjoyments. And therefore, if the prospect of a future state was calculated to make converts, the future state that the Pagans put forward was more fitted, because far more congenial to the natural man, than the sublime, holy, and beautiful Heaven, the everlasting Sabbath, the only future rest that Christianity reveals as remaining for the people of God.

But the third cause of the progress of this religion, he says, was "the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Christians." To this I answer, If the miracles done by the Apostles were impostures, there were sophists and advocates in Rome admirably able to detect the imposition. But if they were really proofs of a supernatural presence, then the admission of Gibbon is most candid, and it is at the same time most decisive; for a miracle, such as the Apostles wrought, acknowledged to be so by the bitterest enemy of our religion, is only another and an incontrovertible trace of the finger of God.

The historian says a fourth cause of the spread of this religion was, "the pure and austere morals of the early Christians." One rejoices to find a sceptic admitting that the morals of the early Christians were so pure; but we naturally ask, Can good fruit grow upon a bad tree? May we expect pure morals from impure men? Can thieves live honestly? Would liars speak truth? Could men who spent their days in spreading a conscious imposition and a fraud advocate whatsoever things were pure and just; and not only advocate them, but live, amplify, and illustrate them? The supposition is impossible. How hard is the sceptic pushed, in order to get rid of the only solution—"Truly this was the finger of God!"

Another reason assigned by Gibbon is, "the union and discipline of the Christian army." We answer, this union of the early Christians was not the result of compression. There was then no person pretending to be the Vicar of Christ; there was no Pope to drill and discipline the Christians into an army. If, therefore, there was union, it was the result of some common inner

love and holy principle. Union in evil is a conspiracy; union without clear concord is only coalition; union that is lasting and real must be the growth of common principles, and the reciprocity of common affections and universal love towards a common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The admission, therefore, of the union of Christians is the compliment, if so one may call it, that a sceptic pays to Christianity.

Do any of these statements explain the rapid progress of Christianity? Is it not much less credulous to infer, that the spread of a religion so pure in its nature, so repressing to the long-cherished lusts and passions of mankind, so fitted to make humble and lowly them who treated these graces as sins, deformities, and crimes; so spiritual in its nature, so resisted by great power, and persecuted by every mode that cruelty could invent, or calumny concoct, was the result of the presence of the finger of God?

But let us trace the history of the world a little further downward, and we shall see this position further illustrated. For some mysterious purpose, which it is not ours to solve, God permitted a night of a thousand years to fall upon broad Europe. Deadly errors grew up like rank grass, and the fair and fragrant flowers of Christianity were some of them hidden, and others exhausted of their vitality and virtue. The doctrines of the Gospel were arrayed in robes the most grotesque and ridiculous.—Spiritual worship gave way to sacred dramas, to pageantry, to gaudy shows, and to all the forms and habiliments of the great Western apostacy. The rays of the rising sun were obstructed in the East by Mahometanism, and the rays of the retiring sun were enveloped in the West by Papal superstition.

Certainly the mediæval ages are the finger of man. Why it was thus permitted it is not for us to say ; but even during the darkest years of mediæval Europe there were scattered lights that indicated their origin—the presence of God. In the bleakest desert of mid Europe there were beautiful flowers, like the mosses that we often see breaking out amid the ruins of an ancient castle, telling us their affinity with suns and showers, and proving that if man had shown himself so unfaithful to his trust, God had not wholly forgotten, or altogether forsaken, his apostate and sinful world.

Towards the close of this very dark night we begin to see God's finger, so long hidden or faintly traceable, indicating its presence again by things that the mere secular historian would not admit. It was proposed towards the close of the middle ages to recover the holy sepulchre from the Moslem, and consecrate it to Christianity. In order to accomplish this wild and fanatic attempt, many thousands combined, and constituted a great army, which, after having been consecrated by the Pope, was commissioned to rescue the holy sepulchre from the power of the Moslem. This seemed to have nothing to do with real religion, and yet it was the finger of God stirring the stagnant waters of Europe: for by that movement the barbarism of the West was brought into contact with the light and civilization of the East, and sparks were struck out that were not quenched until they were merged in the dawning rays and kindling fires of the Reformation itself.

We have all heard of an ingenious lecture delivered by a learned Cardinal, to prove that the Church of Rome has always been the great patroness of learning

and science in the world. But when he did so he must either have forgotten, or inadvertently concealed, the facts of the past. I will not take a period when his Church had rivals; I will take a period when the Church of Rome was supreme, when she had no rival that she did not put down, no opponent that she did not lay low. Well, in the age of Hildebrand, the greatest, because the most active, unscrupulous, and daring Pope that ever occupied the Vatican, the Church of Rome had a monopoly of Europe. But was she then the patroness of literature and science? Why, the only literature and science that then existed was amongst the Arabs, or Mahometans, in the East, and in the schismatic Greek Church in Constantinople; and literally and truly, in the middle ages of Europe, the only Church that was the advocate of ignorance, the extinguisher of truth, the opposer of science, was just this Roman Catholic Church that has been unscrupulously paraded as the patroness of all that is great in the history of mankind.

At this period the Greeks of Constantinople, schismatics in the estimate of the Cardinal, came into contact with the barbarous Roman Catholics of mid Europe. The Arabs, too, were far more enlightened in that day than the Roman Catholics; and even now let me fall into the hands of the Sultan at Constantinople rather than into the hands of the Pope at Florence and Tuscany; for the Sultan himself has given freedom of worship to all throughout the whole of his dominions. The barbarism of the West was then brought into contact with the civilization of the Arabs, and of the Greeks of the East. This led to inquiry, and inquiry is the death of superstition.

That inquiry led to investigation, and the mariner's compass was discovered, not by a subject of Hildebrand; and printing was discovered, not by a native of Italy; and the result of all these discoveries coming in rapid and brilliant succession was, that the spirit of inquiry did not pause at the gates of colleges, but marched to the gates of the Vatican, and asked the tyrant who swayed the sceptre of universal ignorance and universal slavery, "Why is this? and why is that? We do not want to know what you think of the Bible, but to ascertain what the Bible says and thinks about you." The result of this was, that reformer after reformer began to appear, and amongst the rest, the greatest, best, and noblest of them all, but not faultless, Martin Luther. You may quote his faults, and I admit them. You may quote the faults of John Knox, and they were very many. But God made use of these men, not because they had faults, but in spite of their faults. If God did not make use of such men as John Knox and Martin Luther to reform the Church, is it likely that he made use of such men as Alexander the Sixth, and the Borgias, to perpetuate the Church? The faults of the Reformers are no argument against them. They partook of the common faults of the age, and inherited a part of the leaven of Rome; and we have to praise God for so much that grace achieved, whilst we are humbled when we see that our common humanity retained so many of the sins to which it is heir.

Read the history of Martin Luther as it is given by Merle D'Aubigné, and there will be found evidence of the finger of God shining forth in almost every chapter. He is so poor that he goes out playing his flute upon

the streets, in order to get his daily bread. The good wife of Conrad Cotta, seeing his distress, pities him, takes him in, gives him a meal, and is so charmed with his thoughts, and sentiments, and sympathies, that she becomes his patroness. Thus other wives may entertain angels unawares. The result of that accident, as the world would say, but which we Christians call the finger of God, was, that he was sent to college. His great mind, never inactive but always thinking, begins to ransack the library, and he stumbles, for the first time in his life, upon a whole Bible. He had never seen anything of that book before except the scraps given in the Breviary. He reads it, and is struck and overwhelmed by its majesty, and holiness, and beauty. But the reading of that Book makes him feel himself guilty and lost in the sight of God. He does not know how to get to heaven, and he has not yet been able to discover the way in the Bible. He goes into an Augustinian convent, the purest and best of the convents of the age. He meets there with Staupitz, the vicar-general, one who was in Rome but not of it, like those saints who are there still, but who are saved and sanctified in spite of it; and Staupitz becomes the means of telling Luther the way to heaven,—Christ alone. And when Luther said to him, very naturally, “But, my Vicar-general, I am a sinner; how can I have anything to do with such a Saviour?” Staupitz said, “If you be a pretended sinner, Luther, you can only expect a pretended Saviour; but if you are a real sinner, there is a real Saviour for you.” This sound and beautiful advice was the turning point in the history of that great man Luther. After this, still startled but not converted, he visited Rome, and that visit, and his

ascent of Pilot's stair-case on his knees, confirmed him in the impression that by deeds of law no flesh can be justified, and also in the persuasion that Rome, judged by its fruits, was not the church of the living God, but the great Apostasy. After that, he burnt the Pope's bull, and wherever he trod struck out the glorious lights, in the splendour of which we live; and planted that great tree in his fatherland, where its roots are, which now spreads from sea to sea, and across the Atlantic Ocean itself, and bears fruit in America, and in the distant continents of the earth; and one cannot fail to see in all this, not, surely, the accidental creation of circumstance, but the moving and suggestive finger of God.

Let us notice, after this took place, what attempts were made to quench the light that the Reformers kindled, and to arrest the progress of that faith, the blessings and the privileges of which we now enjoy. Philip the Second, personated by the Duke of Alva, kindled those wars in the Low Countries that ended in the Protestantism of Holland. The same monarch arranged the Invincible Armada. It was consecrated by the reigning Pope; and in order that England might offer no obstruction to the progress of this fleet, filled as it was with instruments of torture for the heretics, the Pope deposed Queen Elizabeth, and released all her subjects from any duty or allegiance that they owed to her; and then he sent the Armada, blessed and consecrated by himself, to our shores. We read (and can this be chance?) that the admiral of the fleet died upon the voyage; the winds of heaven, like the stars in their courses, fought against the gigantic armament; many of the ships were buried in the deep;

and our own admiral, who was professedly a member of the Church of Rome, but more an Englishman than an ultramontane, went out to meet the foes of his country, and completely overwhelmed them. And then Queen Elizabeth, with that piety which ought never to be forgotten, had medals struck commemorating the deliverance of her country with these words engraved on them, — "*Afflavit Deus et dissipantur,*" "God breathed upon the armada, and it was scattered to the winds;" in other words, she said, "Truly this is the finger of God."

We have traced the finger of God in all these events in our past history; let us see the result of all. After the long peace we have enjoyed, after the conquests which were the parents of that peace, see what progress our country has attained. Britain, at this moment the most Protestant nation in the world, the most free, the most enlightened, dictates her terms on the banks of the Indus and the Ganges. At this moment Cabul, Affghanistan, and China stand ready to receive her orders. Africa is penetrated by her civilization, her Bibles, her freedom. America is her eldest daughter, doing her kind mother's work, according to her means and opportunities, across the Atlantic. At this moment her flag waves in every wind, her ships drop their anchors on every strand; the sound of her conquering drum reverberates on every quarter of the globe; the boom of her cannon is the signal to the slave that he shall be free, and to the oppressed that he shall be delivered. It is literally true that the sun never sets upon the empire of our gracious sovereign. Why is this? Is it chance that the nation that is most free, most religious, most furnished with Bibles, is the

whole history of Greece tells us that the arts, and literature, and poetry, and painting, may gild, but they cannot arrest human corruption; they may rear glorious temples, but they cannot build up a noble and Christian manhood; they are like the ivy that beautifies the ruin it cannot arrest, and makes look lovely to the outward eye that which, inspected, is the abode of all unclean and venomous reptiles.

The Apostle said, "I determined not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This is not the only text that contains the words. "We preach," says the Apostle, "Christ crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." "I count all but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus." And this truth, that he thus expressed in his whole life, he preached amid the splendor of Athens, with philosophers for his auditory. He preached this amidst the luxury of Corinth, with men and women who were given to indiscriminate sensual indulgence for his audience. He preached this amidst the martial heroes of Rome, who thought of nothing but war, saw nothing but domination over all the wide world. Paul was a man of one idea; and it is only a man of one idea, provided it be a Divine one, who makes a deep and permanent impression upon his age. Paul's hope, therefore, of subduing the world to Christ, rested not upon the army, nor the navy, nor the treasury, nor the Academus, nor the arts and sciences; his whole hope of a world's regeneration, and of the salvation of lost souls, was wrapped up in this truth, "Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation."

Now what was it in Christ's death that made it so

fertile and so fruitful a source of hope to the Apostle, and of influence upon mankind? It was not, clearly, the manner of his death. There is no virtue in a cross, there is no value in crucifixion. Some men have been crucified for their crimes, others for their virtues; neither the one nor the other made the least expiation to God, or before men.

It was not the mere sufferings of Christ that was any thing. Job was a ceaseless sufferer; the lost in ruin ever suffer, and ever sin, but never satisfy. Mere suffering in itself, therefore, has no value as a meritorious efficacy.

What was it, then, in Christ's death that made the Apostle lay so great a stress upon it? First, it was the peculiarity of the Sufferer's person; and secondly, the peculiarity of the Sufferer's death. There was that in his person so peculiar, that none before and none after have ever been his equal; and there was that in his death so peculiar, that no man ever did as he did, just as no man ever lived or spake as he did. What was the peculiarity in the Saviour's person? First, he was not only man, but God. He is called, "God manifest in the flesh." He has come down to me so near, and is so truly one with me, that he reciprocates every sorrow, and sympathises with every suffering, and is to me a great High Priest who can be touched with all the feeling of my infirmities; and yet he remains so truly God, that I adore, worship, and trust in him as the Maker of heaven and earth. No prophet, patriarch, or priest was this. There must have been an extraordinary crisis to warrant the interposition of so extraordinary a personage.

It was also the peculiarity of his death. The agony

a thousand years are but one day, and that what seems to us long is with him as nothing. He is ripening his plans, preparing his purposes, though unseen by us, and he will soon accomplish them.

All things are at the present moment rushing to a great crisis. It looks as if everybody—statesmen, ministers, merchants, tradesmen—felt that the daylight is about to be quenched, and that the night is soon coming when no man can work. There seems to be a universal presentiment that we must do all before our efforts close for ever. It proves that the morning twilight is near ; and that therefore the axles are heated by the accelerated revolutions of the wheels of time, as they near their rest. But instead of this being a reason for our relaxing our exertions, it is the reverse ; if the letter-paper is nearly full, let us crowd more writing into the space that remains ; if the candle-light is nearly extinguished, let us work the harder ere it go out. Let our loins be girt, and our lamps burning, as men waiting for the Lord.

In all circumstances Christianity is safe. All the Popes of Rome cannot extinguish the Bible : all the Grand Dukes of Tuscany cannot imprison Christianity. Religion dies not with its martyrs ; Christianity departs not with its professors ; pyramids shall be reduced to ruin, and the great granite hills from which they were dug shall be scattered, like dust, before the winds ; but Christianity has God for its Author, omnipotence for its shield, and eternity for its glorious life ; and when this dispensation shall have passed away, it will only be to give place to a better. The olive and the palm shall grow upon the soil that is beaten hard by the

soldier's feet ; the ramparts of cities shall become the gardens of their citizens, and—

“ Jesus shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion,
Or dove's light wing can soar.”

III.

Removing Obstructions.

I AM anxious to show, as far as I can, the finger of God, not only in raising the superstructure, but in removing obstructions to its progress—not only in giving impulse to the current, but in creating the channels in which it is to run—not only in building the grand superstructure of a temple that shall be vocal with his praise, and sparkle with his glory in unsetting suns, but also in removing those great obstructions to its erection and its progress which are still more or less spread over all the world. And in order to show this, I will refer, first of all, to that ancient and grand obstruction to which we alluded in the last chapter, namely, paganism. Let us recollect what heathenism or paganism was, when Christianity first started on its majestic march, and by comparing the countries of the world it once overflowed, we can ascertain what paganism is now, and how it was dwarfed and dwindled down into a comparatively small obstruction. Let us refer to that portion of Asia called India, and there, I think, we are able to show, not from guesses, but from the testimony of competent witnesses, that paganism in its formula of Hindooism, one of its most degraded

developments, is fast giving way. Whether it be dislodged by Christianity or not, is another question, but that it is being gradually wasted and overthrown day after day is obvious from the statement of competent witnesses, as well as from the progress that Christianity is making in different provinces of that vast and splendid empire.

All India is under the jurisdiction of Britain, and there is, therefore, in it what there was not in ancient times, freedom and facility for circulating the Bible, and preaching the everlasting Gospel. India, Birmah, and China are more or less accessible at this moment, as they never were before, to the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Hindooism, I am told, is being abjured day by day by the educated and higher classes of the natives of that land. We know the effects of caste; we know the pride and inveteracy of sect; but we no less see that, in proportion as the natives of India become educated, they see the absurdity of the system of which they have been the victims; and whilst they do not all accept Christianity as a substitute, for some of them have unhappily accepted infidelity, yet they are in great numbers abjuring that religion which has been the ancient belief of millions of that long benighted land. What aids the ruin of this ancient superstition, is the fact that has been brought before the public by the various missionaries who have laboured in Hindostan — that the whole Hindoo system is sacred — and has no secular parts in it. For instance, that this earth is a vast plain, supported, I believe as they imagine, by an elephant, and surrounded by concentric seas, is as much an article of an Hindoo's creed as any theological dogma strictly

so called. The eclipses of the sun and moon, according to their Shasters, are theological and supernatural phenomena — and so part and parcel of their religious system. The astronomer, who with his telescope sweeps the firmament, the geologist who excavates the earth, the mathematician who calculates the eclipses, the man who proves the earth to be a spheroid, and not a plane, does not merely make the Hindoo a better scientific scholar, but he actually destroys a vital and infallible dogma of his religious system. And hence, the telescope, mathematics, and science, just in proportion as they spread, are at this moment destroying not secular scientific conclusions, but sacred and infallible dogmas in the creed of the Hindoos. If one could prove to a Roman Catholic, which it is very easy to do, that transubstantiation is an unscriptural falsehood and absurdity, one not merely dispossesses him of that dogma, but shakes his confidence in the infallibility of his church; so, if we can convince a Hindoo that the earth is round, or that an eclipse is one of the regular phenomena of nature, we do not merely convince him that he has believed a scientific error, but that his religion is not Divine—we take away a vital article of his creed; and if we go no further, we necessarily throw him into infidelity. Hence, while I should rejoice to see Scriptural religion taught in India, yet I rejoice to hear of education of any sort there; just as in Ireland, we are thankful, while we may not approve, that any sort of education is taught; because where the darkness is so dense, and the superstition so universal, light of any sort goes to overthrow an obstruction to the Gospel, and then the ministers of religion must go and spread those blessed truths that will fill

the gap that is left behind. I cannot but believe that this is the finger of God in India stirring the long stagnant waters preparatory to the descent of the angel of the everlasting Gospel to impregnate them with spiritual and eternal healing. One, therefore, rejoices that missionaries of every section of the Church are labouring in India at this moment, and so increasing the means of the spread of the Gospel with very great and growing success. The most honoured Society beyond all question is the Church of England Missionary Society; and in such a field to feel envy at brother labourers seems as extravagantly absurd, where there are millions of people in darkness, as if two little minnows should quarrel in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean for want of room to live in. We rejoice, then, to see the Church of England Missionary Society having in South India alone between 200 and 300 schoolmasters, 270 native catechists, and 30,000 at least under tuition: and at various stations there is evidence of the progress of the Gospel of the most encouraging kind.

The Bible has been translated into Sanscrit by the Bible Society, and thus the Brahmins can read the glad tidings of salvation in their own sacred tongue.

The whole of Hindooism, as statesmen as well as Christians tell us, is undergoing disorganization; and in the political world, as in the material world, whenever substances become disorganized, it is preparatory to new combinations; and when moral systems become disorganized, it is always before the presence of some greater and higher manifestation. Out of the ruins of Hindooism, and from the destruction produced by silent, but successful elements, there will emerge a far

more glorious temple than the Hindoo has ever witnessed, around which there will be no revolting practices, and in the progress of which there will be no immolation of unhappy victims—a sanctuary around whose altars all will find a refuge, and in which mercy and truth will meet together, and righteousness and peace will kiss each other. We thus see in India at this moment the finger of God; and if we do not see progress amongst the educated so much as we could wish, yet schools are doing in India a most noble work. The Church of Scotland schools at the different Presidencies are allowed by the present distinguished Governor of India to be most eminently useful. Twelve hundred Hindoo children are taught in one of them to read God's Holy Word; while the opportunities of teaching the young Hindoos are so many and so pressing, that the Scotch Church is only prevented from opening larger premises from want of larger funds.

But let me look at another province of the world where I think we shall see the finger of God—that is, Africa. “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands,” is an ancient prophecy, and one can see in Africa the first beams of approaching morn, the elements of progress, if not emancipation, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. First, philanthropic merchants from this country are every day endeavouring to penetrate into the interior of Africa—commercially in the minds of some, philanthropically in the hearts of others; but in whatever way, they go, in the providence of God, as pioneers of the missionaries of the Gospel of Christ. I think I see in that fearful system which we feel has stained the southern states of America, a great

purpose that will very soon unfold and develop itself. The slaves in the southern states of America are the children, or the children's children, of Africa; and it is matter of fact that, degraded as the slaves are, they have, as a whole, rather risen in the social scale than fallen by slavery in the Southern States; it is also true, though not to the extent that it should be, that many of the slaves are Christians. I have conversed with a slave who is now a minister of the Gospel at Liberia, a colony in Africa, consisting, at this moment, of a very considerable population of about 8,000, most of these being captured slaves, and having twenty-three places of worship in which the Gospel is preached. I was told by a very competent witness from America, that such is the inherent dislike in the minds of the white population of that country to the black (a most unjustifiable dislike), that it must ultimately end in the entire removal of the black population. Now may not all this be God's finger overruling the sins of man in bringing that population into America, and there furnishing them with English Bibles and Protestant Christianity? America will gradually get rid of the whole mass of African slaves, and these will return to their own land, where European missionaries cannot live and labour, and there become themselves missionaries of the Cross and preachers of the Gospel; and thus prove to all mankind that the finger of God overrules the sins of men.

We notice the removal of another great obstruction. The first, we saw dissolving in the sunshine of the Christian spring, was Paganism; the second, we see dissolving the more rapidly as it approaches its end, is Mahometanism. In some expositions of the Apocalypse

in Exeter Hall, I stated that it seemed to me, from concurrent and remarkable providential facts, that the sixth vial had begun to be poured out about that time. The unclean spirits—priestcraft, popery, and infidelity—then went forth to devastate the nations, where they are still acting; and during that period the great river Euphrates, used in the Apocalypse as the symbol of the Mahometan, Turkish, or Saracenic powers, begins to be dried up. I said I expected, from all these facts, its utter exhaustion from its channel very soon. Now just be at the trouble to refer to the newspapers of the day—read their correspondence from abroad, and their leading articles; and I think that in these days, when prophecy is so rapidly rushing into performance, the newspaper is the best commentary upon Scripture. You will see the universal admission that Turkey is gone, and a very leading daily paper says that it should be given up, that our buttressing it any longer is useless. The European dispute at this moment agitating the political world is just one of the providential proofs of God's finger moving in this matter. In a very little time I fully expect Turkey will cease to be a nation; Mahometanism will afterwards wholly disappear from the earth; and then what takes place? The great river Euphrates is dried up to make way for the kings of the East, literally "royal ones from the sun-rising." These royal ones are God's ancient people, that were chosen by him to be a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; and the instant that Mahometanism evaporates from its channels, along the dry bed it has left behind there will be seen an exodus vastly more magnificent than that which was headed by Moses from Egypt into Canaan—God's ancient people

returning into the land of their fathers, there to glorify him whom their fathers crucified. Chateaubriand says that Turkey is literally dying for want of Turks; and a very recent traveller writing from Constantinople says, "Turkey is in the agony of dissolution, and will soon be a corpse." A missionary says, "It requires no prophecy to satisfy us that Mahometanism is falling to ruins, and will very soon be at an end. Its distinctive peculiarities have all been surrendered."— Persia has ceased to be a power; Algiers is in the hands of France; Greece is independent; Affghanistan crouches at the feet of Great Britain; and thus these Mahometan powers are giving up their independence, and very soon the whole system will give way. It was not to be destroyed by a blow, but gradually to dry up, to be wasted and exhausted. And if you will read the account given by any historian of Mahometanism, you will find in his history the best possible commentary upon what is recorded in the 16th chapter of the Apocalypse. Let us mark another feature. The ancient Armenian churches in the midst of the Mahometan power have been recently, according to the reports of missionaries, quickened with new life, and visited with new light from on high. The Armenian churches (not called so from Arminius the theologian, but from Armenia their country) consist of a population of nearly two millions, who are the agriculturists and manufacturers throughout the whole of the Mahometan countries. Now it is stated that these ancient Christians have very lately begun to see the errors that had encrusted their creed imported plainly from the Church of Rome: and they begin to cast off those errors, and to profess and hold fast a pure and Scriptural Chris-

tianity. Their Patriarch—for religion generally grows first amongst the people before it reaches the priests, and it is sure to spread amongst the priests before it touches the bishops, and amongst them before it gets higher—finding that they were renouncing what he thought the ancient faith, fulminated an anathema against them, and employed the old Romish weapons, in order to exterminate them by persecution and proscription; but the Sultan, who here set an example that Pio Nono might well transfer to himself, insisted upon liberty of conscience throughout all his realms; and at this moment the Armenian Church is establishing itself everywhere, real religion is spreading in the midst of the East, and for the first time the Mahometans are able to see specimens of pure and primitive Christianity untarnished by the corruptions which degrade the Romish, exhibited in much of the simplicity of the great Original. Thus, there is the exhaustion of Mahometanism from without, and there is the growing spread of this pure and spiritual Christianity within. Soon the Crescent will wane, and the Cross emerge in greater glory. Soon, also, the song of the Christian psalmist will be heard where the voice of the muezzin now only sounds. Soon, the Christian temple will take the place of the mosque and the minaret; and the Koran, unable to stand railways, and steamboats, and paddle-wheels, and newspapers, and the advancing light of secular knowledge—for such light the Koran never can stand, the Bible only can do so—will give way for the Book of God; and that beautiful and magnificent land, consisting of the choicest parts of Europe and Asia, will yet have shining upon it a brighter and a better Sun, and become part and parcel

of the garden of the Lord. This also is the finger of God.

Let me notice a third obstruction that is gradually disappearing from the earth—Romanism. I know some will deny this, because in the present day a few are very much alarmed, and have an idea that Romanism is making head. So far there is truth in this—no doubt it does advance in some places, but I do not believe that it makes head really, substantially and truly in the mass of the people. A few very silly ministers, and some of the higher classes, have left the Protestant Church, and joined the Church of Rome; but we can tell of movements in the opposite direction just as decided, complete, and valuable every whit. But apart from these incidental perversions, it has been said by some, that the extraordinary invasion of 1850, is proof that Rome is gaining power. Now my belief is, that it was just the reverse. In fact, the aggression of 1850 was just like one of Napoleon's desperate strokes when the tide of battle was really turned against him—it was a desperate and most indiscreet attempt, infallible as it assumed to be, to recover ground inevitably and eternally lost. I believe that if that deed could be recalled, that is, if infallibility would, like Pharaoh, humble itself, and say it was fallible, it would be recalled forthwith; because the Church of Rome cannot afford to carry on its movements in the light; it needs darkness and quiet. An aroused and awakened people are just the elements it can make nothing of; and therefore the disclosure in the light of day of the subterranean mining that had been going on in the darkness of a long night, was

the unhappiest piece of policy that Pio Nono could pursue.

But let us look now at the countries of Europe. There is no seat in Europe at this moment so insecure as the throne of Pio Nono; for we all know that if he had not French soldiers to guard it at this moment it would explode in twenty-four hours; and yet that city, Rome, ought to be the model capital of the world. There are no heretics to disturb it; there are no Bibles allowed there to endanger the dominant religion. The Protestant chapel is outside of the walls. In Rome there is a priest for every eighty people, and a teacher for every thirty people. There are in Rome, with a population not half that of Manchester, not nearly equal to that of Edinburgh, three hundred and sixty-five churches, besides chapels in convents and other places. If ever a city had adequate teachers, a surfeit of priests, plenty of churches, and convents also, it is the city of Rome; and if the system has failed there, it is because it is bad at its core, not because there are not means to carry it out into practical development. Yet in that city there is a population ready to break loose every moment. I admit there may be among them advocates of disorder, there may be democrats anxious to do mischief, and I suspect that many of them are Jesuits who act thus in order to bring discredit upon Protestantism, and upon the circulation of the Bible. No doubt there may be men among Italian reformers with whom we have no sympathy whatever; but, unquestionably, all over Italy real religion is at this moment rolling in silent and subterranean currents that will ultimately meet and deepen into a mighty ocean, and gain universal ground right rapidly. All the

attempts that have been made there to arrest the progress of true religion have only recoiled upon those who made them. In Sardinia, Dr. Mazzinghi, in company with Captain Pakenham, was discovered reading the Scriptures, and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. A very excellent member of the Sardinian Parliament intimated he would put a question with reference to this to the chief minister of the crown; but that minister saw that the effect of that question would be so terrific that he anticipated it by saying that he totally disapproved of what the ecclesiastical authorities had done, and that he was armed with the royal pardon for Dr. Mazzinghi for the crime of reading God's holy word. We read that matters did not improve, for the Madiais were cast into prison, as I can prove from official documents, for nothing else but reading and instructing others in the Bible. But what has been the result? That deed has awakened the echoes and reverberations of righteous indignation over the length and breadth of Christendom; and such suffering was worth enduring, if it was only to provoke that magnificent letter which a recent prime minister addressed to our representative in that country, denouncing the conduct of those who imprison men for reading God's holy word and trying to tell others the way out of darkness to heaven and happiness. And the very pleas—and I have read them with the greatest care—that have been urged in defence of the conduct of those who imprisoned the Madiais, have only laid bare the greatness of the original sin. It is an unwise thing in the Church of Rome ever to attempt to defend what she has done; for generally when she attempts a defence, she makes matters worse. The

Cardinal in this country delivered a lecture, in which he endeavoured to satisfy the literati of Leeds that Galileo was not imprisoned for his discoveries; but he forgot that what was spoken in a literary room is reported in the newspapers. Well, Galileo was imprisoned, and the Cardinal says, not for his scientific discoveries. It was therefore for his religion. This was Dr. Wiseman's defence. Here is the Church of Rome avowing that she persecutes for religious opinions, surely a very poor apology for the Church in imprisoning Galileo. If he was persecuted for his scientific discoveries the literati will be offended; if he was persecuted for his religion the whole Church of Christ will be outraged. The best way is to leave it untouched, for the more it is brought to the light the worse it becomes. But in all this gradual decay of Romanism in the whole world, and the insecurity of those who are its greatest advocates, I think I trace the finger of God.

Let us turn to another most interesting country, France, and there we shall find proof of the presence of the finger of God. Whole communities have renounced Romanism and embraced the Protestant religion, and such men as Monod, and Grandpierre, and Puaux, are, at this moment, creating a very deep and powerful impression amongst the Roman Catholics of France. "Never," says M. Roussel, "have the Roman Catholic population been more disgusted with the superstition of their Church, and the offices of their priests, than they are at this moment." And in the Oratoire at Paris I heard myself the most excellent ministers of the Protestant Church give an account of Protestantism in the provinces; and while there was

not what we could wish, there was enough to indicate the finger of God, and to show that in that land pure and undefiled religion is making way.

I see in all these facts the wasting of the Church of Rome prior to its destruction at a blow. The prophecy is that the Lord shall consume it with the Spirit of his mouth—that is, his Word; and then, when it has been consumed to the utmost, he will destroy it with the brightness of his personal coming.

The last obstruction to the spread of the Gospel I will refer to, is Judaism. The present state of the Jews, the expectations that we cherish, and the progress that is made in enlightening them, deserve attention. First of all, I will look at the evidences of a movement in connexion with them from certain civil occurrences; and, secondly, at the proofs of a movement evidently from the finger of God in relation to their spiritual condition.

In their civil relations (I am not pronouncing whether it be right or wrong) there is indicated returning favour of the nations to a people they have persecuted, oppressed, plundered. I am not stating whether that movement be right or wrong, but simply that as a movement it is the evidence to me of returning favour to a people who heretofore have been the objects of their hatred and their proscription. The very first proclamation that the Jews had rights at all was made by Napoleon the First; and in Turkey, Arabia, Algiers, Prussia, Austria, and Germany, what they believed to be their civil rights have been restored to them. In this country they are at least tolerated; and the question of the day is their condition with reference to the civil constitution of the land.

moral world, as a vacuum is in the physical world ; and if men cannot find the knowledge of the true God, they will with the chisel strike from the obedient marble the nearest likeness to him that heart and imagination can conceive. To meet this yearning of human nature God was manifest in the flesh. We have in Jesus the autograph and portrait of Deity as prepared by himself : so that when Jesus became man, he came so near to me, that I can clearly see him ; and yet he remained so perfectly holy, that I can see God in him. There is no excuse now for images or image worship ; there is no apology for idolatry of any sort. We have Jesus as the representative of God, manifest in the flesh ; so that when I study him as he is sketched at length in the sacred Scriptures, I see all of God that my heart can desire, or that finite language can convey, and I am perfectly and altogether satisfied.

When Jesus uttered these words, the last touch was put to the picture of the perfect Christian. We must never forget that whilst Christ was God, he was also man ; that if he was God revealed to us as God is, he was also man revealed to us as man should be. He was God manifest in the flesh, but he was also man inspired, illuminated, glorified by Deity. And therefore we have in Jesus the perfect model of the believer. Seeing what he did, I see what I must strive after. Watching what he said, I hear what I ought, as far as I am able, to echo : whilst he is, as God, the object of my worship, he is, as man, the model and example for my imitation. I have in Christ Jesus, therefore, the everlasting God revealed in all the glory that human eye can look on, and I have the perfect believer set forth in all the perfection of infinite excellence. I

look at him in the one light, and I worship. I look at him in the other aspect, and I imitate. I have in him the finished picture of Deity, and the finished portrait of humanity. How true and beautiful the exclamation of the Apostle, "Ye are complete in Christ."

These are the results that may be supposed to have been included by our Lord, when he exclaimed upon the cross "It is finished." But these were the seeds of glorious harvests, facts that live, and act, and influence time and eternity for ever. The river that flowed from that stricken rock still rolls along the channels in the world's desert. The light that arose from that setting sun still shines in deepening splendor in many a land. His name shall endure for ever; it shall last like the sun; all shall bless him, and be blessed in him. Whilst, therefore, the price was paid, the sacrifice was made, the atonement complete, the portrait of God received its last touch, and the picture of humanity received its last feature; let us recollect these are not facts that have ceased, and, like the facts recorded in an almanac, of no more value; they are living facts, still shaping and influencing the characters of mankind, and the destiny of the earth.

In reviewing the words of our blessed Lord in his last moments on the cross, let us mark the sublimity of the composure he exhibited on this occasion. All was storm, wrath, animosity, hatred around. Satan had sifted him, and found nothing in him; all was agony in his frame, and inconcievable distress in his soul. There was something that we cannot comprehend in that awful language—the most awful in the whole Scripture—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But in the midst of all this there was an inner

of it, like patches of snow in spring, only in the desert and distant retreats of the world — giving token of its approaching departure. We see, secondly, the great river Euphrates, or the Mahometan power, beginning to evaporate, weakening by its own corruptions, broken in upon by Russia, and soon destined to disappear from the world. We see, next, the growing interest in God's ancient people — every cabinet in Europe considering them; every church in Christendom seeking to do them good. We hear at this moment, as it never was heard before, the universal preaching of the Gospel; and one of the last signs of the end of the world is, that this Gospel shall be preached to all nations, not to convert them, but as a witness; and then, it is said, shall the end come. I can see God's finger also in the recent discoveries of gold in Australia and California, especially pointing out where the Gospel has not been preached before, and bringing in the train of the gold-seekers the preaching of that "fine gold tried in the fire," that gold that makes truly rich, and that adds no sorrow. And at this moment, literally, there is not a tribe throughout the world, into whose tongue the Bible has not been translated, and to whom its offers have not been made. The prophecy of Daniel is, that in the last days many should "run to and fro" — speed, excitement, intercourse — and that "knowledge should be increased." At this moment, this running to and fro is so remarkable, that every nation in Europe has its ceaseless exodus; and everybody is in the express; and it looks to me, in this present age, as if there was so much to do, and so little time to do it in, that God is opening up new

pathways, and giving men new means of speed; and I ask, is not this the finger of God?

We notice also, what is no less remarkable, the growing intensity of demarcation between the two great systems into which all will be absorbed. Very soon all those distinctions which we Protestants have kept up amongst ourselves will for ever be obliterated. What is the difference between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland as presented by their faithful ministers? What is the difference between Independents, Wesleyans, and Baptists, and ourselves? Scarcely anything worth quarrelling about; long before the end arrive there will be two grand bodies—Christ and his church, and its correlative—Antichrist and his church. These are the two great divisions into which all men seem rapidly splitting in the present day. We must all so rejoice to see in this growing peace of the Church of Christ, this sense of spiritual inter-communion, that we ought scarcely to see the points that are differential. Our different circumstances and clothing ought not to conceal the traces of our own beautiful and lasting brotherhood. There is light enough from Pentecost to illuminate the world; there is warmth enough from Calvary to sanctify all hearts. On the hearthstone of our common Father's house there burns a ceaseless fire, from which every denomination may light its lamp, and go forth to spread the Gospel, and make ready for the coming of the Lord. When two armies are about to meet, there are seen frequent skirmishes between the outposts before the main battle begins. All the disputes with Romanism in the present day—the instances of her persecution, and the opposition that is made to it—are the skirmishes between the

adamantine walls, if that be possible, or to open doors that are barred, and shut for ever. All is finished, and we have nothing to do in order to enjoy heaven, and nothing to endure in order to escape the curse. We receive a price, not pay one. We receive the title-deeds, we have not to write them. We have but to rest upon him who is the perfect title, and have perfect peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. I believe it is this intense and magnificent simplicity of the Gospel that makes so many misapprehend, hesitate, fear. I am not stating on my own authority the mode of our acceptance before God; but I am stating, on the authority of the express and reiterated expressions of the Holy Spirit of God, what is the only way to heaven.

But you say, if we get to heaven without doing anything, we shall do nothing. It is not so; they who accept heaven gratis, are just the persons whose hearts are loaded with the deepest gratitude, and irradiated with the brightest love, and who feel in all life's ways and windings how much they owe, and how much they should now do for God. We are not to regard God, like the mere legalist, as a being exacting duties; but we are to regard him as a benefactor bestowing blessings. If I were placed under law, I should hear God saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" and God would see me constantly striving to obey the demands of my Master, the exactions of my King. But as I am placed under the Gospel, I do not hear God saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" but giving his Son to die for me; and seeing God constantly giving, the responsive emotion is awakened in my heart; What shall I return to him? I can and need do nothing that will deserve happiness, for all has been done for me;

but I will go forth, and let the world see that this religion that has given me all heaven gratis, conforms me to the image and model of him who has earned my salvation, and constrains me by an irresistible impulse to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God. Those who believe in Jesus, through believing in him get a new nature; and to live as they like is to live according to the model that Christ set before them, and the requirements of his holy, pure, and perfect law.

On a communion day we do not come with painful and heavy hearts to make a sacrifice for sins; the sacrifice is made; but we come with joyous and grateful hearts to commemorate the sacrifice finished 1800 years ago. The Lord's Supper is not Christ crucified for us, but the pledge continued from year to year, in every section of the Church, that this sacrifice was completed, and that we are welcome to rest upon it, and live for ever. If there be one Sunday in the year when all hearts should glow with the brightest joy, and be charged with the richest gratitude, it is that Sabbath on which we commemorate this great fact, the sacrifice is finished.

In the Passover of old there were two parts. The Jewish father had first to slay an innocent lamb, and shed its blood—that was the sacrifice. But the next day he had to eat with his family the roasted flesh of the lamb that had been previously slain—that was the feast after it. In our case, Jesus was the victim—the sacrifice was slain 1800 years ago; and we have now none of the painful part, but only the bequest of the pleasant part, which is to rejoice while we commemorate a deed done, and sacrifice offered, perfect, and

science, have mouldered to the dust, and no finger has traced an inscription to record them; great temples, cathedrals and churches have fallen, but this holy Levite still lives, and serves and worships where they once stood. Christianity still walks the world, and worships and loves, and builds other edifices more suitable to its greatness.

Again, let us look at its wonderful spread. This religion once spoke but one tongue; it now speaks in every tongue of the world, and every day is a continual Pentecost. Our holy faith crosses broad seas, climbs rugged mountains, and raises its fanes in every country. Its wing is not numbered amid polar snows, and it does not faint amid equatorial suns. It gains in speed and power, and the most accomplished of mankind are acknowledging respecting it, "Truly this is the finger of God."

And we predict from the past its progress for the future. Its works prove its Divinity; the prophecies in its bosom proclaim its own immortality. We see in every section of the Church proofs that this religion is the religion of God. The question was put to Jesus, "What works doest thou?" The same question may be put to Christianity, "What works doest thou?" I answer, it quickens the dead in trespasses and sins; it gives music to the ears of the deaf; it presents its magnificent panorama to the eyes that once were blind; it gives comfort to the mourner; conviction to the doubting; strength to the weak; and happiness, and the hope of an everlasting home, to all. This religion is the finger of God. For its progress, for its triumphs, for its universal spread, all obstructions are

removing, as if they heard the Baptist voice of Elijah, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

My dear reader, on whose side are we? In the coming crisis shall we be found, not thorns to be burned, but branches of the living Vine? Are our hearts renewed? Are we justified by a righteousness without us? Are we regenerated by the Holy Spirit? Is our religion a letter, a form, a pretence, a ceremony; or is it life, light, power, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost? Safe are ye whose refuge is the Lord. Let him who has not fled to that refuge remember that now is the accepted time. There is welcome in Jesus for all; the doors of the Refuge are open; come and live; and then neither life nor death shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

IV.

In Sunshine and Shadow.

STRANGE words are these, "Thou art a God that hidest thyself," in a Revelation. In order to explain them, it will be necessary to show that though there is a seeming, there is not a real contradiction. What is the Bible? It is called the Revelation, that is, a making known. God's Name is written in it. The Bible is, if we may so speak, his autograph; it is the only precious and purely divine relic that has floated down to our age. The Bible is the nearest and exactest portrait and likeness of God. All we can gather of God is there. If the Bible be a Revelation of God, Isaiah surely should have said, "Thou art a God that revealest thyself;" but instead, we read, "Thou art a God that hidest thyself." How then can God reveal and yet hide himself? How can he be light that we can see, and yet darkness that we cannot penetrate? How can his Book be a Revelation or an Apocalypse, and yet be a hiding or an Apocrypha? It is explained by seeing what God is.

God is infinite in all his attributes, character, and being; man by the very nature of his constitution is finite. The finite being cannot receive on the retina of his mind, if I may use the expression, all the magnificence and glory of an infinite Being. We all

know what an horizon is. It is a radius of some three or four miles, beyond which we cannot see, at the margin of which heaven and earth seem to meet. Man has a horizon. I may change my horizon—I may leave the point where I now stand—the margin of my present horizon may become the centre of the next; but I cannot extend the width of it, so long as things are constituted as they now are. Man's mind, too, has its horizon; there is a certain amount of light and space only that it can take in. God has no horizon. All space overflows with light and splendour before Him. All the secrets of deepest mines, all the nooks of the interior of the grandest cathedrals, all that is in the height or in the depth, is luminous, transparent, and comprehended by Him who is the circle whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere. I can easily understand that if I can only take into my mind a portion of the light, the immense mass beyond it must appear the darker by reason of the brightness of the portion that I now see. Because God reveals himself, therefore, God necessarily hides himself; for the greater the light of the portion that I do see, the darker and the blacker, by the contrast, must the space seem that stretches beyond it.

The greater the truths—like great mountains in sunlight—the longer and the darker are the shadows that they cast around them. Everybody who has pursued an investigation in science, literature, or politics, knows that he no sooner gets hold of one truth than he discovers a vast retinue of other truths looming from the dim and dark distance, so that the more he knows the more he sees remains to be known; and he who makes the greatest progress in the light that he has, is sure

to infer, far beyond it, a still greater amount of knowledge that yet remains to be ascertained. Sir Isaac Newton said, with all the humility of true genius, as well as of high Christianity, that he felt only like a man gathering pebbles washed by the spray on the seashore, whilst the great ocean rolled beyond unsounded, of whose depths and mysteries he knew nothing. In the experience of us all, every great truth that comes within the horizon that constitutes the limit of our sight, brings other truths with it, so that we have no sooner mastered one than another has to be explored, and that other brings more with it, till we can easily see that knowledge is infinite, and that man's progress, if he will ever learn, must be eternal. The brightest day ever lies between two nights; the brightest horizon is ever embosomed in the greatest darkness; and the more we know the more we see remains to be known: so that great Christians, like great intellects, must ever feel the most lowly and humble.

But we rejoice to know that our knowledge is progressive; that what we do not see of God's finger now,—what God does not allow to come within our view now, we shall see and know hereafter. I have not the least doubt that everlasting heaven will present a horizon ever advancing, and brighter objects ever filling it, and successive things and thoughts crowding in, ever new, instructive, and eloquent. I can conceive no happiness more intense, or more real, except the happiness of union and communion with God himself, than our ever learning, and yet never mastering all that is to be learned. God is the infinitely remote centre; everlasting happiness will be the eternal approximation to a centre that we ever near and never reach. There

is no doubt that if we were in that sunlit land now, where the horizon is so much greater, and where things are seen in so much brighter light, we should look down upon all the diplomacy of our most illustrious statesmen, and upon all the literature, science, and learning of our greatest scholars, with a feeling somewhat analagous to that with which parents look upon infants with their toys, pitying them; while we should long for the day when all shall see even as they are now seen.

We must not forget that there is a repressive influence at present resting upon all that God has made, as well as upon all that God has written, in consequence of sin. The fact is, human language does not convey thought fully. We speak of the excellence of the Bible, and we cannot speak too highly comparatively of its excellence, but the Bible is still an imperfect mirror of God's thoughts. Language has the curse upon it; it not only lies under the original curse of Paradise, but also the curse of the dislocation on the plain of Shinar; and hence language, even when inspired, fails to convey, in all their brilliancy and magnificence, those great and everlasting truths which we see dimly now, but which we shall see purely hereafter. The Apostle tells us that creation groans and travails, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Every flower that peeps from the earth is not a specimen of what the earth will one day produce, but only a hint of possibilities of beauty that are latent below, waiting for the removal of the curse, in order to burst forth and make every desert of the earth rejoice and blossom even as the rose. All the magnificence of June is but a faint approximate specimen of beauty

that is to be ; all that we now see is more or less hazy ; all that man knows is, from the language, the instrument by which he acquires it, imperfect or fragmental ; and, therefore, God revealing himself in a tongue that is imperfect, in a world that is cursed, and to hearts where sin and its shadow lie so deep and so powerful, necessarily, in proportion as He reveals himself, also hides himself.

Let us look at some illustrations of this. Take any one truth or doctrine of Christianity, and we shall find that its very brightness creates around it a darker shadow. Study, for instance, the great doctrine of the existence of God ; take God's revelation of himself. "I am," He says, "that I am." The very splendour of his character dazzles us. God is truth, and the bright light is his shadow. When God thus reveals himself, the Infinite and Eternal, "I am that I am," we can form but a very imperfect conception of the greatness of that character thus indicated.

What do we understand of omnipresence ? We speak the word, and discuss and argue about it ; but the fact is, its very greatness defies our inspection. We cannot comprehend it, whilst, because here revealed, and by all sound thinkers accepted, we undoubtingly believe it. What can I comprehend of a Being who is here, and yet there, and everywhere—in the tiniest pebble washed by the sea-wave, and yet in the remotest star ; in the dewdrop that dances on the rose-leaf, and yet in the great ocean that girdles the earth as with an illuminated zone ; watching over Moses, the babe nestled in the ark of bulrushes, and yet ruling, controlling, and guiding the cherubim and seraphim that minister around His throne ? What can I understand

of a Being who fills all space, so that there is not a thought in a human heart, nor a fact in the world's history, nor an eddy in a nation's current, that He does not see, is not in, and does not control? I can believe it, but I cannot comprehend it. The incomprehensible is not necessarily the incredible. God has said it, therefore I believe it; and when I ask, "Why, then, do I not comprehend it?" I remember that I am finite, and that the eye of my mind, just like the eye of my body, has only a certain diameter, and can only take in a certain amount of space, or light, or revelation.

Study another doctrine revealed in the Bible, namely, a Triune Jehovah. For instance, in the Bible the Father is said to be God, Jesus is declared to be God, and the Holy Spirit is declared to be God, and yet again and again it is said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God." How little do I comprehend of this! There are not three Gods, but only one living and true God. How three can be one, and one three, I know not; all that I can see is, that the Father is God, that Jesus Christ is God, that the Holy Spirit is God, and yet that there is but one living and true God. But can we expect that a finite mind can grasp that infinite and incomprehensible relation? It is a doctrine, however, not against reason, but above reason. It is a truth revealed and partly luminous; it is a truth distinctly stated, but a truth that is not explained. It is a revelation on God's authority, not an analysis that meets and satisfies the reasoning powers of man. In short, there is enough for saints to adore—there is nothing left for metaphysicians to cavil and to carp about.

Turn to another truth—the origin and entrance of sin. We can see that sin is in the world, we can feel that it is in our own hearts, we do not need a revelation to tell us; our own hearts condemn us; but when you ask, Why did not omnipotent power prevent the introduction of sin, and why did not infinite love resist it? I can only say, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” And if we have learned no other lesson than this, we have learned a very wholesome one, namely, how low and limited we are,—how great, glorious, and everlasting God is. All that we can do with such a doctrine is, to show that there is no objection that can be urged against God’s Word that reveals it, which does not fall with tenfold force against God’s government and creation of the world, because the world unmistakably shows it; and therefore, taking Butler’s plan of reasoning from analogy, we can thus justify the ways of God to man.

In creation, again, God hides himself. We are all so accustomed to look upon the surface of things, and without thought, that we often fancy that there is no mystery where really there is great mystery. For instance, does any one understand that mysterious link that binds mortality to immortality—the soul that goes the way of all spirits, and the body that goes the way of all flesh? The physiologist will tell you that he cannot find the holy of holies, where the spirit perpetually worships; he cannot find out the solemn chancel where the inner priest and Levite ministers before God continually. No physiologist has pretended to discover it; and yet nobody possessed of common sense, will say that a piece of material organization of flesh and blood, of oxygen and hydrogen and carbon,

can produce the magnificent creations of the poet, or the noble paintings of the artist, or any of those master-pieces of art, that indicate the greatness of the human soul, notwithstanding the wreck of the habitation that is about it.

Can any one explain to me how it is that, by a single volition, I can move my hand to the right or left, or up or down? The physiologist will tell you that he can trace the nerves and the muscles; he can explain all the apparatus of the physical economy, but he cannot explain how, by a volition, I can move my hand anywhere and everywhere. We are surrounded with mysteries. The whole of man's economy is a mystery; every look is a mystery. It will be time for the carping and cavilling sceptic to quarrel with the religion of Jesus, because it contains mysteries, when he has unveiled and illuminated with intenser splendour, the mysteries that are in blades of grass, in the human frame, and in the every-day things with which he comes into contact in this world.

If we look at the seasons of the year, what mysteries are in them! How fair is autumn! What a beautiful result from strange chemical combinations, when the autumn sits amid her sheaves, as a mother amid her children, singing and chanting in the world-wide harvest home, the praises of Him who hath given seed-time and harvest still! What can be more mysterious than the season of spring? If we were to see the bursting of leaves from root and tree but once in our lifetime, we should feel that the blossoming of Aaron's rod was not to be compared with it. We look only at the surface of these things, and fancy they are common, while they are deep mysteries. Who is it that marshals the

hosts of the sky upon the plains of infinitude, giving each sentinel his round, and the whole their functions, yet, without any jarring discord, or interruption? I cannot look into the heights of heaven without feeling, "O God, thou revealest thyself in these bright stars; but thy revelation of thyself only discloses to me a deeper and darker hiding beyond;" and when I look down to the earth, I can see, "Thou God revealest thyself;" but when I look closest into the relationship of things, I am constrained to see that the field that reveals most of his glory, contains beneath it also much more of mystery and inscrutable darkness.

Let us take another department, providence, and we shall find the same truth illustrated. What strange experience is ours, in that a step is taken, and that step leads to the dethronement of one monarch, and to the elevation of another! It was not chance. It was the finger of God. The cloud that we thought yesterday would break in judgments, breaks to-day in benedictions. The wreck, as we supposed it, has ended only in a better and more precious structure; and the storm that we feared, as likely to lay waste all that we loved, has only removed what, if it had remained, would have injured us, and left behind richer and better blessings. An unseen hand has been over us all; and that man must be blind, and that Christian must be insensible, who does not feel that during the whole past there has been an unseen, it may be, an unfelt finger, guarding, governing, ordering all things in a way to him most unexpected and most beneficent. The day that has just dawned upon us, will be a day of wonders and mysteries, as much, if not more so, than yesterday. There is not one of us who does not feel that we have

been borne by a current we did not originate, and guided to a result, however tiny or grand that result may be, which we ourselves did not contemplate. We are all too prone to calculate that, at the close of this year, we shall be where we have pre-arranged; but probably none of us will be, at its decease, where we expected at its birth that we should be. We are under the control, presidency, and arrangement of One who makes all things work alike for His glory, and for the lasting good of His people.

And what changes and vicissitudes will the coming months and days of the year, now current, or before us, bring! One month will come clad in snow, and another crowned with flowers. One month will come with rich gains, another with ruinous losses. One will see a babe born, another will see the mother laid low in the grave. One month will come and bring a bride to a happy husband, another will come and open a grave for a venerable and beloved parent. What changes are before us in a year? How little do we know all the way in which God will lead us! There is no opening the gate to go back to the past; there is no parting the veil to become acquainted with the future. All that we know is, that each opening of a year, is the porch, the vestibule of an unsounded future. Dare we go into this unsounded, impenetrable future, trusting in ourselves? or shall we go praying for, and leaning on the rod and staff of the Shepherd of Israel, as he has promised to be with his people, their pillar of fire by night, and their guide by day, during their pilgrimage upon earth?

Let us study the doctrine of the Incarnation. I believe that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh — not

God taking the place of a human soul and dwelling in a human body, but absolute Deity united to a true body and a true reasonable soul. Now how can perfection be wedded to imperfection? How can Deity and humanity be one? How can He suffer, and yet be impassible; infinite, and yet finite? How can he be capable of temptation, and yet not be tempted? How can want and fulness, sickness and health, perfection and imperfection, meet and mingle, and be in one? I do not know, I cannot comprehend it. The very revelation of the truth, in all the brilliancy with which it is revealed in the Bible, makes the dark shadow that is behind it only the darker, broader, and deeper.

I take the operation in man of the Holy Spirit of God. "Except a man be born again," he may call himself Churchman, or Dissenter, or whatever he likes, he is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. If I must be born again in order to enter into heaven, and if it be the Holy Spirit that changes my heart, what mysteries are brought within my horizon, when I begin to ponder the mysterious question? How can he bow my will, and yet not break it? How can he draw me, and yet not destroy my freedom and responsibility? How can he turn me, and yet not annihilate my own self-government, independence, and freedom of will? The only answer given is, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The fact I know, because my nature is altered; but the mystery "how" I never can answer, because God has not revealed it.

Compare God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. These two things seem perfectly contradictory; and

yet they are not so. How can it be true that I can do nothing, and yet am free? How can it be true that God does all, and yet I not be a mere machine? Take the language of Scripture, and see how difficult it is to reconcile it. Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" but he says also, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How am I to reconcile these? I cannot. They are both true, because they are stated on the authority of God; but how to harmonize the responsibility of man, embodied in the first passage, with the sovereignty of God asserted in the second, I cannot understand. Again, in another passage, it is said, "Repent, and be converted;" and yet we are told that Jesus is exalted "to give repentance." Again, "Make you clean hearts," is a command; and yet, says Job, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—there is responsibility; and again, "Faith is the gift of God"—how can I reconcile these? I cannot. I can see each of the two ends of the chain at each side of the river, but the intermediate links are deep below the flood. I can see the link at one end that is radiant with human responsibility, and I can see the link at the other end that is luminous with God's sovereignty, and I accept both; but how the two are knit the great rolling stream of mystery conceals, and I am constrained to say, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself."

Let us look into that doctrine about which sceptics have made so much complaint, namely, how God answers prayer? there cannot be a more perplexing inquiry. The very revelation that he does so, only

covers the darker mystery, how it is possible to do so. If God has predetermined what is best, and decided on his own course from the commencement, how can my importunity turn him from his purpose? If God has fixed on a line of action, — He, to whom there is no past, present, nor future, but whose course is calculated and reckoned with perfect precision, — how shall the fervency of my prayer alter his decree? Can the petition of me, a leaf tossed by the wind, a bubble in the stream that soon bursts, have any effect upon the sovereign and fixed purposes of God, purposes that relate to millions of orbs, as well as to that on which I now live? I cannot explain these difficulties; but my Bible tells me, that I ought to pray, as prayer may be one of the elements of God's purposes. He may propose to give a thing on condition that I pray, and his calculations may proceed accordingly. Though I cannot explain the metaphysics of prayer, I know its value. All the instincts of my heart say that God hears prayer, and all the texts of the Bible say so too. Though the hidden mystery may perplex metaphysicians, the revealed truth does not in the least puzzle me: for He who cannot deceive has said, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened; ask, and ye shall obtain."

Let us study the resurrection of the body. We are told by the Apostle, that this mortal shall put on immortality; but how am I puzzled by it! The sailor is drowned in the deep, and incorporated in the shark's body; the dead dust of our cemeteries is incorporated with the yew-trees that so appropriately become "God's acre," or the place of the dead. If you ask how it is possible that this body, thus disintegrated, existing in gaseous forms, and in a thousand substances

throughout the world, can be raised in all its marked, discoverable, and discernible identity, I cannot say. All that I know is, that it does not seem a greater marvel than building man out of dust, or than any mystery that underlies any doctrine of revealed or natural religion; and I can fall back upon the plain and unequivocal announcement, "This mortal shall put on immortality"—not, this soul shall get another house, but it is in the neuter gender—"This mortal shall put on immortality." I can conceive the magnificent effect of that sentiment, when the Apostle preached it to the Corinthians. Paul was a very little man; he was lame, and personally unimpressive, as he himself declares, in one of his Epistles. The Apostle, dwelling in that poor, miserable, broken, shattered, decrepit tent, the body of Paul the tent-maker,—solemnly laid his hand upon his breast, and said, "You may wonder at it, ye sophists of Greece, and you incredulous of Rome, but this poor mortal that you see, shall put on immortality, and all these unequivocal traces of death shall be swallowed up in everlasting and glorious victory." Because, then, God has thus revealed it, I accept it. Thou art a God that revealest this, only underneath the light are shadows and clouds that we cannot penetrate. But I might reason from analogy. When poison has been taken into the system, and ended in death, the chemist can, by his tests, separate every element of that poison, however it may have been mixed with a thousand ingredients, and bring the poison out, and place it before a court of justice. Is it a very extravagant inference to make, that the Great Chemist of the universe will be able to disintegrate every atom of my scattered dust, and reconstruct it in a magnificence that Adam never dreamed of?

Other truths come before us that are equally inscrutable ; but this, at least, we can say in conclusion, the great and saving truths of Christianity are un-mistakeable. The mystery we cannot penetrate is the cup, but the doctrine that we can understand, is the precious wine that is in that cup. If we reject the mystery, we cast away the cup, and so lose the wine. Let us accept the mystery, and take the wine it contains, and drink it ; and leave the solution of the mystery to that day, when what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. We can enjoy the light and splendour of the stars, though we cannot say what their contents are. The sailor upon the deck, amid the storms and waves of the Atlantic, can guide himself by that little needle, though he knows not why one end of it should point to the north, and not to the south, east, or west. We build our houses, assuming the law of gravitation ; but we know nothing of the great mystery, why everything should tend toward the centre of the globe. We cannot explain why the sap rises, or why trees grow ; but in a hot sultry day we can rejoice in the shadow of the majestic oak. We cannot explain why the flowers have their rich and delicious fragrance ; but we can, nevertheless, enjoy it. We can trust a wisdom which we cannot fathom ; we can lean upon an omnipotence we cannot grasp ; we can believe in a God who says He is our Father, whilst we cannot comprehend the Infinite and Unsearchable who still hideth himself.

But it is to me most refreshing to think that these dim apprehensions of a perfection that we cannot reach, are auguries of an immortality that is before us. These presentiments of purity and perfection, amid our impurity and imperfection, are the shadows that indicate a

glorious light lying on the things from which they are now projected. It is said that a traveller in Jerusalem, seeing the fragment of an arch, exactly calculated where the other limb once rested; and from those fragmental thoughts, and hopes, and researches that are scattered among us, I can calculate the magnificent sweep of that arc which every one shall describe, who is redeemed by the blood, and quickened by the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This idea of a blessedness to which there is nothing corresponding in time, and of which all the happiness and all the joys that are realized in time, are but dim glimpses seen through a stormy sky, is to me a prophecy and pledge that this earth is not my rest, that this world is not my home, that I am the heir of a grander, a traveller to a nobler; and the very darkness that lies around all that God reveals, only makes me yearn the more for that grand and illuminated scene, where there will be no shadow, but all things shall be known by us, even as we ourselves are known and seen.

But if we cannot know what is before us in the future, let us lean upon God. Because God is so great, we cannot comprehend him; but if God were not so great, we never could trust him. Let us therefore lean upon him as we go into the unsounded depths of the future; let us take with us what is freely offered, the rod and staff of the Son of Jesse; let us take the Word of God as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; and let us pray that at every step and stage of our journey, He who has been the Guide of our fathers, would lead us through every peril of our pilgrimage, until we arrive at that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

V.

In Preparing for Revelation.

ON the assumption that human nature was in ruins,—that we had lost the way to heaven, and that we could not discover it for ourselves,—why, it may be asked, did God suffer 4000 years to elapse before he made known the Gospel of the kingdom of his Son? Why was the ploughshare of ruin allowed so long to speed its way? Why was the sword so long unsheathed? Why was the darkness suffered to become so dense before the Sun of righteousness arose with healing under his wings? It is a difficult question: it can only be neutralized as an objection—it cannot be solved as a difficulty. With God, what seems to us long, is very short. To an Eternal Being, to be preceded by millions upon millions of years, and to be succeeded by millions and millions more, is as a drop in the bucket in comparison with eternity. What seems to us a long process, only seems so relatively to the shortness of the span of our existence upon earth.

It may be neutralized as an objection in this way. If it be an objection against the God of Christianity that he was so long in making known the Gospel,—that he allowed 4000 years to elapse after the Fall before the Great Recoverer came,—it must also equally tell against the existence and providential government

of a God at all, that he has allowed 6000 years to elapse before he gave, in his providence, some of the most beneficent and brilliant discoveries that have enriched the stores, and benefited the condition and the health of mankind. Why did he allow so long a time to elapse before vaccination was discovered—a remedy that has ended the ravages of a disease that was long the great plague and pestilence of mankind? Why did he allow so long a period to expire before he revealed the ethereal breath, under the influence of which the anatomist's knife communicates no pang, and woman's sorrow is so mitigated, and the severest operations may take place without the patient knowing that he is the subject of them? Why did God allow so long a time to elapse before he gave us the mariner's compass, or before he revealed printing, that gives wings to words, and permanence to thought? Do we not see that if it be an argument against the God of the Bible that he allowed 4000 years to elapse before he gave a manifestation of the great truth, it must be an argument against the existence of a God at all that he allowed the human race to remain so long toiling with distressing ailments, or dying the victims of disease, before he revealed to them those grand prescriptions that are among the choicest providential mercies that have been vouchsafed to the human family? We may thus neutralize the objection as an objection, though we cannot solve it as a difficulty. It is one of the "whys" that a fool may ask in a minute, but that it will take an eternity to unveil, and redeemed and wise men to explain, when we shall see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face. Let us be content with our ignorance, where we cannot dissipate it; let us be

humbled in our imperfections, where we cannot alter them; and wait for the better day, when what we do not know now, or very dimly know, we shall know hereafter.

But we shall see reasons neither light nor few by a very short and succinct *resumé* of the incidents that occurred before the advent of Christ. A great preparatory process was going on, and the human race was under a preliminary discipline, and Jesus came, to use the language of the Apostle, "in the fulness of the times"—that is, just at the moment when it was best for man, and man was fittest for it, and most for the glory of God. This was the finger of God. Admit that the manifestation of Christ was a Divine thing, and that admission is evidence enough that it was the wisest, the best, and the most blessed. But we shall see, by glancing at a few facts and features characteristic of the ages that preceded the Gospel, that our blessed Lord came just at that moment when we were best prepared and it was best for us, and most for his glory.

The description of man after the Fall is, that his heart became deceitful, that its very imagination was only evil continually, that he had become a sinner, and a sinner without any strength adequate to his own restoration. It seems to me that God's great design in allowing 4000 years to elapse before he revealed Christ the Saviour, was to lead all to learn, by personal, social, national, universal experience, that man is what he is described to be, and that he cannot restore himself; and that human nature—thus schooled by these experimental evidences, which fools even, it is said in the proverb, will learn—might appreciate the excellence

and the blessedness of that grand provision, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We shall see this exhibited on every scale. Nation succeeded nation in the ancient economies. The conqueror took the throne of the conquered; the invader occupied the place of the nation invaded. We find a change of tenants, but not a change of character. It looks as if the conqueror caught the contagion of the nation he had conquered, and became himself just as corrupt as those who had preceded him. We do not find that the nations that swept away the empires of ancient days and of eastern times were one whit holier, or purer, or better, than the nations that they had dislodged. Let us see what attempts were made to improve mankind. Legislation made the experiment. All sorts of laws were made; the minds of legislators were taxed; the genius of accomplished men was exhausted. But it was found that human corruption shot up under every *régime*; and whether it was a despot on the throne, or the crowd in the agora—an aristocracy, a despotism, a limited monarchy, or a republic—it was discovered that policy could never make a people; for it was, and is still true, that a people only can make a lasting and a noble policy. It has been found that human nature was the same under all governments whatever.

Philosophy made the experiment in the hands of Socrates; and I know nothing as a human thing more beautiful, or more indicative of the first sprinkling of the rays of revealed truth, than the aphorisms, maxims, and prescriptions that this victim of his country's injustice, but benefactor of his age, gave so frequent utterance to. I know nothing human more beautiful

on earth than the magnificent clothing of the maxims of Socrates in the language of Plato: and we know that the philosophy of the Stagyrice lasted throughout the middle ages of Europe after Christianity itself was revealed, and gave shape and form to many of the conclusions of mankind. But amid all the lights of philosophy, amid all the lessons that it taught mankind, human nature remained still, in the meridian brightness of the purest teaching of Socrates, the slave of passion, the victim of corruption, creeping round an altar to the unknown Deity, and proclaiming, in the experience of a thousand years, that the world by wisdom knew not God.

If we leave philosophy, and turn to the consideration of the fine arts, we shall find the same result. We read a great deal in the writings of the Germans of what is called æsthetic influence. Some Germans who are weary of everything in the past, and who are anxious to strike out something original and real, have many of them the idea that if men were all admirers of statues, and painting, and poetry, they would be pure and happy. In short, that, if you could sweep away all the churches of Christendom, and build Crystal Palaces and British Museums, accessible on Sundays, the human race would reach a pitch of moral excellence unprecedented in the past. But the experiment has been made. In Greece the marble was chiselled into such exquisite forms that the very fragments we are content to gather, and store in our museums, and admire. Painting attained such a pitch of excellence then, that, according to tradition, the birds of heaven descended to peck the fruits the painters of Greece were able to embody on the canvass. And it is well

known that poetry arrived at a perfection that has made it almost a model for after generations to imitate. The architecture of Greece nothing can rival. Its very remains are the admiration of the world. Its merest fragments, its broken columns, its displaced capitals, are the remains of a grandeur and a beauty such as, perhaps, we have at this moment very little idea of. But what was the effect of this? During the very meridian of the arts of Greece, the immorality, licentiousness, profligacy, and abandonment of that people, had reached its very maximum. It was when the arts were in their highest glory that human nature sank deepest in profligacy, debasement, and crime. And let me say, though it may be quoted as the sentiment of a Goth, or the opinion of a Vandal, that it is perhaps well that the Alexandrian Library was burnt by the Mahometan. It is perhaps well that we have less of ancient art than we might otherwise have wished; because the slight glimpses of the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum show an amount of profligacy, corruption, and wickedness, that perhaps we may thank God for having buried in oblivion, and that for ever.

Legislation tried to raise mankind, and failed; philosophy made the experiment, and equally failed; we have seen that the arts and sciences might beautify, like ivy on a ruin, the corruptions that they could not cure; but that human nature remained the same as it is delineated in the sacred Scripture under all human systems, and under every earthly treatment,—its heart deceitful and desperately wicked, and its every imagination only evil continually. But the experiment was made upon a higher platform. One portion of the

human race, perhaps I may say the choicest portion of it, was selected—the Jews. They received supernatural rites, types, shadows, promises, prophecies; they were placed upon a higher level; they were brought more immediately into contact with God; they had a priesthood having, not a sham, but a real succession; they had not tradition, but Scripture given by God himself; they had laws written by the finger of God, who thus took the very best specimen of human nature, hedged it round, sunned it, watered it, and waited on it at every moment of the day. But the Jewish race so little improved under this peculiar treatment, that when the Lord of glory came to the world he had made, they shouted with one heart and voice, “Not this man, but Barabbas!”

Every effort so far failed; human nature must have felt, if it did not admit, that it was far gone from God, and that there was in it no strength to reinstate itself in its lost prerogatives and forfeited glory; and that unless God interposed, there could be no restoration for the race of mankind.

Let us study, in the next place, certain previous preparations that were requisite in order to usher in the religion of the New Testament. First, in order to be convinced of the nature of a miracle, it was essential that men should be accustomed to and acquainted with the ordinary laws by which the world is governed; because unless it be known to be the order of nature that the sun shall rise in the morning, to use popular phraseology, and set at night, the interruption of his course at midday would be no miracle in the estimate of any. We can only appreciate an interruption of nature’s laws by being previously accustomed to the

ordinary action of those laws. It was therefore necessary that man should, by long acquaintance with the world as it was made, see what were the ordinary laws by which the world is governed; and then, when an interruption of these laws occurred, the world would be able to say, "This arrest of the machine is the act of Him who made it; this interruption of the harmony is the deed of the Great Composer." You would not be able to appreciate a miracle, unless you could first appreciate and understand the ordinary and continuous laws by which the world is regularly governed. For instance, if we were not acquainted with the law that man dies, and is buried, and ceases to have any sympathy with the things that are around us, we could not see that to be a miracle which consisted in his rising from the grave, and mixing with the ranks of living man.

It is our acquaintance with the ordinary laws of nature, which enables us to understand the miracle of a man coming forth from the grave, and living again. Now, as the Christian economy was introduced by miracles, it seems to be requisite that man should be prepared to receive, appreciate, and weigh the effects of a miracle; and that these miracles should take place in an age sufficiently enlightened, civilized, and instructed to be able to appreciate them, and record them for the guidance of subsequent generations.

Again, if there was to be a written Bible, it seems very necessary that there should be prepared a language suitable for embodying its sublime truths, and becoming the vehicle of those truths for all future generations. The Hebrew is a magnificent language, as far as I understand it; but it cannot for one

moment be compared in beauty, in expressiveness, in versatility, in all that constitutes an unrivalled language, to the Greek; and it seems to me that the truths of the Christian economy are so peculiar, glorious, and transcendent, that it needed some language nobler and grander than the ancient Hebrew to embody and express them. It is therefore interesting to see all the orators of Greece, — all the rhetoricians of Athens, all the poets of that great university of the world, — all the philosophers of the *Academy* and the *Ilyssus*, — combining together to cultivate and perpetuate that magnificent tongue, which they thought would reflect glory on their names, but which God was leading them to prepare and perfect in order to convey His grand truths, and perpetuate them to the latest generations of mankind. It seems, therefore, one reason why the time prior to the advent of Christ should be so long, that there might be prepared the means for embodying the truths of the Gospel in the most expressive and most permanent shape.¹

We can also see that when Christ came, things had attained that pitch of unity, and that nations of the earth had become so consolidated, and the language in which the New Testament truths were to be preached had become the language of so many cultivated nations in the human family, that a truth spoken in Greek found an echo everywhere two thousand years ago, whilst the same truth, spoken in Hebrew, would scarcely have been understood beyond the borders of Palestine a few years before that. It seems, therefore, a precious preparation for the advent of Christ, that

¹ The peculiarities of Hellenistic Greek do not affect the argument.

one tongue should very much dominate and prevail over the earth ; so that the truths of Christianity might be proclaimed with the greatest ease, be understood by the greatest number, and reach the utmost limits of the human family.

It seems very important, too, that the nations of the earth should be in such a state as to facilitate the labours of the ambassadors of Christ. About two or three hundred years before the advent of our Lord, nations were in that condition of internal antagonism, that no inhabitant of one country could cross the frontiers, or sojourn even for a little in another. But by the conquests of Alexander, and afterwards of the Cæsars, the whole civilized world became consolidated into one empire : so that “ I appeal to Cæsar,” or, “ Is it lawful to scourge a man who is a Roman ?” was a sufficient protection in almost every capital and village of the habitable world. Thus, therefore, we see the finger of God preparing for the advent of Christ ; and all these things would lead us to conclude that there was a seasonableness in the time when Christ came, and that then was the time when Christianity should tell upon the world with the greatest possible emphasis.

Now, all these were the turnings, changes, and movements of 4,000 years—the stirring of the waters by the finger of God prior to the descent of the angel of the everlasting covenant to impregnate them with all the elements of permanent and universal health : and when the world had thus been prepared by a deep sense of its sins, and a deeper conviction of its inability to restore itself, — when a language had been formed fitted to convey the truths of the Gospel, — and when the whole earth had become consolidated and made

accessible to the feet of them that bring glad tidings of great joy everywhere, the Sun of Righteousness arose; the beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God was heard, and John preached the glorious proclamation, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

At the close of all this, was enunciated the Gospel. I do not dwell upon it: we know well what it is and says. It tells us the way we have lost; it proclaims to us that we are saved, not by something we can do, but by something that has been done for us,—it tells us of One able to save to the uttermost all them that believe; it proclaims in one glorious verse the sum and substance of our joy, happiness, and peace, "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) This Gospel is preached in every land, — is proclaimed from increasing numbers of pulpits,— is accepted by growing numbers of converts, and is giving already the foretoken of its universal triumph, when the whole earth shall ring with its glad accents, and all shall bless the Messiah, and be blessed in Him.

This Gospel, too, let us rejoice, is no longer the monopoly of a few, but the privilege and right of all mankind. Once it was a national cistern; now it is a world-wide fountain. Once it was a lamp for Jerusalem; now it is the bright sun in the sky for all that will open their eyes to see it. Christianity invites all to the shelter of its walls, and opens its aisles to all pilgrims and strangers that seek the way to heaven. Around its hospitable hearthstone the whole family of man may gather, warm themselves by its warmth, kindle their own lamps from its light, and go on their

way, better than pilgrims in the valley of Baca, from strength to strength, till at last they arrive in Zion.

Blessed be God, this Gospel is written. It was not left to treacherous memories; it was not bequeathed to hearts diseased and depraved, that might corrupt it; it was not left to the diluting influences of oral transmission; but it is written; and written, I believe, by the command of Christ himself, and recorded by inspiration in a book, we thank God, so cheap, that summer itself is not cheaper, daylight is not more universal, the water of the earth is not more easily accessible.

The Bible is not only written and accessible, but it is the most translatable book in the world. If we take the work of any Greek or Latin writer that we please, and translate it, we shall find it is not nearly so translatable as the New Testament Scriptures. And it seems a most interesting fact that our Blessed Lord and the Apostles, for once that they quote from the Hebrew Old Testament—which they very frequently do—at least twice quote from the Greek Septuagint of the Old Testament. Now, I think this is not a dumb accident, but a holy precedent, showing by a significant fact that it is the right of every nation to have God's Holy Word translated into the tongue in which they were born.

Let me ask, without dwelling more upon what this Gospel is to us, Are we changed by its influence? The amount of the change that has passed upon our nature is the amount of faith that we have in the Gospel. Has it made us different from the rest of mankind? Has it altered our nature by its transforming touch? Do we bless God, from the heart, that our ears have heard and our eyes have seen what prophets and righteous

men desired to hear and see, but were not permitted? Can we say, Whereas I was blind, I now see? Should we have been just what we are, if we had never heard the beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God?

And if we are influenced and changed by this blessed Gospel, let me ask, Do we seek to diffuse it? That man never has appreciated the preciousness of Christianity, who can rest satisfied whilst there is one mind unenlightened, or one heart unimpressed by it. The very first impulse of a man who feels the good news is to become the reflector of the good news. We are enlightened, that we may enlighten. We have received the unction of the saint, that we may receive the responsibilities, energy, and duties of the servant. Every epithet used in the Bible to represent the Christian is that of active influence. "Ye are the light of the world;" to illuminate it. "Ye are the salt of the earth;" to preserve it from corruption. Some of us would prefer to be the lights, that the world may admire the dazzling splendour; but it is the evidence of the richest grace, when we are satisfied to be the noiseless, unseen salt, silently but surely influencing all that are connected with us. And if we cannot preach the Gospel as missionaries, if we cannot contribute our money as supporters of missionaries, we can do what is equally our duty, be Christians ourselves. The eloquence of a holy life is an element of power. Love Christianity, and others will inquire where is the fountain from which your urn is filled? what is the religion that makes you thus to differ? Meanwhile let us rejoice that in due time we shall taste all its joys, and enter into the full sunshine of that Sun whose rays are

now horizontal, because He is but a little above the horizon, but who soon will ascend to his Millennial meridian, and shed down yet brighter beams; when we shall have no shadow, but all things shall be in bright sunlight, — we ourselves seeing even as we are seen, and loving even as we are loved.

VI.

Out of Evil still Educing Good.

JOSEPH'S exclamation to his brethren is not peculiar to his history. It embodies a great principle evermore evolved in God's providential dealings, and recognised in the experience of God's people in every age of the world. It was not alone in the case of Joseph's brethren that God makes the evil that men design to issue in the good that from everlasting He contemplates. His finger makes not only all things that are good, but all things that are evil; all things that are prosperous, and all that are adverse, work together in spite of what men design, or what the world may attempt, for good to them that He loves, and for glory to that Name which is above every name. This is the finger of God.

We shall best learn, not by argument, or abstract principles, but by facts found in various portions of the Word of God, how true is the line of the poet,

“From seeming evil still educing good.”

And if we are satisfied of this great fact, it will awaken in us a sense of repose amid the trials of this present life—confidence when the sky is blackest, and the sun has gone down. We shall nourish the deep and

unwavering conviction that all that befalls individuals, nations, families, the wide world itself, is under the presidency of One who gives to everything that is good its mission, and exacts from all that is evil its overruled contribution of glory to him, and of good to his people.

The success of Satan in Paradise, where he seduced Eve to evil, and Adam with her, seemed at first unmitigated calamity, as Satan meant it to be; but the promise that follows,—“The woman’s seed,” that is, Jesus Christ, “shall bruise the serpent’s head,” with its results as indicated here and there, in scattered intimations in the Word of God, show that God will derive more glory, and the saved intenser happiness, indirectly from the Fall, than ever they could have reaped if Adam had remained in his first innocence, and Eden had retained its first summer robes. It may be objected, this does not seem compatible with the fact that some will be lost. But not one soul that hears the glorious Gospel will be lost because Adam sinned. They that perish will incur their dread doom, because they rejected the only remedy. Our ruin, if ruin shall be, will not be our original Fall, or our past transgressions, but this,—that we have not believed on the only-begotten Son of God.

There is a grand remedy provided in the Gospel, recorded in the Bible, and preached from every pulpit.

It is free at life’s last hour. It is free to the greatest and oldest sinner upon earth. If any reader of this perish, it will be his burning remembrance—“I preferred to lie down amid the wrecks of Paradise, and bide the issue, rather than to enter on the living way that leads to Paradise regained, and so reach the

inheritance of glory." It is therefore plain that this great primal mischief, meant for unmitigated evil, the introduction of sin, will evolve, not from its own instinctive tendencies, but through God's overruling, gracious, and providential arrangements, greater happiness for the saved, and richer glory to God himself.

Let us refer to another incident in the history of our race, the murder of Abel by the fratricide Cain. That seemed at first sight to be for evil only. Cain contemplated evil only: what good do we obtain from it? First, we learn this, that God's Word in describing the wickedness of man does not exaggerate; and secondly, the blessed fact that the first subject of death was not a guilty criminal, but a believing saint. Death did not strike upon the world with all his horror. He carried off a saint to glory. We may see how fallen man is when we read Cain's history. We see how mercifully God dealt with our race when, through the woman's Seed, Christ Jesus, the first victim of death was not the subject of death eternal, but only of a death which was not dying, but transference.

At the era of the Deluge all seemed evil. Man rose up in almost universal rebellion against God. And in this fact what proof have we of the insufficiency of tradition! We are told by some that tradition is the great light of the Church. Well, for 2,000 years prior to the Flood they had no written Bible, they had only tradition. What was the result? "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." There were only eight persons who professed to love the true God. But, one would say, surely Satan's success here was unmingled evil, as it was

meant by him to be. But if the black cloud was the symbol of God's wrath emptying itself upon a guilty world, was it not also the very back-ground on which he threw up and painted the glorious rainbow? the symbol to man of a pathway from earth to heaven, up which man might rise heavenward, and down which angels might tread in their ministration to the sons of Adam. In the ark itself we have presented to us the symbol of Christ's true Church; those in it being wafted across the floods,—carried in spite of wind and wave, without compass and without chart, safe to Ararat, its resting-place, because God was with them. The very judgments that God let forth to punish guilty man for his transgressions, are so mingled and chequered with relieving benedictions and intermingling acts of love, mercy, and truth, that we can see that in wrath God ever remembers mercy.

Let us refer to another instance, the unfilial conduct of Canaan or Ham. He sinned, and a curse was pronounced upon him; but the very sin of Canaan, while it provoked most justly the curse, was the occasion of God's giving a blessing to Shem and Japheth, not exhausted at the present hour, and the fulfilment of which in every field in which Japheth's descendants are, is one of the most striking proofs that holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The building of the Tower of Babel was meant for evil. Man said, "Let us build a tower, and by it defy the judgments of God." They would not believe the rainbow sign, that God placed upon the clouds as a proof that the earth would not again be overflowed with a flood. They said, "Let us go out from God's presence; let us despise his memorial sign, and let us

build a tower ;” and the remains of it that are to this day upon the plain of Shinar indicate such vastness and strength, that one can well conceive the power and resources, as well as the determination of the architects who undertook it. “Let us build a tower ;” and for what ? For this wicked purpose, that they might not be scattered over the whole earth. But by God’s introducing provincialisms into their tongues, or dialects into their speech, that very tower was the means of precipitating them into what they wished to avoid. That which they selected to prevent the action of God’s government, God made the means of carrying out his own grand purpose.

To allude to a still more recent story in Genesis,—the crooked dealings of Rebekah and Jacob. Jacob and Esau appeared before their father Isaac. Esau ought to have inherited all, but through Rebekah’s deceit the blessing was pronounced upon Jacob, the younger. Now it seems a strange thing that a blessing should be earned by the most wicked deceit, used only for evil ; and that such deceit and wickedness should be overruled by God to be the fixture of the blessing upon Jacob’s head, and through him upon all his descendants down to the coming of the great Shiloh himself.

We refer, in the next place, to Joseph’s beautiful and interesting history. His brethren hated him, partly because he was the son of Rachel, another mother, and partly because he was so dutiful to a father who showed him special and distinguishing affection. They not only hated him, but when he came gently to rebuke them, or, rather, to convey his father’s rebuke to them, they rose up and laid hold on him, and

unanimously determined to slay him; but relenting, and becoming more tender in their feelings, by the recollection of domestic relations, they resolved to cast him into a pit, and afterwards sell him to Ishmaelite merchants. Everything looks like an accident. These merchants bring him into Egypt, and he is brought into Potiphar's house. He there acts so nobly, that he attains the highest dignity that a slave could attain. He is accused falsely of crime, and cast into prison. Accidentally, the world would say, two officers of Pharaoh offend their royal master, and are cast into the same prison. Accidentally, these two men dreamed; and their dreams leave an impression upon them so saddening, that Joseph asks them why they were so sad that morning; and they tell him that they had dreamed, and were troubled by their dreams. Joseph then explains to them these dreams, and tells them their destiny: one is hanged, and the other is promoted; and, like most men, who generally try to cast away the ladder by which they have risen, lest others should rise to the same height, the butler forgot Joseph. But an incident occurs in the history of Pharaoh. He dreams too, and his dreams make such an impression upon him, that he must have a man to interpret them. The authorized interpreters cannot; the butler, not because he wished to remember Joseph, but because he thought he could thereby ingratiate himself with his royal master, informs him that a Hebrew youth was in prison, who, having already excelled in this, might be able to interpret his dream. Joseph is brought into Pharaoh's presence, and he not only interprets the dream, but shows a political intelligence and capacity for office so striking, that he is

made prime minister, has all the arrangement of Pharaoh's cabinet, and all the appointments in the State, and determines the policy to be pursued on the great bread question in Egypt for many years to come, — a policy so successful, that he is the admiration and the love of all the people of Egypt, and becomes only second to the royal Pharaoh himself. What a collection of seeming accidents! and yet there was not a real accident in one of these events. It was no more possible that one of these little pegs could fall from its place, than that the sun could fall from his socket. All was meant for evil by man. "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." How beautiful! Man determines, God arranges. Man casts the lot into the lap, but God fixes all the issues and the effects of it.

We have thus seen, that to the days of Joseph himself, invariably as evil was meant, the issue and results were overruled to be beneficent and blessed. The fiftieth chapter of Genesis, so simple and so true, alone should give us confidence in the overruling presence of God. In circumstances which we cannot understand now, in occurrences that we cannot unravel,—in overwhelming strokes that almost sink us to the earth, we should patiently wait, trust, and hope; and be as certain of this as that suns shall rise and set, that if we are God's people, out of the worst that betides us by the wickedness of man, the best that a Father's love can bestow will evolve in His good providence.

But let us pass down to the New Testament, not for want of additional instances in the Old, but because the New has so many with which we are thoroughly acquainted. The first I would notice occurs in the life

of our Blessed Lord. His birthplace was not known by Herod, who wanted in his cruelty to slay him who should be born King of the Jews. He, therefore, called a synod of the Scribes and Pharisees, and they intimated the very time when he should be born, and his birthplace also. Thus, the cruelty of Herod, which was the origin of a synod meeting in a public place in Jerusalem, was overruled to be a public declaration to all mankind that, "Thou, Beth-lehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah v. 2.)

In reading the history of our Blessed Lord, we must see that it was the cavils, the objections, and the manœuvres of the Pharisees that brought out those most precious lessons that are engraven on the hearts of God's people, and appreciated by all who have either genius to admire the beautiful, or grace to love the sanctifying and the true. I do not say it would have been so, but humanly speaking, those grand truths that Christ uttered had not been spoken, if these malignant Pharisees had not come to him asking questions, and endeavouring to ensnare him.

The quarrels of the Apostles among themselves, which seem to us at first sight so sad, are yet overruled to establish this,—that none was constituted the head or chief of the rest. If Peter had been appointed Pope, how could the Apostles ever have quarrelled which should be the greatest in this economy? The very fact that they quarrelled "which should be greatest," is evidence that they did not know, and that Peter did not assume, that Christ had appointed one to be pre-

eminent. Their quarrels were evil; but out of the troubled waters of apostolic strifes God evolved lasting practical and important truths.

The same may be said of the errors of the early Church. The Galatians became in that day a sort of Tractarians—half-Judaists, half-Christians—collecting from the Rabbi's faded wardrobe, and Aaron's worn-out vestments, new clothing for the majestic truths of Christianity. The consequence of this was, that the Apostle wrote them an Epistle. The Epistle to the Corinthians was written because they were quarrelling amongst themselves. James, again, wrote his Epistle, because men were becoming antinomians, laying aside practical religion in deference to theoretical dogmas. It was, in short, a quarrel, or an error in each Church that originated an Epistle addressed to it. Thus, the tares sown by wicked ones were meant for evil; but God out of the evil has educes good, and given us in consequence those magnificent compendia of precious truth, which are the lights of the living and the consolations of the dying in every age of the Christian Church.

Refer to the crucifixion of our Blessed Lord itself. The Jews meant it entirely for evil: they had no good design whatever in it. And when the Apostles told them that Christ was crucified by the purpose of God, that our sins might be forgiven, they might have argued, "We crucified him; therefore we have some of the merit or the credit." But the Apostle Peter distinguishes very beautifully when he says "Jesus of Nazareth, being delivered by the determinate counsel," that is, decree, "and fore-knowledge of God," that is, everlasting purpose, "ye have taken, and by wicked hands

have crucified and slain." We see how man's sin is reprobated; and yet, when he committed that sin, he was only fulfilling a great and irreversible decree. We cannot explain how it is that God does use sometimes wicked men in order to accomplish beneficent ends, but the fact is so: yet, whatever the result may be, even when most splendid, it does not cover or atone for the wickedness of the means that are pursued in order to attain it. In other words, Jesuitism is not Christianity. No ultimate result can sanction the use of a vile or unholy weapon. If we contemplate holy ends, let us never use bad means; and never let us think that a good end can be attained by an unholy process. Nevertheless we see that the bad ends of the Jews were overruled to the crucifixion of Him who died for our sins.

After the day of Pentecost we will recollect the strong feeling of enmity that rose towards the Apostles, and how the first fruit of it was the martyrdom of Stephen, commonly called the proto-martyr, or the first martyr after the death of Christ. When Stephen preached so irresistibly that men gnashed their teeth, feeling the error and wickedness of what they would not give up, it is said, "They stoned him, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." They meant it for evil; and it seemed at first sight an irreparable catastrophe; but what was the result of it? We are told in Acts viii. that in consequence of that great persecution in which Stephen fell, "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria," and there they preached the Word. The fall of that great central tree was the scattering of the smaller ones that were around it. This persecution,

meant for evil, which issued in the death of a sainted martyr, made the Christians, who were clustering round their own country and anxious never to leave it, go forth to Italy, and all the distant regions of the earth, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I quote again another illustration of this the grand principle of God's providential dealings. The Apostle Paul is assailed by the Jews; he seeks shelter under the laws of his country; but the officers of justice there were so much the puppets of the infuriated mob, that he saw he could have no justice in that province. He appeals, as I have already shown, to Cæsar. One would suppose that the cause of Christianity would suffer because of this removal of a shining light. But it was not so. He goes by sea; they have a perilous voyage, and ultimately the ship is wrecked, the sailors reaching the shore, some upon fragments of the wreck, and others swimming; but none are lost. The Apostle, thus escaping, travels all the way to Rome. He is placed in the custody of Roman soldiers, and confined to a hired room, which was practically a prison, yet he was better treated than the Madiais. Some of the inhabitants came to him out of curiosity, and some out of reverence; and amongst the rest, some Jews, who had been at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, were anxious to hear what he had to say. He preaches to them; they accept Christianity, and carry it to others; and thus that Gospel, which was almost unknown in Rome, so spreads, that converts are furnished in thousands from the shops, and they even start up in Nero's household, and under the roof of the imperial palace itself; and so do they increase, that Pliny is obliged to write to his imperial master, in the year 107,

to say that it was of no use putting to death the Christians; for if so, they would have a large part of the population of the empire to exterminate. Thus did Christianity spread in consequence of this imprisonment of the Apostle. Mark the importance, as we have already done, of striking a blow at Rome. Rome was the capital, not only of Italy, but of the world. A blow struck there would spread its reverberations even to the Orkneys and the boundaries of the earth. Great roads started from Rome as a centre to almost every part of the earth. And a conversion to Christ made in the midst of Rome, and especially the conversion of some of its most illustrious ones in the imperial palace, would make an impression so deep and so powerful, that this imprisonment and persecution of Paul, meant only for evil, would thus be overruled to the conversion of millions upon millions of the unconverted and ignorant human family. We thus see in Paul's history another illustration as striking as that of Joseph himself.

The Romans, in their grasping ambition, anxious to be known only as the *domini rerum*, that is, the lords of the earth, determined to invade Britain,—not to repel a foe that oppressed it, but to add another province to their already overgrown and unmanageable empire. They landed at the Straits of Dover, marched through Kent to the capital itself, spread northward till they reached York and Carlisle, and their arms and civilization made a very deep impression upon the semi-savage people who were our forefathers. When the imperial officers returned to Rome, they took Caractacus and others as specimens of the British people. Caractacus was a heathen: he and his family

were brought to hear the preaching, it is understood, of the Apostle Paul—certainly, the preaching of some of his disciples. He was converted to the Gospel, and after seven years he comes back to Britain, and kindles a flame which has never been quenched since, and which, by God's grace, shall not be quenched, till the light of Britain melts into the brightness and the glory of the Millennial morn. We had, then, this country invaded only for evil; we had Caractacus carried to Rome, merely as a wild beast might be taken in a cage, as a specimen of the British people; and, lo! man's wickedness is overruled by God's providence to kindle that light in which you and I, dear reader, now live, and rejoice to live as the greatest glory of our country.

After the Gospel had been spread by such means as we have mentioned, a night of a thousand years fell upon Europe. I must say that it is the most perplexing section of the history of our human race. I cannot understand how, after so great a light started from the Cross, irradiating by its splendour them that were in darkness, kindling lamps in every land, and making proselytes in every isle of the sea,—God suffered the whole of Europe to fall into such a state as that usually known by the name of the dark ages. It is a mystery. It is yet a more awful thing, that they who were the appointed teachers of the Church became its corrupters, and that that grand religion which speaks only love, mercy, and peace, was made in the hands of ambitious priests to seal the very fountains of light, and to promote ends and objects the very opposite of what it was meant originally to secure. The defenders of that state (for even darkness has its defenders in this strange world of ours; and, truly, nothing is so bad that some

erratic genius will not defend it) say that there were then monasteries, which were retreats of learning. But what means that word "retreat," if it does not imply that learning was persecuted? And by whom was learning persecuted? By the dominant ecclesiastical hierarchy of that day, who were the first to extinguish the truth everywhere, and to hunt learning almost from off the face of the earth. It is monstrously absurd to quote the few glimmering lights, like lamps in sepulchres, that they left behind them, to prove that they were patrons of learning and science. What God's great design in this darkness was, we know not. All we know is, that that night passed away. A poor miner's son starts upon the stage, and he is made the instrument of scattering the darkness of Europe. Melanchthon, who came from the workshop, but by genius and by study was a magnificent scholar, writes the grand criticisms that Luther unfolds in his own terse Saxon eloquence. Nothing could have been more seasonable, nothing more evidently the appointment of God, than that there should be a Melanchthon so reserved and so modest, that he would not dare to preach for the world,—that he would not argue with a priest if it were to save his life, but who struck out in his study the grand lights that Luther, who was a stranger to such delicacy altogether, took in his hands to unveil the darkness of that system that was not Christ's Church, but the great predicted apostasy itself. And if we carefully read the history of Luther, we shall find that almost the whole result of his doings was contingent upon many little apparent accidents. He was one day singing for bread in the streets, when he was invited into their house by Conrad Cotta and his

wife. He was then starving for want of food, and the kindness that was thus showed him was the means of giving Martin Luther heart again to begin that grand mission which God had assigned him. Never underestimate an act of kindness. Never lose an opportunity of saying a good word, if you cannot do, for want of means, a good act. You cannot tell how far, or how long, it will influence future ages.

When the glorious reformation first broke out, Martin Luther meant only to attack an abuse, namely, Tetzels most avaricious system of the sale of indulgences for raising money for building St. Peter's: he did not mean to leave the Church of Rome. It was only when he went to head-quarters, and saw that all was vile and black there, that he discovered that it was the mystery of iniquity, and not the church of Christ. He meant only to attack the sale of indulgences; but it was overruled to the destruction of the whole.

And then this great land of ours instantly became enlightened. Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer, in the south, and Knox, Melville, and others, in the north, held communion with the German reformers and the most eminent saints of Germany, and imported into England, not Christianity for the first time, not a new, but the old religion,—for Protestantism is not a new religion, but the old religion without the additions that had encrusted it in the lapse of a thousand years. At that time our country took its first step in the right direction. You may depend upon it, our Revolution in 1688, and all our national privileges, had their spring in an open Bible. We know not how much we owe, as a nation, to that book the Bible. And never, I believe, will our country sink, till she quench this

light. As long as she retains this blessed book, her charter, the source of her light, the fountain of her information, the spring of her hopes, so long she will find strong arms and heroic hearts to defend her; and so long God, even our own God, will bless us.

But to come to more recent events; after our country had long enjoyed all the blessings purchased by precious blood, and secured and vindicated by the Reformation, we became the envy of surrounding nations. We became the admiration of the good, and the envy of the bad. A great, ambitious, but gifted Corsican came forth to destroy that great land which other nations might envy, but that no nation could equal. He brought all the chivalry, strength, and resources of a prodigious empire, to hurl them as one vast avalanche upon this citadel of freedom, this retreat of light, this sanctuary of faith. He meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. He who permitted the Corsican to assail us, raised up the illustrious hero, lately borne to his grave, who met him foot to foot in his chosen fields, in his strongest intrenchments, in his most secure fortresses; and not only vindicated our country from his assaults, but placed it in an orbit of magnificence, grandeur, and hope, unprecedented in its best and palmiest days. God permitted the evil to assail us, but God overruled it for good.

After we had been established, and, in the beautiful language of the Scriptures, "the land had rest for forty years," then it was thought, that as the bayonet and the tyrant could make no impression upon us, the breviary and the priest might successfully subvert a land by fraud that the soldier could not destroy by

force. And accordingly, in 1850, the great experiment was made, only less honestly than by Napoleon, of extinguishing our freedom and our nationality. But what was the result of that invasion, as it has been justly called, or that aggression? I believe it is felt at Rome to be the unhappiest attempt the Pope has yet made; and if infallibility could humble itself to acknowledge its fallibility, it would be revoked, and that right speedily. Pio Nono learned that a few had become admirers of his principles, and had transferred themselves to his jurisdiction. He thought that the crotchets of a handful were the convictions of a nation. He dreamed that the pulse that throbs at a well-known bishop's wrist was the beat of old England's heart. But he has learned by this time his mistake; for what has been the result of this aggression? It has taught us that ultramontaniam is essential tyranny; that what we used to say over and over again, that persecution was a principle inseparable from the Romish system, Pio Nono has just come forward to vindicate and establish. The Canon Law is introduced, and power only is wanted to carry out its sanguinary principles. Though it was meant for evil, it has issued in good. All true Christians saw that if they were separated, they would be broken in pieces. They, therefore, consolidated, and forgetting their minor differences in their common creed, they felt a sense of brotherhood such as they had never felt before.

As if God would show us in the most remarkable manner, that though Pio Nono meant it for evil, God could overrule it for good, — at that very time, or a little before, an excellent clergyman went over to Ireland, and was struck with the conviction that its

people were ripe for listening to the truth. The experiment was purely and earnestly made, and the majestic fruits are now being reaped. I have the strongest conviction that Ireland will be wholly Protestant in the course of a very few years. After all, this is the true way to deal with that country, All has been empiricism before ; we are now beginning in the right way,—carrying the breviary in the left hand and the Bible in the right, and thus letting the light of the one fall upon the darkness of the other ; and that fine people are beginning to see that the Bible is God's book, that the breviary is the priests', and that the two cannot be recognised as true. The results are becoming so rapid and magnificent, that one should almost have services specially for praising and thanking God that what was meant for evil, in the invasion of Pio Nono, has been overruled for so much good. In instances I need not name, Roman Catholics have been brought to feel, to think, and to inquire, and to retrace their steps ; and my belief is, that those clergymen who have been seduced into the Church of Rome, are there in God's good providence to learn the secrets of the prison-house, and by-and-by come out, and protest in more emphatic eloquence against that dread and unscriptural system. I believe the Pope's day is nearly done ; his last efforts are spasmodic ; he is in the death struggle. I can see the dawn of a bright and joyous morn. Take heart ; be steadfast, immovable. All that man means for evil, will, under our gracious God, burst into benedictions and sunshine upon our beloved land.

I may mention, as another illustration, the attacks of scepticism in the last century. We all know that in

the close of the 18th century, scepticism was extremely popular. It had become very fashionable to dispute the inspiration of Scripture. But every point that the sceptic assailed, the Christian scholar was led thoroughly to investigate, (I speak not rashly, but advisedly, and from carefully looking into it,) and the very points selected by the sceptic, as the evidence that the Bible was not God's book, are most of them now vindicated as the strongest corroborative proofs that this book is the inspiration of the Almighty: and so truly that now no educated man is a sceptic. He may be an ungodly man, and his heart may be sceptical; but no man who is a scholar will dare to support scepticism. It has been swept away; its strongest points have been demonstrated to be weak ones; and the issue of what the sceptic meant for evil has been the vindication of this book, with a splendour, a force, a light, unparalleled in the best days of the Christian Church.

Let me notice another instance, in the various quarrels and disputes of Christians. Many persons say, What a sad disproof of the unity of the Church is the fact that Christians are divided into so many denominations! and we are aware that the great plan of the Church of Rome is to quote her unity, and to allege our disunion. Well, I admit that there is disunion amongst the Protestants: but I would ask the hostile Church, Have you always had unity? She answers, We are a united Church. Then, how did you let the Greek Church dissent from you in the 7th century? and the Protestants in the 16th century? She answers, They, truly, separated from us, but we ever rebuke schism as it occurs. Then you mean to say, that the

rebuke of schism is a proof of unity. I might just as well say, There are no thieves in London, because we bid the police take them. The wrong has taken place, and the rebuke is not its annihilation, nor a remedy for it. To say that rebuke of division is unity, is just the same as to assert that we have perfect purity in a metropolitan population, because we punish crime. But the truth is, these Protestant divisions, which were meant for evil, God has overruled for good. We are divided into sects, just as the Church of Rome is. She has her orders, we have our denominations. But see how our divisions are overruled. If the Baptists were to tamper with a text of the Bible, the Pædobaptist would immediately expose it. Again, if the Congregationalist were to alter a text, to prove their theory of Church polity, the Episcopalians would show that his reading was wrong. So that the whole divisions of Christendom are made the guardians of the purity of the sacred volume; and thus, what seems evil is really turned into good.

Nothing can be more abhorrent to the Word of God than slavery. I can see no foundation there for man having disposable property in man: at the same time I think it will not be put an end to till the world close. We ought as individuals to discourage it; and wherever we can say a word in defence of the slave, and against the principle and relation, not the person, of the slaveholder, we should say it heartily and often. But the curse was pronounced upon Ham,—“A bondsman of bondsmen shall he be.” The descendants of Ham are the Africans, and they are slaves to this day; and all the efforts that you have made by Free Trade, and Protection, and pecuniary sacrifice, have issued in this,

that there are more slaves at this moment than there have been at any past period of the world. Not that God's prediction warrants us to fulfil it. Our duty is,—“Love thy neighbour,” black or white. But what I would point out is this,—that slavery, which was meant for evil, and is, no doubt, inherently evil, begins to evolve the most striking good. In the southern States of America, I have learned that Christian ministers and readers are visiting the slave population, and enlightening them in the knowledge of the Gospel to a very great and rapid extent. Now mark the ultimate use of this. It has been found that no white man can ever live long or work successfully as a missionary in Africa. Every European settlement in that country has more or less failed. I have no doubt the attempt will still be made to employ European labourers; but the only present hope of Christianizing Africa is now generally admitted to be through Christian natives. Well, such natives are going back from the southern States of America to Liberia, and other parts of Africa, and preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. So that this slavery, which man meant for evil, may yet be overruled in the most signal manner for good.

The series of illustrations already touched on is inexhaustible. It is now time to learn one or two lessons. First, all this gives no warrant to do evil that good may come. That is clearly and emphatically forbidden in the Word of God.

Secondly, we have learned from all this that God reigns and rules. O beautiful thought! this is not an orphan world—a family without a Father. Those ragged children in our schools are fatherless on earth, but they have a loving Father in the skies. The earth

rolls beneath his paternal touch: all things move under the inspection of his paternal eye. All the currents of public life, all the eddies of private life, are under the direction, or overruled by the wisdom of our Father, to the accomplishment of his own purposes. Such a thought in man's heart ennobles him. I would rather have this thought in my heart than a crown around my brow—the blessed thought that we are not leaves tossed by the winds, that we are not swimming in a vast and surging chaos, without beginning, government, or end; but that each in his place is watched and waited on, and all overruled or guided to the accomplishment of God's grand and beneficent purposes.

We learn, too, the wonderful beneficence of God. Joseph says, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good:" and in the 45th chapter he tells them that it was to find bread for them that he was sold to the Egyptians. In other words God's providence thus shielded Joseph,—God's wisdom thus overruled all,—not for his own comfort, nor for his own elevation, nor for Egypt's greatness, but that the very eleven brothers, who so cruelly treated him, might get bread; and, through the omnipotence of such loving-kindness, be brought back to God, to duty, and to truth. This may be our position. I often get letters from young men, who write, "I cannot remain in that house of business, because the employer is so severe." Another says, "Do you think it right that I should remain where my fellow-labourer is of such a stamp?" We are all too selfish. We all think we are here for ourselves; but each is in his place for the person who is nearest to him. Where God has placed us, he has a mission for us; and our duty is to remain and work,

and watch, and pray, and wait where the Great Captain has placed us. Our position may be a very trying one; the Great Captain of the faith has placed us in the van: it is the post of honour, but it is the place of trial. Seek strength from the Providence that placed you there, and rejoice in the conviction that, as sure as you are there, so sure others about you are to be the fruits of your steadfastness, your faithfulness, your prayers, and pure discharge of duty in the sight of God.

We are not the best judges of what befalls us. We are not to argue, I am visited with this illness, therefore God is angry with me. This is heathen logic. Our argument must be this: God is my Father—I have accepted him as such in Christ; therefore whatever befalls me is meant to be a blessing to me his child. Not only begin your prayer with “Our Father,” but your creed also. The Apostles’ Creed ought not to be, “The Father,” but “Our Father.” Always rejoice to know that “all things work together for good to them that love God,—to them who are the called according to his purpose;” and that “though no tribulation for the present seemeth joyous, but rather grievous, yet it worketh out the peaceable fruits of righteousness.” It is here said, “all things,” not “some things;” and not “all things exist,” but “all things work”—activity; and not only “work,” but “work together,”—harmony; and not only “work together,” but they “work together for good,” that is, beneficently, “to them that love God.”

We shall see the finger of God by careful and patient inspection in many a texture or arrangement where we used to see tumbling accidents, and learn to

praise where in other times we did not attempt to pray. Very calmly, too, we can repose in the hands of God the adjustment and issue of all sublunary things; and while we do the duty that devolves on us, we can rest in the sure and certain conviction that the finger of God will accomplish in beauty and in glory what man will not, or dare not, or cannot attempt.

T H E E N D .

Christ our Passover.

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Christ our Passover.

I.

Israel in Egypt.

“For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”—1 Cor. v. 7.

THE passover, the ceremonial of which is laid down in Exodus xii., was clearly a typical institution; it was designed to foreshadow a glorious Sacrifice, that should be finished in the fulness of the times. The shadow that appeared in the land of Egypt is now lost in the splendor of that perfect consummation, finished in the land of Palestine, resting upon which for the pardon of all transgressions that are past, life becomes to us no more a painful fast, but a joyous and blessed festival. The institutions of Levi are only explicable in the light of the New Testament. Were there no New Testament, our inference would be that the God who gave that holy, spiritual Law on Mount Sinai, never could have descended to institute the burdensome

code of ceremonies scattered throughout the pages of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy; but the moment the light of the New Testament falls upon the Old, it reveals the passover as a page of ancient Christianity. The Jew learned through the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb that was slain in the midst of Egypt, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and was taught to anticipate therein that perfect Sacrifice that was to be made in the fulness of the times.

There were two distinct classes at the time that this ceremonial was instituted by God. There were first those who had inward character. The Israelites believed in God, and were obedient to his Law. There were those, in the second place, who had outward circumstance, arrayed in all the pomp, and possessed of all the riches of Egypt. The Hebrews were Christians, but slaves; the Egyptians were idolaters, but princes and rulers; the one had character, the other circumstance. The outer circumstance, which is the gift of Providence, must be left upon the margin of the grave. The inner character, which is the inspiration of the Almighty, immortal and indestructible, shall emerge from the wreck of the outward tenement, and praise God with the saints that are about the throne. Let us, like Moses, prefer inner character to outer circumstance; let us prefer Christianity, or goodness, to circumstance, or greatness.

God takes notice of those distinctions to which I have alluded. He saw those who were his own, and singled them out for exemption from the destroying stroke; and he saw and took cognisance of those who were not his own, and left them to the issues of their

own great transgressions. God sees the character that is within, and passes by the circumstances, however splendid, that are without.

Those distinctions that were practically brought out between the Israelites and the Egyptians in the land of Egypt, will be brought out in permanent and impressive relief at the judgment day. At that day a distinction will be made, and only two classes will be recognised, the blessed of the Father, who have been made by grace what grace alone can make them; and the cursed of themselves, who have made themselves what human nature left to itself has the awful power to make itself. Our great anxiety, in the prospect of a judgment day, should be not what we have, but what we are; not what providence has given us, but what grace has made us; not what we seem to be, but what we are when seen by the Searcher of all hearts.

It was not the inner distinction of the Israelite that constituted the ground of his exemption, when the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt. Both the Israelite and the Egyptian, however distinguished in the sight of men, were, as to merit, on the same dead level. The Israelite no more deserved heaven by what he had done than the Egyptian did. The moral character of the one was vastly above the level of the moral character of the other: but it was not the Israelite's inner piety that spared him from the visitation of the angel; and it was not, perhaps, the Egyptian's moral depravity that brought down the judgment of that consuming visitation. The whole reason of the exemption of the Israelite lay in the blood sprinkled on the lintel; and the whole ground of the destruction of the children of Egypt lay in the

fact, that they refused to sprinkle that blood upon the lintel. The lamb was offered to all who would have it; the blood might have been sprinkled upon any doorpost by any one who had faith in its efficacy, and wherever the angel saw that blood he reverently retired. It is so in our great passover. Our safety from the destroying angel, whatever he may be, is not our loyalty, however beautiful; our morality, however pure; our patriotism, however sincere; our conduct, however exemplary. I am not asserting that these things are worthless, or have no place; I am only showing that they do not belong to the place of our justification in the sight of God. I do not say that men are saved without holiness, but I do not assert that men are not saved by or on the ground of their holiness. If Christ be our passover, it is not what we are in ourselves, but the fact that his atoning blood has been sprinkled on the lintels of the heart, that will constitute our great exemption in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. No inner excellency that we have is our merit; no sacramental rite or ecclesiastical ceremony is the ground of our exemption; there is saving and atoning efficacy only in one element, the blood that was shed on the cross for the salvation of the guilty. It is not a carnal, but a spiritual element. It is not touched by sense, but taken by faith. It is not something that we see, but something that we lean on. It is not an earthly element that the human senses may take cognisance of, but a divine fact, the efficacy of which extends through all ages. Here, then, is the ground of our pardon, or our exemption in the sight of God, namely, the Atonement, to vary the phraseology, or the death, or expiatory Sacrifice of the Son of God.

Holy character will be wherever there is a Christian trust; but no holiness that can emulate within, no character that the Spirit inspires in the human heart, constitutes the ground of acceptance and acquittal in the sight of God, without which we can never pass the ordeal of a judgment morn, or be admitted with the saints of God into glory everlasting. In this one truth, that Christ is the antitype of the ancient pass-over, we have evidence that Christ's death was not, as rationalists assert, a mere example, but that it is, as the Christian believes, an atoning, expiatory, and meritorious Sacrifice. It never could be said that the passover lamb was slain as an example, where there was no example. It never can be said that Jesus died as an example, because such is not typified here or elsewhere. He lived as an example; he died an expiation. His death was not that of a martyr, but a victim. And hence, the Christianity we preach is not a merely directive system, but a remedial one. Seneca made the very just and natural remark, "God is just; therefore he will punish; and therefore he will never pardon." If any should say, Why should we not suppose that God would pardon? I ask, To what degree of guilt will God's pardon go down? Do you mean that God's pardon will reach to all? Then the distinctions between vice and virtue are destroyed. Do you mean that God will punish all? Then there will not be one remnant of humanity to praise him. How high will God's justice rise in punishing, and to what depth will God's mercy descend in pardoning? You cannot answer. We cannot explain the possibility or the probability of forgiveness, until we open the New Testament, and find the solution of the inexplicable

mystery in the Cross of Christ. There we can see, God is just, and he will punish; but we can see written, clear as a sunbeam, God is merciful, and he will pardon. We can see in the page of the New Testament what Seneca could not see in the most joyous page of nature, mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other. If, then, the ancient passover was sacrificial, Christ our passover, the antitype, must be a Sacrifice also; and on the supposition that the Apostles understood the language that they used, we must infer that they meant to teach that Christ died a Sacrifice, for they have used all the ancient language of the sacrifices of Levi, and have applied that phraseology inseparable from the idea of atonement or sacrifice, to the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The very wants of nature indicate the necessity of a sacrifice: I want not simply to see what is perfectly pure and holy, but to see how I, who have violated every law in thought, word, or deed, can be forgiven. I want not simply that preaching or reading which would suit the angels that are in glory, but that prescription that will meet the dying and the diseased that are in an hospital; and if the Gospel of Christ be not a prescription for the sick, it is of no use to me. I do not want a clearer edition of Sinai; I can only find a shelter and a home under the shadow of Calvary. I do not need to know better what is right, but I need pardon for the wrong, and grace to enable me in the future to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God.

We see in Christ our passover an atonement for us. He, the innocent One, bore the load and pressure of

my guilt; He, the holy One, was clad in my unholy robes; He took my cup, and drank it; He met my curse, and exhausted it; and I am free from the curse of a broken law, because He bore it; and I am entitled to all the blessings of a kept law, because He magnified it, and made it honorable for me.

I can conceive that when some Hebrew mother in the midst of her home heard the rush of the angel's wing, and the wild wail that arose from innumerable homes that clustered around her own, her heart trembled, and as she looked upon the babe upon her knee, that she feared that the next breath of the destroyer might be upon its brow; but while she thus feared, the believing mother said to the fearing mother, "Behold, the blood is on the lintel, and the angel therefore may not enter." I can conceive that as the Jewish group in many a home were told what was taking place around them, they had fainting hearts and faltering feelings, and that their confidence even in the efficacy of the blood that was sprinkled on the lintel many a time faltered and failed in that long and weary night. But because the inhabitant within the house doubted, suspected, feared, fainted, he had the discomfort, but his safety was not the less on that account. His safety was not the strength of his peace, but the blood that was on the lintel. The security of the firstborn was not contingent upon the permanence of his quiet, but upon the precious blood that was sprinkled on the doorpost. And this explains to us a very important truth. We too often have our doubts, perplexities, and fears; many a freezing cloud casts its shadow upon the heart; many a time we are tempted to doubt, to fear, and to suspect, and to think of God as a tyrant, instead of

recollecting that he is a Father. Many a time we are provoked to seek a retreat in the world's follies, in order to escape the heart's misgivings; but because we so feel, our safety is not impelled by our fears, though our comfort may be. Our salvation is not contingent upon the strength of our faith, but upon the perfection of the Atonement on which that faith leans. The cloud that comes between us and the noonday sun comes not from the sun; it is an exhalation from the earth; it will pass away, and his beams will shine forth with augmented, not diminished, splendor.

It is important to learn that as it was to no protecting purpose that the lamb was slain, unless the Israelite dipped the hyssop in the blood, and sprinkled that blood upon the door-posts and lintels of his home, so it is of no saving efficacy to us that Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us, unless each man personally for himself trust, and unfold to God, when no ear can hear but the Eternal One, his trust, confidence, and reliance upon that finished Sacrifice, that atoning blood, that all-sufficient expiation for the sins of all that believe. The blood is shed for all, it is available to all; it is effective only for those that personally make use of it. There is sufficiency in Christ's blood for all; there is efficiency in it only for those that by faith close with the offers of the Gospel, trust in the provision that is made, and seek heaven for no other reason than this, that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Have we ever gone to God in secrecy and silence, and thought, not said, because the heart can think what the lips never can say, "O Lord, I have no merit, no excellence, but I believe that Christ died for me, and that there is in his blood forgiveness for me: O Lord, let

that blood cleanse me ; let that passover be my shelter. Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief?" Have we done so ? If so, it is as certain that we are pardoned, and are true believers, as that there is a God in heaven, or an eternity before us. Salvation is—not waiting till we feel something—not pausing till we have purchased something—not suffering till we have expiated something ; but—Look and live, believe and be happy.

But I have said that all this must be done as a personal act. What is the use of the sunshine, if I do not open my eyes to see it ? What is the value of the sweetest music, if my ear is stopped, and cannot hear it ? It will only be a weightier curse that Christ died, if I, with the tidings of that fact ringing in my hearing, refuse so great a salvation, secured at so great and unspeakable a price. We are saved, not as members of an ecclesiastical corporation, not as Churchmen, not as Dissenters, but as lost sinners.

Our personal trust in Christ our passover sacrificed for us will modify all that befalls us in this present dispensation. So long as I have not this trust I am under the wrath of God : every pain that comes upon me is penal ; every affliction that touches me is punishment : but when I have seen through this truth, that God is my Father, what was punishment becomes chastisement, what was penal becomes paternal, and those things that appear to the world frightful visitations, are felt by us to be only disguised mercies : and when afflictions begin to fall upon us, like the snow-flakes of autumn, indicating the approaching winter of life, we feel that we have a genial warmth within, and a bright summer beyond ; and our hearts are neither troubled

nor dismayed;—we believe in God, we believe also in Jesus.

Not only is there the destroying angel of Rahab, but also the great archangel fallen, who assumes in the present day many a garb,—the destroying, though the disguised angel still. He will come to you, and he will try to tempt you to deny the existence of a God; he will throw into your hearts doubts about the immortality of the soul, and fears and surmisings that all may be but a painted vision, Christianity a beautiful dream, the appeals and statements of the preacher a fable, and nothing more. Fall back upon the great truth, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;” fall, back, not upon the inferences of human reason, but upon the announcement of everlasting truth, and say, “Get thee behind me, Satan; thus it is written, Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

The destroying angel will come to you in the shape of an austere moralist from Sinai; he will tell you of its holiness, its purity, and its demands; he will sting memory with the recollections of past doings; he will array before you all your transgressions, and all the terrors of the judgment, and he will try to plunge you into the very depths of despair. Remember what Luther called to mind when similarly tried,—the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and Sinai will be transformed into Calvary—a condemning law into an acquitting Gospel; and you will feel that because Christ your passover has been sacrificed for you, there is to you no condemnation.

The destroying angel will come to you in a garb of beauty, and he will tell you that the way to heaven is by penances, and pilgrimages, and holy church. This,

though an angel of light, is the destroying angel still. Remember the passover Lamb, and that "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him, and that he is the way, the truth, and the life."

Or Satan will come to you in the garb of a theologian, representing God as a very awful being. Hear the voice of the blood upon the lintel: God so loved me, that he gave his only Son to die for me.

The angel of death will come to you, either in sickness, or after seventy; but when death appears to you darkest, remember it is because the sunshine is nearest. That expression, "the shadow of death," is a proof that he is in sunshine, for unless there is sunshine there is no shadow. And what sunshine? That of the Sun of righteousness. And, therefore, when death seems to you blackest, and the shadow projected deepest and longest, it is only the twilight of time melting into the twilight of the everlasting morn; and you can say, because that blood has been shed for you, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" He is not your foe, but your friend; he comes to translate you from the cold, damp crypt into the sunlit and beautiful cathedral; he comes to lift you from the tents of earth to the tabernacles of glory. This precious blood tells you that all is safe without, and that all is bright before. Christ our passover shines on the countenance of death, lifts the pall, rends the shroud, and makes marble and granite monuments point only to the skies; and tells us in dumb but eloquent speech, that weeping willows, and broken columns, and inverted torches, and Egyptian sarcophagi, were all appropriate enough in heathendom, but

are not proper where sleeps the dead dust of those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and who lie so still because they listen so profoundly for the first peal of that resurrection trumpet that brings the dead to life, and the pilgrim of a day to a house not made with hands.

Blessed truth, then, that this blood is on us! Blessed revelation, that we have this sacrifice to trust in! blessed is that man whose only confidence is here, and who, because of that confidence, "in all time of his wealth, in all time of his tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment," has no fear; because his Judge was his Passover, and the King of Glory was crucified for him.

II.

The Atoning Death.

THE 12th chapter of the Book of Exodus gives a minute account of the institution of the Passover. The origin of the distinction between the Israelite who was saved from the destroying angel, and the Egyptian who was smitten down, was owing, not to the distinctive merits of the men, but to the distinguishing grace of God. The safety of the first-born of Israel, we have seen, was not owing to anything he was, but wholly and solely owing to the significant blood that was sprinkled upon the door-post and the lintel. When the angel of destruction passed, he did not ask what was within; he only looked if he could see the sacred mark without. I said, we are justified and pardoned, not by something that we are, though that we must be, but by something that is upon us; for the righteousness of Christ is unto all and upon all that believe. There is no difference. I showed, secondly, that the poor Israelitish mother, when she heard the noise of the angel's wing, or the wild wail that arose from a neighbour's house, as that neighbour gazed upon the pale face of her first-born struck dead, trembled, and feared lest her child might be next struck down, and clasped it the more fondly to her bosom; but her

trembling, anxiety, and fear, did not in the least imperil her babe. There was the blood upon the lintel, and that was enough. So Christians now may have doubts, fears, suspicions, which are sins; but these, while they injure their peace, do not touch their safety. Our safety rests, not upon the strength of our confidence within, but the efficacy of the shed blood of the Lamb slain, that is without.

I now proceed to state by comparison of texts what I think most important to those who do not agree with me, and no less confirmatory to those who do; the evidence that the death of Christ was literally and strictly an atonement, propitiation, and sacrifice, for the sins of all that believe. There are different opinions, some, I submit, fatally wrong; and many Christians even have loose opinions upon the subject. It seems, therefore, of paramount importance that we should gather, not from catechisms and creeds, not from popular impression, but by a careful comparison of God's own Holy Word, as we easily can, this most demonstrable conclusion, that Jesus died not a martyr, not an example, not a teacher *merely* (while he was all these,) but as the grand, not the subsidiary end of his death, an atonement and a sacrifice for sin.

Let us weigh well the evidence of this. Christ is said in the first place to have "died for us." "In threescore and two weeks," says Daniel, "the Messiah shall be cut off," or die, "but *not for* himself," that is, for others. Jesus declares, "I lay down my life *for* the sheep." Again, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up *for* us all." Again, "One died *for* all." Now what is meant by these expressions? To die for a person is not once used in the whole word

of God in the sense of dying as an example, or for any one's improvement, or in order to make others wiser. What then is meant by the expression? David explains it when he says, "Would to God I had died for thee, my son Absalom." Does not this mean, "Would that thy life had been spared, and that mine had been given, or I had died in thy stead?" It is said, "The father shall not die for his children, but every man shall die for his own sins." Does not this mean, that the father shall not suffer death in order that the children may live; but that he shall die for his own sins, or suffer their consequence? When the high priest Caiaphas said, "It is expedient that one should die for the people," this surely did not, and could not mean, as an encouragement, or an example, or a precedent, but undoubtedly in their stead, or for their life and safety. And what does the Apostle mean when he says, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die?" (Rom. v. 7.) Does not that mean, in the stead of a good man, in the room of a righteous man? The inference, therefore, is irresistible from all the laws and usages of language, that when Jesus is said to have died for sinners, it means that he died in their stead, that they might not die, but enjoy life everlasting.

I now turn to another class of phrases. Jesus is said to die for our sins. For instance, "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." Again, "He gave himself for our sins." Again, "Christ has suffered for sin." What do these expressions mean? I quote as the solution the following passage in Jer. xxxi. 30, "Every one shall die for his own iniquity;" which certainly means that he shall

suffer the consequences of his iniquity. Again, "The son shall not die for the iniquity of the father;" that is, the son shall not be punished because of the father's sins. Again, "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Does not that mean, "Shall I give my first-born, that I may escape the consequences of my sin?" The expression, that Christ died for our sins, does not mean that he suffered to reform or enlighten us, but that he suffered the penalty deserved by our sins, that we might not suffer it. These two phrases, or modes of speech, seem clearly and unequivocally to teach the doctrine of an Atonement, propitiation, or sacrifice.

Another form of expression is used, Christ died a sin-offering: "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Again, "This man, after he had made one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God." What is the meaning of these words? We find the explanation in Lev. v. 15, 16, "that if a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance in the holy things of the Lord; the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him." We, in like manner, plead Christ, our sin-offering before God, and therefore we shall not be punished as the law demands. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission for sin," that is, no removal of the punishment of sin. "Christ our passover," that is, our offering, "is sacrificed for us." All these expressions clearly mean, that just as the death of a lamb secured the Israelitish offerer from the consequences, ecclesiastical and civil, of the sin he had committed, so Christ our passover, our trespass-offering, is the ground and cause why we are delivered from the punishment incurred by our violation of the law of a holy God.

Christ's death is called an Atonement. The proofs are as follows:—"We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 11. Again, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation," or atonement, "for iniquity." Dan. iv. 24. Again, Christ is said to be the "propitiation" for our sins. Now the Hebrew word, which is translated "atonement," is first used in its literal sense in reference to the ark of Noah, "to cover over with pitch," or "to enclose with pitch," but in its secondary and moral sense, it means atonement. This Hebrew word "caphar" occurs 154 times in the Old Testament Scriptures. In 13 instances it means "to cover over." God is said to "cover" transgression; and hence the word comes to mean atonement.

In 12 instances the word is used to denote "to forgive," and in 129 instances it means "atonement," or "propitiation."

The Greek words *ἱλασμός*, which means "propitiation," and *ἱλαστήριον*, which means "the place of propitiation or atonement," are applied to Christ's death. The origin of the word "atonement" in our language is to make two at one, or the at-one-ment—bringing two who were separate from each other into oneness, or communion. In Lev. xvii. 11, it is said, "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The blood is always regarded in Scripture as the seat of life. Now that plainly means that the destruction of one life, or the shedding of the blood of

one life, is the procuring reason why another life should be saved. We have the blood or life given, that the blood or life may be saved. In that instance it clearly denotes one life sacrificed that another life may be spared. There is one great exception in the Levitical law, that no atonement shall be made for the life of a murderer. But what does this mean? Why, that on no ground whatever shall he escape punishment. Then "atonement" means "an escape from punishment." Christ died an atonement for us, that is, he died that we might escape the punishment that we have merited, and might be restored to the blessings that we have justly forfeited.

The next phrase applied to Christ's death is "reconciling." Christ is said to reconcile us to God. This phrase implies previous alienation. Whether the combination at-one-ment be the correct origin of the word "atonement" I do not stop to discuss—it has been disputed; but there can be no dispute that "reconciliation" implies previous alienation. It is said, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10. Christ is said to have reconciled Jew and Gentile "unto God in one body by the cross." Eph. ii. 16. "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Now this plainly means forgiving, or not imputing sins. Let me give the proofs of it. In Lev. vi. 30, it is said, "No sin-offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten; it shall be burnt in the fire." What is meant

by this? Surely, that the sins of the officiating person might be forgiven. It is said, "Wherewithal shall David reconcile himself to his master?" That does not mean, "How shall David be conciliated to Saul?" Saul was the offended party; and when David says, "Wherewithal shall I reconcile myself to my master?" it plainly implies, "How shall Saul be induced to pardon?" In Matt. v. 23, we find these words, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother." But that does not mean that you are to lay aside something that you have, as most people interpret it; but it means, that the brother who has ought against you shall on some ground be induced or brought to forgive you. Hear the words again: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest,"—not that thou hast ought against thy brother, but—"that thy brother hath ought against thee;" then what are you to do? Go and be reconciled to thy brother. You have no quarrel with your brother, but he with you. Then, it means, "Go and see whether anything can be done or said that will induce your brother to forgive you." Therefore, that text means that you ought to have no malice towards a brother; but that, if a brother has a spite against you, you are to do your utmost to induce your brother to forget that spite. If you fail, you have done your duty; if you succeed, you have reconciled your brother. It means always something done to the offended party. But we never can say that by Christ's death God was induced to love them whom he previously hated. The expression must therefore denote

the forgiving of sin. God in Christ reconciling the world, is God in or through Christ pardoning those sins which he could not otherwise pardon; being just while he yet justifies, holy while he yet pardons.

Let me quote another expression applied to Christ's death. Christ is said to bear our sins — "Who his own self bare our sins." "Christ was once offered, to bear the sins of many;" and again, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." What is meant by this? The following are parallel passages, — "Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities." Lam. v. 7. That means, that we are bearing the consequences of their iniquities. When, therefore, it is said that Christ bare our iniquities, it means that he bare the consequences of our sins. Again, it is said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." This means, he shall not be visited with punishment for the sins of the father. So Christ bare our sins, not as an example or a teacher, but as one that took on himself the penalty that was due to us; and because he exhausted it, we, for whose sake it was endured, go free.

Having seen these texts, which, I think, clearly and irresistibly prove that Christ died, not as an example or a teacher, but as an atonement for our sins,—let us look at the reasons of those men who hold rationalistic or Socinian views; let us ascertain what it is that satisfies them as the ground and reason of Christ's death. The first they suggest is, that Christ died to prove his perfect sincerity. I am not speaking of subsidiary ends. He did, no doubt, die an example, a teacher, and to prove his sincerity; but these were subsidiary ends: what

was the main end? It is alleged, merely to prove his sincerity. This is nowhere asserted in the Scriptures; and this alone is sufficient to dispose of it. Secondly, neither Moses, nor Abraham, nor Job, died to attest their sincerity; and yet who doubts the sincerity of these ancient patriarchs? To subject oneself voluntarily to death, to come into the world to die merely to prove one's sincerity, seems very equivocal morality. Paul was sincere; but he did not think that saving his life by being hoisted down from a window in a basket at all impeached his sincerity. If this were the great object that Christ had in view, if he had lived thirty years longer his sincerity would have been the more conspicuous, and his death would not have been the less instructive. And if his death were simply to prove his sincerity, why the supernatural phenomena at his death? Why the rending earth, the opening graves, the emerging of the sheeted dead, the supernatural darkness that covered the earth at noonday? Why the exclamation of the soldiers? Why all the awful scenery of Calvary and the cross? It is impossible to believe he died for this end; it must be a mere subterfuge from an irresistible conviction; it cannot be a solemn and sober judgment.

But others have said that Christ died as an example of fortitude and of patience. If so, why did he die so early? His death would have been as striking at 70 as at 33. And if he died merely as an instance of a martyr's patience, why is the absolute necessity of his death so ceaselessly asserted in Scripture? Why assert, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day?" And are there not examples in the word of God, in Paul and Peter,—and

immediately after the apostolic age, in Polycarp,—of great patience under suffering? I venture to assert that, as far as outward suffering visible to the eye was observed, other martyrs have suffered as much as Jesus did—I mean, in outward sufferings visible to the eye—and yet their sufferings are not quoted merely as instances of patience. Again, if Christ died merely as an example of patience, why such interest in his death? Did Abraham leap for joy merely to see a patient man die? did Isaiah's harp ring so beautifully throughout the ages, merely to celebrate one who should be an unprecedented specimen of patience? did Job look forward to his life; did David speak of David's Son; and did Isaiah speak of the travail of his soul, merely as descriptions of one who died a wonderful and unprecedented instance of patience? And how am I to account for the fact, that God broke his own law by making the only Innocent Being on earth the greatest sufferer that ever existed? Is it not God's law, that innocence is happiness, and that sin is misery? How happens it, then, that on the most public platform, on the most impressive occasion, God showed that innocence was not happiness? And again, if God has said to every Christian, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee," how is it that Jesus was constrained to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Can we explain this upon the hypothesis that he died a patient martyr? that he died merely to show how patiently he endured the pangs that were inflicted upon him? I cannot believe it. The theory is untenable: it confutes itself.

The third theory that I have heard is, that Christ died merely to be to us a striking and impressive evi-

dence that God is willing to pardon us. Now that expression, that we need to be convinced that God is willing to pardon us, involves the prior conviction that there was something to prevent that conviction. From God's law it is evident that the soul that sins shall die. But if God had said himself, "I am willing to pardon," that would have been enough. Many men go into eternity with a sort of notion that God will pardon; that is a very common belief. It seems to me that a bow hung in the cloud, a star in the zenith, or some simple phenomenon inscribed with this, "God pardons all men," would have been perfectly sufficient to convince us that God would be willing to pardon us. I cannot believe that all the events of Gethsemane, Calvary, and the cross, were needed in order to convince us that God was willing to pardon us. That they do convince us of this is obvious; but it seems to me that the reasoning of apostles, the usage of sacrifices, the express assertions of Jesus, all convey that God was not only willing, but that this was the only channel and way in which God could carry that willingness into effect, and be just, while he justifies them that believe in Jesus.

I thus have looked at some of those propositions put forward to explain the reason of the necessity of Christ's death. We must come back to the all but universal creed, and it seems to me the only true one, that he died an Atonement, a Sacrifice, a Victim, a Ransom for our sins. Therefore we commemorate his death; therefore were his sufferings so intense. In short, it seems plain to us that Jesus clothed himself with our nature, took our place of responsibility, suffered all we deserved as sinners, and did all that we owed as creatures; so that in Christ our sins have

been suffered for, and we escape their consequences; and by Christ our Law has been obeyed, and we inherit all the blessed results. Jesus, therefore, paid for us more than we owed, and procured for us more than God hath promised. The spotless Lamb in the tainted fleece died; the stray sheep arrayed in his spotless righteousness shall live for ever and ever.

It has been said by many that God can forgive sin without an Atonement. We cannot set limits to Omnipotence; but there is an answer to that statement applicable on many occasions. When persons say, God can do so, I answer, God's Omnipotence has no limit, but God's moral being has limits. "God cannot lie." God's Omnipotence can do many things; but for one to argue that God's Omnipotence might have forgiven sin without an Atonement, is to forget that our rule of faith is, not what God can do, but what God has written and inspired for our instruction. But who shall decide what became God in this case? It is decided, and the answer is conclusive, "It became God in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." God is the best judge of what became himself; and he has declared that what has been done became him.

It has been objected to this doctrine, that it weakens our motives to a holy life. I answer, it does just the reverse. The objection was urged in the Apostle Paul's days. Some said then that this doctrine made void the Law; and I think that objection in Paul's days is a proof that his doctrine was the same as Luther's, and ours; for how could men have objected to this doctrine, if he had not said that we are justified by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ Jesus?

But I answer in the language of Paul, "Do we then make void the Law?" Is it a fact that Evangelical Christians are inconsistent in their life? I do not mean that there are no inconsistent professors, for there are more than we could wish; but I do think that if you compare Evangelical Christians with those who make no profession upon the subject, you will find that the first are most characterized by those things that are just, and honest, and lovely. At all events, the world thinks they ought to be; for, on seeing an Evangelical Christian falter, it will say, with a logic that never fails, "There is the man from whom we expect so much." But why expect so much? Because his principles imply so much. The world thoroughly comprehends what a Christian should be, as it instantly lays hold upon him, when he makes a false step. The world will never take notice of the good man; but just as wasps always dash at fruit that is too ripe, or begins to decay, the world will first seize upon the falling footstep of a professing follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see this as matter of fact; I put it also upon principle. Where should we expect the best service? Would you expect better service from a slave, who had no love for you, than from a son, knit to you by affection? Is not the service of love better than the service that is mercenary? We know it is. Well, the Gospel translates us from being slaves to be sons; and our service, instead of being a mercenary drudgery, is the affectionate service of sons, who inherit heaven, because they are related to Him who gives it, and go forth, as already sure of heaven, to do their Father's will, and to glorify him as he has loved and saved them.

It has been objected to this doctrine, that it is not consistent with divine equity to make an innocent being suffer for guilty men. Is it consistent with divine equity that a nation should suffer for the sins of its ruler? Is it any more consistent with divine equity that children in health, in position, and in everything, should suffer for the sins of their fathers? But, in this case, you have an innocent being voluntarily suffering for the guilty. The nation does not voluntarily suffer for the ruler's sins; the children do not voluntarily suffer for the parent's sins; but Jesus voluntarily suffered. "I lay down my life," were his words.

How glorious is this precious truth, Christ our Passover is sacrificed, not for our example or instruction, but in our stead! How blessed the thought that he became the sufferer, that we might never suffer; that he died, that we might live; that he became a curse, that we might inherit a blessing. That Good Friday was no parade of unreal suffering; it was no triumphant promenade of one who had no sensibility. It was his agony and bloody sweat; it was his cross and passion; it was his death and suffering for us; it was a real transaction; therefore it is a real salvation, therefore we have real hopes, that will never make ashamed. I think it very beautiful and suitable that any section of the Church should take special notice of those days which are associated with Christ. I do not like saints' days, but I think days that refer to the life or death of our blessed Lord ought to be observed. I can see no objection to seizing all the opportunities possible in a world where there are so few, of bringing before men those great truths upon which our eternal destiny depends. That Good Friday was to Jesus agony and

pain, but every subsequent Good Friday should be to us joy. We joy in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the Atonement. This is not the day of the Sacrifice, it is finished; this is the day that simply recalls, commemorates, or refers to it. His was the agony, ours is the joy. We rejoice that Aceldama has passed away. Calvary is now scarcely distinguishable amid the other hills of Palestine, but its virtue still remains. We have no heed of any repetition of those scenes. Jesus, who wore our raiment, and shed our tears, and bowed under our anguish, still lives in heaven to apply to the believer his finished and consummated Sacrifice upon earth; and what we are asked to do is, not to sacrifice, not to weep over a suffering victim, not to look upon the Cross and Calvary as John and Mary did; but to believe these facts, to repose our confidence in them, to say to God, "We believe this; we are quite satisfied. O Lord, we believe Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Do not then, gaze upon Christ as a marvellous portrait, fair to look upon, but too remote for us to believe in. Do not gaze upon Christ as a grand likeness hung up in the halls of history, or in the chambers of memory, beautiful and glorious in itself, but too distant for us; but look upon him, and rest upon him, as Christ our Passover sacrificed for us, the virtues of which are inexhaustible as the years that extend into eternity itself.

III.

Behold the Lamb.

IT needs only a superficial acquaintance with the statements of the Gospels, to see that John was extremely popular as a preacher of repentance. Great multitudes followed him, and wherever he proclaimed the message entrusted to his charge, he found many open ears to hear it, and many hearts disposed earnestly to embrace it.

It appears that Jesus had just been baptized, that a voice from the heavenly glory had sounded in the hearing of all, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John caught the echo of the beautiful and glorious accents, and pointed to Jesus, and said, "He, of whom the voice has spoken, This is my beloved Son—He, whom I have baptized in the Jordan—He, whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose, and who cometh after me—He is there—behold Him—the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

John's mission, too, at this moment was about to expire; he was soon to be cast into prison, and to disappear from the stage on which he had played so long and so conspicuous a part; and he was anxious, that, as he left, men should recollect him simply as the servant, and should cling to his glorious Master as all

and in all. The morning star was about to retreat into its orbit; the Sun of Righteousness was about to shine. John was anxious that the last ray of his departing glory might be effaced from every mind, and that the full splendor of the rising Sun might be welcomed and received by all; and therefore he said, "Behold not me, but the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

It is evident that Jesus, who was here specified, was no ordinary being. There is not an instance in the Old Testament Scriptures, of priest, prophet, or king, having thus a herald to announce his advent. The very fact that the Baptist thus preceeded Jesus, was an evidence of a Royalty that was not human, of a Priesthood that was not Levitical, and of a Prophet greater than Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament Scriptures.

But what was the precise meaning of this epithet that John applied to Jesus? It was not a mere figure, hyperbole, or random expression, borrowed from the usages of Levi, and accidentally or eulogistically applied to Jesus. What is added to it, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," at once points out its special, sacrificial, and atoning import. The time was at the 10th hour of the day; it was nearly between the evenings, or two hours before the evening, or about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when John pointed out Jesus. We gather this from the previous context. It is very probable, that at this moment the persons whose duty it was were carrying the evening lamb to be offered on the accustomed altar for the evening sacrifice; and John, seeing the crowd of his disciples looking round and gazing reverentially upon

that lamb that was being born to the altar, to be offered up as a typical sacrifice, seized the opportunity of turning their attention from the type that was soon to wither, to the Lamb it prefigured and foreshadowed; and, with an emphasis peculiar to the moment, he said, "Behold, not that lamb, for its mission is done; that shadow retires, that sign is now empty; behold, not the lamb of Levi, but the Lamb of God which really, not typically, taketh away the sin, not of the Jews, but of the world."

Or he may have referred to the Passover Lamb, whose blood upon the lintel of the Israelites kept away the destroying angel, and procured exemption, safety, and peace, to all the first-born of the people of Israel. So the blood of this Lamb shed, and stricken upon the lintel of many a believer's heart, shall save from the breath of the angel of the second death, who shall breathe into the faces of all who are not interested in the Sacrifice of the better than the paschal lamb,—Christ our passover sacrificed for us, who taketh away the sin of the world.

Or it may be that John in this language made some allusion to the prophecies in Isaiah: One cannot fail to see that the 53d chapter of Isaiah is interwoven with the Gospels, is the undertone of every sermon in the Acts of the Apostles, is alluded to constantly in the Epistles; in truth, it was the great prophecy to which Evangelists, Apostles, and martyrs, constantly referred. In that prophecy Christ is spoken of as being led as a lamb to the slaughter. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading this very chapter, and he was led to ask Philip whether the prophet spoke of himself, or of some other man; and there may have been some

among the Jews who felt the same perplexity. To these the words of John would be strikingly suggestive and eloquent. "Here is He of whom Isaiah spake. Behold the Lamb that was led to the slaughter, and wounded for our transgressions, on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all; behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is very remarkable that this epithet here applied to Jesus, is so associated with his character, that in the Book of Revelation it is the common epithet. For instance, it is said that the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb. And again, it is said that in the midst of the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders, there stood a lamb, as if he had been slain in sacrifice, which is the true meaning of the Greek word there used. Glory and blessing are ascribed unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb; as if Calvary were not lost in the splendors of heaven; as if that great fact in the annals of the universe should be destined to perpetuate its echoes whilst there was a saint in heaven to look back to it as the ground of his salvation, or an angel to look into it, and wonder at the mysteries and glories it contains.

The expression, too, is worthy of notice, "the Lamb of God." Not the lamb that God accepts, nor the lamb that belongs to God, but evidently from John's contrasting language, the lamb that God has prescribed. The ancient Jew selected his victim, took it to the proper place, and had it offered for his sin. Now, says John, here is the lamb, not that each selects for himself, but that God has selected for all. Here is not the individual lamb, nor the family lamb, as in the

passover; nor the national lamb, as in the morning and evening sacrifice; but the catholic lamb, the Lamb of God, provided by Him, and that taketh away the sins of Jew and Gentile, and of all in all ages who believe, to the end of the world.

But what is meant by the peculiar expression, "taketh away?" The Greek words correspond with the Hebrew ones in the Old Testament, which denote taking away sin or guilt by expiation. The Jew for his ecclesiastical or civil offence had a lamb or sacrifice offered; and the ecclesiastical or civil offence was done away. The Christian has for his moral offence the Lamb of God offered up in sacrifice; and because of that offering, the penalty that is due to him by the law is for ever taken away. The reference is, not to Jesus as the teacher, but as the sacrifice; not as the example, but as the expiation. It is not "Behold the Teacher, that taketh away the sin of the world by his instruction;" nor, "Behold the Example, that taketh away the sin of the world by his example;" but, "Behold the Lamb,"—sacrificial, atoning language,—"that taketh away the sin of the world" by his atonement.

He takes away, not first the sorrow, but the sin of the world! Man's plan is to dry the tears without touching the fountain of them all, the sin that is in the heart. The divine plan is to dry the tears by drying up their fountain, to take away the sorrow by first taking away the sin. The secret spring of the world's woe is sin. The only source of the world's regeneration is holiness. In Christ we have gained infinitely more than we have lost in Adam; for He is the Lamb that takes away our sins, and lifts us to a holiness and dignity greater and more glorious than Adam would

have ever reached, if Adam had never fallen. All the sins of the world were laid upon Christ Jesus, and he made atonement for all; and there is no reason why every soul on earth should not be perfectly acquitted, except that we think the tidings are too good to be true, or that we think we have more important things to mind, and that we will send for the teller of the good tidings at a more convenient season. It is now addressed to every soul in the wide circuit of the world, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and if the sin of the world, why not yours? If you are a sinner, Christ came to save such; if the chiefest of sinners, Christ came to save such. What brand is on your soul? what Cain-mark is on your brow? that you think you are exempted from the great benefits of that Sacrifice. To you, in spite of all the sins of the past, in spite of all the suspicions of the present, it is said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

But you say, How can we see or behold Christ? We are told by the same book that reveals Him, that we see Him by faith. What is faith? The eyesight of the soul; "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But one day the resurrection eye shall see the risen Christ. Our present sight is better than that of Simeon, and Anna, and Peter, and Thomas; for "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" and our present sight is not so good as that of saints around the throne; for we see through a glass darkly, but they face to face. But whatever be the defects of our present sight, which is by faith, many of us, I trust, can yet say, "Whom having not seen with the outer eye we love; and in

whom, though we see him not with the outer eye, yet believing, which is far better, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Now let us inquire, next, what there is in Christ that should induce me and every minister of the Gospel to press the prescription of the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." I answer, first, God is to be seen in Him. The yearning desire of patriarchs of old, the deep aspirations of human nature in its purest and loftiest communing, that which the nations thirsted to see, and were not permitted, we see in Christ; for he is God come so near to me, that I can see and hear him; and yet he remains so perfect an exponent of God, that in his tears I can see glistening the mercy of the sin-forgiving God; in his compassions I can see God's love, in his miracles God's power; in Jesus, God manifest in the flesh. I can see a glimpse of God's majesty in creation; I can see the consuming fire gleam from the crags and heights of Sinai; but in Jesus I can see God my Father, no longer shrouded in impenetrable darkness, no longer the consuming fire, but God loving me, hanging over me with all the yearnings of parental love, and longing that I, the lost prodigal, should return to my Father's bosom, and to my Father's home, and find in Christ the meeting-place for the rejoicing Father and the reclaimed prodigal, and so be at peace.

I can see in Christ, not only God, but God's love. I can read in all nature that God has loved, but in Christ I see that God is love. God so loved us, that he gave Christ as the expression of that love. What a blessed thought is this, and how corrective of a popular misapprehension! God does not love me because Christ

died for me; but Christ died for me, because God loved me. In other words, Christ is not the cause of a love in God that was not, but he is the evidence of a love that we did not otherwise know, and the channel of a love that could not otherwise reach and reclaim us. And therefore, I see in Christ, not only that God loves me, but I see how that love can come down to me, and transform me from a slave into a son; and yet, justice, holiness, and truth, instead of protesting, stand by and add their consentaneous and joyful assent. In creation, I can see some solitary springs of ancient divine love, like the springs in our mountains and hills, so deep, that they cannot be frozen by the frosts of winter, and so overlapped by the everlasting hills, that they cannot be evaporated by the heats of summer. In providence, I can see God's love in successive waves that touch the shores of earth, and make music on the sands of time; but in Christ I can see, not, as in creation, the sequestered spring, not, as in providence, the successive waves, but the great ocean fulness, the mighty and inexhaustible fountain, from which all are fed, and feel in all its magnificence and comfort, when I gaze on that countenance that was more marred than any man's, this grand and consolatory truth—God in Christ is love.

I can see also in Christ God's wisdom. There is much of God's wisdom in many things in this world. The structure of an insect's wing is a proof of God's wisdom. A bee's cell is a proof of wonderful wisdom; and many other things that God has made show that in wisdom he has made them all. But in Christ are treasures of wisdom; for there I see that wisdom that devised what all the wisdom of man never dreamed of,

how God could be just, and yet justify the greatest sinner; how God could be holy, and yet take a sinner to his bosom. I see in Christ how the sinner can be pardoned, and yet sin not be connived at; how the law can be maintained in all its uncompromising grandeur, and yet the creature that has broken it escape its consuming and desolating curse. In other words, I can see God educing out of ruin a grand restoration, and on the bosom of a fallen earth erecting a temple of magnificence, beauty, and glory, on which angels will see the top stone put, and shout, and sing, "Grace, grace, unto it." It is on the edges of the Alpine snows that the most beautiful flowerets bloom; it will be on this once cold, lost, ruined, dismantled earth, that the fairest flowers of grace will blossom, and that the noblest proofs of God's wisdom and love will be gathered by mankind.

I see in Christ also God's mercy; and therefore, I bid all behold him. You say, what difference is there between love and mercy? Just the same difference as there is between the pure light that streams from the sun at noonday, and the same light broken into its seven, or, more scientifically, into three colors in the rainbow. Mercy is refracted love. Love is God in contact with the unfallen; mercy is love in contact with sin and sinners. I can see nothing in the sky that proves that God is merciful. Seneca inferred, "God is just, and therefore he will punish sin." Now we have no tidings of mercy anywhere, except in Christ. If you wish to see love the intensest, wisdom the most unsearchable,—if you wish to taste mercy in the forgiveness of your sins, behold the Lamb of God.

Behold Christ, because in him alone there is salva-

tion. Scripture tells us that His is the only name given among men, whereby we can be saved; and in that name there is salvation, upon which worlds on worlds may draw, inexhaustible as the infinitude of God, and lasting as the eternity of his throne. You have but to look on Christ to live. Look above him, and there is the absolute God; look beneath, and there is the opening hell; look upon his right, and there is a crucified malefactor; look upon his left, and there is a sinner saved by grace, with nothing to spare for others; but look to Jesus, behold the Lamb of God, and your sins are for ever taken away.

Do you seek a way to heaven? I bid you look to Christ. He is the only way. The way of innocence disappeared with paradise; the way of merit never was and never can be; but if you wish to know a way so broad, that the greatest sinner may enter on it, but so holy, that the least known sin cannot be tolerated on it, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Do I address a reader depressed by a sense of sin; cast down, but not cast off; depressed, but not altogether despairing; deeply convinced of sinfulness and demerit in the sight of God, and longing to know how to get rid of the heavy burden? I would say to such, Why art thou cast down? Why is thy soul disquieted within thee? Hast thou not heard that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin? Hast thou not heard that he came into the world to save sinners? Let thy sins be like crimson, and thy transgressions like blood; yet they may be made like wool. Why are you then depressed? Your sense of sin Satan would use to plunge you into despair; your sense of sin the Holy

Spirit is using to lead you to behold for its pardon the Lamb of God, which taketh away your sin, and the sin of the world.

Are these pages read by any that make a mock at sin. If you will behold the Lamb of God, if you will read the awful tragedy of Gethsemane and Calvary, you will not make a mock at sin. If you want to know the intensity of evil comprised in that monosyllable "sin," behold Christ, the sufferer of unsounded sorrows, whose outer sufferings were unparalleled, but whose inner agony was so intense, that it made him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" When you have beheld this, you will pronounce sin to be no imperfection, no accidental flaw in our humanity, but to be the intensest evil, the very germ of endless woe—the very fuel of the fire that is never, never quenched.

Do I address any grieving over a heart of unbelief? saying, "I believe these truths, but O that I could feel them!" There is a prescription for you, and that prescription is just my text. You ask me the evidence of it. It is this: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced;" and what shall be the effect of that look? "They shall mourn." And again, it is said that Christ is exalted a prince and a Saviour to give repentance, which is the very thing you want, and remission of sins. If, then, to look at Christ, whom we have pierced, is to mourn; if Christ be exalted to give repentance, then your hard heart, touched by the rod of Jesse, like Horeb's rock, will dissolve in springs of tears and of genuine repentance; and by beholding the Lamb, not only will the mind be enlightened, but the heart will be touched and savingly impressed.

Does any one read these lines who is murmuring under affliction, thinking "God hath forgotten me, and my God has forsaken me?" or any who feel the world rushing against them, their fair hopes blasted, their beautiful visions expunged, their fireside no longer joyous, but sombre, and suggestive only of all that is anguish and evil? For you the prescription of the text is the only cure. An apostle gives it; for, speaking to the afflicted Hebrews, he says, "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied, and faint in your minds; for," he adds, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Christ's sufferings were penal, but not for himself; our sufferings are paternal, and they are wholly for ourselves. Therefore, if that affliction is a part of the race set before you, run that race with patience, looking unto Jesus; and then you will glory in tribulation.

Do you fear death? It is very natural to fear it. The fact is, death is less the judicial sentence of God, and more the provoked retribution and desert of sin; and hence the death of every man has something suicidal in it. God never made us to die; God made us holy, immortal and happy; and wherever there is death, there is the rebound of sin; wherever there is suffering, there is the shadow of sin: and therefore, when we look forward to death, it is natural that we should shrink from it. Who wishes to have pains and aches? Who can look forward without some shrinking to that moment when the heart-strings shall be torn, and an unearthly blindness shall come over the eyeballs—who can anticipate such an hour without shrinking? It is not Christian to court death. What we are

called upon to do is to behold Christ, and beholding him, we shall cherish such hope, that we shall be able in anticipatory triumph to defy or disregard death. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Whatever may be the physical agonies of dying, yet what is death in the case of a Christian? Not annihilation. It is one of the thoughts that I delight contemplating, that death is not one moment's extinction of the continuity of life. Therefore, when I look at death, I will look at it in the countenance of Christ, and I shall triumph gloriously.

In short, in all your sorrows, behold the Man of sorrows; in darkness, behold Him who is the true light. Do you want an altar? Behold the Lamb? Do you want a sacrifice, or a priest? Behold the Lamb. In the time when sorrow clouds your horizon, when grief gnaws the heart, amid the righteous with whom you sympathise, and the guilty whom you pity; in all time of your tribulation, in all time of your wealth, in the hour of death, and in the hour of judgment, behold only the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This is the true prescription for unity to the whole Church of Christ. If all Christians would look only at Christ, all Christians would be one. What is the secret of our divisions? That one makes Knox his centre, another Wesley, another Latimer; and taking these false centres, we gather round them in groups, and we indulge in mutual anathemas and hate; but the instant the false centres are swept away, and the true and only Centre becomes that of the thoughts and trust of all, we compose concentric circles, all on successive

tiers, looking in one direction, beholding the Lamb of God, and so at one with each other in true unity.

To behold the Lamb of God is the way to greater holiness. "We shall be like him," says John, "for we shall see him as he is." The more we look at Christ, the more like him we become. "Beholding, as in a glass," says Paul, "the glory of the Lord, we are changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In this prescription we have safety from all apostasy and error. For what is the secret of all apostasies? It is giving to something else a prominence that belongs only to the Lord. If you put a sacrament in Christ's stead, you raise up in the Church of Christ an idol. If you divorce a sacrament from Christ, you empty it of all its virtue and preciousness.

We have here the subject of all ministerial preaching. "We preach not ourselves," says an apostle, "but Christ Jesus, and ourselves your servants for his sake." Wherever the language of the minister is, "Behold not the church, the priest, the sacrament, but behold the Lamb of God," there he is most respected; as if God would show in history, "Them that honour me I will honour."

IV.

Christ Crucified, or Christianity.

I NOW proceed, in connexion with the thoughts which have been submitted to our minds in previous chapters, to show what use the Apostles made of the great facts we have been thinking over, the Atonement on the Cross, and the resurrection from the dead. So prominent were these facts in Paul's mind, so near were they to his heart, that he exclaims, in language that does not exceed the impression on his own soul, "I determined after reading the tidings of his cross, after hearing the triumphs of his resurrection, not even to know, as a preacher and minister of Christ one subject subordinate or collateral, but only Christ, and him crucified."

This language of the Apostle is most remarkable. It is a precedent for all who have his true doctrinal succession in every age and century of the Christian Church. He did not say, "I determined to preach myself;" but lest that impression should be gathered from anything he did, he said, "We preach, not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake." To preach himself is to make man the minion of the priest, not to make him a son of God. For the priest or minister to preach himself, is

to degrade his hearers into slaves, and to conceal from them the dignity of God's freemen, and the relationship of God's sons. To degrade man is not to humble him. The humblest man may be the most elevated and noble. Preach man, and you degrade man; preach Christ, and you humble but do not degrade the sinner.

The Apostle did not say, "I determined to preach nothing but the Church to which I belong." Alas! is it not the text of too many, "The temple of the Lord are we?" but is it not equally true that to preach any Church is the very way to paralyse it? If I were to say from morn to night, "I am a Christian," that would not make people believe it; but if I should live from morn to night like a Christian, no one could help believing it. The Church is known by its actions, the Christian by his life; and that is the best Church, which best does the Church's great and holy work.

The Apostle did not say that he would preach philosophy, science, or literature. These have all their value; true religion does not frown upon these, but on the contrary, would be their nursing mother; but when one is consecrated to the great work of being a minister of Christ, it is not to preach science, or literature, or the arts,—but Christ, and him crucified. Athens was illustrious for its sculpture, unrivalled for its paintings. The very remains of Greek architecture, and of Greek poetry, command the admiration of cultivated minds in every land; but what did they do for it? The arts and the sciences flourished amid a morally degraded, though an intellectually elevated people; and we know that even Marathon and Thermopylæ were fought by slaves let loose from the bondage of their masters, degraded and despised; and the

whole history of Greece tells us that the arts, and literature, and poetry, and painting, may gild, but they cannot arrest human corruption; they may rear glorious temples, but they cannot build up a noble and Christian manhood; they are like the ivy that beautifies the ruin it cannot arrest, and makes look lovely to the outward eye that which, inspected, is the abode of all unclean and venomous reptiles.

The Apostle said, "I determined not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This is not the only text that contains the words. "We preach," says the Apostle, "Christ crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." "I count all but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus." And this truth, that he thus expressed in his whole life, he preached amid the splendor of Athens, with philosophers for his auditory. He preached this amidst the luxury of Corinth, with men and women who were given to indiscriminate sensual indulgence for his audience. He preached this amidst the martial heroes of Rome, who thought of nothing but war, saw nothing but domination over all the wide world. Paul was a man of one idea; and it is only a man of one idea, provided it be a Divine one, who makes a deep and permanent impression upon his age. Paul's hope, therefore, of subduing the world to Christ, rested not upon the army, nor the navy, nor the treasury, nor the Academus, nor the arts and sciences; his whole hope of a world's regeneration, and of the salvation of lost souls, was wrapped up in this truth, "Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation."

Now what was it in Christ's death that made it so

fertile and so fruitful a source of hope to the Apostle, and of influence upon mankind? It was not, clearly, the manner of his death. There is no virtue in a cross, there is no value in crucifixion. Some men have been crucified for their crimes, others for their virtues; neither the one nor the other made the least expiation to God, or before men.

It was not the mere sufferings of Christ that was any thing. Job was a ceaseless sufferer; the lost in ruin ever suffer, and ever sin, but never satisfy. Mere suffering in itself, therefore, has no value as a meritorious efficacy.

What was it, then, in Christ's death that made the Apostle lay so great a stress upon it? First, it was the peculiarity of the Sufferer's person; and secondly, the peculiarity of the Sufferer's death. There was that in his person so peculiar, that none before and none after have ever been his equal; and there was that in his death so peculiar, that no man ever did as he did, just as no man ever lived or spake as he did. What was the peculiarity in the Saviour's person? First, he was not only man, but God. He is called, "God manifest in the flesh." He has come down to me so near, and is so truly one with me, that he reciprocates every sorrow, and sympathises with every suffering, and is to me a great High Priest who can be touched with all the feeling of my infirmities; and yet he remains so truly God, that I adore, worship, and trust in him as the Maker of heaven and earth. No prophet, patriarch, or priest was this. There must have been an extraordinary crisis to warrant the interposition of so extraordinary a personage.

It was also the peculiarity of his death. The agony

he endured was great, but his physical suffering was probably not greater than the suffering of many others. It was in the inmost recesses of the soul that there appears to have been felt a sense of desolation that no human language could by his lips, still less by ours, give adequate expression to. It was upon the inmost soul that there seems to have fallen, on that memorable Friday, a shadow so cold and dark, that the Son of God in the midst of that agony cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not the punishment of a criminal, and yet it was the penalty of crime. It was not the suffering of a martyr, and yet it was more than a martyr's agony. Our sins were laid on him, that his righteousness might be laid on us. None so suffered for us, because none so loved as he did.

Thus, the peculiarity of the Saviour's person, and the peculiarity of the Saviour's death, made the Apostle see in it a significance and a greatness that was not in any other. This doctrine of Christ crucified entered into every appeal, was the motive of every persuasion, was the argument in every discourse, gave colour to every virtue, solemnity to every lesson, and music more than human to every promise. In other words, Christ crucified is the very keystone of Christianity; not a subsidiary buttress, but the very keystone of the celestial arch. Christ crucified is the very cohesion of every truth, the harmony of every statement, the alpha and omega of the Gospel. In other words, Christianity is the expansion of Christ crucified, and Christ crucified is the sum and substance of Christianity. It is in the Bible, the prescription for the intelligent as well as for the ignorant, for the philosopher at Athens, for the

soldier at Rome, for the magi with their offerings, for the shepherds with their incense, for the peasant amid the hills, and the fishermen on the seaside. It is the great truth that meets all; it is the foundation on which all must lean, and without feeling it, loving it, living it, the Apostle tells us we cannot be saved. Christ died—evangelists recorded it, Apostles preached it, early Christians defended it, the sextons of Rome buried it, the Reformers raised it from its grave, and exhibited it again, the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people, Israel.

Paul carried out this great truth in all its fulness, on every occasion. It was the governing thought in all his addresses. Christ's promises, precepts, and example had *a* place in the Apostle's preaching, but Christ crucified had *the* place—the former dependent upon the force and virtue of the latter. Paul describes Christ as a martyr, a model, a Prophet, a Prince, a King; but above all—infinately above all—Christ crucified rises above other doctrines, like Mont Blanc over the surrounding Alps—majestic, magnificent, alone.

And whenever a Church eclipses this truth, she not only conceals the great source of safety from the human mind, but she destroys herself. In an eclipse of the sun, when the moon comes between the earth and the sun, not only does the moon keep off the sun's light from the earth, but she becomes dark herself. It is so with the Church of Christ. The Church that intercepts the light of the Sun of righteousness from us, not only darkens us, but becomes black and dark herself.

This is the great truth that satisfies the judgment,

that gives peace to the conscience, that imparts joy to the human heart. It is the truth which the more it is studied the more it is found to be the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. Superstition makes fanatics, the sword makes slaves, moral preaching scarcely makes moralists, but Christ crucified makes us the sons of God and heirs of glory. This was the hope that gladdened the heart of the weary Abraham; the joy that made him gaze upon the dead dust of Sarah, and see reflected there the light and splendor of a resurrection morn; it was the name that rang sweetest from the harp of David. There was no light value, no subordinate importance in a truth that is thus throughout the Bible asserted and assumed everywhere to be the very core and heart of Christianity.

But some will say, why was this needed? I answer, God loved us in our ruins, and would recover us; but how was it to be done? He had said, "The soul that sins shall die," and God is not a man that he should change his word. He had said again, "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." How then, I ask, was Sinai to be surmounted? How was the Law to be magnified? How was God to appear to the universe, not a ruler conniving at sin, but hating sin, and who could not save one to whom sin clave with its polluting and defiling touch? The answer is found in the Atonement. In that sacrifice God is seen to be just while he justifies, holy while he welcomes the sinner, true when he redeems the sinner's soul. It is demonstrated in the evangelical page that Christ bare our sins, endured our punishment, obeyed our law, fulfilled the obligations that we owed; and that now, because of this, God's love pours down in a refreshing and trans

forming tide, and turns the prisoners of the law into the freemen of Christ, and the aliens and strangers that crouched and trembled around Sinai into the sons and heirs of God with Jesus Christ. Christ crucified was not to make God love me, but it was to enable God's love to reach me. It was not the creation in God of a love that was not, but the presentation of a channel for the outpouring of a love that eternally was. Thus we see that if there is any obstruction between God and us, it is not on God's part. There is no repressive decree driving me before it to everlasting ruin in spite of my volition. If we perish, we perish self-ruined.

This great truth, Christ and him crucified is meant to be the religion of all the ends of the earth, and for all generations of mankind. Every religion that is purely human is fitted for man in certain conditions of civilization, and certain latitudes and longitudes of the globe. Judaism is utterly impracticable beyond the limits of Palestine. Hindooism would be impossible in England, and we know that Mahometanism belongs to a warm climate; but if we compare with all false religions scriptural Christianity, we shall find that whilst they have the element of place and clime, this is adapted to all climes, grows amid the Polar snows, ripens under equatorial suns, goes down, like the atmosphere, to the lowest, and rises, like the same atmosphere, to the highest, and embraces in its ample and beneficent folds the most civilized and savage of mankind. This religion is not the religion of externals, nor of circumstance. It penetrates every position in which man can be placed, finds its way to the innermost recesses of the soul, and receives hospitality in

the heart of human nature itself. It came from God, and to God it goes again, carrying its trophies with it. God gave Christ crucified, and by Christ crucified we can reach God. We need not read much history to know that the most gifted intellects, that the noblest minds, that men weighty with the profoundest erudition, have been the very first and humblest to pay homage to Christ crucified. Sir Isaac Newton, who stands amidst all that is greatest, unequalled in intellect, was a lowly worshipper of Jesus, humbly trusting in Christ crucified as the foundation of his hopes.

This is the only truth that will stand us in stead at that hour which must approach us all. But when that hour comes, let us not fear it; for what is death to a Christian? It is just the great Master saying, "Workman, your work is now done; come and reap the blessed wages of grace that are beyond." What is death to a believer? Exchange, not extinction. And he who has the best home that this world's sun can shine upon, if he holds fast Christ crucified, has a brighter, happier, and more enduring one, when time and things seen and temporal shall be no more.

But how do we become interested in this great truth? I answer, we have nothing to do but just to accept as fact, and to act upon the fact, that Christ has borne our curse, and that we are now for ever and irrevocably free.

Shall I try to persuade you, reader, to embrace this great truth? Is it possible that one needs to persuade you to believe such good news? I should not be called upon to persuade a person to accept £1000; how is it that one finds it difficult to persuade men to receive what they cannot live happy or die safely without?

This beautiful religion dawns in the shape of a nuptial benediction at Cana, and it comes down to make the grave ring with the accents of the resurrection and the life in England, when we part with the near and the dear. This religion comes to rejoice with them that do rejoice, as well as to weep with them that weep. Your sunny hours never will have their brightest sunshine without Christ, and your saddest ones will be sad indeed, in which you know not him, whom to know is present peace and everlasting joy.

Lastly, the result of this belief will be a holy life; for our anxiety will ever be, "How much owe I to my Lord?" And the answer will practically be, — I owe to love him with all my heart, and to serve him with all my strength; I long for that blessed day, when I shall see him as he is, and love him as I ought.

V.

“It is Finished.”

THE voice that uttered these words said at the commencement of our world, “Let there be light, and there was light.” By him were all things made, and without him was not anything made that was made. His first accents were the completion of the earth, his last accents on the cross were the completion of its redemption. In the first we have the evidence of Almighty power; in the last words that he uttered on the cross, we have the evidence of Almighty and redeeming grace! The hands that made the world were nailed to a cross, that that world might be redeemed. He who was its Maker is now its Redeemer.

When he uttered these words, he taught that the work assigned him by his Father was now finished. He could say now with an emphasis with which he had not said it before, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have filled up the outline sketched by thyself in all its fulness. There is nothing left to be endured that sins may be forgiven, nothing to be done that God may be glorified, and that the sinner may be justified, acquitted, and accepted in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. What a blessed and a

glorious thought! Jesus endured all the agony, and left to us the legacy of all the joy; he finished the sacrifice, and bequeathed to us only the joyous commemoration of it; there is nothing to be done that can entitle to heaven that he has not done; there is nothing to be endured by us by way of expiation, that he has not endured! The grand distinguishing peculiarity of scriptural and evangelical religion is this, that the price of our salvation has been paid, the gates flung open, and the password of the universe offered to every man.

These words are those of one who was more than man. When you and I lie down upon the last bed, and our bodies shall go the way of all the earth, and our souls the way of all spirits, we shall be constrained to say, “We have done much that we ought not to have done, and we have left undone much that we ought to have done, and we have finished nothing perfectly that we ever undertook. Unfinished thoughts, purposes, aims, resolutions, lie like scattered wrecks everywhere within us and about us.” But when Jesus died, he left nothing unfinished. His exclamation was the language of infinite and absolute truth, “It is finished.” He never thought a thought that was not infinitely pure; he never did a deed that was not infinitely perfect; he never spoke a word that was not infinitely true; he never was anything but the Holy, Holy, Holy One, who inhabiteth the praises of eternity. Therefore he could say what we never can say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” He had no sin to ask forgiveness of; he had no omission to ask pardon for. He had finished all, exhausted all, and left nothing for us to do in the way of expiation, on the one hand, or in the way of obedience for justification on the

other. He exclaimed with his last breath what is the commencement of the endless jubilee, "It is finished!"

When he said, "It is finished," he conveyed to us, and taught all who were around him, that all the ancient prophecies relating to his atonement, sacrifice, and sufferings, were now completed and exhausted. The kernel was there, the mere husks and shells dropped off. He read all, remembered all, met all, and gloriously and completely fulfilled all. Isaiah liii. was compressed into these words, "It is finished." Isaiah gives the prophecy. Jesus is its Amen. "I have borne your griefs, I have carried your sorrows, I have made an end of sin, I have brought in everlasting righteousness." These words, "It is finished," were the echo of all the ancient prophecies, with all the original utterances melted and met in it. When he uttered, "It is finished," Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, all stood round the cross, and said in one deep-toned and responsive voice, "Amen, it is finished; our prophecies are all fulfilled; all that God taught us, God in our nature has now done. Amen."

When he uttered these words, he taught that all ancient types then passed away. There were in the Old Testament Church, not only voices crying in the desert, "Christ shall come," but foreshadows spread over the desert intimating that Christ was about to come. And when he cried, "It is finished," he said substantially, "The rock that you saw in Horeb is now lost in the Rock of ages. The robes of Aaron, and the royalties of David—the mitre of the priest, and the diadem of the king—are all merged in me, who am Prophet, Priest, and King to my Church for ever. These dim, prefigurative shadows are all lost in me, the substance,

the light, the glory, and the end of them all. The altar is to be destroyed, the priest is to depart, the sacrifices are done. I am the Altar, the Priest, and the Sacrifice; the true Melchisedec, the end of the law, the object of the types, in whom alone they have consistency, and seen in whose light alone they have any significance, meaning, or value.”

When he said, “It is finished,” he also taught us that all the sacrificial offerings of the ancient economy had passed away. For 4000 years previous to the advent of Christ there were expiatory offerings, slain animals, and sacrifices of beasts, not as substitutes for Christ, but as sign-posts, on which the believer could legibly read what they pointed out. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The Jew was not saved by his sacrifices any more than the Christian is saved by his sacraments. The Jewish sacrifices carried the Jew’s heart forward to the One Sacrifice, and the Christian’s sacrament brings the Christian’s heart backward to the same perfect Sacrifice consummated on the cross. Hence the sacrifices of the Jews were simply significant proofs and earnest of the Sacrifice that was to be. They were the footprints of Jesus upon the sands of time, coming, according to the promise, to suffer—a Sacrifice for our transgressions. They inculcated the necessity of a sacrifice, the impossibility of man ever doing it, and the efficacy of that Sacrifice whenever it should be finished on the cross. Hence Christ’s death was the last and only expiatory sacrifice. There never was an expiatory one before, and there never has been an expiatory sacrifice since. When Christ said, “It is finished,” all the bulls, rams, goats, sheep, and heifers of Levi

died the instant that he died, and are buried, but shall never rise; he died and was buried too, but rose again, the Prince of life, the Conqueror of death and the grave. We have, therefore, in Christ's sacrifice, that to which all past signs pointed—that to which all present sacrifices refer—the epochal act in the history of the world, towards which eternity continually looks, and from which the happy years of the blessed in heaven date their beginning and their course.

When Christ uttered these words, "It is finished," he also said, "I have now put an end to sin, I have now conquered death and the grave, and will soon appear the resurrection and the life. All my trials, troubles, and sufferings are finished, and all that was given me to do is finally and fully completed." He was persecuted by Cæsar, he was laid in wait for by the Pharisees, he was betrayed by an apostle, he was given up by the Jews to the Romans to be crucified; his last tear was shed, his last pang was now felt; these words were the accents of suffering, but they were the tones also of conquest. "Now," he said, "the hour and power of darkness ends in joyous light; death is deprived of his sting, the grave is stripped of its victory; death is no more the executor of the curse, but the herald of a joyous blessing; the grave is no more the prison-house of the saints of God, but the sacred urn that contains their dead dust; it is the midway repose between heaven and earth; it is the vestibule of glory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" "It is finished." Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

But there were certain great truths that he had to

illustrate, or requirements that he had to meet, so that when he exclaimed, "It is finished," he taught us in that phrase that these had all been completely exhausted. Before there could be pardon for us, God's attributes demanded satisfaction; God's law broken by us, in the language of Scripture, had to be magnified and made honourable, and shown to be compatible with our pardon. All this Jesus did.

What is the law? It was not the arbitrary enactment of 4000 years ago, but the expression in words of ideas eternal as the very being of God. That law that was published on Sinai, but ever operative, before the harmony of all created things, is not now diluted or deposed under the Christian economy; it is just as true, applicable, and obligatory as ever. It is still true, "He that doth these things shall live in them." It is still true, that if any man, from the first pulse of life to the last pulse of the heart, could perfectly keep that law, he would be justified by it; but no man has done so. Adam could not do it in Paradise, how much less shall we do it in the desert! When Christ died he accepted what the law commanded, and obeyed it; he accepted its penalties, and endured and exhausted them. Whatever God's justice, holiness, and truth, as embodied in that law, demanded, before we could be saved, Jesus did, and endured. But why could not God save sinners without this dread tragedy—this awful process—this incarnation of a God—this suffering upon the cross? The first answer is, God has said we could not be saved without it; and we know that if less expenditure could have sufficed, so great a sacrifice had not been made. We can easily see, as reasonable men, that if God's love should save all without a repa-

ration, love would be the grave of justice, and the exercise of mercy the extinction of truth. God so loved us, that he would save the whole world at any sacrifice, except the impossible sacrifice of his own essential glory, that is, the sacrifice of himself, which cannot be. And he so loved us, that in order that a way might be opened up for our entrance into that glory we had forfeited, he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Jesus took our place. He bore the curse that the law denounced, that we sinners, who are the true inheritors of it, might never feel it; and he obeyed the commandments which the law prescribed, that we might have from him what we cannot elaborate for ourselves — a perfect right and title to everlasting glory. He endured all that we deserved as sinners; he obeyed all that we could not obey as creatures. By what he suffered we are saved from the curse of sin; by what he did we are entitled to the rewards of righteousness. And thus, in Jesus, and in his finished sacrifice, we have the price of glory, the pathway to the skies, a title to the forfeited inheritance, the assurance of Paradise restored in more than its first and fairest beauty.

When Jesus uttered these words, "It is finished," he not only put an end to all prefigurations of this one Sacrifice, but he offered up Himself, the only perfect propitiatory and atoning sacrifice that ever was offered up, or ever can be, for the sins of all that believe. This is explained to us very fully by the Apostles, when he tells us in his Epistle to the Hebrews, x. 11: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one

sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" that is, that the sacrifices offered before never could take away sin: they were ever repeated because they had no inherent virtue, but only a relative significance, pointing out the One Sacrifice that was to be. We are told by the Apostle in another Epistle, that "God hath set forth him to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26. When Christ died upon the cross, crying aloud, "It is finished," all the sins of all believers, from Adam, the first in Paradise, to the last in the Millennium, were laid upon Christ; and when he endured the curse, and obeyed the law, and exclaimed, "It is finished!" a perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice was made for all — complete, and needing not to be reiterated. This is the promise of all ancient prophecy; none else was promised; and, we can say, none else is needed. The handwriting is expunged, the law is magnified, God is satisfied; he now can be, in the language of the Apostle, just, while he justifies them that believe. There is no sin so deep in its dye, from which this sacrifice does not cleanse. There is no height of glory to which the heart can aspire that this sacrifice cannot reach. There is no opening for another victim, there is no possibility of another sacrifice. There is not an altar ordered or sanctioned in the whole Church of Christ; there is no such officer as a sacrificing priest appointed in the Christian economy. There is no sacrifice to be offered; the blood of bulls and of

goats cannot take away sin. Therefore not only is no other sacrifice promised, but it is not possible; and if it were possible, what is the use of a sacrifice that a creature can offer, to add to the sacrifice that the Creator has made? Would a glowworm add to the light of the noon-day sun? Would a tear dropped in the ocean swell its immensity? Can we suppose that anything that man can do can add to the Eternal, the Infinite, the Inexhaustible, the All-enduring? Nor is it to be repeated. It is said by some that Christ comes down every Sunday upon the altar bodily, and is sacrificed by the priest; but the answer to this is, "He dieth no more."

And the Apostle argues, that if Christ be often offered he must suffer often. There is no offering if there be no suffering. Christ dieth no more, and therefore is offered no more; therefore, this sacrifice is not reiterated or repeated upon any altar whatever. It is perfect in its nature, it is inexhaustible in its efficacy, it is all that the worst of sinners can require, it is all that a holy God demands as reparation to a law that has been broken, and as satisfaction to attributes that have been violated.

When Christ said, "It is finished," he taught us also that there is a perfect way opened up now from earth to heaven. When Adam and Eve left Paradise, the gates which shut them out prevented all return to its happiness again. The gate of innocence is shut for ever; there is no access to heaven by that way. When Jesus exclaimed upon the Cross, "It is finished," he said virtually, "All obstructions are now removed a way is opened up from my grave to God's throne;" and in that way thousands upon thousands may walk,

as a new and living way, that will lead them to the presence of God and of the Lamb for ever.

Prayer is not the way to heaven, reading the Scripture is not the way to heaven, no church nor priest upon earth is the way to heaven. There is but one way, and Jesus is that way. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” And therefore, the way to rise to heaven is, not to join a church, but to believe in Christ; not to do something great, but to believe in Christ; not to endure something painful, but simply to believe in Christ — to look and live — to rest on what God has done for you, and in no degree upon anything that you can do for yourselves, or that man can do for you. Jesus alone is the way, opened up, finished and completed when he died upon the cross.

When Jesus said, “It is finished,” he presented to us what man required, a perfect portrait and revelation of God. In another passage in Scripture he is called, “God manifest in the flesh.” This was the ardent and earnest desire of the heathen for thousands of years before our blessed Redeemer came. Human nature longed for a representation of God. The widow longed for a sight of the everlasting Husband in the skies. The orphan grieved that he could not get a glimpse of the glory of his heavenly Father. The watchers on the street, and the pilgrims in the desert, longed for the rising of that glorious Sun, in whose wings there should be healing, and whose light should be the light of the nations. And pure human nature, in its aspiration to see God, and its inability to do so, made a god rather than be godless, the best god it could invent to express its feelings — so true is it that man never can do without a God. Atheism is as impossible in the

moral world, as a vacuum is in the physical world ; and if men cannot find the knowledge of the true God, they will with the chisel strike from the obedient marble the nearest likeness to him that heart and imagination can conceive. To meet this yearning of human nature God was manifest in the flesh. We have in Jesus the autograph and portrait of Deity as prepared by himself : so that when Jesus became man, he came so near to me, that I can clearly see him ; and yet he remained so perfectly holy, that I can see God in him. There is no excuse now for images or image worship ; there is no apology for idolatry of any sort. We have Jesus as the representative of God, manifest in the flesh ; so that when I study him as he is sketched at length in the sacred Scriptures, I see all of God that my heart can desire, or that finite language can convey, and I am perfectly and altogether satisfied.

When Jesus uttered these words, the last touch was put to the picture of the perfect Christian. We must never forget that whilst Christ was God, he was also man ; that if he was God revealed to us as God is, he was also man revealed to us as man should be. He was God manifest in the flesh, but he was also man inspired, illuminated, glorified by Deity. And therefore we have in Jesus the perfect model of the believer. Seeing what he did, I see what I must strive after. Watching what he said, I hear what I ought, as far as I am able, to echo : whilst he is, as God, the object of my worship, he is, as man, the model and example for my imitation. I have in Christ Jesus, therefore, the everlasting God revealed in all the glory that human eye can look on, and I have the perfect believer set forth in all the perfection of infinite excellence. I

look at him in the one light, and I worship. I look at him in the other aspect, and I imitate. I have in him the finished picture of Deity, and the finished portrait of humanity. How true and beautiful the exclamation of the Apostle, "Ye are complete in Christ."

These are the results that may be supposed to have been included by our Lord, when he exclaimed upon the cross "It is finished." But these were the seeds of glorious harvests, facts that live, and act, and influence time and eternity for ever. The river that flowed from that stricken rock still rolls along the channels in the world's desert. The light that arose from that setting sun still shines in deepening splendor in many a land. His name shall endure for ever; it shall last like the sun; all shall bless him, and be blessed in him. Whilst, therefore, the price was paid, the sacrifice was made, the atonement complete, the portrait of God received its last touch, and the picture of humanity received its last feature; let us recollect these are not facts that have ceased, and, like the facts recorded in an almanac, of no more value; they are living facts, still shaping and influencing the characters of mankind, and the destiny of the earth.

In reviewing the words of our blessed Lord in his last moments on the cross, let us mark the sublimity of the composure he exhibited on this occasion. All was storm, wrath, animosity, hatred around. Satan had sifted him, and found nothing in him; all was agony in his frame, and inconceivable distress in his soul. There was something that we cannot comprehend in that awful language—the most awful in the whole Scripture—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But in the midst of all this there was an inner

sunshine, connected evidently with a higher and a holier land, that gave peace, and calm, and self-possession, in the most stirring, agitating, and painful circumstances, and enabled him to exclaim, not hastily or passionately, but in calm and solemn accents, "It is finished."

There was great joy in these words—joy that his agonies were ended, his sorrows finished; but a greater joy still—in his anticipation of its results. It is remarkable, in the history of Jesus, that we never find him in the least influenced by what was befalling himself, but a constant and continuous provision that what was done, sacrificed, or suffered might be turned to good account for us. His death was only the end of a vicarious life; it was the last act, not the only one, of the great Sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, the main joy that Jesus felt when he exclaimed, "It is finished," must have been that joy, which, it is said, is now set before him, and for which he endured the cross, despising the shame; or as it is written in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." What a joy to the holy Sufferer that the voices that were shouting in execrations in his hearing, "Not this man, but Barabbas," should one day sing with joy, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" What a sublime and unprecedented joy was this, that his crucifiers should be the very first to partake of the blessings of his purchase, and they that wreathed his brow with thorns should be crowned with crowns of glory that fade not away! What a sublime joy was it to see that the very voices that shouted in infatuated feeling, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children," should one day have that blood upon

them, yet not as they imprecated it, but as he shed it, for the remission and the pardon of their sins! The joy, then, that sustained him on the cross, was not so much that his personal sorrows were now closed, but that the price was paid that would make many hearts happy, and that great atonement completed by which many sins would be forgiven. He looked from that cross along the vista of many thousand years, and as he saw the lengthening procession of those who washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

These accents were also the language of triumph. He was not conquered by death, he conquered it. He died, but it was that he might live. What seemed to the outer eye all weakness and shame, we know now to have been power and greatness unspeakable. Satan's power was now broken, death was now destroyed, the handwriting against us was washed out; sins were no longer imputed to them that believe, but a perfect ransom was given for all and every age that would trust in him as their only sacrifice and atonement.

If these facts be true, which I have tried meagrely to describe, and of which I have given but an imperfect outline, what a blessed provision has been made for us, and with what gratitude ought we to commemorate the glorious fact that the atonement is finished, our sins forgiven, and God no longer the Judge coming forth to condemn, but the Father waiting and rejoicing to accept of us! The fountain is opened, we have not to go and dig one. The price is paid, we have not to try to accumulate it. The doors of glory are flung open, we are not to go and strike a door through its

adamantine walls, if that be possible, or to open doors that are barred, and shut for ever. All is finished, and we have nothing to do in order to enjoy heaven, and nothing to endure in order to escape the curse. We receive a price, not pay one. We receive the title-deeds, we have not to write them. We have but to rest upon him who is the perfect title, and have perfect peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. I believe it is this intense and magnificent simplicity of the Gospel that makes so many misapprehend, hesitate, fear. I am not stating on my own authority the mode of our acceptance before God; but I am stating, on the authority of the express and reiterated expressions of the Holy Spirit of God, what is the only way to heaven.

But you say, if we get to heaven without doing anything, we shall do nothing. It is not so; they who accept heaven gratis, are just the persons whose hearts are loaded with the deepest gratitude, and irradiated with the brightest love, and who feel in all life's ways and windings how much they owe, and how much they should now do for God. We are not to regard God, like the mere legalist, as a being exacting duties; but we are to regard him as a benefactor bestowing blessings. If I were placed under law, I should hear God saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" and God would see me constantly striving to obey the demands of my Master, the exactions of my King. But as I am placed under the Gospel, I do not hear God saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" but giving his Son to die for me; and seeing God constantly giving, the responsive emotion is awakened in my heart; What shall I return to him? I can and need do nothing that will deserve happiness, for all has been done for me;

but I will go forth, and let the world see that this religion that has given me all heaven gratis, conforms me to the image and model of him who has earned my salvation, and constrains me by an irresistible impulse to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God. Those who believe in Jesus, through believing in him get a new nature; and to live as they like is to live according to the model that Christ set before them, and the requirements of his holy, pure, and perfect law.

On a communion day we do not come with painful and heavy hearts to make a sacrifice for sins; the sacrifice is made; but we come with joyous and grateful hearts to commemorate the sacrifice finished 1800 years ago. The Lord's Supper is not Christ crucified for us, but the pledge continued from year to year, in every section of the Church, that this sacrifice was completed, and that we are welcome to rest upon it, and live for ever. If there be one Sunday in the year when all hearts should glow with the brightest joy, and be charged with the richest gratitude, it is that Sabbath on which we commemorate this great fact, the sacrifice is finished.

In the Passover of old there were two parts. The Jewish father had first to slay an innocent lamb, and shed its blood—that was the sacrifice. But the next day he had to eat with his family the roasted flesh of the lamb that had been previously slain—that was the feast after it. In our case, Jesus was the victim—the sacrifice was slain 1800 years ago; and we have now none of the painful part, but only the bequest of the pleasant part, which is to rejoice while we commemorate a deed done, and sacrifice offered, perfect, and

complete. In this world, when men commemorate illustrious deeds, they do it with gratitude and joy; when they raise monuments to illustrious persons, they do it in thanksgiving and in praise. And when we join in this rite, than which nothing can be more simple, we do so joyfully and thankfully, praising and blessing God that we have not the sacrifice to make, nor the price to pay, but to rejoice in a sacrifice already finished, and to glory in a price already completely paid.

VI.

“The Lord is Risen.”

WE have seen the sufferings of Christ our Passover. It behoved him, or it was necessary that he should suffer; and, it was no less necessary that he should rise from the dead on the third day.

Is there irresistible evidence that Christ rose from the dead? This fact the Apostles expended their greatest force in constantly demonstrating and proving. There is more evidence for this than for any fact in the history of mankind. Nothing has been so completely sifted; and no fact has been so thoroughly tested. The Apostles themselves were unprejudiced witnesses to the fact. They did not expect it; they scarcely believed it, when it occurred. They thought it too good to be true; and therefore they did not adapt the fact to their previous expectations, but yielded their prejudices to the irresistible evidence of the fact.

In the next place, the Apostles were not fanatics, who asserted a feeling as the only evidence of a fact; but constantly, in the soberest terms, with the clearest arguments, they appealed to it, not as a fancy, not as a prophecy, not as a thing that ought to be, but as a

fact that was, and could be proved to have actually occurred.

In the next place, they did not deceive others. They were incapable of it. Read their history, their morality, their integrity, their truthfulness. You cannot conceive that men, constantly inculcating the obligations of truth, assuming the loftiest character, and giving proof, in the most trying circumstances, that they possessed it, would have deliberately palmed a falsehood as a fact upon the nations of the earth. But, if they had an object to gain by it, one might suppose this possible: but what had they to gain? Everything in this world by suppressing it: nothing in this world by announcing it. They were told by their blessed Master that bonds and imprisonment awaited them. They saw that it must be so; they were taken before the tribunals of their country, they were threatened with punishment if they asserted this fact; with their last breath they asserted it still, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name's sake. No torture made them vary, no threatenings made them retract it, their constant reply was, "What we have seen, that declare we unto you."

The season when the Resurrection occurred was such, that it was absolutely impossible that twelve fishermen, chiefly of Galilee—a tax-gatherer and some fishermen—could have taken a dead body, carried it through the streets of Jerusalem, secreted it, and successfully asserted that that body had risen from the dead. First of all, it was the season of the great festival of the Jews; secondly, it was clear and beautiful moonlight—it was full moon, and not in a cold northern climate, but in a beautiful eastern and cloud-

less clime. Thirdly, there were at least a million of people gathered within the walls of Jerusalem to celebrate the festival. There were not lodgings for them all; thousands were bivouacked upon the highways; thousands were loitering in the streets; thousands were in the fields; and lastly, sixty Roman soldiers — men who feared no foe, and whose sleeping or inattention at their post was, by the military law of the empire, visited with instant death — appointed to superintend that grave. Can you suppose that a handful of fishermen, in moonlight, with sixty Roman soldiers armed around the grave, with the streets crowded with people, at a great festival, succeeded in rolling away a gigantic stone, descending into a rocky tomb, lifting out a dead body, carrying it along the streets, and so secreting it, that the most inquisitive and active police in the whole world were unable to detect it? Is it possible to suppose such a thing? The soldiers said, as the Pharisees bribed them to say, that while they slept, the disciples came and stole away the body. Now, just notice how this would have been answered in a modern court of justice. It would have been said, You, Roman soldiers, confess that you slept as sentinels at your post — how did you escape punishment? Secondly, if you slept, how did you *see* the disciples come and steal the body? And thirdly, how does it happen that you all sixty slept precisely at the same moment, and slept so soundly that a great stone could be rolled away, weighing, it might be, a ton or half a ton? If you saw them do it, why did you not resist? Were twelve fishermen stronger than sixty Roman soldiers? The thing is untenable; nobody in his senses, in modern times, would accept such an excuse. The evidence is irre-

sistible that the Apostles did no such thing. And again, when men are engaged in an unlawful act, they are always in a hurry. Whenever man's conscience is not sure of what he is about, his hand will always tremble, and he will leave something not nicely adjusted, as it ought to have been. What took place on this occasion? They rolled away the stone; and, though sixty Roman soldiers were about them—though the streets were crowded, and though it was bright moonlight—so little in a hurry were these twelve fishermen, if they took the body, that they carefully adjusted all the clothes, folded them, and laid them quietly aside, giving evidence that it was done in no hurry. Is not the inference of reason the conclusion of an Apostle,—“Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that slept?”

Let us now direct our attention to some of the facts connected with this resurrection. I will refer especially, in doing so, to some remarkable statements respecting it, in that most beautiful history given in the 20th chapter of St. John. First, then, what was the day on which Christ rose from the dead? It is said, “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord.” The exact hour is not specified; but plainly it was before daylight, in the grey and misty morn. Now, many Christians have been perplexed with this—How could this be the third day? If Jesus was crucified between the evenings on Friday, how could Sunday morning be

the third day after? I answer, If the Resurrection had taken place at midnight on Saturday — if it had taken place at ten o'clock on Saturday evening, it would have been the third day; for, from Thursday evening to Friday evening at six o'clock was one day; from Friday evening at six o'clock to Saturday evening at six o'clock was the second day; and from Saturday evening at six o'clock to Sunday evening at six o'clock must be the third day. Therefore, if Jesus had risen any time after six o'clock on Saturday evening, and before six o'clock on Sunday evening, it would have been the third day. Recollect the Jewish mode of reckoning, from evening to evening; and you will see how Jesus was crucified between the evenings on Friday, and how he rose on the third day, or the Lord's day, or Sunday.

Secondly, we are not told the precise mode of the Resurrection. There was no struggle, no indication of alarm, but everything was perfectly adjusted — it was done quietly, and without the least interruption, or fear of interruption. It was a rocky tomb, against which a great stone was rolled. John, in his history of it, in the second verse, says, speaking of Mary Magdalene, “She cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved,” — such is the beautiful way in which John speaks of himself; not dragging in his own name, for this was unnecessary, — “and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.” What beautiful and holy scepticism, if I may make such a combination, was here! She could not believe that Christ would rise from the dead, for that was the last conviction that was impressed upon

the disciples; and yet, she could not retire even from the dead dust, as she thought, of so great and so blessed a Master; and therefore, looking into the tomb, and finding the body gone, and not believing yet that he was to rise from the dead, she said, "They have taken away the Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

If she were spared to look now upon the awful apostasy from Christianity in the West of Europe, she would be constrained to say of all its forms, ceremonies, and solemnities, august and impressive to the outer sense as they may be, "There is here music, and painting, and poetry, and incense, and gorgeous robes, and grand cathedrals, but they have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him."

John and Peter went to the sepulchre. "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they both ran together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter." I allude to this, to show how minutely the identity of character is kept up throughout the gospel; in other words, to show how every touch indicates reality. There never is a trait, most incidentally developed, that shows that Peter was not, at any one moment, what he was originally described and declared to be. John was quite a young man at this time; Peter was past the meridian of life, I dare say about fifty years old or upwards. Our blessed Lord alludes to this, when he says in another place, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself." But Peter was full of the fire and fervour of his early youth. He was always rash, precipitate, first to speak, first to smite, and first to run away—a very peculiar composite was the character of Peter, it was love, and

vacillation, and courage, and cowardice. But, on this occasion, they both ran together, the old man, Peter, having more fire in his heart than John, but having feebler muscles in his limbs. “But John outran Peter”—he was a young man. Both arrived at the grave; but Peter, still keeping up his peculiar character, rushed into the sepulchre before John. John, the young man, was timid; Peter was courageous, or, at least, he was the first to dare, if he might be afterwards the first to flinch. And therefore he ran first unto the sepulchre, to see what was the matter, and what explanation might be furnished by the place, of the loss or departure of the Lord.

Angels said to Mary, “Why weepest thou?” She answers—and no wonder—“Because they have taken away my Lord,”—alluding to the Scribes and Pharisees, as she thought,—“and I know not where they have laid him.” She was looking into the sepulchre of him, of whom she had some indefinite hope, not yet fully developed into a conviction, that he would rise from the dead. “And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.” I have not the least doubt that that “knowing not,” was not because he was changed, as I shall afterwards show, or because she could have forgotten him; but when a thing comes upon one suddenly, it is so unexpected, that we cannot believe it is the object that we had seen before. So, when Jesus came upon her so unexpectedly, the sight of him being the last thing she expected, and said, “Mary,” she instantly “turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni,” which ought to be interpreted, “My dear, or beloved Master.” This shows, that if one

sense may falter, another sense, like a faithful sentinel, is in reserve to take its place. A person who forgets the features of a friend whom he suddenly comes into contact with, recollects that friend's name the instant he opens his mouth and speaks. There is something in the human voice, just as in the human face, that I have often thought is one of the greatest proofs of the infinitude of the resources of God. You may collect all the faces in Europe; and, though they may have a generic likeness, yet there are not any two exactly like each other. And so with the voice; no two voices are perfectly alike; there is an infinite variety of development with a great basis of essential identity.

Jesus said to her, in words that have puzzled many, but through which, I think, I can clearly discern light, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." The Greek verb here translated, "touch," is ἅπτου. Ancient writers have some of them paraphrased it thus,—"Do not pay attention to this earthly manifestation; for I am not yet ascended into heaven; this is not your present duty." But this is translating ἅπτου in a way that I think it ought not to be translated. Others think that Mary was uncertain whether it was a phantom or a reality; and touched him, in order to ascertain whether he had flesh and bones, as a spirit has not. Others think, and the most general view of our commentators is, that Jesus meant to say, "Do not waste your time in embracing me, and holding me fast, but go and tell my brethren that I am not yet ascended to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God; and I having not yet ascended,

you will have plenty of time to see me again." But none of these seems to exhaust its meaning. The following would rather appear to be the true signification of it. Mary was distinguished by her attention to our blessed Lord; she was the intimate friend of John, and John reports the fullest, as he enjoyed the oftenest, the discourses of our blessed Lord. Now the frequent promise of Jesus was, as you will find in the 14th and 16th chapters of St. John, "I will come unto you again;" "I told you before that I would come again unto you, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe;" "I go to the Father." Now these promises, I say, refer to the second advent of our blessed Lord. He gave a clear and unequivocal promise that he would come again; and Mary thought, when she beheld him risen from the dead, that this was the fulfilment of that promise; she thought that this was his second coming; and therefore she determined to hold him fast, and be with him for ever. But Jesus says, "Nay, Mary, touch me not; you cannot expect the fulfilment of my promise now; for I told you, when I gave you my promise, that I should ascend to the Father, and that I should come again; but I am not yet ascended to the Father, and therefore, this is not my second advent; and do not touch me, therefore, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God," where I must be before I come again.

After his resurrection Jesus appeared to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. They had doubts whether he would rise, and one seems to have been altogether sceptical. Apparently, they were recent converts, who thought that it must have been he who

would have redeemed Israel; "but," said they, in their simplicity, "this is the third day, and there are no tidings of him." Jesus, therefore, draws near to the disciples, and explains to them what the prophets had said of him. Of that beautiful commentary we have scarcely an outline embodied in the narrative. It must have been eloquent, impressive, and satisfactory; but these things were written—if not all we could wish, all that is necessary for us—that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The next appearance of Jesus is recorded in John xx. 19: where he showed himself to the disciples on the first day of the week, that is, the Lord's day, or Sunday, in the room where they were met together; when the doors were shut, he appeared in the midst of them. It has been said, that Christ's body could not have been like our body, after he rose, because he passed through the shut doors. But this does not follow. The fact that the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, does not imply that they were bolted. Two sentinels would be as great security as an iron bar; which would be no security against the Jewish police, or the Roman soldiers. Besides, it is not said that he passed through the doors; it is said that the doors were shut when he came, and appeared in the midst of them. And even if he had entered the house in a way that we know not, we recollect that he walked on the sea, that he laid the waters by a word, that he awoke the dead; and therefore, the passage could not prove that his body, in all its essential characteristics, was substantially different from ours.

The second time that he appears is when Thomas is absent; and when Thomas was told that he was risen,

he doubted. Jesus again showed himself to him ; bade him touch the wound in his side, and see the marks on his hands, in order that he might be satisfied that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as he saw him have. And then he pronounced the benediction, in which we share, "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." "In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

The next appearance of Jesus is where he wrought a special miracle, recorded in John xxi.—the miraculous draught of fishes. He appeared to his disciples again when the Ascension took place from the Mount of Olives. Luke sums up the whole of his appearances by stating — "To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Thus we have first of all the testimony of sane and competent men, not on one, two, or three, but on successive and numerous occasions, declaring that they saw Christ, who was nailed to the cross, whose heart was pierced by the spear, whose death was an unquestionable fact, risen from the dead, and talking of the things pertaining to the kingdom, during forty successive days. There is quite as much evidence of the resurrection from the grave, as there is of the manger, of the cross, of the walking on the sea, of the feeding five thousand miraculously, or of any one fact in the history of Jesus. And, as if to crown all, the Apostle himself says, that he was seen by five hundred brethren at once. The fact is, therefore, not simply true, but is demonstrably proved. If testimony has any weight

in a court of justice; if the evidence of accurate and competent witnesses is of any value; if anything upon earth can be demonstrated by testimony to be true, this is true, that Jesus suffered, and was buried, and rose on the third day, the first-fruits of them that sleep.

And if you wish experimentally to test it, you may do so. Go to Jesus, on the supposition that he now lives; ask of him by his Spirit to renew your heart, and your regenerated heart will be the demonstration that he does live. You have historical evidence in what the Apostles state; you may have the experimental evidence in your own happy and rejoicing hearts.

But in what respect, it may be asked, is this an evidence to us that our bodies shall rise from the dead? He was in the grave three days, and rose upon the third; but, if it be a fact that he died, and that he rose, it matters not whether three days, or three thousand years intervened; the fact is equally suggestive, and, because associated with it, demonstrates that our bodies too shall rise from the dead. It may be, that all the children of men, like seeds cast into the earth, take different times to germinate or fructify. Adam's body is in the earth now, except he should be one of those that rose, when Christ rose from the dead. The bodies of Jacob, and Moses, and Abraham, are in the earth now; the different seeds, sown in different centuries, are under the providential restraint of God; and it may be, that the harvest burst shall come in one moment, and the dead of a thousand years, and the dead of ten hours, shall rise coterminously in the shining robes of immortality and glory.

I believe, too, that it will not be another body, but the very same identical body that will rise again from the dust of the earth. If you say, Is it not stated that it is a spiritual body? I answer, It is so; but it is a body still. It does not say that it is a spirit, but a spiritual body. If it be a spirit, it is not a body; and if it be a body, it is not a spirit. It may be a body with larger and grander prerogatives, and richer capabilities; that it may be, but it will be a body still. If Jesus could walk upon the sea, if he could ascend from the Mount to his Father's presence, such prerogatives may be given to our bodies. We know that carbonic acid gas may assume a gaseous form as well as a solid. We have instances of solid bodies becoming gases, and gases becoming solid bodies; and that is only a dim and distant shadow of what may be in reference to our bodies. But that it will be the same body, is evident from what the Apostle says, "This very mortal shall," not be exchanged for another body, but, shall "put on immortality." The very word *resurrection*, too, implies it. It is not re-creation, but it is *resurrectio, resurgo*, the raising that which is fallen, not the investiture with that which never was, and which has to be made again.

But there are difficulties, or rather, doubts, about what was the nature of our Lord's body after he rose from the dead. Some say, among the Fathers, after whose unanimous consent the Church of Rome is bound to interpret the Bible, that his body was an ethereal phantom. Others of the Fathers, with singular inattention to the duty of unanimity, assert that it is not a phantom, but a glorified body; and others assert, what is to us obviously true, that it was just

the same body that rose from the tomb that was laid in it, with all the marks, and features, and elements of its perfect identity. This seems to us the obvious and the natural view. The Apostles had no idea of any other. The resurrection of Lazarus was the same body coming forth from the tomb that was laid in it; the resurrection, if it may be so called, of the son of the widow of Nain, was his coming from the dead the same in form as he was before. That the body of Jesus was in one sense helpless, may be shown from this, that when he rose from the dead, it needed the descent of an angel to roll away the stone. And again, the angels said to the woman,—and this proves it was a true body,—“He is not here, but risen,” thereby showing that he could not be in two places at once. He partook of a fish and a honeycomb, which he ate before them; and all these are the characteristics of a real, identical, but resurrection body.

When he arose from the Mount, and ascended into glory, his body then became a glorified body. And my impression is, that our bodies will be, during the millennial reign, what Christ's body was after his resurrection, and before his ascension; and that in the everlasting state, of which the millennial state is the dawn, our bodies will be glorified like his at his ascension, of which we have a very imperfect idea. Christ's glorified body we have an account of in the Acts of the Apostles, where Paul says, “And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered,

Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." The only other hint is given in the Book of Revelation, where we have an allusion to it in these words, where one appeared in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, "like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were like a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." This is the only imagery used to describe what Christ was after his ascension, and entrance into glory.

What does the resurrection prove to us? First, it proves that the Atonement made on the previous day but one, was complete. If the Atonement had not been complete, and had not met every claim of a broken law,—if the obedience of Jesus had not covered every requirement of an exacting law,—the grave had kept him, and he had never appeared, the first-fruits of them that sleep. The Atonement was his triumph over sin; the Resurrection was his triumph over death. The very fact, therefore, that death could not hold him, and that the grave could not imprison him, is

proof that the great Atonement was complete, and that there was nothing more to pay.

And secondly, it is to us the proof that we too shall be raised from the dead. Every atom of a Christian's body is as truly redeemed as every faculty of a Christian's soul. The precious blood that was shed for us, has redeemed us, soul, and body, and spirit. It is not true that death shall take the body, and that God shall take the soul. They are both redeemed property; the blood of the Lamb is stricken upon them; and therefore the words of the poet shall be proved true:—

“Grave, the guardian of our lost,
Grave, the treasury of the skies,
Every atom of thy dust
Rests in hope against the rise.

“Hark! the judgment trumpet calls;
Soul, rebuild thy house of clay,
Immortality its walls,
And eternity its day.”

What consolation must this be to us who have parted with our dead dear to us on earth, and now concealed from us by the shadow of the tomb! The heart of the mourner longs to know, not that the dead are—for that he believes—but what they now are. The forms of our beloved dead—for there is no family that has not in it some place empty, some niche vacant—the forms of our departed dead frequently come back on the wings of our remembrance, for the memory of some is a picture-gallery of the dear that are gone. At evening-tide, venerable forms will emerge from amidst the shadows of the tomb, and appear to us more beautiful, because seen in the dim and hazy vista of the

past. At times, babes that bowed their heads like frost-stricken flowers prematurely in spring, will appear, at least in fancy, no longer in the clinging garments of the grave, but as if, by anticipation, in the robes of the resurrection morn. We are sure that they still are; but we long to know how they live, how they now appear. All we can say of the present is, that their mortal part is in the tomb; their souls, the persons, in glory, waiting for the time when the one shall be wedded to the other, and so both be for ever with the Lord. But we have no notion respecting the resurrection except what the Bible gives us. The ancient Greeks never dreamed of it; they listened to Paul, some sarcastically, and some benevolently, when he spoke of it. The Jews themselves had a very dim idea of it. Some quote the flowers bursting from the earth in April and May, and they say, "What a beautiful proof it is of the resurrection of the body, that that exquisitely fragrant thing, a rose, springs out of that dry, repulsive, and apparently dead stem, the root on which it grows." That does not prove the resurrection of the body; it is a very beautiful, poetical, and very just illustration of it. The best evidence of this is, that Jesus was buried in the midst of a garden; the disciples, Mary, and others, were weeping around it, with broken hearts; they saw the spring, not as it is with us, checked by wintry and frosty blasts, but in all its splendid Eastern glory, when the whole earth bursts into blossom, as if touched magically by the breath of God. And yet bursting roses, and opening flowers, and the green buds that started from every stem, even contiguous to the very tomb of Jesus, did not prove to the broken-hearted Mary that Christ would rise from

the dead. When he had risen, these things were beautiful types; but till he rose, they were dumb oracles, waiting for this fact to touch them, that their lips might become eloquent. But, knowing that Jesus rose, not as an individual, but as the first-fruits of them that sleep; we argue, if one rose from the dead, there is nothing to prevent millions upon millions rising. And, because one rose from the dead, we are told that all that are in their graves (and oh, what a variety of graves are in the world!) shall hear the voice of the Son of God, who is the Resurrection and the Life. That voice shall be heard by the silent dust that lies in the deep channels of the unfathomed ocean, the requiem of which, for a thousand years, has been the chimes of the desert sea; it shall reach the dust that sleeps with nothing but the floating sand for its winding-sheet, and no sweet flower to give the least token of life that is, or life that will be; and the dead buried there shall come forth. It will penetrate the green turf that covers the rude forefathers of the hamlet; and enter, with equal celerity, into monuments of brass and bronze, that are covered by the consecrated walls of ancient and venerable cathedrals. Abraham and Sarah shall hear it, in the heart of desecrated Palestine; and the dead bones of Joseph, borne through the desert to Canaan shall also hear it; the silent ashes of 3000 years, in their stony urns, in the chambers of the Egyptian Pyramids, shall hear it; and Pharaoh, who would not let Israel go, shall himself come forth at the bidding of Israel's God. When that voice speaks, none shall be deaf, none shall venture to delay, none shall disobey, none will be excused. The Pyramids of the Nile will give forth their sleeping dust; the ava-

lanches of the Alps will uncover the bones that are bleached beneath them; and the Atlantic Ocean will cast up its buried crews; and battle sods will be broken again, to let out the buried slain; and this mortal shall put on immortality; and death shall be swallowed up in victory.

If this great resurrection is to be, if God's people are thus to appear, shall we recognise each other? There is not a doubt about it. Deny that, and it seems to me you may as well deny the resurrection from the dead. Mighty will be the improvement; but permanent as heaven itself will be the identity. Why, the resurrection is not a vague extraction of a common nature from the dust; but it is a resurrection from the grave of all, with their distinguishing marks, none obliterated, but every feature developed with greater sharpness, force, and clearness. What a beautiful thought, that what pain has wrestled with, what disease has disfigured, what death has transmuted, shall rise perfect and beautiful; and the fallen shrine of mortality shall be reconstructed in more than its pristine and its greatest glory! That expression in the face of a beloved friend shall appear again; that smile of benignity and goodness that bade you welcome across the threshold, and that warmed your heart like sunshine, shall not perish, but re-appear; for this mortal shall put on immortality. Those kind tones, which you knew to be his or her voice, and which sounded so musical in your ear, shall be heard in yet more musical and beautiful vibrations. The resurrection shall restore to you infinitely more than death snatched from you. Death has gleaned the treasures; it has transplanted the flowers; it has reaped that which you garnered in your

bosom as your own; but not one blossom that death took from your bosom shall wither in his hand; not one sheaf that death reaped from your field shall ever be lost or dropped by him; each flower shall appear in richer blossom, each sheaf in greater wealth. You will find all you lost on earth restored with ten times double interest in heaven. And when you think that you shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with friend, and father, and mother, and sister, and brother, that were taken from you, not destroyed,—what grand thoughts, what ennobling hopes! Why, one wonders that one's heart does not leap with joy at the prospect; that, in anticipating all this, when Christ shall come again, in his kingdom, and the dead shall rise again, one does not wish that that time were shorter, and involuntarily say, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away!" That heaven, be it on the earth, or in the skies,—on the earth, as I believe it will be,—will not be a hermitage, but a home; it will not be a cluster of separate cells, like a prison, but the solemn chambers of our Father's home. Christ has taken possession of it for us. And the images of your dead—children, of your parents; parents, of your children; friends, of friends—the images that you store in memory, truer than the pictures that hang on the walls of your chambers, will never be effaced, until the originals take their place: when that which is perfect is come, that which is provisional shall be for ever done away with.

Such are the hopes of that blessed hour, the prospects of that great gathering; that city that hath foundations; that better country, of which the richest anticipations on earth are but dim presentiments; of

which the noblest palaces, and temples, and cathedrals, are but thin shadows.

Seeing, then, that we are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, our Passover, let us run the race set before us. Let our hearts be there; let our treasure be there; let our trust be there, where He is.

VII.

The Great Attraction.

IN the passage, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," Jesus who died, "Christ our passover sacrificed for us," who rose again from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep, preaches himself; what an Apostle never did, what an Apostle's successor never should do, what was, in short, the prerogative of Jesus alone. The place or scene of this is not important. If I view lifting up in its widest sense of magnifying, it matters not where. It is the fact that has the virtue, not the place where the fact occurs. All earth was consecrated when Jesus stepped on it; and on every hill, and nook, and valley, and mountain crag, upon the bosom of every stream; and on the wave of every sea, Christ may be preached and proclaimed our Atonement, and our Resurrection from the dead.

The person who preaches Christ is not a material element. There is one order of persons whose duty it is to study, whose office it is to preach, whose privilege it is to illustrate what they preach in their walk and conduct, of divine institution, to be perpetuated till the arrival of that day when we shall no more teach every

man his neighbor. But notwithstanding this, it is true that wherever a word is said for Christ, it shall have an echo; wherever Jesus is praised or proclaimed, it shall not return unto God void.

Nor does it matter vitally when this is done. Any hour is canonical, all days are holy, for holy work. The preaching of Christ once occurred at midnight, when a prison was the only sanctuary, and a rude jailor the only auditor, who believed, and rejoiced, and was baptized.

But this supposes that lifting up is used in the broad sense of preaching. Let us see in what sense this word is employed in Scripture, and what precise meaning we may attach to it.

First, it refers specially and emphatically to his death. "This," we are told, "he spake, signifying what death he should die." It seems strange to apply an epithet that denotes exaltation to a fact in itself the most humiliating of all. Is it not strange that the expression, elevation, should be applied to the death and sufferings of the Son of man upon the cross? It is really not so. The crown of thorns was nobler than the diadem of Cæsar; the robe that was cast upon his shoulders in mockery was more resplendent than imperial purple. It was his shame that he died; it was his glory that he died, not for himself, but a Sacrifice for us.

He may be said to be lifted up—and this will be admitted by all—in his resurrection. Then he rose from the dead; it was not possible that he could be kept under the power of the grave. Death fastens only on the sinner. Where there is no sin, there can be no suffering. Jesus went into the grave bearing

our sins, but he left there after having expiated them. The grave thought it had received a victim; it found it had received its vanquisher.

It may be said, our Lord is lifted up by different beings in the universe. In this respect he was lifted up or magnified by God the Father, when he said, "This is my beloved Son;" by himself, when he said, "I am the way;" "I am the resurrection and the life;" and by the Holy Spirit, when he descended upon him like a dove. The angels in glory also magnify Jesus. The angels announced his birth, and the angels in the Apocalypse are represented as saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." He was exalted or magnified also by the Prophets. "To him give all the prophets witness." All the prophets from Samuel testified of him. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. He was lifted up in this sense by John the Baptist: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He was exalted by the Apostles. His name is the key-note of every epistle; every sermon is inlaid with it; it is the music of every promise; it is the foundation of every precept. And he is magnified still by the true Church. It is the mark of a true Church that it sets forth Christ and him crucified. A certain class of divines say the Atonement ought to be a doctrine of reserve, that is, an isoteric doctrine, a mystery and hidden truth that the common people should not know; but wherever there is a true Church, it will preach Christ, and this alone will make Christians. The best sermons are not what are called eloquent or grand ones. Some people admire a sermon just in propor-

tion as they fail to comprehend it. If language be, as the old French diplomatist said, designed to conceal thought, then such sermons must be most eloquent; but if it be of the very nature of language that it shall convey thought, and if the best speaking is that which is most transparent, the sermon that tells us most clearly the greatest truths in the fewest words, with the deepest emphasis, you will best comprehend, and God will most bless. By a law of our economy, all sermons must reach the heart through the medium of the head; and if they are not comprehended by the mind, I cannot see, unless by a special miracle, how their holy and sanctifying contagion can be conveyed to the heart. The sermon that is most eloquent and grand, is like the summer lightning that plays magnificently amid the clouds, which the rustic looks up to and admires; but it will not give warmth to a fireside, or benefit to those that see it. A single coal burning upon one's hearth on a winter evening, is more precious to the poor than all the lightning that ever illuminated eastern or western skies; and the simple truth that comes home to your conscience in all its penetrating simplicity, and remains there, a seed that will not perish, a truth that will not be hushed, a motive that will not part with its spring, is better than all the grand and eloquent appeals that were ever made. It is the essential duty of a Church to exhibit Christ. The best Church is that which holds up Christ, not itself, most distinctly. The Presbyterian would Presbyterianize the world, if he could; the Episcopalian would Episcopelize the world; the Tractarian would Tractarianize it; the Romanist would Romanize it; but there are, we hope, more than a few who care comparatively little for these things, whose

hearts' desire and prayer to God is, that the world may fail, in all the respects to which we have alluded, to receive the least impression, and that in one only it may be impressed, by being Christianized.

If this expression, "lifting up," is to be used in the sense in which I have employed it, Christ will be lifted up by the two sacraments he has instituted in the Church, and by all the rites and ceremonies that have been thought needful in it for decency, propriety, and order. Baptism is not to be an exorcism, as it is in the Romish Church, to expel fiends from the infant heart. The Lord's Supper is not to be an idol, as it is in the same Church, for the people in their folly to adore. Baptism cannot regenerate the heart, and the Lord's Supper cannot save the soul. The instant that a sacrament is torn from its place of being a witness to Christ, and is made a substitute for Christ, that instant it parts with all its glory, and leaves a curse only upon those that have so perverted it. And so all the rites and ceremonies in the Church ought to have this tendency. Whatever in a Church abstracts the thoughts, the feelings, and the affections from the main thing, is wrong. It may be most exquisite architecture; but if it hide Christ, it is bad theology. It may be most beautiful music; but if it prevent worship, it is defective service. The rites and ceremonies may be most gorgeous; but if they are veils and obscurations of the truth, not mirrors that display it, they are vicious and heretical in the extreme.

A day comes, for which we long, and I think not very far distant, when all nature shall lift up and preach Christ. The earth has not been consigned to the devil. If Satan be in it, he is a usurper, not the

lawful sovereign. He has entered; he has not been sent; but a day comes when all sounds shall have their key-note Christ, and when all nature, like an Æolian harp, touched by the breath of God's Spirit, shall lift up Christ the first, and Christ the last,—Him all and in all.

When we speak then of the Lord Jesus being thus lifted up, it must denote that he is set forth in some definite light. In what character then is Jesus set forth? I am assuming that the word "lift up," not only denotes his being lifted up in his death upon the cross, and in his resurrection from the grave, but also, in the peculiar sense in which it is used in the Scripture, of being preached forth and exhibited. The simile would imply that if I tell you what Christ is, and proclaim him as being what he is, then salvation in your case is, not suffering a penance, but believing and instantly living the life everlasting. The less we discuss the question whether Christ died for all, or for the elect only; or whether this or that form of church government be best, the better. Whenever a sinner begins to grope his way to heaven, the devil always steps in and starts a side fight about liturgies, and organs, and church government, and various outside questions of that kind; and if Satan could see the whole world quarrelling about bishops and presbyters, he would have a momentary respite. What he dreads is, when all forget the shape of the vessel and think only of the glory it contains,—when all look away from the servants, and look at the Master only.

In what respects is Christ lifted up? First, he is set forth by every faithful preacher and true church as the only portrait of God our Father. In creation God is

obscured by the mist of sin; in the law God is seen, but it is in the flame of the consuming fire, and he who sees him is the first to beg that he may see the sight no more; but in Christ God is revealed as a Father, bending over his prodigal family, praying them to be reconciled, stretching out the hand of mercy after them; and ten thousand times more willing to take the worst of you back to an everlasting home than the best of us are willing to go to that home. What a beautiful illustration of this is the case of the prodigal! The father forgot, as he forgave, all his sins, and bade all about him rejoice that the dead was alive, and that the lost was found. No predestinating pressure sinks any man to hell; no decree of reprobation drives any man to ruin. None are in the realms of the lost but suicides, spiritually and morally self-slain; and none are in the realms of glory but brands plucked by grace from the burning, who have reached heaven by Christ the way: for "no man cometh to the Father but by me."

And again, we must lift up Christ in his death as the only sufficient atonement for our sins. Nothing we can do adds to its virtue, nothing we can suffer can increase its efficacy. You must rejoice to be saved by Christ's sacrifice alone, or you cannot be saved at all. We need no penitential works, no expiatory tears, no interceding saints, no propitiatory masses; Christ died once for all, and by him we are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.

And if Christ be thus preached, he will draw all men unto him. This expression "draw" denotes that we are distant by nature from him. Our sins have sepa-

rated between us and God. We are not separated from God physically, or essentially, because he fills all space; but morally, because we have sinned. But if we were only distant, we might easily be drawn; but we are also as disinclined to go to God as we are distant from God; and therefore both these must be overcome before we can ever come to God. But we are told by the Prophet that God says, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." The first is "with cords of a man," that is, rationally. When Christ draws us to himself, he does not draw us as beings destitute of reason, but by convincing our minds, and satisfying our judgment by many and infallible proofs of the great truths of Christianity. He draws us by conscience. A spark of the consuming fire is thrown into conscience, and the moment that a thoughtless ungodly man is left to himself, and his conscience begins to discharge its awful and stern functions, it reasons intolerably within him of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment. The thoughtless and ungodly can exist only by keeping conscience quiet, either by bribes, or by opiates, or by stimulants, or frivolities and distracting amusements; but as soon as a sinner is drawn to Christ, the spark of wrath is quenched, light dawns, and he has peace. "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the man whose mind is stayed on thee." We see that God is satisfied with Christ's sacrifice; and the whole thing so commends itself to conscience, that our reason is convinced, and conscience is at peace.

He draws us also by love, which is the mightiest attraction in the universe, and the fulfilling of the law. If love to God can be implanted in a man's heart, there

is in that germ the whole harvest of perfect conformity to the will of God. The great law and secret of our loving God is just what is said by an Apostle, "We love God, because he first loved us."

His love creates ours. He loves, and we love in responsive joy.

VIII.

Ashamed of Christianity?

WE have seen that Christ's death was atoning, that it was the great subject of the Apostle's preaching, and that risen from the dead he intercedes for us. In what Christ our Passover was in himself, and in what he accomplished on the Cross for us, there is nothing of which a Christian ought to be ashamed, but everything in which a Christian should always and everywhere glory and rejoice.

The Epistle to the Romans was addressed to the Christians resident at Rome by the Apostle Paul, an accomplished scholar, and a devoted Christian. To those who might be expected, from their peculiar views, to have little sympathy with him, he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." You will recollect that the virtues the gospel inculcates, the motives it implants, the ends it contemplates, and the process by which it proposes to accomplish those ends, were all substantially unintelligible to the Roman, and not likely to be appreciated by a people who had no taste for the softer virtues that elevate and adorn, but who rather gloried in the more terrible magnificence of war and victory. But, says the Apostle, whether in the Acade-

mus on the banks of the Ilyssus, amidst the philosophers of Greece, or in the Forum by the waters of the Tiber, amidst the warriors of Rome, I am neither ashamed of professing, nor will I shrink from glorying in the gospel of Christ.

Can there be any in modern times who should hesitate to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ?" There are few who shrink from the proprieties and decencies of Christianity. Most people like to have their children baptized, to come to public worship, to profess to be Christians. This is all proper; but there is something beyond all this. Are there not many who would not be ashamed of Christianity on the whole, but who would shrink from being thought spiritual, religious, godly people? And yet, if the gospel be what the Apostles pronounce it to be, why should any man be ashamed of it? If it be the most excellent thing in the universe, the inspiration of wisdom, the exponent of love, the salvation of souls, the study of angels, the glory of God, what ignorance, or what crime, in any one to be ashamed of such a gospel! Did you ever hear of a scholar ashamed of his learning, a rich man of being thought so, or a beauty ashamed of its charms? Can a Christian be ashamed of that which is the beauty of the universe, the safety of souls, the glory and the inspiration of God?

But let me show you by some plain, but, I think, conclusive facts, that there is no reason whatever for being ashamed of anything that is in the gospel, but, on the contrary, every reason for manfully avowing whose we are and whom we serve. We have no reason whatever for being ashamed of the great Author and theme of the gospel—Christ and him crucified. True,

he was a sufferer, and acquainted with grief. That was his shame; but it was his glory that he suffered not for himself. He lay in a manger; but angel choirs chanted his praise while he lay there, and royal personages came from afar to do him homage. True, he wept; but every tear was the extinction of a sin, or the exhaustion of a curse. He died; but the rending rocks, the quaking earth, the retiring sun, the thick darkness of noonday, composed a pall that never rested on the most illustrious dead. He lay in a grave, but it was its vanquisher, and not its victim, who was there. We must measure the greatness and the glory of the gospel's Author by a line stretching from the throne of heaven downward to the Cross of Calvary; from the adoration of cherubim to the execration of earth: and when we can measure that immeasurable descent, we shall have some conception of the glory and magnificence of him who is the Author and the End of the gospel.

It is a remarkable fact, that in all the worst assaults of scepticism, infidelity, and irreligion, the life and character of Jesus they have never dared to impugn. It is recorded by Josephus, that when the Roman soldiers under Titus and Vespasian came into the holy of holies of the Temple of Jerusalem, they were so struck by the awful magnificence of the place, that they did not dare to lay a profane hand upon it. Infidelity has assailed our Bible, our sacraments, our Christianity; but it has not dared to assail the character or impugn the principles of Jesus of Nazareth; and it is Rosseau himself, the profane infidel of France, who has pronounced upon our Lord the most eloquent eulogium ever enunciated perhaps in any tongue. We have

no reason for being ashamed of the Author of the gospel.

But there is no reason for being ashamed of its doctrines. The great question that perplexed ancient philosophy was, How shall God be just, and yet pardon sinners? Surely a religion that casts light upon this question is one of which we should not be ashamed. It tells us that Jesus endured all that we deserved, and paid all that we owed; and that by virtue of the first we are emancipated from the curse of a broken law, and by virtue of the second we are entitled to the reward of a law that we were not able to obey. What light has this gospel cast on the dreariest and darkest places of the human heart! What blessed joys has it awakened where all was sorrow and sadness before! What specimens of whatsoever things are pure, and just, and lovely has it created! Its doctrines have been proved by the experience of eighteen hundred years to be according to godliness. Are we ashamed of the character it gives of God? of the prospect it holds out of the future? of the work of the Holy Spirit? Is there one doctrine in this blessed book that does not bear the impress of a Divine original?

But again, we have no reason to be ashamed of the evidences upon which Christianity rests. Witnesses unimpeachable attest its divinity; history from its thousand chapters proclaims it to be from God; ancient prophecies, meeting in confluent streams in its majestic current, show that it was the object of the predictions of four thousand years; ancient types find their illustration in it; and all facts combine to show that it is no priestly fable. What efforts have been made to quench this light, and lo! it only burns

brighter. What efforts have been made to arrest its progress! and it moves only more enthusiastically in its appointed orbit, giving irresistible proof to all who will think, that this religion is the ambassadress of heaven, and the benefactress of earth. Well might the Apostle say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

We have no reason to be ashamed of the means by which the gospel has been promoted amongst mankind. If the religion of the New Testament had been a mere human religion, it would have allied itself with every earthly element. Mahometanism has trusted to the scimitar; and Romanism asserts its supremacy by its proscriptive and sanguinary laws. If Christianity had either cheated its way to ascendancy, or cloven its way to supremacy, I should be ashamed of it; but it seeks to obtain universal sway by persuading the judgment, convincing the reason, and softening the heart; and therefore I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

But if you will look at the fruits it has produced, you will come to the very same conclusion. Do not quote fanaticism, persecution, bigotry, intolerance; of such, alas! there has been plenty in the world. The apple-tree is not to be cut down because the spider weaves its web amongst its leaves; and Christianity is not to be rejected because of the parasite plants that cling to it, and have tried to identify themselves with it. The fruits of Christianity are temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, whatsoever things are pure, just, honest, lovely, and of good report. These are its fruits; and where they are not, Christianity is

not. If these are the fruits of Christianity, I am not ashamed of it. It opens the ear that is deaf to the music of heaven; it opens the eye that is blind to angelic beauty; it casts out evil passions; it subdues and sanctifies the heart; it raises men to the dignity of God's sons, and to the responsibility of God's free-men; it beautifies the desert, and makes the very wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose.

If you look at its more direct influences, you will see how little reason you have to be ashamed of it. Those hospitals for the poor — those retreats for the maimed, the wounded, the reduced — those asylums for the aged, — the most precious jewels in our country's crown, are all the offspring of Christianity. In heathendom such things were not; and I am not ashamed of a gospel that has borne such fruits as these.

If we look at the consolations of the gospel, we shall find no reason to be ashamed of it. This religion of ours alone can give that peace which passeth understanding. Have you been bereaved of your relatives or friends? — has not Jesus seized the opportunity, and lifted your affections from trailing on the ground, and made them cluster round himself? Is it not true that your greatest losses have often been your greatest gains? The greatest sufferer will have the greatest weight of glory. The loss of an earthly treasure will make you look for a heavenly one. The loss of the beloved below will make you cleave closer to the beloved above. If this religion thus comforts them that mourn, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but rejoice in accepting, professing, and proclaiming

it as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.

But if we look at the prospects it holds forth, we shall see no reason to be ashamed of the gospel. It tells me that the soul of the Christian no sooner leaves the frail tent that is deposited in the grave, than it joins the cherubim that are around the throne. Cicero, the most gifted of Latin orators, said he could not persuade himself that the soul did survive the body, but it was so dear and delightful a thought, that though he could not prove it, he still held it fast. What Cicero guessed, the Bible has enunciated as absolute fact. And not only so, but it tells me that the body I have left behind in the grave is not a cast-away, but that every atom of its dust is redeemed by precious blood, and that it sleeps sweetly, waiting for the first tone of the resurrection trumpet, when the mortal shall put on immortality. And it tells me also that earth shall come under a more glorious genesis, that its bleakest deserts shall yet blossom as the rose; that Nature, long a weeper, shall lay aside her ashen garments, and put on her Easter robes; and the wild wail of sorrow that, like a melancholy minor, runs through all the sounds of nature, shall melt in that last and lofty jubilee, "Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" If these be the prospects of the gospel, surely every Christian must say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

But, you ask, how are we to show this? First, by personal acceptance of the gospel. Christianity demands, not compliments, but the supremacy of the human heart. Either this religion is everything, or it

is nothing. Does this religion penetrate your heart? Is it, not a profession that you loosely hold, but the wisdom and power of God governing your heart, your conscience, and your life? We shall show that we are not ashamed of the gospel by our conduct. Never does the Christian faith shine with so impressive a splendor, as from the quiet, unobtrusive life of a true Christian. If we be not ashamed of the gospel, it will not be with us an exhibition for a holiday, a splendid procession, an anniversary display, 'paraded upon the Sabbath, but it will go with us in every winding of the world; it will make Sabbath days cheerful, and working days holy; it will not be profession, but practice. Religious meetings are not religion; a text upon every panel of your house is not religion; crucifixes and images are not religion. Religion is a life, not a creed; it is a character, not a profession; it is that which gives tone, shape, direction, impetus, to the least that man does in his private home, and to the loftiest deed that he performs before the world. Some say, "Business is business, and religion is religion, and we wish the two to be separate;" but the very persons who say so bring their business into their religion. This they do not object to; what they do not like is bringing their religion into their business. Now it appears to me that business without religion is just time exhausted of eternity, or humanity trying to get away from God.

We do not advocate a religion of display, parade, or ostentation. This is offensive to God and hateful to man. But what we do advocate is a religion so conscious of its own dignity and truth as to be superior to

all the influences of fear or favour amongst mankind; a religion too meek to obtrude itself, but too noble to shrink from declaring itself—not pretence, not profession, and yet not timidity,—a religion that shall boldly say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for whom, blessed Lord, have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth we desire beside thee.”

IX.

Passover Tidings.

I CLOSE the interesting truths I have endeavoured to unfold in this little volume with a statement of the good tidings which Christ our Passover warrants us to make known. They are these :—

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinth. v. 20, 21.

The Apostle presents himself, together with those who were associated with him, as ambassadors for Christ, — “as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.”

What is an ambassador? What are we to understand by the application of such a name to the ministry of the gospel of Christ? An ambassador is one delegated by his sovereign to represent his country at a foreign court, and to bring the things that relate to his nation before a foreign power, to explain them, and to present them as they are and as they ought to be. He is not called upon to devise measures, but to declare measures previously determined. He is not

appointed to make laws, but to unfold at a foreign court what are the laws, what the duties, the intentions and designs of his country and his queen, so far as these may be committed to him. A minister of the gospel occupies precisely the same position; he is not called upon to make laws, or enunciate ordinances, or to create or originate truth, but simply to declare what is truth, what the King of Kings has committed to his charge, and what is the will of Him by whom kings reign, and by whom princes decree justice.

An ambassador can be made only by his sovereign. He may be a duke, an earl, or a baron; he may have the richest learning, the greatest worth, the highest genius; but none of these, nor all of these together, constitute him an ambassador of his queen; there must be this one grand preliminary,—a commission from his sovereign. No genius will do without it, no virtue is a compensation for the absence of it; the very first requirement in his character is that he should be sent directly from his sovereign to deal with the matters committed to his care, in a foreign country and at another court. It is so with a minister of the gospel. A bishop in the Church of England does not make a minister; he declares only who is a minister: a presbytery in the Scotch Church does not create a minister; that presbytery only pronounces who is already a minister, and who may publicly execute the office of the ministry in the Church of Christ. And very beautifully in the Church of England Service it is said, “Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?” and if a man should say, “No,” then all the bishops in England cannot make him a minister; but if he say, “Yes,” then charitably

they believe what he says, and ordain him as an ambassador already sent from the King of kings, and publicly authorize him, as far as man can, to minister in the great congregation. Such is an apostolical ambassador, and such the duties, and the functions, and the responsibilities of that office.

Now, says the Apostle, we are ambassadors for Christ; we have come forth from him with a special commission; and in this respect most certainly every true minister of the gospel has the apostolical succession, only our succession is not from Paul or Peter,—that is not enough,—but from the Lord of Paul and the Lord of Peter. It is not the outer consecration, but the inner call that constitutes a minister. The outer consecration is, I admit, an ordinance of God, most proper, most dutiful, most scriptural, but that outer consecration, in the absence of the inner commission, cannot make a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, says the Apostle, we are “ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” We *beseech* you. How very different is that from the preaching of him who would say, not, “we beseech you,” but, “we scold you, we command you, we decide and determine that you shall do so.” You may depend upon it that human nature never can be driven; but human nature, even in its worst phases, may be drawn to adopt sentiments. I do not believe that the preaching of the terrors of the Lord is so fitted to win sinners to the Cross of Christ, as the preaching of the expression of an infinite love, and the beseeching in Christ’s name, “Be ye reconciled to God.” And this is not mere conjecture from the peculiarity of the human mind; we have a

precedent for it in the conduct of our blessed Lord. When he spoke to a Church, what did he say? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He is the Creator of the human frame; he made the human mind; he might insist upon an entrance, he has a right to it; and yet the Lord of glory will rather wait than insist; and his Apostle surely, in imitating his beautiful and blessed example, has not done wrong. It has been said by many, and very beautifully by a great orator and statesman, that an Englishman's house is his castle; that the rains and winds of heaven may penetrate every crevice, but into that hut or hovel not the Queen of England can enter as a matter of right, without the owner's permission. It is a noble trait in our country's constitution, that every man's house, however humble, is his castle. The Lord Jesus seems to respect the living house he has made, as the constitution of the realm respects the earthly and frail house man builds within it. Jesus will not force an entrance where he might; he will rather remain outside, and, like the Apostle, his ambassador, beseech you to open and give admission, and be reconciled to him.

When an ambassador comes to a foreign court, to declare his commission, and to discharge his duty, it is not his office, mark you, to create relationships, but to declare them; not to make peace arbitrarily, and of his own accord, but to proclaim what his sovereign has decreed. So a minister of the gospel of Christ is not called upon, nor is he sent, to make a sacrifice, but to declare one finished; not to make an atonement, but to proclaim Christ our Passover the Atonement already made. He is sent, not to absolve, but to show where absolution may be obtained; not to make peace in vir-

tue of his own rights, powers, and prerogatives, but to tell how and on what terms, as he himself is charged, peace may be made with the King of kings, rebels may be made loyal subjects, and the whole world may be overspread with the beauty and the blessedness of millennial and of Christian peace. Thus we see that a minister's office is that of an ambassador, not a priest. I cannot see in the word of God, from its commencement to its close, the shadow of a shade of a reason for calling a minister of the gospel a priest. It does happen that, in the Rubrics of the Liturgy of the Church of England, that word is used; but I can say, from really tracing the subject, that the word *priest* is the translation there of the Greek word *πρεσβύτερος*, and never was meant by the Reformers to be the translation of the Greek word *ιερεύς*, "a sacrificing," or "a propitiatory priest." In the Church of God we have no such officer as a priest, and I believe that none of such a name has a right to officiate at the communion-table, any more than a colonel of the Horse Guards, or a commander of the troops. We do not know of anything that such an officer can do. We know of presbyters, and pastors, and bishops, and ministers, but a sacrificing priest in the house of God we know not — we have nothing for him to do, and he had better, therefore, betake himself where some special function is provided for him; there is none for him known in the Protestant Church; and long may that Church flourish without a nook or niche in its walls for that monstrosity in Christian history, a sacrificing priest.

The Apostle having thus stated what ministers of the gospel are, namely, ambassadors, men who are to de-

clare what is, not to constitute what is not; he lays down, most beautifully, the basis on which they are to proceed; and he says, the basis of your exhortation is—what? That you have the apostolical succession? No. That you are the Established Church? No. That you are Dissenters? No. That you are learned men? No. That you have the degree of M.A., of D.D., or B.D. at a university? No. Whatever these things may be, they are not the ground,—and I am not depreciating them, I am only putting them in the right place. It is a grand mistake to suppose that you depreciate a thing when you take it out of its wrong place, and put it in the right one. I honour the Church when I put it in the right place, and I give no honour to Christ by taking him out of his place. They dishonour the Church, the minister, the ordinance, who lift them from their own appropriate place, and put them in the place of Christ; for whoever, priest, minister, or ordinance, steals a ray from the glory of the Son of God, by necessity takes a curse into his own bosom. Now, then, says the Apostle, the basis of your appeal is to be nothing but this,—the ground on which you are to operate, the back-ground from which your lessons are to be thrown forward, is just to be this,—“God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we,” who have known and done nothing but sin, “might be made the righteousness of God in him.” In other words, the doctrine which our Tractarian friends say should be made a doctrine of reserve, that is, Christ’s Atonement, is, by the Apostle Paul, made the very basis of operation; and instead here of being the last thing to be enunciated, is declared to be the first thing to be put forward. In this,

most certainly, those persons have not the apostolical succession,—at least, if they have what they say, they do not imitate apostolical example; and better be without the apostolical succession, if the doctrines we enunciate are apostolical truths, reverberating through the length and breadth of Christendom, while we assume, as the ground of our mightiest influence, that God “hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Having thus reached the basis of action, let us notice what it means, and what truths may be gathered from it. It mentions, first of all, a thing which is only a monosyllable in speech, but an inexhaustible spring of misery in reality, and in the future,—the word *sin*. A breath can utter it—eternity will not exhaust it. What means the word which is here called *sin*? It is defined by the Apostle to be “the transgression of the law.” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” is the law. The least interruption or suspension of that love is transgression, or sin. Now battle, murder, famine, plague, pestilence, death, these are not sins in themselves; they may be misfortunes or chastisements, but, whether the one or the other, they are the progeny and the offspring of sin. Sin explains all the calamities we see. It is the solvent of all the discords that we hear; it is the why and the wherefore of our present abnormal, unnatural, painful position and condition in the world, and therefore, until you fall back upon this one thing, *sin*, you never can explain the world, or why we are thus situated, and wherefore these calamities and troubles. The pulse at the wrist beating 120 is not the cause of fever, but the

sign of fever; battle, murder, famine, intemperance, dishonesty, are not the cause of man's sin, but the evidences, and the fruits, and the results of it. If you meet with a drunken man, and induce him to cease to indulge in that which is so abominable and so horrible, —drunkenness, you merely stop up one exit for the inner malady called *sin*, and that inner malady will seek an exit by another avenue in that man's character. The true way to reform man's nature is not so much to preach against drunkenness, most important as it is in its place, but to preach against sin, the mother of drunkenness; and when you have rooted out that which is the cause, the effects and the issues will soon be removed also. I believe that what is called Tectotalism—which has done great good, and I am sure if it could do more good I should rejoice—is not the cure for drunkenness; nothing else will do but the grace of God, and nothing more is absolutely required. If a man be a truly converted person, let him drink from a cask, he will not get drunk; but if he be unconverted, let him drink from a bottle or a cup, and he may. It is not the quantity in the landlord's cellar that will make that landlord drunk; if he can be put right internally with God, all that is externally right will immediately and undoubtedly follow.

Speaking further of this element here mentioned, *sin*, I may state, in the next place, that sin is the only thing in this grand universe that God did not make. He made all things that are seen,—the lowest reptile, and the loftiest archangel; the babe that prattles by its mother's knee, and the cherubim and the seraphim that are about his throne. He made the pebble by the sea-shore, and the sparkling planet in the sky; the bee

and the behemoth,—all that is exquisitely minute, all that is magnificently grand,—and the superscription and the signature of his power, legible in the glory in which it was struck, is traceable upon them all; but sin he did not make, and it was not numbered in the catalogue of those things over which God said, “It is very good.” You say, If God did not make it, whence came it? I am just as ignorant as you are. Ask the sceptic, and he will say, “I cannot tell.” Ask Socrates, ask Plato, and they will answer, “We cannot tell.” But whatever be the source of sin, however it came into this once fair, beautiful, and magnificent creation, God did not make it, and God is not answerable for the presence of it in the midst of us. And, in the next place, it is the only thing that I believe will be cast out of this world. I do not believe that God means to expunge this orb from its sisterhood in the skies. Why should he do so? He has not said that he will do it; on the contrary, he has said that he will purify it with that last baptism of fire, but he has not said that he will annihilate it. And if God were to annihilate this orb, it seems to me that it would be saying to Satan, You have got your will; you entered this orb to destroy it, and you have succeeded. There is nothing in this earth that needs to be destroyed, except that which is the cause of the discord in its harmony, which is the source of its disquiet, its fear, and its misery, namely, *sin*. I could take the reader to glens, ravines, and panoramas amid the hills of my native land, so beautiful that he would say, Well, take away sin, and its shadow, death, and I could wish to live here for ever. There is nothing sinful in a rock, there is nothing unclean in a beautiful flower, there is nothing that dis-

honours God in a bright star,—why should these things be destroyed? We only want them cleansed from the trail of the foul serpent, and consecrated by the foot-step of our blessed Lord, and then this earth, marred and dismantled, stained and fevered, will lay aside its ashen garments, and put on its Easter robes, and Paradise will close it as Paradise began it. Sin is the only thing that God will eject; the instant it is cast out, this earth will be beautiful. This world is to be a part of heaven. I believe that in my resurrection body I shall see this world again, that I shall recognise those with whom I took sweet counsel. And where is the difficulty? Some men have an idea that matter, rock, stone, flower, fruit, sky, light, sunshine, sea, are all such vile things, that they ought to be exterminated. Why the whole universe is filled with matter; our resurrection bodies will be matter, and there is nothing in matter essentially sinful: it needs but its last baptism, and it will be beautiful again, and excel its first, its morning beauty, when the angels sang together for joy over a new-born globe. Not only is sin the thing that will be ejected from the world, but the only thing that God hates. We in our folly often hate the sinner, God never. He so loved the sinner, that he gave his Son to die for him; he so hates the sin, that nothing short of the blood of Christ can expunge its dye and its guilt; and he has determined that the sin must be separated from the sinner, before the sinner ever can be happy. I think I quoted, in the course of my remarks, one thing in the Church of England; let me quote another:—there is a Collect which I think begins in the following words,—“O God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made.” I think that is ex-

quisitely true and beautiful. God hates nothing he made; sin he did not make, man he did make; and he so loves that lost, ruined, pained, grieved, fevered man, that to separate between him and his sins, he gave his own dear Son to die for him; and until that separation can be made by the blood of Jesus, there will be no happiness for the greatest saint, any more than for the greatest sinner. God hates sin, but there is no evidence that he hates the sinner. He pities the sinner; he hates the sin. And so should we. In dealing with mankind, if you meet with one who has gone far wrong, it is a most wretched plan to persecute him with penances and penalties. Man's conscience is so sacred a thing, that even in its aberrations it ought to be respected; and I believe that every man has a right to worship God in the way that his conscience tells him is right, even though it be wrong, and he who does violence to that, does violence to the constitution of man. But when I see one who has gone conscientiously wrong, because he is conscientious I respect him, because he is so fatally wrong I pity him, and will try to undeceive him. I believe that the ostentatious Cardinal, who came into this country to upset its laws, feels towards his master, the Pope, as conscientiously as we do towards our Lord and Master Jesus Christ; but because he is conscientious I will treat him with respect, and because he is fatally and fearfully wrong I will try to undeceive him, and because his error is contagious I will try to show you how it is your duty and your privilege to resist and protest against it. In the next place I observe of sin, that which Christ was made for us, that it is the only thing which is an absolute disgrace. I do not believe that poverty is disgraceful. I do not look upon a

beggar's rags as in the least discreditable. I know too well that the fashion of this world leads you to do homage to a man well dressed, and to retire to a respectful distance from a man in rags; but that man clothed in rags may be noble, and the man graced with a coronet may be mean, paltry, and miserable; it is the royal heart that makes royal robes, and royal robes without it never can make a royal heart. Many a noble character sweeps a crossing; many a mean craven slave sways a sceptre, and sits upon a throne. We are to estimate man by what he is, not as we do a cinnamon tree, which is valuable only for its bark, by what he wears. Nothing is a shame but sin. A man in rags may be pitied, may be prayed for; he may not be scorned. There are too many of the fragments of his aboriginal grandeur about him, there is too much of his origin radiating from his brow, to let me despise him, even in his degraded state; there is too much to make me pray for him, much to induce me to try to undeceive him, if in error; nothing, nothing, that can make me scorn and despise him. Learn, then, to stand upon that noble platform, where you can see sin alone to be shame, let it be clothed in purple and fine linen every day, and manliness and holiness to be true and sublime, even if, like Lazarus, clothed in rags, and eating of the crumbs that the dogs do eat.

Having noticed this monosyllable *sin*, which it is said Christ was made, I proceed to what is really the substance of the statement, and inquire in what respects Christ was made sin. It is said, "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now I wish to know in what respect Christ was made sin.

First, he did not take a sinful nature. This was the sentiment of one distinguished by great genius, but in his last years by very awful and painful aberration; aberration that was intellectual, therefore to be deplored,—not designed, and therefore to be rebuked. I do not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ had a sinful nature. If he had, he could not make an Atonement for me. I believe that he was the holy, harmless Son of God: that is what is meant by “the holy thing which shall be born of thee.” He was the Lamb without blemish. His nature was just as distant from sin,—to use the language of a master spirit of the last age, one whose loss was one of the greatest calamities of his day, the late William Howells of Long Acre,—the humanity of Jesus was as remote from sin as was his Godhead. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Then in what sense was Christ made sin? I open the Prophet Isaiah, and he tells me that he “bore our sins in his own body;” and I read again, that “on him were laid the iniquities of us all,” and that “he bore our sins in his own body on the accursed tree.” In other words,—to use a term that has been disputed, and made the subject of controversy, (and not the worse on that account,)—our sins were *imputed* to him. He was man really, he was a sinner putatively; he was made man, he was constituted a sinner. *In* him there was nothing but infinite purity, *on* him there were the sins and the transgressions of us all. It was not the treachery of Judas, nor the sentence of Pilate, nor the fury of the Jews that slew him; it was not sin in him, or done by him, that brought about his death; it was our sins laid upon him that dragged him to the dust of death, and made him an offering. He was the

holy, innocent, spotless Lamb; but over him and on him was the tainted and polluted fleece of our transgressions, and God, seeing that tainted fleece upon him, treated him as if he were the stray and fallen sheep of humanity, upon whom lay the guilt and transgression of it all. Our sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus; he took our infirmities, our sorrows, really; he took our sins, our transgressions, putatively. He *was* man, he was *made* a sinner. On him, again to use the language of the prophet Isaiah, were laid the iniquities of us all.

It is said, that God thus made him — “made him to be sin for us.” God’s wisdom devised the plan, God’s love prescribed the plan, God’s glory was the end of the plan, and salvation to us was the result. I am not discussing whether the thing adapts itself to our reason or not; I merely state that, as an ambassador for Christ, all this is in my credentials and commission. I know and am persuaded that it is the truth and the inspiration of God. Jesus became the Great representative Sinner of Christendom, the representative of lost and stray humanity; he took our place, he stood in our shoes, he was arrayed in our responsibilities, and, as humanity gathered up and headed in one, he became the subject of the judgments that all humanity had provoked, and he suffered, the just in the room of the unjust, to bring us to God.

Now, says the Apostle, in the very same sense (and here comes out the precious truth) in which Christ was made sin for us, in that very same sense, nothing less, nothing more, we are made righteousness in him. In what sense, I ask again, was Christ made sin for us? Sin was laid on him. In the same sense, says the

Apostle, we are made righteousness in him. His righteousness is laid upon us. Imputed sin was the cause of Christ's agony; imputed righteousness is the ground of our everlasting joy. The sin that was on Jesus was external to him; the righteousness that is on us is external to us. When Jesus died upon the cross, there was nothing in him worthy of death; when you and I, reader, shall be admitted into glory, there will be found nothing in us worthy of eternal life. He died with sin on him, not in him; we shall be glorified with righteousness upon us, not in us; and just as God smote him, because of our sin upon him, God will glorify us because of his righteousness upon us. His was death-deserving sin imputed to him, ours is heaven-deserving righteousness imputed to us. When he suffered for sin, all the shame was ours; when we shall be glorified for righteousness, all the glory will be his. Sin upon him brought him to the cross, righteousness upon us will lift us to heaven and everlasting happiness. God looked at Jesus, and saw my tainted fleece, whilst he shut his eyes to the innocent Lamb that was under it; so God will look at us, and shut his eyes to the stray sheep, and look only at the spotless and glorious righteousness that is upon us. What a perfect and complete prescription is the Gospel of the Son of God! No wonder that all Europe shook when Martin Luther preached this grand truth; no wonder that all the Papacy was smitten with paralysis in proportion as it felt the vibrations of this grand declaration: "God hath made him to be sin for us, that we, who have known nothing but sin, may be made the righteousness of God in him." Thus our position is, that as it was just in God to let forth the expressions of his wrath

upon Jesus, because of our sins laid on him, so it will be just in God to let forth the expressions of his love upon us, because of Christ's righteousness laid upon us. Jesus paid all that we owed to God, and purchased for us more than God ever promised to us; and if I were called upon this very day to appear at that judgment seat, I could face it without one flinching or failing presentiment, deep in the conviction of this grand truth, that I am clothed in a righteousness so spotless, that an angel's tear would stain it; so pure that a sainted martyr's blood would defile it; the very righteousness of Jesus himself, arrayed in which I have a title to heaven, and presenting which I can say, what my Bible tells me, that God is not only merciful to forgive me, but faithful and just to forgive me all my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Blessed truth! glorious Gospel! glorious privilege! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, the Lord Jesus Christ.

No man who understands this grand truth will ever accept any of the quack and empirical prescriptions of the Vatican. The man who feels, "I have a righteousness in which I am clothed," who can say, "I am complete in Christ," will answer those who are giving other prescriptions, which are yet another Gospel, "I do not need penance, I do not need anguish to expiate a sin; the blood of Christ has done it. I do not need to give alms, or any other acts, in order to constitute merit; Christ's righteousness is all my merit. I do not need to do anything that I may expiate a single sin, or anything that I may deserve a single blessing. I am complete in Christ, his atonement my emancipation from the curse, his active righteousness my title to heaven

and everlasting joy." Unless we have a clear, strong grasp of his truth, we stand in jeopardy every hour. We may depend upon it, that unless we hold fast this truth, there is a charm, an unearthly charm about Romanism, that will make us captives. I do not wonder so many go over to Romanism, but what I am astonished at is, that every man who is not converted, and who does not know this truth, does not go over to Romanism. If I did not know this truth, I declare there is so much in that Church to please the carnal heart,—it is so gratifying to be able to sin here, and to go there for absolution, and to come back and sin again, and by way of compensation to have to perform a little penance,—it is so easy to human nature to go to confess to a priest, a sympathising, dear father, who will sympathise with your sin, not suffering; and it is so difficult to deal with one's own conscience in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God,—it is so easy to do penance, it is so difficult to repent,—that I confess, if I were not a child of God, as I trust by grace I am, I should become a Roman Catholic by the seductions of the Church of Rome. But if I grasp this great truth, that I am complete in Christ, and if I stand, not upon Churchmanship, nor upon Dissent,—for these are not worth one farthing in the coming struggle,—but upon the substance of evangelical religion, of Protestant Christianity, I can successfully withstand all the aggressions of Romanism; but if I let go this, I must become a speedy victim to a system which grows in popularity every day, a system that will yet scourge us before it has done with us, and will lead us to value more than we ever have done in days past that grand boon, an open Bible, a preached Gospel, a glori-

ous Saviour, Heaven without money and without price, a Bible without a clasp, a Cross without a screen, and all things freely for Christ's sake.

What is salvation? Nothing more and nothing less than taking God at his word. The man who understands the truth we have been explaining, and can plead it and hold it fast, and incorporate it by the Holy Spirit's aid in his heart, is safe. Faith is not doing something that is not done, but receiving something already done. The old legal system was, Do, Do, Do, till you reach the requisite amount, and then claim the deserved reward; but the evangelical system is, Believe, Believe, Believe, and thou shalt be saved. In the case of Adam, Adam had to do, or to produce, or to weave out, or to spin out, if you like, a righteousness; and when he had done the work, he got the reward; but in our case God gives the price, puts it in our hands, and says, Go forth to the world, and show how much, and how truly, how deeply you love me. And hence, if any one attempts now, in imitation of Adam, to work out his own righteousness, he has the feeling of a slave, and not his success; whereas the Christian has only the feeling of a son, who serveth the father who loveth him. Salvation is just, in one word, faith, trust, confidence in this blessed truth, that God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God does not say that he will give salvation to a certain amount of faith. It is not the degree of our faith, but the reality of our faith. If our faith be strong, we have greater comfort, but not greater safety; if our faith be weak, we have greater perplexity, but not greater danger. Salvation is the belief of

this testimony, the laying the whole heart's stress upon it, and pleading before God that we are ready to brave a judgment-seat, and to go into the presence of the Judge, with nothing less, and seeking nothing more, than Christ's righteousness, our only title, all our salvation and all our desire. But you say, If this be the case, will not men presume, and indulge in sin, because grace has abounded? Well, bad as human nature is, I cannot think that of it, because if a person so loves you that that person does some great act, or undergoes some great sacrifice to help you, is it likely now that you will try to vex that person? Is it not much more likely that you will strive to love and serve him? You say, Such a religion, such a salvation, will make men live as they like. I answer, Certainly, it will make men live as they like, but then the liking will be changed by the change of circumstance. Your liking now is to live in sin, but your likings, when you live under a new attraction, are placed on a new basis; inspired by a new influence, will be to obey God's law, for you will love him with your whole heart, and soul, and strength. We are told in the Scripture, that "love is the fulfilling of the law;" that is, plant in a man's heart love to God, and you guarantee in that man's life obedience to God's law. Well, the way to implant love to God is to show how God loved us; the apostolical plan is, "We love God because he first loved us;" and if you see that God loved you, and respond to that by love to him, the result will be that you will delight to do God service, and obey his will.

THE END.

The Comforter.

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The Comforter.

I.

The Ministration of the Spirit.

A FAVOURITE and instructive line of teaching in the New Testament Scriptures is that of allusive contrast. The New Testament economy shows us the lustre of the Old, and the Old finds its complement in the clear and beautiful expositions of the New.

It is in this strain that St. Paul refers, in the following words, to the old dispensation:—“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made

glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth."—2 Cor. iii. 7-10.

The Apostle argues that the Levitical dispensation was "glorious." It was so: it was given on Sinai, amid great pomp and unearthly splendor. On the mount the very face of Moses shone with glory, from its contact with the presence of Deity. The ministration of the Spirit, that is, the evangelical economy, is yet more so. The first was the ministration of death—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" the second is the communication of life. The one presented a rigid and inflexible law—the other imparts a plastic and transforming principle; the first was engraven on stone—the last on the living tablets of the heart. The ministration of the law was essentially transitory; its lightnings are now laid, its thunders lulled, its tables broken, and its whole structure and economy dissolved: but the ministration of the Spirit is to stretch into everlasting ages, to add to the brightness of heaven, and to give tone and colouring to the thoughts and praises of the redeemed throughout eternity.

But the ministration of the Spirit is not placed in antagonism to the ministration of the law, as if the one were contrary to the other. They are not so. On the contrary, the one is the complement of the other: the first is the bud, and the last is the full blossom; the one is a series of types—the other, of truths; the one presents us with the patriarch at his altar, the Jew in his temple, and the priest in his holy place—the other gives us the preacher in his pulpit, the hearer in his pew, and the great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens. External rites have passed away, like clouds from the sky, but eternal truths, struck into the

heart, remain, like the stars, for ever. The altars of Judaism have been abandoned, its victims have ceased to bleed, and instead the Holy Spirit now preaches and points to the great oblation made once for all for the sins of mankind. Moses is no longer read in the synagogue, but Christ is preached in the church; the priest no longer burns incense within the veil, but the Redeemer intercedes in heaven; Sinai emits no more thunders, but the "still small voice" is yet audible to the people of God; the lightnings that flash despair are no more seen, but "the light of God's countenance" is still "lifted up" upon his saints. In short, there has been progress in God's revelation of his will—that progress which is visible in creation. Is not the earth a vast laboratory? are not islands emerging from the deep? are not new shapes and forms of crystallization taking place? do not all things work upward towards perfection? So Revelation has been progressive from its dawn to its nearing noon.

It is not, however, meant to be alleged, that the Holy Spirit was not in the former dispensation. It was true in the days of Abraham, just as it is true now—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There was never but one church, and there never was but one way of turning sinners into saints; there never was but one spring of life, one element of victory, one source of sanctification—the Holy Spirit of God.

Wherein, it may be asked, then, was the difference? We answer, it was in degree, not in kind. There is "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn;" the spring leaps from the hill-side, and swells into the river, that bears on its bosom the navy of the empire,

and the treasures of the earth. And these are but the just illustrations of the progress of the kingdom of Christ, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, from Moses to Paul, and from Paul to Luther. The one dispensation was the grub in its chrysalis state — the other the beautiful butterfly, unfurling its wings, and sailing in the air, a thing of life. We have far greater light, more glorious privileges, more inspiring hopes; the glory of the dispensation of the Spirit is as much superior to that of the dispensation of the law, as is the glory of that city that hath no need of the sun nor of the moon, to that of the earthly Canaan; and if there be no nobler nor more illustrious specimens of Christianity now than of old, it is our sin and our shame, and nothing else.

The superiority of our dispensation to the previous one will be seen in such points of view as the following. We have, in the Gospel dispensation, views of God far more beautiful, consolatory, and clear. In the dispensation of the law the Father was clouded with the awful drapery of the Judge; his very presence shook the earth, and made even Moses tremble; the flaming sword of the cherubim needed to be passed under, before the hungry could eat of the tree of life. But in the evangelical dispensation “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to men their trespasses”—and “the Spirit of adoption,” which we receive, helps us to see, and to say—“Abba, Father.” It is written upon its very lintels and doorposts, as its great central truth—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

If we look to the worship of the old dispensation, as contrasted with that of the new, we shall see the superior glory of the latter. The one had a heavy and costly ceremonial, fitted to awe and dazzle men's senses—the latter has a simple and sublime service, calculated to reach and captivate men's hearts; the one possessed an outward Leviticus, with rigid rubrics—the other is characterised by an inward and spiritual worship. The Jewish church was “all glorious without”—the Christian church is “all glorious within.” All that the former had materially, the latter has morally. Truth, the lamp of the holy place—life, the rubric—love, the ritual—all hours canonical, and all places holy—every day an anniversary, and every spot a shrine. The one, in short, was the letter—the other is, in one word, the life.

If we look at the place of worship, we shall see also another evidence of the superior glory of our dispensation. The temple was the central object of the former, with its mercy-seat, and its shechinah, and its overshadowing cherubim, and its other impressive furniture. Have we anything to correspond to this? We have that which infinitely eclipses it. I do not quote those vast and truly magnificent structures, our cathedrals, where the very stones of the earth seem to have had life, and to have shot up into foliage and blossom; but we have what Christ himself pronounced to be the true temple—his own holy and perfect humanity; and wheresoever, in the poorest cellar, or in gorgeous hall, or in royal palace, or in rags, in ermine, in lawn, or in purple, we find a true Christian, we find a true temple, beside which cathedrals, shrines, and synagogues, the temple of Solomon, with all its glory, and the temple

of Herod, with all its augmented magnificence, become dim and pale—for that true Christian is “the temple of the Holy Ghost.”

The Jew had also his high priest, a divine and august institution; but we have a far more glorious Priest. The Jewish high priest offered first for his own sins, then for the sins of the people, and eventually died; but we have a High Priest who has “passed into the heavens,” and liveth for ever, “holy, harmless, and undefiled,” arrayed in the imperishable robes of our humanity—our names upon his heart, and our souls in his hand. The shadow, in short, is absorbed in the eternal substance; the star that was beautiful, but dim and distant, and without any mellowing power, is lost in the full-orbed splendor of the unsetting sun; the rite has perished, but the religion remains; the ceremony has “waxed old as doth a garment, and as a vesture it is folded up,” but the Son of God is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” If, then, the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”

The former dispensation had its sacrifices, but this was their imperfection, that the same sacrifice was oft-times offered, and could not take away sin. They had the morning and the evening lamb, the lamb of Levi—

we have “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;” the Jew had his paschal lamb, that was offered once a year—we have “Christ our passover, sacrificed for us.” Our sacrifice needs no repetition, and is capable of no increase. Its retrospective efficacy reached Adam, amid the *debris* of Paradise—its present efficacy comprehends the round globe, as with a glorious zone, and its prospective blessings are inexpressible now, as they will be unexhausted throughout eternity.

But who is the Spirit, whose ministration we have been considering?

First, we allege, he is a Person; and secondly, that Person is God. The following passages are evidences that he is a Person, and not (as the Socinian alleges) an influence, a metaphor, or a figure of speech. Isaiah xlvi. 16—“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.” Acts viii. 29—“Then the Spirit *said* unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Acts xvi. 16—“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were *forbidden* of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.” 1 Cor. ii. 10—“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit *searcheth* all things, yea, the deep things of God.” These, surely, are not the effects of a metaphor; surely it would be doing violence, alike to the writers and to the language they employ, to suppose that any other than a Person is alluded to. The Spirit is represented as *speaking* in the prophets and the apostles. Mark xiii. 11—“But when they shall lead you, and deliver

you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Luke i. 67— "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied." 1 Pet. i. 10, 11—"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 2 Pet. i. 21—"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Spirit is represented as *striving*. Gen. vi. 3—"And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he also is flesh." *Reproving*. John xvi. 8—"And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." *Helping*. Rom. viii. 26—"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." *Guiding*. John xvi. 13—"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." *Bearing witness*. 1 John v. 6—"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is Truth." *Testifying*. John xv. 26—"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He

shall testify of Me." *Working.* 1 Cor. xii. 11—"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." He is *grieved.* Eph. iv. 30—"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." He is *resisted.* Acts vii. 51—"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." He is *tempted.* Acts v. 9—"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" We are baptized in his name, and blessed in his name. All these and other acts, attributed to the Spirit of God, constitute irrefragable proof that He is a Person.

In the next place, he is God. Compare Exod. xvii. 7—"And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?"—with Heb. iii. 7-9—"Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years." Thus the Holy Ghost was tempted in the wilderness. He is therefore Jehovah. Compare also Isaiah vi. 5-9—"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips;

and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not:"—with Acts xxviii. 25, 26 —“And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.” Simeon’s song is addressed to the Holy Spirit. It was revealed to him by the Spirit that he should not depart, till he had seen the Lord’s Christ; and in his song he addresses the Divine Person that made this promise to him, (that is, the Holy Spirit,) and acknowledges that the promise was fulfilled. If we compare the third and fourth verses of the fifth chapter of the Acts, we shall see that to lie to God and to lie to the Holy Ghost are convertible and equivalent expressions: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” In Ezekiel the Spirit gives life to the dry bones; in Rom. viii. 11, we read —“The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.”

John iii. 6 —“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

1 John v. 4—"Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world." Here we see that to be born of the Spirit, and to be born of God, is the same thing.

Acts xiii. 2—"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Heb. v. 4—"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Here we see the Spirit doing what is declared to be the exclusive prerogative of God.

Matt. ix. 38—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Acts xiii. 4—"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." This is evidence not only of an attribute of God being declared to be an attribute of the Holy Spirit, but also of worship being paid to Him.

John xiv. 17—"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." 1 Cor. xiv. 25—"And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." These two passages show that the Spirit of truth and the indwelling God are one and the same Being.

2 Tim. iii. 16—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 1 Pet. i. 12—"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have

preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Thus inspiration, the prerogative of God, is declared to be the prerogative of the Holy Ghost.

John vi. 45 — "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God." 1 Cor. ii. 13 — "Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." John xiv. 26 — "But the Comforter," which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Thus the prophecy that Christians "shall be taught of God," is fulfilled in the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Acts v. 3 — "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" Acts v. 4 — "Whiles it remained was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Thus the perfect identity of God and the Holy Ghost is affirmed.

1 Cor. ii. 11 — "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Cor. ii. 14 — "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him." These two texts show that the things of God, and the things of the Spirit of God, are the things of one Person.

Deut. vi. 16 — "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." Acts v. 9 —

“Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” Thus to tempt the Spirit of God is the same thing as to tempt God.

In Ezekiel xxxvii. 9 — “Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind; prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live”—the Spirit of God is represented as the great quickener of the dead.

In Acts ii. 24—“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death,”—1 Peter iii. 18 — “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,”—Rom. i. 4 — “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,”—the Holy Spirit is set forth as raising Christ from the dead.

In Matt. xii. 28 — “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,”—Luke xi. 20 — “But if I, with the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you,”—Acts xix. 11—“And God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul,”—Rom. xv. 19 — “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,”—the Spirit is represented as the source of all miraculous power.

In 1 Cor. iii. 17—“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,”—John xiv. 17 — “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye

know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," — he is represented as dwelling in the people of God.

Now is it possible to conceive, that he who is thus identified with God in every word of truth, in every act of power, is any other than God? Is it possible to believe, that he who gives life to the dead soul, raises from the tomb the dead body, inspires Scripture, performs miracles, gives ministers to the church, and dwells in all saints, at all times, and in all places of the world, is any other than God? To change the heart is a more stupendous exercise of power than to create the universe. To mould and shape yielding matter into countless forms of beauty, into suns and stars and minerals and flowers, is beyond all dispute the evidence of the finger of God; but to allay evil passions, to dethrone corruption from the human heart, to transform by a touch the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and to construct from the ruins of the soul a residence for Deity, is an expression of yet greater power. A saint is a monument of greater might than a fixed star; a Christian is a more glorious thing than creation itself.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Spirit is represented as having the attribute of eternity, where Christ is said to have "offered himself through the eternal Spirit." We are baptized in his name, we are blessed in his name, we are taught by his wisdom, we are comforted by his consolations. None is able to do all this, save he who is God.

If, then, we revert to the banks of the ancient Jordan, and the baptism of Jesus, or if we refer to our own baptism, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

and of the Holy Ghost," or if we look forward to the Apocalyptic description of the sevenfold Spirit, we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is God. God the Father is sovereign love, God the Son is redeeming love, God the Spirit is effective love; "God," the triune Jehovah, "is love." This is the foundation of the Christian faith, the hope of Christian men, and the main element of that superior glory which makes "the ministration of righteousness" exceed in glory "the ministration of condemnation;" "for if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

II.

The Other Comforter.

JESUS just told his disciples that he was about to leave them. This information was to them the severest stroke of all. It all but overwhelmed them. They felt that they were about to lose their greatest friend, their noblest and most unwearied benefactor. In his power they had realized exhaustless resources, and in his presence omnipotent protection, and in his love springs of sympathy and hope and peace. Their occasional separation from him had already been found in their experience eminently perilous to their stability and safety. Their courage, heroic in his presence, evaporated in his absence; and as they heard him foretell his departure, they naturally asked themselves—‘Who will now gather us, as a hen doth a brood under her wing? who will guide us in difficulties, direct us in perplexities, shelter us and console us in the hour and power of sorrow? His departure will be the extinction of our sun, the wreck of the vessel to which our all was entrusted, the blasting in short of all hope, the breath of fell despair.’

Jesus, in order to comfort them, said, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not

come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. How could it be so? Is it expedient that the parent should be torn from his offspring, the patron from his protégé, the master from his pupils, the bird from her callow brood? If the oak be cut down, must not the parasite plants that clung to it for support, and fed upon its juices, die? If the keystone be removed, must not the whole arch give way? Every analogy of life, every atom of experience, every heartstring within them, protested together that it was not expedient that Jesus should go away.

Yet beautifully and earnestly did Jesus reiterate—"I, who am the Truth—I, who never deceived you—I tell you it is expedient:" and whenever Christ speaks, all discussion should be closed; his word should outweigh all probabilities, as it is stronger than all law. It made the universe, and will outlive it; it sways the universe, and can bend and bow all its movements to its mighty purposes.

The departure of Christ was expedient, because his death was absolutely necessary: "It behoved him to suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day." He also said—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." An apostle also "opened and alleged that Christ must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead." The death of the victim was essential to the validity of the sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood there was no remission" of sin. It was expedient that the expiatory offerings of Levi should be finished—that the dim institutions of the ancient economy should be illustrated, and that the great atonement, promised by prophets, sung by psalmists, and panted

for by all creation, should be consummated. Such ancient promises as Isaiah xxxii. 15 must be fulfilled—“Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest;” Isaiah xlv. 3—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;” Joel ii. 28—“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;” John vii. 38—“He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;” and John xiv. 16—“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

The great reason why it was expedient that Christ should go away was, therefore, that the Spirit, the Comforter, might come. This is shown by reference to Acts ii. 23—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;” and Ephes. iv. 8—“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Christ must be removed, that the Comforter may come. So it ever must be: things dear and beautiful must fade, that better things may occupy their place. He who never knew what it is to be tossed to and fro, never learned what the preciousness of the Gospel is. The life of such an one must be like a smooth surface, from which the healing waters of the Gospel must glide off. When God takes the bud, how-

ever, it is that he may give the blossom; and when he takes the green, it is that he may supply the ripe. Jesus therefore presented the apostles with the prospect of a glorious compensation, a blessed substitute for his absence. He said—‘Amid the crushing trials and dark hours of life, when human arms grow weary, and human sympathies expire—when the canopy above is all darkness, and the prospect before you all black, my Spirit shall rend the clouds, and reveal to you new glories, and breathe into your hearts a new inspiration, and your sorrowing hearts shall find what your glad hearts never sought, a peace which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away.’

It was expedient that he should go away, in order that they might learn to “walk by faith.” Hitherto they had “walked by sight.” The feeling of all was the creed of Mary—“If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” They had hitherto believed only in One they saw and heard; they had no trust in the far-off, no confidence in the unseen. Now, however, the outward restraints and props were to be withdrawn, that their inward principles might stand erect in their own strength; the crutch was to be cast away, and the disciple was to walk alone. Their love must now burn as brightly in the absence as it did in the presence of Jesus. The carnal eye must close on a visible Saviour, and the spiritual eye must open to a Saviour within the veil, invisible to flesh and blood.

The *man* Christ Jesus was the utmost height to which their hearts had risen. The mountain-brow, the fisherman’s boat, the earthly temple, the crown of thorns, were the limits of their horizon. They had

now to pass through the manhood, and lean on the love of the unseen Godhead. Humanity must not be the soul's resting-place, but the medium through which it may reach its resting-place. It was therefore expedient that Jesus of Nazareth should retire, in order that the eternal Son of God might occupy his place — that the Lamb upon the cross should give way to the Lamb upon the throne—and the ear be shut to the infuriated cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," and open only to the hosannas of them "that do continually cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts."

It is the great error of the Church of Rome, as it is indeed the tendency of all humanity, to seek to keep a visible Christ. That church practically says — 'It is not expedient that Jesus should go away, and therefore we must have a visible figure, a visible Calvary, a visible victim, holy robes and crucifixes.' She, in fact, would rather "touch the hem of his garment," than believe in his name and be saved. Nevertheless, it was expedient that he should go away. We have lost the Saviour as the "Man of sorrows," to find him as the Son of God. The crucified is enshrined in the glorified. "If we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know him no more" after the flesh.

It was expedient that Christ should go away, in order that the conversion of the ends of the earth might be hastened. As man he could be in one place only; there was a brilliant light, but it illumined Palestine only; there was a glorious beacon, but it was on one shore only. Rome slept in her midnight, Athens in darkness, and the whole earth in its cold aphelion; while one consecrated acre only glowed with

light. It was essential that this narrow sphere should be enlarged, and that no longer as a local light, but as "the Sun of righteousness," Jesus should take possession of his celestial throne, and pour down his beams upon Jew and Gentile.

It was expedient that Christ should go away, in order that the apostles might have an ampler field of ministry. As long as Jesus was on earth they clung to his person, and preached only within the range of his presence; they moved along the shores, but dared not launch out into the deep; theirs was the ministry of a parish, instead of the mission of the whole earth. His elevation from the midst of them was the removal of the visible central column, and the scattering of the apostles to the ends of the earth. All local and national ties, binding to a spot, were broken, and they went forth to preach on Mars' hill, as they had done on Mount Zion—the luminaries of the world, not merely the lights of Judæa; and to make every tongue, however barbarous or refined, the vehicle of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The apostles themselves gave personal evidence on the day of Pentecost how expedient it was that Christ should go away. The contrast between Peter, the companion of his blessed Master, and Peter, the subject of the unction of the Holy Ghost, is most strikingly displayed. We find Peter, the fisherman and companion of Jesus, described in Matt. xiv. 28–31 — "And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and

beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matt. xvi. 22 — "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Luke v. 8 — "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke xxii. 54 — "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off." John xiii. 6 — "Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" John xviii. 10 — "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." And also we have Peter the apostle, after the day of Pentecost, portrayed in Acts ii. 14 — "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words." Acts iii. 12 — "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Acts iv. 8 — "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." It was not

miraculous gifts that made the difference. There was a progress in Divine life and light created, in consequence of the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and understandings of the apostles, so palpable that "he that runs may read." They saw Christ after his departure, as they had never seen him before, and they preached the truths of the Gospel with a fulness, a faithfulness, and a power, that prove incontestably they were the subjects of a new and Divine unction.

It may indeed be asked, "Was not the Spirit in the Jewish church as truly as in the Christian?" We answer,—He was as truly, but not as fully. As Christ was in the ancient church before his incarnation, so was the Spirit before his effusion at Pentecost. The incarnation was the manifestation of the fulness of Christ's life; the Pentecostal effusion was the manifestation of the Spirit's power.

May not the promise of the Spirit, let me ask, enable us also to make progress, not only in the clearer apprehension of truths we know, but in the full discovery of latent truths, that may have escaped us? We cannot, indeed, add to the Scripture, but we may nevertheless discover in it precious thoughts that have hitherto escaped us; we cannot add to the book of creation, and yet we may discover in it additional facts, richer harmony, new fibres running below and linking things the most remote with others the most near. The Bible is an exhaustless mine, and other ingots may yet be found in it—a sea whose floor is covered with gems and pearls, and he that dives deepest and oftenest will bring up the brightest. Progress in acquaintance with Divine truth, and in adjusting what seems conflicting, is, in fact, daily made. The Reformers had clearer

apprehensions of truth than the fathers, and we than the Reformers. True, the last century is not always in advance of its predecessor; our course is not continuously rectilinear. Like the course of a ship at sea, it is zigzag, but yet it is actual progress as a whole.

Certain portions of divine truth have always been clearly seen, because they have always been obtruded by the sacred penmen, in intense light and prominence; such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement; but there are other truths partly beyond the horizon, partly luminous, clearer conceptions of which we shall attain day after day.

It may also be expedient for us, as well as for the apostles, that Christ should go away, and that the human should shine far remote, amid the effulgence of the divine. We read his life; we are smitten with that magnificent example, that unequalled foot-print upon the sands of time, and are apt to forget his yet higher functions—his atoning death, his prevailing intercession, his enthronization and glory. It is expedient, therefore, that the example should be withdrawn for a little, that we may gaze without distraction on the atoning victim, and that even that atoning victim should be removed from earth, that we may behold in that victim the satisfying God.

He who sent the Comforter at first, still sends him. He sends him to transform and ripen his elect for glory. All the purchase of his blood is not yet gathered in; all the travail of his soul he has not yet seen; all the crowns destined for him are not yet on his head; all his guests are not yet seated at his table; all his jewels are not yet placed in their caskets. He can do what man's feeble voice is inadequate to do, imprint

on the heart the everlasting truths that now sound in the ears.

Behold the great privilege of the people of God! They are summoned to come near to God himself; the Holy Spirit is sent from God to bring his children by Christ to the presence of God. No earthly element or sacrament may come between; this is a blood-bought prerogative; "a stranger" may "not intermeddle" with it. We need not the lenses of the priest — the Spirit of God has touched the eye of our souls with eye-salve; we need not the anointings of man — for we have the unction of God; we need not the canonized urn — for we have access to the deep and illimitable sea; we can do without the priest's farthing candle — for it is our privilege to look upon the great central and celestial sun. In short, we are not left dependent for eternal life on any order of men; "that our faith may stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

"These words are faithful and true."

III.

The Work of the Comforter.

THERE can be no real prosperity in the Christian church, unless the Spirit of God create it; and that Spirit will not create amongst us true spiritual prosperity, unless we honor him by imploring it, pleading at the throne of mercy the promise of our blessed Lord, that when he should depart, “he would send him unto us.” If I read the Scriptures aright, every grace with which the Christian character is inlaid, derives all its beauty from his smile, and all its fragrance from his breath. He creates it. He nourishes it. He perfects it. His is the authorship, his the glory, and ours only all the comfort.

One of the very first offices of the Spirit of God, referred to in Holy Scripture, is that of enlightening the minds of his people. This is a most important work. By nature we are insensible alike to the glory of the Saviour and to the excellency of the gospel—to our own deep necessities, and to our real peril—to the duties that devolve upon us, or to the difficulties that beset us; but the Spirit of God, when he comes to us, in the energy of his grace, and in the exercise of his peculiar office, “turns us from darkness to light, and from the

power of Satan unto God." He rends the veil that obstructs our perception of celestial glory; he dissipates the blindness that clouds the natural man's mind, and that makes spiritual things foolishness to his eye, and strengthens its powers, and extends its focus. Hence, saith Scripture, "he translates us from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Because of his work, it may be said of us, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." He proclaims at the commencement of the new, what he proclaimed at the commencement of the old creation, "Let there be light;" and the beams of an eternal Sun we never saw before, fall upon the human heart, and imprint with photographic instancy and accuracy upon every portion of that heart, the lineaments and likeness of Jesus. Great, therefore, is the difference between reading the Bible in the exercise of ordinary reason, and reading the Bible under the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit: the natural man reads it as a critic, the spiritual man reads it as a Christian: one *sees* in it what he sees in any authentic history — the presence and the portraiture of the creature; the other *feels* in it the touch, and participates through it of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ: the one sees eternal things through the hazy medium of prejudice and passion, the other in the still clear light of everlasting truth.

In the second place, the Spirit is represented in Scripture as the Spirit of adoption, making those in whom he dwells the "sons of God." We shall see the importance of this, if we consider that in Scripture we are represented as naturally "aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel," "enemies of God,

without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world." And this is not merely the state of the most depraved; it is that of all by nature without exception; be we born in the lowliest hut, or in the noblest hall,—be we born where and from whom we may, we are all, without exception, born beneath the shadow of that curse, which was first projected from Paradise, and which remains the just and terrible inheritance of the whole family of man, in all lands and in all ages. We are all born, without exception, in a house, from every wall, and porch, and rafter of which, we have wickedly labored to efface the name and to extinguish the memorials of Deity, and every recess and avenue of which we have striven to render vocal with the praise and glory of man. But when the Spirit of God comes, and re-consecrates our hearts to be fanes for his residence, he makes ourselves "the sons of God." We "receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the sons of God." Hence, if there be a reader of this work who is a Christian indeed, he is so "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Man can make a theologian—God alone can make a Christian. I can argue—the Holy Ghost alone can convince and create.

In the third place, the Spirit of God is represented in Scripture as teaching us to pray. By nature we can no more express our spiritual wants than we can feel them. We are dead and dumb, and he who gives us the life of prayer, must give us the language too. "I will pour upon the house of David the spirit of grace and of supplications." "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh in-

tercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Throughout the Bible that blessed Spirit is represented as opening to our minds all the depths of their inherent weakness — awakening our souls to the multitude of our wants and our miseries, and unfolding to us the illimitable fulness of light and love treasured up in Jesus Christ. He inclines us to seek supply *there*, where alone our unutterable necessities may all be supplied.

In the fourth place, the Spirit of God is represented in Scripture as the Comforter. His name is, emphatically, "the Comforter." Hence it is said of the primitive Christians, "They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Again, he is spoken of as the author of "all joy and peace in believing." David, in his deepest affliction, prays, "Take not the Holy Spirit from me." Those torn feelings that the losses of the world have left behind, he alone can mitigate and remove. That aching vacuum which the departure of the dear, the near, and the cherished creates, he alone can supply. Those "ashes" he only can exchange for "beauty;" that broken heart he alone can bind up. Those tears which man may wipe *away*, but which will flow again in more full and frequent floods, the Spirit alone can wipe *out*. He only can awaken in the human heart the echoes of the glad tidings of everlasting joy—echoes so musical, so holy, that they shall not be spent upon the earth, but shall live and be audible until they touch the confines of heaven, and mingle with the jubilee of the blest for ever. He is the Comforter; and all the real comfort that is in the world is from him.

The Spirit of God is represented as operating not a

partial but a *total* change in the character of man. It is said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is written on the very threshold of the gospel of Christ. It is true of the worst man and of the best in this assembly; it is true of the man who is characterized by all the amiabilities of the fairest specimens of human nature; and it is equally true of the man who is deformed by the most repulsive qualities of the most repulsive of mankind; "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There is made in regeneration a complete revolution in man's heart,—there is presented a new object for his affections, and a sublime motive for his actions,—a new and heavenly hope that dazzles by its splendor, and draws him upwards by its silent and powerful attraction, to a new home beyond the stars. "All things are become new." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says the Apostle, "but according to his mercy he saves us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Hence, it is not more necessary that our sins should be forgiven by a Saviour's blood, than it is that our hearts should be renewed by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's work.

The Spirit of God is also represented as maintaining all life and holiness in the believer. The Spirit of God, says the apostle, "dwells in us." "Know ye not," he says again, "that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" Solomon said that he felt it the most wonderful thing, that God should dwell in the splendid temple he had reared; and I am sure that every Christian must feel it a still more stupendous exhibition of his love, that he should condescend to dwell in a human

heart which had once revolted from him. But that Spirit must dwell there, if we are to be saved. Nothing less than Omnipotence can save us from falling. We live in the midst of an uncongenial world; we are surrounded by all hostile influences; and as nothing but a Divine power can make us Christians—so nothing less than a Divine power can keep us so. He creates our Christianity, he continues that Christianity, and finally crowns it.

The Spirit of God is represented in Scripture as the bond of all spiritual communion. "If there be any fellowship of the Spirit," says the apostle. We are, as believers, "one body," and "one spirit." And again: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *communion* of the Holy Ghost be with you." In short, the possession of the Spirit of God is described in Scripture as the possession of all conceivable and possible good. He is represented as taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us; taking of the difficulties of the Scripture, and enabling us to understand them; helping us to the first movement of faith, inspiring into us the least pulse of love, animating us with the last vision of hope, and finally "crowning us with a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

I have thus run briefly over some of the functions attributed in Scripture to the Holy Spirit. I desire now to obviate, if possible, some misconceptions which are entertained upon this subject.

It is not the work of the Spirit of God to blot out any of those aboriginal faculties of the soul, with which man was originally endowed by his Maker; nor is it the work of the Spirit of God to add to man's intel-

lectual or moral economy any new faculties, of which he was not possessed before. This would be to alter our state, and thereby our obligations, altogether. The law that bound us once, would not bind us now, if so be that we receive a different moral constitution. We must be the same subjects to be continued beneath the obligation of the same unchanged and unchangeable law. The Spirit of God annihilates no faculty within us, and he creates no new one. We are not extinguished that we may be renewed. We have within us, even in the depth of our ruin, all our pristine capabilities of angel beauty, holiness, and greatness. We are marred and wrecked and ruined, but within us still are original faculties, that Adam had in Eden, clouded and weakened, but not consumed, the essential groundwork of that magnificent character which shall be developed in glory, and unfolded in all the forms of beauty and holiness and happiness.

The Spirit of God does not create within us a new reasoning faculty. The man who is a stranger to the Gospel, and the man who is under its power, have substantially the same reasoning powers within them. God says to the sinner, "Come now, let us *reason* together." If the fallen man had no reasoning faculty within him, he could not reason with God, nor could God reason with him; he could not be the responsible subject of divine remonstrance and appeal. Our reason is dimmed in its brightness, broken in its power, shorn of much of its pristine glory, but it exists still. The strings of the mind are untuned, its primeval melodies suspended, but when the finger of God shall retouch it, all its discords will be silenced, and its primeval and awful harmonies will be evolved, responding to the universal harmony of the restored universe around it.

When God the Spirit makes the change to which I am alluding, he does not create within us a conscience. Every man, without exception, the worst or the best, the greatest felon or the noblest philanthropist, has within him a faculty that responds to the feelings of right or wrong, just as he has within him a faculty that responds to the true and the false. We see this faculty in the sensual Herod, who thought he saw a John the Baptist whom he had iniquitously murdered, in every person whose name was whispered in public. We see it also in the brethren of Joseph, awakened to its awful action within them, when they recollected their treatment of their innocent and unoffending brother. The Spirit of God opens its eye, purifies it, retouches and restores its pristine strength and excellency, but does not create it. In short, it is not necessary to destroy humanity, in order to regenerate it; it is not necessary to degrade the creature to the level of the demon, in order to honour and to glorify the God who raises it to the dignity of sonship.

The Holy Spirit does not make holiness obligatory upon us as new creatures, more truly than it was obligatory upon us before. He does not make it more obligatory upon the Christian to be holy, than upon the unbeliever to be holy. It is not true, that you, the rejecters of the Gospel, are exempt from the obligations of God's holy law; and that those who embrace the Gospel are specially, and differently from what they were before, amenable to the law—liable to its penalties, or entitled especially to its rewards. Without exception we are under law—its grasp is on all created beings. All its obligations are upon us. It commands the greatest sinner upon the earth, and the greatest

saint in glory. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," lies on all. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," is as obligatory upon the guilty as it is upon the regenerate; and the reason why the response is not universal, is not our weakness, and therefore our misfortune, but our wickedness, and therefore our crime.

The Holy Spirit, when he makes these changes in the character of a man, does not destroy all freedom of action. One class of men deify human effort, another class degrade the human soul; one party would make man his own Saviour, another party would make man a mere brute machine. He is neither. Man is a free and responsible being; he works willingly what he does; the freedom of his will is not crushed by the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. I appeal to every Christian in this assembly. The Spirit has touched your heart, he has changed your affections, he has altered the whole man; but you were so little conscious of any coercive power exercised by his presence, that you did not know he had changed your heart until you beheld the magnificent and blessed results that follow. It is not the Holy Spirit that repents, or that believes — it is we that repent, it is we that believe; and yet, while we repent and believe, the Holy Spirit has all the glory of that grace, and all the honour of its development.

The presence and operation of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts does not paralyse human effort. The apostle evidently supposes, that he who leans most upon the Spirit of God, is just the man who will most be characterised by active and strenuous exertion; for he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Thus the logic of the Christian differs from the logic of the world; we need the Spirit of God to make us right logicians, as well as to make us true Christians. The world draws the inference—"The Spirit of God does all; therefore we must do nothing;" the apostle draws the inference—"The Spirit of God does all; therefore we must do much." A farmer knows that unless there are rains, and brilliant suns, and blue and cloudless skies, there will be no golden harvest; let him sow as he pleases, and till and watch and weed as he pleases, he knows that it is absolutely impossible that there can be any good result, if the sun should suspend his beams, or the clouds withhold their rain-drops; and yet, because he knows this, he does not sow the less diligently, nor plough the less laboriously, nor weed the less carefully. God's law is this, in the temporal and spiritual provinces both,—terrestrial effort to its utmost, and yet a celestial blessing without which all is vain. God's great law is, that we shall toil as if all depended upon human strength, and yet we shall look and lean and pray as if all absolutely depended upon a celestial blessing. Hence in the Song of Solomon we read—"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Here you have the posture of the church of Christ—"leaning"—conscious that she would fall and perish if she did not lean; yet walking—"coming up"—conscious that if she did not, she would make no progress: the church in Solomon's days presenting the beautiful combination of leaning upon Christ's arm, without which she must lie down and

perish—and yet walking in Christ's way, without which she will never with Christ inherit everlasting glory.

Let me notice, in the next place, what I believe is contrary to the sentiments of a very considerable class who have lately appeared, — that the Holy Spirit of God acts directly and immediately upon the heart of man. The opinion of some excellent persons (eminent Christians I believe many of them to be, but mistaken, I think, in this part of their theology,) is, that the Spirit of God is so tied to God's word, that wherever the word is heard, there of necessity the Spirit must act, and that the only influence we can conceive exerted by the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men, is that which accompanies, and is inherent in, the read or the preached word. There are serious objections to this view—objections that go, I think, to overturn it; and such as must strike us at once. First, infants, we know, are regenerated by the Spirit of God; there are in the case of infants that die, and of infants that are spared, instances of infant regeneration; and if we admit that one infant is renewed by the Spirit of God, it must be by a process that does not require the contact or connexion of the word preached or read, because infants are incapable of listening to the one, or of perusing the other. Let me illustrate this also by the instance of seed: Suppose a farmer sows the most excellent seed in an utterly barren soil; what is required to make that seed grow is, not that the seed should be invested with a greater amount of vitality within it, nor that the sunbeams should receive greater intensity; for the intenser the beams that shine upon the land, the less productive it would become: what is required is, not a change in the seed that is sown, nor in the *sunbeams* that play

upon it, but in the *soil* that receives the seed. It is so in the preaching of the Gospel: it is not a change in the Gospel, which is good seed, that is required; nor in the means of grace, which are also good, abundant, and scriptural; the change required is a direct action upon the soil, or the heart, that receives the seed, and then the seed will germinate, and there will be golden prolific harvests. The Spirit of God must first, prior to the scattering of the seed, or the shining of the sunbeams, change the heart and make it meet for the reception of the seed. Or, to present this truth in another point of view: suppose a wall intercepted the light of the sun from my window, and therefore from my room; what would be required in order to enable me to have the full sunbeams playing into my room would be, not that they should shine with greater intensity upon that wall—which would only harden it the more—but that the wall should be pulled down. It is so with the preaching of the Gospel: it is not that the Spirit of God should make the truth more vivid, or its motives more glorious, but that he should remove the wall of prejudice and passion, which obstructs the entrance of that word which “giveth light.” It is plain, then, that the Spirit of God first influences the heart, before it can receive spiritual things. Hence, we read, that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” moved first by the Spirit, then speaking what they were taught. We read again, “The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” And again: “The Holy Spirit shall teach you in that same hour what ye ought to say:” implying, clearly, the

previous influence of the Spirit before they can say what ought to be said, or know what is necessary to salvation.

I may also notice, that the Holy Spirit, thus promised by the Saviour, abides with his church for ever. Its great and most illustrious pillars may be swept away; its ornaments and its props may totter, and its lights fade; but the Spirit of God is to "abide with us for ever."

IV.

Special Mission of the Comforter.

I NOW enter upon some of the personal offices of the Holy Spirit. One chief office which he is represented as sustaining is that of the Comforter.

The propriety or justice of the translation of the original word for Comforter has been the subject of dispute. In the original it is, literally rendered, *the Paraclete*. The very same word is also applied to our Lord, in the Epistle of St. John, where it is said, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." The original word is — "*Paraclete* with the Father;" not the word usually applied to our blessed Lord, denoting that he is an Intercessor, but another, which denotes that he is a Comforter. The strict meaning of *Paraclete* is something like that which we attach to the name "advocate" in Scotland — one that identifies himself with another, takes up another's cause, throws all his energies and sympathies into it, and makes that cause his own, and upholds or proves it a good and a righteous one. But this is not all. There is embodied in it the element of comfort or consolation also; and this attribute is so interwoven with our convictions of the office of the Holy Spirit, that we should not be willing to part with so precious a thought.

There is in this world great necessity, not merely for such comfort as the promises of the Gospel may convey, but for comfort so vast and varied, that it needs nothing short of a divine person to convey and to impress it on the sad and sorrowing heart. We live in a world in which we need a Comforter. Much there is that is beautiful on earth, but much also that is forlorn. There is no street in this world without its sick-bed; there is no corner of the city without its physician; there is no turning that leads not to a cemetery; and there is no cemetery that is without its graves of all lengths and durations. There is not a pillow, in the happiest home on which the sun shines, that has not a thorn in it; there is not a heart in which there is not some cankering and vexing feeling, known best and most intimately to itself. One great lesson disclosed by Christianity is impressed upon the experience of every man, in some shape,—“Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” We are prone to fancy that every man’s lot is better than our own: and the reason of this is, that we are dazzled by the mere spangles and glare of circumstance; whereas, if we could penetrate the purple, or look beneath the ermine, or see under the lawn, we should find that there are unhappy and restless hearts beating there, just as heavily as anywhere else. Poor men are often happier in their cabins than royal men are in their palaces, or noblemen in their halls. But be we where we may, there is only one thing that can make us really happy—that thing which quells all fears within, and triumphs over all fightings without—the possession of the promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God.

The promise that is here given by our blessed Lord

shows us that we are, in this world, however varied may be its afflictions, capable of comfort. In the regions of the lost there is no capacity, as well as no possibility of comfort; but as long as we are amid the means of grace, there is no sorrow so severe that it cannot be assuaged; there are no tears that can be sown in spring, which shall not bloom in autumn into harvests of joy. As the great revelation of the Gospel is, that there is no sin which cannot be forgiven, so there is no sorrow which cannot be assuaged; as there is no sinner, whose crimes are so deep in their dye that the blood of Jesus cannot take them all away, so there is no weeper whose wound is so painful, and whose sorrow is so poignant, that the blessed Comforter cannot heal it.

The Holy Spirit is not only capable of affording comfort, but able and willing to afford it. That he is able, is evident from the fact which I have shown, that that Spirit is God. His consolations are omnipotent consolations. All earthly comfort is represented by a cistern, a thing of finite dimensions, and which needs continually to be filled; nay, it is represented, even when sweetest and purest, by "a broken cistern," that leaks and lets out its comforts hour by hour: but the consolations that the Gospel ministers to those that need them, are represented by the illimitable and exhaustless main, or the great, the self-originating and overflowing fountain. The consolations of the world are the consolations of the footstool; those of the Gospel are the consolations of the throne; the former evaporate like the dew, beneath the beams of the approaching sun; the latter grow and increase in quantity, the

more liberally they are drawn and drunk by the children of men.

This Comforter is called not only a Comforter but "the Spirit of truth." Here lies a very important distinction, which needs to be impressed; it is, that the Holy Spirit will only comfort man as "the Spirit of truth." A lie may serve as a momentary opiate, but there is in it nothing of real or of permanent comfort. Hence the comfort which the world gives, but lulls or deadens for an hour; but the comfort which the Holy Spirit of God gives, lasts for ever. The comfort which the world gives, is like the opiate weed, that makes us forget our pain; the comfort which the Spirit of God gives, is a flower that blooms upon the stem of everlasting truth, borrows its perennial fragrance from the skies, and remains green, and fair, and beautiful, when all the flowers of mortality are withered and gathered to a common grave. In other words, the Spirit of God will only give comfort through the medium, or in the vehicle of truth. If this be so, let us never attempt to comfort a dying sinner by telling him a lie; let us never shrink from telling the dying the whole truth, under the idea that to tell them all the truth will make them wretched. Better there should be wretchedness felt, in the knowledge of God's truth, than that there should be comfort dreamed of in the belief of man's lie; better that there should be disquiet the most saddening to those that are around, rather than the "Peace, peace," when, "saith my God, there is no peace" at all.

Having noticed these features in the revelation of the Holy Spirit of God, as the Comforter of his church,

let me refer to instances, in which we may presume that this blessed Comforter will exercise especially his consolatory function.

Is there some true, but humble Christian, who trembles and fears lest, after all, his sins are not forgiven, nor his iniquities blotted out? How does the Spirit of God, as "the Spirit of truth," bring comfort to that Christian? He will not, as the world does, tell him that sin is a very trivial thing, or that there is nothing in the condemnation of the law which ought to alarm, agitate, or frighten him. The world will say to the dying sinner—"You have done your duty in the sphere in which you have been placed; your life has been most respectable; at least you are not as bad as that man, and certainly you have as good a chance and as bright a hope as this man!" The Spirit comforts not so; when the Spirit of God comforts, he comforts by conveying to such a doubting sinner the whole truth. And what is it? He "takes of the things of Christ, and shows them" to that sinner, according to the promise of the Gospel, made by our blessed Lord; he shows him the precious blood, which now, as when shed on Calvary, "cleanseth from all sin;" he speaks to that dying man's heart what I can only speak to his ear; he breathes into that heart tones taken from the jubilee of heaven; he makes the very music of the skies resound in the depths of that human heart:—"Son," "daughter," "be of good cheer; thy sins," through Jesus Christ, "are forgiven thee."

But not only does he show this forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Christ, but he shows to the humbling, doubting, trembling, yet believing Christian, a right and a title to the skies, which nothing else can be

a substitute for. He not only shows him that the curse is taken away by a Saviour's blood, but also that his title to heaven is restored, by the sufficiency of a Saviour's righteousness. Christ's atonement delivers us from the curse — Christ's obedience entitles us to a blessing. By the one our breaking of the law is put away; by the other, our obedience to the law is presented. "He who knew no sin, is made sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God by him."

Thus, then, the Comforter, as "the Spirit of truth," comforts the depressed with a knowledge of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and of the sufficiency of the righteousness of Jesus.

All of us, however healthy and strong, must one day lie down and die. There is not a flower so fair, that must not, like the flower of the grass, be withered. Let us not forget, that the only thing which can give us comfort on a death-bed is this,—that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bore our curse and obeyed the law which we had broken; and by his suffering we are saved from that curse, and by his righteousness we are entitled to an everlasting blessing.

The sense of sin that agitates the Christian, in the hands of Satan might plunge him in despair, or precipitate him into presumption; but the sense of sin, when it is laid hold upon by the teaching of the Holy Spirit of God, only leads us to a deeper, richer sense of the Saviour's mercy. And hence, while our sins appear to us, as they must appear in the intense light of eternity, like the great mountains, that Holy Spirit reveals to our heart a Saviour's mercy, which appears like a yet greater sea, that can bury and entomb them all.

There may be some one who is constrained to say, 'All God's providential dealings are against me; I have been afflicted, I am a sufferer, I have lost the loved and the dear; my estate has been swept from me, the home that I built and under which I hoped to die has been stripped, the property which I accumulated, and which was the fruit of my industry, has been torn away as by a whirlwind; and I am desolate.' My dear brother, the Spirit of God is the Comforter that you need. He can show to your heart, what I now show to your eye and to your understanding; that the hand of God may be heavy upon you, while the heart of God overflows with love to you. Nay, we are told that suffering is not a sign or an evidence of a curse, but a privilege: "To you," he says, "it is given to suffer;" and again, "Whom the Lord loveth"—what? He makes prosperous and happy? No—"whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." If there be one man whose life has been one of uninterrupted prosperity, that man has most need to tremble; but if there be one whose life has been a series of successive and all but crushing calamities, he should lift up his head to the everlasting hills, and read written by the Spirit of God, upon those tablets which man's hand cannot deface, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Have you lost your property? God remains. Are you poor in time? It may be in order that you may be rich in eternity. Has your estate perished? It may be in order that your soul may be saved. Has the gourd been cut down in a night? It may be to lead you to repose beneath the shadow of the Rock of ages—the Lord Jesus Christ, your Saviour. And these precious truths the Spirit

of God takes; and he does what I cannot do—imprints them on the heart, and helps those who know them in their heads to feel them as living, vital realities in their inmost souls.

Are you placed, as a Christian, under reproaches? Are you calumniated? Are you misrepresented in the discharge of duties which you feel to devolve upon you? Are you exposed to the proud man's contumely and the coarse man's scorn? In standing up in the sphere in which Providence has placed you, and protesting against what is wrong, and contending for what is right, are you liable to misrepresentation, calumny, and mockery? There is One who can comfort you under it; the Spirit of God will remind you of that text—"For thy sake I have borne reproach." Christ's name was taken away before his life. He was persecuted and crucified in his name, before he was crucified in his person. And we are told by Peter, what the Spirit of God can impress upon us, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ"—what? Sad are ye? To be pitied are ye? No; "if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." And on what account? Because you do not care? Because you are stoical enough to be impenetrable? or because you have excitements enough around you to divert you? No; "for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Here is the consolation. If there be one spot upon the earth on which that heavenly Dove rests, and spreads his overshadowing wings, and diffuses all the fragrance of the sky, it is the heart of a reproached, calumniated man. And, therefore, "if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

Some may say—‘Once indeed we had all the sensations of Christian happiness; we were full of joy, when first we knew the Lord; but all these feelings have become deadened, and all those joys have palled.’ There is comfort in that Comforter for you. When you first emerged from darkness to light, you were dazzled by the glorious change; your excitement and your joy were commensurate with that change. Your eyes have now been accustomed to its splendor; you have lived and rejoiced long amid its glories. You must not expect that the enthusiasm of your youth will last through your riper and maturer years. It may be, that the strong emotions which burst from your heart in the dawn of your Christian life, may have sobered down into that deep, steadfast, and enduring principle which is more precious than all. Do not forget that the absence of joy is not necessarily the loss of an interest in Christ. It is possible to be a son, and yet to be sorrowful: it is possible to have nothing in possession, but beyond the skies, and in bright and blessed reversion, to have a “crown of glory that fadeth not away.” May the Spirit of God imprint that upon our hearts! For what is wanted in our churches is not more light, which the minister can give, but more life, which the Spirit of God alone can give. And I am quite sure of this, that if there were in our pews more of secret prayer that God would accompany his truth with his own power, there would be richer and more blessed spectacles exhibited by the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some feel that once they seemed to live, as it were, beneath the sunshine of the countenance of God; all things seemed bright and merry as the summer-

day; but all this, they feel, has utterly departed. They think that God has at length forsaken them, and their God has finally forgotten them. They are cast down, and dejected and depressed, and appear occasionally trembling on the verge of despair. If there be any such a reader of this page let him intimate a distinction, which I can explain, but which the Comforter alone can impress so as to comfort you: there may be day-light when there is no sun-light. This is the experience of every one. God gives the sun-light, when it is most seasonable for the ripening of the fruits of the earth; but he gives the day-light according to his everlasting and irreversible covenant. Your sun-light may be removed for good and gracious ends, but your day-light may still be continued. Sun-light is assurance, which is the privilege of the few; day-light is salvation, which is the real possession of all true Christians. God may not give us the first, because it is inexpedient for us; God will not withdraw from us the last, for it is his own promise to continue it. God may sustain us the most, even with "the everlasting arms," whilst he comforts us with the least. Our Lord upon the cross was sustained completely, whilst he was not comforted at all. "*My God, My God*"—there was his sustaining grasp; "Why hast thou forsaken me?"—there is the absence of all consolation. Thus it will be still; as it was with the Master, so it will be with the servant—as it was with Christ, so it will be with the Christian. Our faith may be strong, and God's hold of us unchangeable, whilst our comforts may be low and our consolations few. If God the Spirit will be pleased to impress this upon a Chris-

tian's heart, it is a lesson more precious than the gold of Inde, or the perfumes of "Araby the blessed."

Is there some believer who says and feels—"I am harassed with temptation?" Every Christian must be conscious of temptation. Do not thoughts sometimes originate within you, which have no sooner spread their dim and distant shades into shape and reality, than you hate, and abhor, and shrink from them? Have not even atheistical thoughts, sceptical and infidel and unholy thoughts, swept through your minds and grieved your hearts, whilst you were conscious of their presence? So it has been, and so it will be. "Think it not strange," says the apostle, "concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened to you." Job was tempted and tried; the royal psalmist had the discords of Satan thrown into his sweetest songs; and if you were without such temptations, you would be without evidence that you belonged to the great family of Christ. Satan lets the weed alone—he tries only to corrupt, and blast, and wither the flower. Satan, sure of his own, gives his own undisturbed peace; but the instant that the prey begins to escape from his fangs, and the victim of his wiles rises to become a son of God, Satan interposes to tempt, to try, to curse, and to destroy. "Think it not strange." The Spirit of God will open your eyes, to see Christ interceding for you in heaven, whilst you are struggling on earth, as Moses interceded on the mountain, whilst the Israelites were warring in the valley below. Whilst we are toiling at the oar, and contending with the stormy and tempestuous sea, Christ is on the mountain-side, as of old, praying, or marching upon

the mountain-waves, and making the angry sea a pathway to come and deliver his own. Poor human nature, since the days of the apostles, cries in its agony — “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” The Holy Spirit teaches that nature now, as he taught it in the days of Paul, to say — “Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus, the Spirit comforts believers. He is the Comforter — Christ always the subject of his comfort; or, in other words, the Spirit is the Comforter as “the Spirit of truth,” and only by the truth does he comfort believers.

Let me notice a few corollaries to be drawn from the remarks I have already made.

The Holy Spirit is the best and most precious Comforter of all. All the consolations of time may decay, or become diluted; but the Spirit of God says, in the words breathed through the lips of Jeremiah — “I satisfy the weary soul, I replenish the sorrowful soul.” The Spirit of God takes, if I may so express myself, a leaf from the tree of life, and lays that leaf close upon the broken heart of the humble and sorrowing believer. That Holy Spirit takes the truths that are radiated from the Sun, and something like a great discovery in the age in which we live, makes the very beams that come from “the Sun of righteousness” print and impress the likeness of the glorious Original upon the living tablets of believers’ hearts. His consolations penetrate the heart, as the dews and the rains of heaven penetrate the willing soil. The heart grows happy, and the soil becomes prolific. “I will,” says he to Hosea, “allure her into the wilderness, and

“speak comfortably to her;” so it is in our translation, but it is literally and strictly translated, — “speak to her heart.”

The Holy Spirit is the best Comforter, because he cannot misapprehend or mistake the real case of believers. We are well aware, that if one is labouring under some bodily disease, and if the physician, by the frailty of humanity and the ignorance of human science, should mistake the disease, and prescribe for one a prescription that is only applicable to another, he aggravates the malady, instead of curing it; and very frequently when a brother mourns under sorrow of heart, or depression, or calamity, we, poor miserable comforters, go to him and aggravate his sorrow, instead of assuaging it. When we meet with some one who mourns deeply and bitterly because of an overwhelming loss, I believe that under such loss the less we say the better; there is something so great in the calamity, and something so little in all our comforts, that we had better be silent. And when we do speak in order to comfort, let us never say—‘Do not weep; it cannot be helped.’ This will not comfort—it will only embitter the sorrow. Admit the calamity to be sore, admit the grief to be just and only adequate to the occasion; but point to the eternal Fountain that overflows with compensatory joy; draw the heart from the green sod on which it lingers, to the bright throne on which Jesus sits. Bring that spirit from communion with the dead, that provokes only its tears, to communion with a living Saviour, who can wipe all those tears away. And because the Holy Spirit knows all things, as the omniscient and omnipresent Spirit of God, he may appoint that which afflicts us—but it will be that which is best

for us. He may contradict our plans, he may withhold our wishes, but he will nevertheless order all wisely, and bestow all mercifully. Leave that Spirit to his own way, and he will spread his wings over the troubled chaos of the wrecked and shattered heart, and bring order out of chaos, harmony out of discord, and light out of darkness.

The Spirit of God is the best comforter, because others, however adequate, may be unable to reach us; he never can be unable. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uppermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." And therefore the consolations of the Spirit of God can descend to the miner in his subterranean walks, can rise to the Alpine herdsman on the loftiest peak, can minister consolation to the captive in his cell, and impart everlasting joy to that silent and solitary weeper, whose sorrows are too big for expression, and whose griefs can find no tears or a channel for their exit. 'There is no sorrow so hidden, that the Holy Spirit cannot see it; there is no weeper so distant, that that Spirit cannot reach him.

Other comforters may be weary. 'The comforter by the bed of the dying may grow tired; the hand may weary in presenting that cup; the heart may faint and fail in the expression of those sympathies. But this blessed Comforter never wearies: "I, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faint not, neither am weary."

Other comforters are frequently withdrawn when their comforts are most needed. The consolations of the earth are, from their very nature, transient and temporary; they are like the summer brooks, that are fed by the summer showers,—they rush, full and overflowing, for a day, and then leave their channels dry. But the consolations which the Holy Spirit gives, are like those streams which are fed by the glaciers, full in the summer, when other streams are dry and other fountains exhausted.

To you, who are the people of God, what elements of comfort are there in that blessed Gospel with which you are acquainted! Can that spirit sink amid the stormy waves of the world, that has an omnipotent arm to lean on? Can that soul be without comfort, in the deep cells of which are sounding the very echoes of the voice of God? Can that man despair, who feels that he is the friend of Jesus—the protégé of the Most High? Is it not unspeakable comfort, that the Holy Spirit—the Comforter himself—dwells in the depths of my heart, and makes that heart a fane and a temple for his residence? Shall I desecrate that temple by a suspicion, shall I darken it by a doubt, that he who is the omnipotent Comforter, cannot comfort me? “Blessed,” then, “are the people that know the joyful sound; happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

By some reader it may be said, “Doth he not speak parables?” All will seem mystery to some, fanaticism to others, and extravagance to more. Christians will feel that what I have spoken is truth, and that my sentiments have awakened echoes of sweet music within them; but those who are not Christians—(and it is not uncharitable to suspect that there may be some such

reader—for baptism does not make us Christians; going to the Lord's table does not make us Christians; having a pew in the house of God does not make us Christians; wearing the name, and speaking the shibboleth, and being covered with the badge of a party, does not make us Christians. The Spirit of God changing the heart, alone can make us Christians:—)—may feel that all I said is a mystery, there is no response to it in their hearts; they cannot understand it; it is as if I were writing demonstrations in a character which they cannot read, or speaking in a tongue which they do not understand. Perhaps this will teach you. You have sorrow, for which you have no balm; you have troubles, which nothing upon earth has comforted you under; you yourselves feel that you are dying, and passing to the judgment-seat of God. What have you instead of the Gospel? What comfort can you appeal to, richer than the consolations of the great Comforter himself? Compare what you have to cling to, with what a Christian has; and the comparison may prompt you to lay hold on his garment, and beg him to allow you to go with him, for he alone has that which can do you good. I ask you what you have to go to in that hour of trial? Mother, when you lose your babe, what comforts you? Child, when you lose your parent, what comforts you? Husband, when you lose your wife, what comforts you? What have you to look to? Where are you? Whither are you going? What explains this tangled web of human life? Where is the light that will open up all its mystery? Where is the fountain that will give comfort in any of its troubles? Stoicism cannot; human nature cannot; kings and queens and emperors cannot. But this blessed book can. It points to a

home beyond the skies, from which no vicissitude can pluck your dear and cherished ones away; and a Comforter who tells you of one that shall be more than father and mother, and sister and brother, and husband and wife—Jesus Christ—“all our salvation, and all our desire.” Ask him, the Comforter, to teach you the mystery, for he is the Teacher also.

V.

The Great Convincer of Sin, Righteousness and Judgment

A PRECIOUS office of the Holy Spirit, not second in importance to any of those we have already discussed, is described by John in these prophetic words: —

“And when the Spirit is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” — John xvi. 8–11.

The word “reprove” is not the exact rendering of the original, and in fact does not convey its specific, deep and peculiar meaning. The reproof of sin has been the practice of philosophers, the song of poets, the topic of preachers. Every excellence reproves by its existence that which is its opposite. A parent reproves his children, silent virtue reproves obtrusive vice, but this reproof is not correction. Sin is repulsed by reproof, it is not eradicated. It is silenced by the eloquence of the rebuke, but it is not, therefore, subdued. The wind blows on the bleak hill; the hill is not wasted or worn by its action: the waves beat against the hard

rock, but the hard rock remains the same. So man's heart may be reprov'd, and yet it will not repent; he may be silenced, but not convinced, or convicted savingly of sin. The true meaning of the word, therefore, is not "reprove," it does not go deep enough, but "convict" or "convince." "He shall convict or convince of sin;" that is, he shall bring home to our judgments and to our conscience, and render real within, the testimony to which we give ear without. It means, he will work into the heart such a deep sense of sin, its detestableness, its injury, God's great dislike of it, that we too shall hate it, and shrink from it.

None can convince the heart of sin but the Holy Spirit. The preacher may carry the judgment; some providential stroke may impress the feelings; but the Holy Spirit alone can impress the heart with that deep and indelible—growingly deep and indelible—sense of sin which is here declared to be one of his great functions, and on which is laid the foundation of the hopes and the salvation of all that believe. The conscience has often tried to convince man of sin; and the conscience is, no doubt, a most powerful preacher. It protests against the sin that you indulge in, but the practice of the sin goes on, notwithstanding its protests. And after conscience has urged for a little, protested for a season, disappointed, beaten back, and overcome, it at last falls asleep, and ceases in despair to protest any longer; and when at intervals it is awakened a little to a sense of what sin is, and leads to, and what its pains and its penalties must be, it only rubs its eyes, counts its beads, says its Pater Nosters, and falls asleep again; the conscience becoming seared and har-

dened, and in very despair giving up the hopeless task of convincing the heart of sin.

The Law is equally unsuccessful. It thunders its "Shalt not," and "Shalt;" but it has no effect upon the sinner, he trembles like the Israelites for a little, and when the thunder is hushed, and the lightnings are laid, he returns again to his sin; or if the Law drives him from the practice of one sin, it only leaves him to the mercy of another. But when the Holy Spirit begins the work that conscience has resigned in despair, and undertakes the duty that the Law has shown itself ineffective to discharge, then does he so impress the heart and the conscience, and the intellect — the whole man — with an apprehension of what sin is, what sin leads to, how hateful and detestable it is in the sight of a holy and a pure God, that the sinner, alarmed at its power, sick of its poison, wearied with its pains, its toils, its drudgery, flees to him who can take it away by the efficacy of his precious blood, and uproot it by the power of his almighty and his glorious arm.

But whilst it is the great function of the Holy Spirit, to convince of sin, in general, we must notice that one special sin is singled out by our blessed Lord, as the especial subject of the reproof, or, as we propose to render it, conviction. What is that sin? It must be a dominant one, if not the dominant one, in order to be pointed out as the sin that the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven to convict the conscience of. It says, "Of sin, because they believe not on me." In other words, it is the sin of unbelief. There are sins that society takes cognisance of, and blames men for; there are sins that society, in its blindness, does not notice

nor care for: but this sin of unbelief, society takes no notice of at all. It cannot understand that a man should be lost because he does not believe a dogma, as they call it; or that another man should be saved because he does believe a dogma; and they say, "It is not in our power or option to believe what another believes; it is a logical conclusion of the intellect, the result of proof, and not of a volition that we ourselves can exercise. And yet our blessed Lord says that the Spirit's first function is to convince mankind of sin — and of this primary and maternal sin — the sin of unbelief, or 'because they believed not on me.'" It is very remarkable, as we read the rest of the Bible, that we find this sin singled out as endued with peculiar intensity. We see faith constantly spoken of as the leading grace, and unbelief constantly quoted as the leading sin; not because in themselves the one is so intense a virtue, and the other so deep a sin: but because of what they involve, what they necessarily lead to; the fruits that grow from, and the blossoms borne by the one, and the deadly apples of Sodom and Gomorrah that grow upon the branches that belong to the other. This unbelief has this peculiar guilt, that it is our refusal to be what we were made originally to be — one with God. It is not true that it is an intellectual thing only; it is as much a thing of heart, and feeling, and conscience, and will. Thousands will not believe a truth because it is not convenient to believe; our wishes are often stronger than our logic; what we want to be true, because it suits our passions, we conclude illogically enough, but intensely enough, to be truth, and suitable to us. This unbelief, then, is our refusal to be what God meant us originally to be — one with Him.

Unbelief is preferring the land of our exile, to our everlasting and our blessed home: it is loving the hulks of the penal colony, more than the home and habitation of our Father's house. It is preferring the convict dress of sin to the best robe, and the ring on the finger, and the shoes on the feet; it is saying, it was not worth God's while so to love us, that he gave Christ to die for us; it is telling God we do not need his mercy, and we decline it; it is saying, it was not necessary that Christ should die; we could have been happy without him; it is declaring that martyrs shed their blood for a crotchet, that heaven and earth have been created for a mere whim, and that there is nothing in the Bible, nor in God's inspiration of it, that demands the reverence and belief of us, or that can contribute to our present elevation, or our future happiness and dignity hereafter.

This is what unbelief is: it is what the sacred penman proclaims it—calling God a liar: and it is followed by the doom that our blessed Lord himself has pronounced, when he says, “He that believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him.” If we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, in the 2d, 3d, and 4th chapters, we shall find, that the great drift and obvious design of the preaching of Peter, was to stir in the hearts of his auditory a conviction of sin. Every sermon that he preached seems to have had this tendency. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked

hands have crucified and slain." There was his attempt to awaken conviction of sin. And what was the result of it, by the blessing of the Spirit of God? "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart," — that is, the Spirit convinced them of sin — "and they said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" So, again, in Acts iii. 13, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." This was, again, another attempt to convict them of sin. So again, in Acts iv. 10, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." And then Peter stood up with the rest of the apostles, and said, (as we read in the 26th verse,) "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy

word." Whether in his prayer, or in his preaching, there is the constant desire and attempt, on the part of Peter, to impress upon their hearts a sense of the greatness, the heinousness, and the terrible consequences of the sin they had perpetrated. We never shall be able to render the news of a Saviour glad music to the hearts of them that hear it, or the blessings that are the purchase of his precious blood, or welcomed and cherished, till, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God, there has been produced in our hearts that deep conviction of the sin and peril of unbelief, as well as of other sins, that cleave to us all,—which is the best preparation for the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus. And whenever one's mind is awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of his past unbelief, and of all that that unbelief covered in his conduct, he begins with amazement to ask, "How can I have lived fifteen, twenty, thirty, or forty years, treading under foot the precious blood of the Son of God? How can I have disregarded the gospel? How" — he will not say — "foolish was I;" but earnestly and deeply will he exclaim, "How sinful and guilty was I!" The moment that the Spirit has thus convinced him who is the subject of his action, or of his influence, of unbelief, that unbelief will be fled from, shrunk from, detested, hated, prayed against, protested against; and, by the aid of that Holy Spirit, the shadow of scepticism will disappear before the light of Christian truth, and the unbelief that sees in Christ no beauty, that we should desire him changed into that cordial, and earnest, and loving faith, which finds its best expression in saying, "He is the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

After, therefore, the Holy Spirit has convinced and convicted the heart and conscience and soul of this unbelief—this mother sin, he proceeds to convict the same heart of righteousness. Now, what is meant by this, “of righteousness?” It is a righteousness provided for us. He opens the blind eyes to see a righteousness laid up for me which I have not of myself, and which none can lend me. And while passion claims indulgence—while conscience calls from its throne, “Sin not!” Jesus speaks to me, and tells me, “I am the propitiation for your sins; I am the Lord your Righteousness; my righteousness is with all and upon all that believe; for there is no difference.” If the Spirit convicted us of sin, and left us there, then we should be in the very vestibule of hell: but when the Spirit makes the conviction of sin the precursor only to conviction of righteousness, I am lifted to the very vestibule of heaven. And here is the difference. When a man convicts you of a sin, he leaves you there; and perhaps he feels a triumph in depressing, humbling, and, it may be, degrading you. But the Holy Spirit, even when he convicts of sin, never lays aside the character of the Comforter; and therefore his conviction of your heart of sin, is only the precursor to his conviction of your heart of righteousness laid up for you. He humbles that he may exalt; he depresses that he may lift up; he makes you ashamed of yourself that you may glory in Christ, your Righteousness. When he has convinced a man of sin, he feels his sins so real, his ruin so true, his whole state, when tested by God’s law, so utterly depraved, that he feels that all the penalties of everlasting misery do not exceed what sin deserves. And, on the other hand, when he

convicts you of righteousness laid up for you, arrayed in which you can be justified in the sight of God, you feel instantly that an eternal weight of glory will not exhaust or outweigh what Christ has deserved for you, and what you have in Christ. The Holy Spirit, showing you your sins, makes you feel hell is not too terrible for the issue of sin; and when he shows you the righteousness that covers it, he convinces you that heaven is not too magnificent a reward for him who has fled from that sin to the Saviour—from his ruin to the great Redeemer—from guilt that bows him in the dust, to a righteousness that lifts him to the very sky.

It is thus that the Holy Spirit convinces us of righteousness—not of a righteous man, as if Christ were only that; but of Christ our righteousness. If the Spirit convinced us only of a righteous man, and Christ that man, as an example, or standard, instead of being comforted we should exclaim, like Peter, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” But what the Spirit convinces us of after he has convicted us of sin, is that Christ is not a righteous man, a standard, an example we are to imitate only; but that he is righteous for us, that he suffered for us, that he died for us, that he is our righteousness, and that by him we may be justified from all things from which we cannot be justified by the law of Moses. Hence, our justifying righteousness, which the Holy Spirit discloses to the heart of the believer, is not an imitation of Christ’s, but really Christ’s; is not something that we do in the direction in which he lived, but something that we receive from him who is our righteousness—not a resemblance to him, but the reality of what he is; so that clothed in it I am justified; so that imputed to me

it entitles me to everlasting heaven; and I am as satisfied that I am safe by the righteousness of Christ upon me, as I was previously that I was ruined by my own sin in my heart and conscience within me.

Lastly, this Holy Spirit convinces those who are the subjects of his presence, "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Who is the prince of this world? Satan, the usurper. And he is judged in what respect? Constantly a judgment upon Satan and sin is going on. We say, frequently we say, and infidel philosophy tries to prove, that disease, and decay, and death, are the natural and normal things in our world. They say it is natural to die, to be ill, to have aches and ills. That is what the world says, what philosophy says, but in truth is not natural. And these very things, if not sanctified by being made new in the case of a believer, are a continuous judgment of God upon sin. All the world's sufferings are just fulfillments of this. The "prince of this world is judged." Wherever you can see sin leading to sorrow, and often leading to suffering, there you see judgments; and if the Holy Spirit implants the conviction in your hearts you feel it. The tints of autumn, frost, winter, snow, plague, pestilence, famine, battle, murder, death, these are the footprints of judgment, prefigurative of a judgment day. There is enough in this world to show that God is in it; and there is enough evil in it to show that it has come under some great catastrophe; and there is enough of judgment visited upon sin to prove that there is a judgment-seat. Now the Holy Spirit convinces us of judgment; in other words, shows us, and not only as man does, but by imprinting it upon the inmost heart, that sin leads to misery, that judgment

is going on, and continues upon us, preparatory to that great day, when the Judge of all the earth shall do right.

And when he says, "The prince of this world is judged," it is in this way that he is judged. Wherever you see, on the other hand, not sin ending in misery, but Christianity triumphing over want, and woe, misery, proscription, opposition, chains and death, there you see Satan like lightning fall from heaven. When Satan raised the persecutors of the early Christians, and cast those Christians into prison, and they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, we saw the prince of this world judged, falling like lightning from heaven; his efforts to crush the Gospel only exhibiting, by the joyous patience of the sufferers, its power, its excellence, and its glory. When Paul and Silas, cast into the prison at Philippi, sang hymns of praise in the night-time, there you had Satan stirring up the persecutor to thrust them there, and make their feet fast in the stocks; but in the songs they sung, and the joy they felt, and the hopes they never let go even in the darkness of the prison and the silence of a dungeon, we heard praise triumphing over suffering, the joy of the Gospel abounding more where its trials abounded, and the prince of this world disappointed, beaten back, — in the language of the text, "the prince of this world judged." And so, wherever we feel our light affliction for a moment working out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, there you have the ills that sin has introduced, that Satan wields, working out the results that God intends — judgment passing as a process on Satan, and glory evolving to God. And do we

not see in this world a striking proof of a process of judgment or condemnation on Satan going on, in the fact that ambition, lust, pride, dishonesty, are visited with punishment; fail to answer their purpose, or recoil upon them that accept them? Is it not fact that ambition, pride, dishonesty, evil appetite, do not succeed, but avenge themselves upon them that indulge in them? And, on the other hand, do we not find that right in the long run is might, that humility is elevation, that holiness is strength, that to gain, it is always the best way to give, and to minister to others is the way to be ministered unto ourselves? What are these but indirect lights of the ultimate ascendancy of the true, the good, the just, the holy,—incipient proofs that the prince of this world is judge,—light evolving from darkness, beauty emerging from wreck, and foretokens scattered over the experience of man;—all telling us by premonitions, by experiments on a small scale, that ambition, and pride, and depravity, and sin of every sort, shall ultimately be laid low, or Satan bound and shut up, sin put away, and all its tumults arrested; and that holiness, and truth, and love, and peace, shall spread over all the earth.

VI.

The Inner Baptism.

ALL that man does, he does as an instrument—God acts as a Sovereign. Delegation is man's—original and underived sovereignty is the attribute of Deity. It is therefore justly said:—“John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”—Luke iii. 16.

In the one case we see the baptism of John—the servant; and in the other the baptism of Jesus—the great Master. John says, “I indeed baptize you with water”—mine is an outward ministry, conferring an outward ecclesiastical sign; but Jesus baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. His is the inner power, imparting to the heart the inward and the spiritual grace. The first is a declaration of the function of the servant—the visible minister, baptizing with visible water; the second is the announcement of the supreme prerogative of the blessed Master, who baptizeth as neither priest, nor prelate, nor presbyter can,—with the Holy Ghost himself. What shows that there is a material distinction between the baptism of the minister and the bap-

tism of Jesus is, the remarkable fact, that Jesus never Himself baptized with water; and yet, even when an apostle baptized with water, he did not seem to attach to it an inward, efficacious, regenerative power. For if he did, would the Apostle Paul have said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you"? If baptism be in every case regeneration of heart, would an apostle thank God that he did not make men Christians? It ought to be ground for sorrow and regret, not for thanksgiving and rejoicing. But baptism with water is not essentially connected with renewal and regeneration of heart; and the fact that our blessed Lord gave the minister the outward function—baptizing with water, and reserved to himself the inner prerogative—baptizing with the Holy Ghost, shows that He alone has this lofty prerogative, and still keeps it specially and exclusively for himself.

This prophecy, given by John the Baptist, was fulfilled, and we see the visible proof of its fulfilment in the fact that flames of fire rested on every apostle's head: evidence to the people, and no more, that the Holy Ghost had come, and that, therefore, the prophecy was fulfilled. Then the miraculous powers which followed the descent of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost, were not the only fruits of the accession of the Holy Spirit, but proofs to the world, and to the church, that the same Spirit whose descent the flame denoted, also continued to dwell in the hearts of those apostles who originally received him. But underneath the baptism with fire, that was visible on the head, was the baptism with miraculous power, transparent in their acts, producing that inner regeneration and revolution of nature which made the Peter after the day of Pen-

tecost as unlike the Peter that was before that day, as one man can be unlike another. It needs but a comparison between what Peter, and John, and the other apostles were previous to the day of Pentecost, and what they became immediately subsequent to that event, to see that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was not simply the power to speak new tongues, or to do wonderful works, but an inward transformation and renewal of heart and nature, that made them new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The promise of John is often referred to in other parts of the Word of God. It began at Pentecost, and will again appear in richer effusion before the Lord comes. It is first of all, or rather most minutely referred to by Joel: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." That prophecy of Joel, which Peter quotes, was partially fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, but has not yet been exhausted. The great and terrible day of the Lord is when the heavens and the earth shall be exchanged for a new heaven and a new earth, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. And before that day comes, that great and terrible day of the Lord, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, there will be an extraordinary pouring

out of God's Holy Spirit on all flesh, preparatory to the advent of Him whose right and promise it is to reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. That this promise was meant by Peter, and described by him to have been partly fulfilled at Pentecost, and that it is associated with John's prophecy also, is evident from what we read in Acts i. 5:—"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Then, in the 2d chapter:—"When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Then Peter says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel"—this is the beginning of it, but not the exhaustion; the commencement, but not the close—"It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

This baptism with the Holy Spirit of God is the true and essential baptism. Satan will be quite satisfied that we should quarrel about the meaning of baptism with water, if we only fail to see the absolute necessity of baptism with the Holy Ghost. It is most important that we should be upon our guard against dwelling too long upon this or any other outward rite. When men begin to quarrel about ecclesiastical questions, they soon come to lift the Church out of its true place: when they discuss long upon sacraments, they end in

displacing the sacraments from their just place. The Lord's Supper was disputed about, till it ended in transubstantiation; baptism with water has been discussed till it has been identified with regeneration by the Holy Spirit. What transubstantiation is to the Lord's Supper, baptismal regeneration is to baptism. Transubstantiation is making a sign to be actual Christ; baptismal regeneration is making a sign to be actually the Holy Spirit of God. How beautiful is the distinction drawn in the words and in the prophecy of John: "I, the minister, baptize you with water,"—that is all that I can do—"but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

What is the import of this baptism with the Holy Ghost, thus spoken of by John, and predicted by the prophet, and partially fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles? It is doing to the inward man what baptism with water does to the outer; it is the cleansing of the thoughts of the heart; it is tuning the discordant strings of the soul. It is implanting, in the place of the old Adam, a new man and a new creature; it is not changing the old nature into the new; but it is planting in the midst of the old nature a powerful, a conquering, and a dominant new. In the highest Christian upon earth, there is still the old Adam, or the old nature, with its offspring of trials and sorrows and temptations; but in the least Christian upon earth there is the new creature, gaining power every day, subduing the old man, triumphing in the strength of the Holy Spirit, and indicating a

baptism which man can neither give, nor mar, nor take away — baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Let us notice what would be some of the effects of the Pentecostal baptism, were it now — as we hope it soon will — to descend upon the whole Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be first, the sprinkling of the shower before the descending flood; there will be first, local indications of the pouring out of that Holy and Blessed Spirit, before the great Pentecostal effusion comes. One cannot look around on the Christian Church at the present moment without admitting, whilst we grieve for the superstition that prevails, whilst we wonder that there should be any in a true Church holding deadly and antisciptural dogmas, that never in the history of our country was there more real religion than at the present moment. Never did religion prevail so much among the higher classes, or spread so wide among the humbler. May not this be the first sprinkling before the glorious shower? May not this be the herald of the Pentecostal day? May it not be the first faint dawn that indicates the approach of a glorious and an everlasting noon? But what would be some of the effects of the baptism of the Holy Ghost? Look at Peter previous to the day of Pentecost, and after that day: the change is complete; the transformation is inconceivable.

Let me, however, guard against misapprehension of what would be the effect of the Holy Spirit of God being poured out on a congregation. So much has been associated with “revivals,” as they are called, especially across the Atlantic, — offensive, unscriptural, and coarse, that when one speaks of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit of God, many excellent Christians

misapprehend and misconstrue it. Were it to please God to pour out his Holy Spirit upon all flesh, the effect would not be mere excitement. I do not know that excitement is always evidence of strength; fever is excitement, but it is not health; excitement is not always power. At the same time, I do not think that the risk of the age lies in the direction of getting too much excited about religion. One may see every day far more excitement in trade, in politics, about the loss or gain of twenty shillings, than about the safety of the soul, the interests of eternity, the destinies of man, the glory of God, the salvation of sinners. Many a one is under far more excitement about an appearance in some gay assembly, than about the appearance of the soul at the judgment-seat of Christ. It is scarcely fair to complain of excitement connected with religion, when we see so much in the gay world, in political circles, in the commercial world.

This pouring out of God's Holy Spirit upon all flesh, would not lead to anything like eccentricity. Some people seem to have the idea that one cannot be religious, and yet be natural; that unless you speak in a peculiar tone, approaching to a whine, put on a grave face, and seem to men to fast; unless you conform to certain extrinsic and peculiar habits, you cannot be under the power of real religion. It seems to me that true piety will never be discourteous, as it will never be disloyal; it will neither give up the urbanities of life, nor refuse to give honour to whom honour, and duty to whom duty are due. Eccentricities are excrescences on true religion, not its beautiful and its fragrant growth; Pharisaic pretences, not the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus. Wherever there is pretence, whether

it be in the pulpit or in the pew, wherever anything is put on for show, or for effect, all power dries up, because all reality is gone. When you come under the influence of true religion, you will be the same man, you will speak in the same way, you will be as friendly on the streets, to friend and foe—to him that differs from you, and to him that agrees with you,—as you ever were before; but you will be, in all that you think, and do, and say, sustained by a power, sanctified by a consecration, and moulded after a standard, which will show that you are, while not eccentric, a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Were God to pour out his Holy Spirit upon all mankind, there would be nothing of fanaticism. We have heard, associated with what has been said to be—I cannot judge whether it is real or not—the revival of real religion, extreme extravagance and fanaticism. Now, it does seem to me that Christian enthusiasm is as different from fanaticism, as the beautiful light that shines on the perfect day is from the flash of lightning that lays low the lofty palace and the lowly hamlet. Enthusiasm is apostolical; fanaticism is Mahometan. Fanaticism is like the rocket that ascends into the sky, and blazes, and bursts, and leaves the darkness blacker than before: but enthusiasm—Christian enthusiasm—is like the warmth that we read of in southern lands, which is to be traced, not by intolerant and explosive fires, but by the genial soil, and the abundant harvests that grow up, witnessing to the goodness of God, and the fertility of the soil below. The descent of the Holy Spirit of God would be accompanied with no fanaticism. I do not believe that, if all England were intensely and enthusiastically Christian, the Royal Ex-

change would be pulled down, or that the House of Lords would be upset. I do not believe, if real religion were in every man's heart, and true piety like the atmosphere of every man's life, that one railway station would be shut up, or one shop closed. The commerce, the statesmanship, the literature, the science, and the arts of the world, would go on as they did before, only inspired by a nobler spirit, and elevated to a more glorious and heavenly platform.

Were this Spirit poured down upon earth in every home, there would be the morning incense of praise, and the evening sacrifice of prayer, not the least beautiful sight below. The family on earth would approach almost the family in heaven: and the roof-tree of the humblest shieling would have the magnificence of the homes of the blest, where it is consecrated by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving.

Our schools would be nurseries of true religion; not less on that account the nurseries of secular education, as it is commonly called, but more than ever the nurseries of true, scriptural, and Christian religion. And were this Holy Spirit poured out, then talent would be no more desecrated. That gigantic engine of good or evil, the newspaper press, would be sanctified; every element, every means of power, would become an element and a means of good. Then men would be temperate without the necessity of being teetotallers; chaste without going into convents; true without oaths; and a self-government that would supersede the outward government of the land would prevail.

In individual cases, no less beautiful results would follow. The moment that a man feels the Spirit of God in his heart, he begins to be anxious about his

soul. Few are without some thoughts about their soul; all know that that outward shell, beautifully and fearfully made, must crumble into dust, and that out of it must emerge the soul, like the sword from its scabbard, or the lightning from the cloud, and appear naked before God in judgment. All know this. Few can escape this solemn presentiment—this deep and sacred truth. But the moment the thought breaks in upon the soul, too many raise up a thousand barriers to repel it, or divert the heart to other inquiries and expectations. But when the Holy Spirit is given, men will ask the question with an emphasis with which they never asked it before—"What must I do to be saved?" and they will wait upon the preaching of God's Word, and draw near to God's throne of grace, and read his holy word with an earnestness with which they never read it before. When men begin to be guided by the Holy Spirit of God to seek and find the way to heaven, it is wonderful how all the paltry and superficial questions on mere forms will fall away, as the one thing needful rises in prominence and greatness. They will not care very much whether they worship with a Liturgy or without one; whether they be under an Episcopalian or a Presbyterian government; whether they have an instrument for praise, or be without one. They will look upon these things as tiny lights, and still desire to see the great and glorious sun that is above them—as the mere jots and tittles that perish, not the essential and vital things. When a person is very hungry, he will not trouble himself much whether the bread that is presented to him be on a wooden trencher or in a silver basket. Indeed, the instant that a man begins to examine the basket, and to discuss its merits, we

may be sure that he is not very hungry. So, when one is very anxious about his soul, he will not entertain many discussions about the mere outward forms and ceremonies; he will have no inclination to enter into disputes upon such details.

When this Holy Spirit is poured out upon an individual there will be in the heart joy, and peace, and righteousness in the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit not only leads to Christ, but he leaves in the heart in which he condescends to dwell, all the holy impressions of his presence. The kingdom of God is first righteousness, then it is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is as much the Comforter as he is the Sanctifier; he is as much the Author of joy as he is the Author of holiness; and therefore one of the direct results of Christianity is, to give men inward peace—to make men happy. Yet the very opposite conclusion is that which thousands entertain. If, instead of asking men their opinions, you watch men's movements, you will see that they think religion, and prayer, and the thought of God, and the Bible, very good things for a funeral, very suitable at a sick bed, most proper when we are in deep distress, but scarcely, if at all, suitable topics for joyous hours. Yet, Christianity in its deepest action, is as appropriate at bridals as it is at burials; it is as beautiful in life's sunny hours, as it is precious in its sad and shadowy ones; it is as appropriate when the father gazes on his new-born babe, as when a venerable parent is taken away, and those he has left behind him weep over the sad and irreparable catastrophe. As if to teach this, the very first miracle that Jesus wrought was at a marriage, in Cana of Galilee. How suggestive is this fact! He who came to tread life's

thorny path, paused for a minute to gather a beautiful flower as he entered it! He that was going through a long and an arduous travail, bearing the cross,—a Man of sorrows—yet paused for a moment to rejoice with them that did rejoice, before he went forth to weep with them that wept! How beautiful, that this blessed Gospel dawned in the form of a nuptial benediction! It began with joy—it ends in glory and joy also. And instead of being a religion wholly sepulchral, it is wholly joyous. If we are not happy under its power, it is not because it has lost its influence, but because we have mistaken, misapprehended, or missed its meaning. The very first effect of the good news is to make a man happy and joyous—not only when all is prosperous, for it is very easy to be happy in the sunshine—but when all is shaded and sad. At those times that happen to all, when life's loveliest things fade, this religion takes their place. "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom; though there shall be no fruit on the vine; though the labour of the olive shall fail; though there shall be no herd in the stall; yet," in the event of this utter destitution, says the prophet, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." And so it is with the Christian; still in circumstances of the deepest distress, he has an inward and a compensatory joy, which makes him, like the apostles, take joyfully the spoiling of his goods.

"As some tall cliff that rears its awful form
Above the rest, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

So it is with the Christian. Though trouble, affliction, distress, make him weep,—for that is human; yet

this blessed Gospel, this possession of the Holy Spirit within him, makes him rejoice,—for this is divine. A Christian is not a Stoic—a man who does not feel! The bravest hearts are generally the most sensitive. It has often been found, that a hero's valour on the field of battle has been combined with a woman's tenderness in sympathy with sorrow and suffering. Not stoicism, but human nature, in all its sensibilities, constitutes a man inspired and ennobled by the possession of the Holy Spirit of God.

Were the Holy Spirit poured out into all hearts, there would be a greater amount of light in every section and department of the Church of Christ. There is much darkness in the most enlightened mind, there are heavy clouds resting upon the Church; but if this Holy Spirit, who is the Teacher, shall take of the things of Christ—who is the Light—and show them to us, it will reveal to us the darkness that lies upon the world like a pall, and show how little impression the light of divine truth has yet produced upon the masses of mankind. We should see multitudes of mankind perishing for lack of knowledge; we should hear the tramp of innumerable feet that beat hard the broad way that leads to everlasting death; we should hear, borne upon every breeze across the Pacific and the broad Atlantic, the cry of innumerable millions; and the world itself, in which we now walk so complacently, would present a very different aspect, if we had only that blessed light to show us the gigantic difference between the light of the glorious Gospel, and the darkness that may be felt.

That this would be the effect is evident from the consideration — as we may see — of the present depravity

and degeneracy of mankind. Mahometanism still holds the fairest portion of the earth; the Crescent still floats supreme where the Cross once was, and where the Cross will be again. And if we had light from on high to see this as it is, we should go and try, by scriptural and spiritual means, to put an end to it, as we should be able. It is impossible that a man who has light should look upon darkness without pity; it is impossible that he who has found the way to heaven should look with indifference upon those that have lost it. The uneducated eye does not see darkness that exists; it is in the aphelion of the Sun of Righteousness; but a Christian's eye will see the whole earth to be in darkness; and we should not rest until we have done something consistent with our belief, to enlighten them that be in darkness, and carry the light of the glorious Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth. I believe that that would be the very first effect of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Light preceded the blossoming earth, and the animated tribes in the ocean, and the cattle on a thousand hills; and light will still, in the spiritual world, precede the greatest triumphs of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next effect of the Holy Ghost being poured out upon us, would be greater and intenser spiritual life. Every Christian, if really such, has life; but then, in many a Christian, life is very feeble; and the pulse at the wrist indicates that the heart in the background is very faint indeed. And when we think of the life of the Apostles—the life of the Reformers of the sixteenth century—the life exhibited by some of the most illustrious Christians of modern times—we must say that the temperature of ours is extremely low, that

there is needed, in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only brighter light, but greater warmth, intenser life; and where there is that individual, spiritual life, there is the best proof of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. . And nothing else will generate that life. No outward ecclesiastical baptisms will ever give life to the Christian heart. No eloquence in the pulpit can do it; no arrangements of Churches can do it. I do not believe that the duty of the age is Church mending—the duty of the age is prayer for the Holy Ghost. Were the Holy Spirit given to its ministers, the worst Church in Christendom would be the ambassadress of Heaven, the benefactress of the earth. And I believe, on the other hand, that if the Spirit be not given to the most orthodox Church in Christendom, that all the excellence of its machinery, all the power and prestige of its social position, will be worth nothing. Satan will rejoice to see you Church menders, if he can only never see you on your knees, praying for the Holy Ghost. Satan will rejoice to see you fierce ecclesiastics, zealous Churchmen, desperate Dissenters, if he can only succeed in keeping you from being baptized with the inner baptism of the Holy Ghost. What we want is not new machinery, but divine life to actuate the old—no other Churches, but divine light to permeate the old ones. I am myself very indifferent about what the Church may be, but I do feel most deeply that the Church should be baptized with the Holy Ghost, as with fire. Let us care less about forms, and ceremonies, and sect, and system, and pray more, each personally, at the throne of grace, for the Holy Spirit of God. I believe that all Churches are soon to be ground to powder; our best and our worst, our

Established and Dissenting, are all soon to be broken to pieces; but out of the ruins will emerge a Church, not made by ecclesiastics, not man-made, or minister-made, or General-Assembly-made, or bishop-made, but Spirit-made, a Church divinely instituted, divinely formed; bright as the sun, fair as the moon, presented unto Jesus a glorious Church, without spot, or blemish, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Our existing Churches are all provisional, the Church that is to be will be perfect; and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is provisional will be done away.

The next effect will be greater holiness in each individual. Holiness is a grace so majestic and impressive, that the world stands in awe of it; and holiness has for its standard a holy law; for its Author the living God; for its inspiration the Holy Ghost; for its fruits whatsoever things are pure, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report. And if we were made what the Holy Spirit can make us, what no baptism with water ever made one, what baptism by an ecclesiastic never can make any, truly regenerate, more holy, by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, we should be less exacting in relation to others, less aspiring in relation to ourselves, less tied, though no less loving, to those with whom we are connected; we should expend far less in ecclesiastical decorations, and far more in building up living stones into a glorious temple, whose builder and whose maker is God. We should have less rivalry with sect, more rivalry who shall do the greatest good. We should prefer to be pure in heart rather than to be beautiful without; to be rich in grace rather than rich in this world; to have new hearts, new sympathies, new desires, to be a holy

nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. And the result of all this light, and life, and holiness, would be more power for good in the whole Christian Church. I do not mean political power; that power does not, I think, materially aid the Church of Christ; nor ecclesiastical domination;—ambitious ecclesiastics, thirsting for ecclesiastical power, have done more to keep men from the Church of Christ than anything else that I know;—nor mere intellectual power—there may be great power in the preacher, and there will only be great admiration, but no sanctifying effect on the people; nor do I mean great numbers,—great numbers are not the test of great prosperity in a church; but power to speak faithfully, to live purely, to do the greatest good, and good to an extent to which it had never been done before, in benefitting and blessing all mankind.

Such would be the effect of baptism with the Holy Ghost, whenever God shall vouchsafe to give it.

This Holy Spirit, whose baptism we thus need, cannot be given or granted by any man upon earth. But yet he has been ever given in connexion with the preaching of the Gospel. We do not find the Holy Spirit poured out upon Mahometans or Pagans; but when the missionaries go to preach the glad tidings of great joy, this result does take place. It shows us, that while God works without means, and above means, and against means, the ordinary way is, that he honours the means, and gives his blessing where Paul plants, and Apollos faithfully sows.

This blessing is given in answer to prayer.—“If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall my Father give the Spirit

unto them that ask him." And God tells the people of Israel in Ezekiel, "For all these things will I be entreated, saith the Lord of Hosts." Now what is the reason that any man has not a new heart? It is that he will not ask. What is the reason that I am not a temple of the Holy Ghost? I do not ask. We have lost faith in God's invitation to ask—we have no confidence in his promise that he will give; and therefore we do not ask. But if we will take God at his word, pray to him, and beseech him to give what we need, and what man cannot give, the baptism of the Holy Ghost; no one who thus earnestly asks will ever retire disappointed. Instead, therefore, of discussing whether baptism with water can regenerate the human heart, a subject that ought to need no discussion, it is so transparent; we ought rather to pray that God will give us that true and inner baptism which man can neither give nor take away, the baptism of the Holy Ghost; thus we should have light, and life, and holiness, and power, and bear visibly before the world the impress of a divine and a heavenly connexion.

If this be the latter era of the world in which we live, how solemn and important is our position; how great, how instant, how urgent is our responsibility! We ought to pray not only for ourselves, but for the whole church, that God will give it that baptism—that spiritual baptism, that is the best preparation for his advent, and the truest evidence that his advent is at hand. What is all the spurious excitement that prevails in every section of the church, but the result of the want of this unction of the Spirit of God? We look in one direction, and men are so conscious that something is wanting, that they are pulling up the old

stakes, and planting new ones. We turn in another direction, and men are attempting to supply the want of it by a rood screen, or a fine altar, or oriel windows, or pictures of the Trinity; there is a universal desire among mankind for something more than they have; a universal feeling that there is some great want in the Church of Christ; and mistaking what is the real want, and who can alone supply it, they are running to cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water; and, instead of removing the thirst, they are only making it intenser. But still, all this movement that prevails in the visible church, is evidence that men are conscious that there is something wanting, there is a felt sensation of some great deficiency. That deficiency is the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and that which we should instantly set about is to pray that the Holy Spirit would descend upon the Church, and we shall then not seek new churches, or gaudy churches, but we shall remain where God, in his providence, has placed us, feeling that religion, true religion, is not connexion with a church, but connexion with Christ; not ecclesiasticism, but true piety; not change of our position in the world, but change of heart and of nature. And if that baptism be ours, we have that which is the best, the only preparation for the kingdom of heaven.

Let each, then, ask himself, Am I baptized with the Holy Ghost? Baptism with water is duty; but are you baptized with the Holy Ghost? Are your hearts changed? He alone can make a Christian, not mere baptism; he alone can make a minister, not imposition of hands; he alone can make a saint, not the canoni-

zation of the Pope; he alone can reach the heart, not the eloquence of the most gifted of mankind.

Are we thus changed? There is one prayer that a child can use, but yet the grandest that a saint can employ: "O Lord, give me the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Man has baptized me with water; oh, exalted Redeemer, do thou baptize me with the Holy Ghost; that mine may be an everlasting blessing, and thine glory, and honour, and thanksgiving."

VII.

The Divine Remembrancer.

NOT the least interesting and instructive view of the work of the Holy Spirit is that of our Remembrancer, as he brings to our remembrance the words and truths of Jesus. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John xvi. 26.

How precious is this promise of our blessed Lord! One shall come and be as much present with each individual Christian as with the whole company of believers, and do what earthly ministers cannot—teach the heart all things, and bring—what no memory of its own unaided powers is able to do—all things to remembrance whatsoever Christ has said to us. We read so often of the Holy Spirit, in the Gospel of St. John especially, that we are sometimes inclined to ask, Was the Spirit given under the Old Testament economy; and is there any allusion to him and his work in that volume? I answer, The Spirit was in the Church from the beginning. David could not have had a clean heart, except by the almighty power of the Holy

Spirit; but under the New Testament economy, as we have seen, he was given in larger abundance, as the promises of the Old distinctly and emphatically say. That the Spirit existed under the Old Testament dispensation is plain from many allusions to him. I might show this by noticing the fact, that wherever God is described in the Old Testament Scriptures, he is described almost always in the plural number; not proving, thereby, that the Holy Spirit is God, but decidedly and unmistakeably that there is what we call in theological language, a plurality of Persons in the essential and blessed Godhead. I know many persons at once shrink from the idea, as if plurality of Persons in the Godhead meant more Gods than one. But they forget an important distinction. We do not believe in *Tritheism* — three Gods; but in the Trinity, or *Trinity* — three in one. You say, How can we conceive three in one? Every reader of this page is a compound being, consisting of soul, spirit, and body; or, more comprehensively, of soul and body. Now there cannot be two more distinct things in the world than soul and body; and yet you do not hesitate to speak of both as one; and therefore we have in every living man three in one, or at least two in one, according as you divide the soul and distinguish it from the body. So may we conceive there can be in Deity three Persons, each God, and yet but one God. Of course I do not pretend to explain it; I cannot comprehend it; but if we are to make our ability to comprehend a thing the criterion of its truth, or the reverse, we shall be obliged to deny many things, and very common things; for we comprehend far smaller and far fewer things than sometimes, in our pride, we satisfy our-

selves. Such allusions as the following indicate more than one Person in the Godhead: Gen. i. 26,—“And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image.” Gen. iii. 22,—“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.” Mal. i. 6,—“If I be a master (literally, masters), where is my fear? saith the Lord.” And again, Eccl. xii. 1,—“Remember now thy Creator,” as in our version; but in the original, “Remember thy *Creators*.” And so many other passages that might be quoted, indicate plurality in the Godhead, whatever be the meaning of that plurality. But we have distinct allusions to the Holy Spirit as God. Gen. i. 2.—“The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters;” a fact distinctly expressive of the Holy Spirit. It is, literally translated, “And the Spirit kept fluttering after the manner of a dove upon the waters.” Accordingly, you read in the Gospels, “The Spirit descended like a dove.” The passage in Gen. i. 2, and the record of the Spirit’s descent upon Jesus, so correspond to each other, that both must refer to the one Holy Spirit. Again, in Gen. vi. 3,—“My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” Again, in Psalm civ. 30,—“Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; they are created.” Sam. xxiii. 2,—“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me.” All these are plainly allusions to the third Person in the holy and blessed Trinity. But it has been supposed by Bishop Heber, a very competent and accomplished critic, that in Daniel there are very pointed allusions to the Holy Spirit of God. For instance, in Daniel x. 16, Bishop Heber thinks that the Holy Spirit is not only alluded to, but positively mentioned: “And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my

mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." Now the reason why the Bishop seems to think that this relates to the Holy Spirit is, that Michael is a designation of our blessed Lord, Michael the archangel elsewhere, called here, "your prince." "I send my messenger," is, in the original, "I send my angel before thee." So again, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel" — the chief Messenger, the Shiloh, the Sent One, the Messiah. And he supposes here that Michael, spoken of in Daniel, is always the representative of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the Jews, very remarkably, in their comments upon Daniel, speak of Michael as the great High Priest in the heavens, by whom the tribes of Israel are presented to God; as if they were giving, long before, the true picture in the Apocalypse,

where Jesus is spoken of as a chief angel, who presented the prayers of saints in the golden censer before the throne,—a dim and imperfect sketch of the great original that should be revealed in the fulness of the times. Then Bishop Heber thinks that Gabriel, spoken of so often in Daniel, is really the Holy Spirit of God—that Michael was our blessed Lord, and that Gabriel was the Holy Spirit of God. The allusions to him are in Dan. viii. 16: “And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision”—that is, some Divine Being called to one here called Gabriel, who is commissioned to make him understand the vision; or, in the language of our Lord, to “teach him all things whatsoever I have said unto you.” Again, Daniel ix. 21: “Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel”—“man” ought to be omitted—“whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation”—that is, sacrifice. “And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding,” which is the great function or office of the Holy Spirit of God. And in Daniel viii. 13, Bishop Heber thinks he is alluded to: “Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice?” Now, in the original, it is, “And one Holy One said unto that other Holy One.” It is not the word “saint,” as applied to the Christian believer, as in the New Testament; but one Holy One speaking to another Holy One.

As if to confirm Bishop Heber’s interpretation, we

find in the beginning of Luke, that there appears to Mary—in the 26th verse of the 1st chapter of Luke —“the angel Gabriel,” or “the messenger Gabriel, sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.” And then Mary said, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.” “Gabriel” is, literally translated, “The power of the Highest;” Gabriel, the strength of God, or the power of the strong God, or the power of the Highest. And therefore here there may be an allusion to the picture of Daniel describing the Holy Spirit of God. This, however, I leave for consideration; I cannot see that Gabriel and Michael are created angels. In the Book of Daniel they appear, on the contrary, as Divine Beings; and they may be as Bishop Heber concludes, and what divines call anthropomorphic appearances of these blessed Persons in the Trinity, consulting, and working, and acting in the salvation of the human family.

I now turn to the special function of the Holy Spirit

stated here ; which is, first, to teach us all things ; and secondly, to bring all things to our remembrance. The first question is, What are the "all things?" It is evidently the same "all things" as that mentioned by John. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know *all things*," It is plain it must be all things spiritual or Christian, relating to God and to the soul. The apostles were not commissioned to reveal scientific facts ; and there is no promise that a Christian shall understand by Divine teaching scientific things, one whit better than the scholar who studies them, and does not believe in Christianity at all. And therefore, in the Bible we understand by the "all things," all those spiritual and eternal truths that bear upon and contribute to the salvation of mankind. We must not therefore expect to find in the Bible scientific truths taught as such ; though there may be many spiritual truths that touch the margin of scientific phenomena. The Spirit will not teach a Christian science. This is not the promise. The "all things" are clearly—what common sense leads us to understand—spiritual things. We do not expect in a book upon geology discourses about astronomy ; and we do not consult a treatise on mineralogy to find the truths of astronomy ; we expect in a book that which on its title-page it professes to teach. So in the Christian Scriptures we look for, not astronomy, not geology, but religion. And, therefore, the promise of the Holy Spirit is to teach us the all things that relate to the soul and to everlasting life.

The "all things," in the second place, must denote all things revealed—all things positively revealed. There are many great things that we must feel a deep interest in knowing, which God has not been pleased

to make known. God has revealed in the Bible everything to sanctify the soul, but nothing to gratify a morbid curiosity. We may not therefore expect that the Holy Spirit will teach us to answer many curious questions that men have asked, and will ask; but that he will teach us savingly and profitably those precious truths which God has revealed. For instance, it has been asked, How long did Adam stand in Paradise before he fell? This is not revealed; there is no reason to hope that the Spirit will teach it. It has been asked, If Eve only had sinned, and Adam had remained innocent, would humanity have fallen? That question may be asked; there is no answer in the Bible; we have no warrant to pray that the Holy Spirit would teach it. It has been asked, How long will the day of judgment last? This is not revealed; but I think there is enough revealed to show that it will not occupy twenty-four hours only, but a long time, in contrast to the day of grace that now is. The Bible, however, is silent. We must therefore limit the teaching of the Holy Spirit to the "all things" that are revealed in the Bible.

We must even further still limit in some respect the "all things;" because there are many things that are stated in the Bible which all believers do not know. Everybody must admit that there are in the Bible things essential and things called non-essential; or truths so vital, that if we do not know them we miss the way to heaven; and other truths valuable, but so subsidiary, that many Christians who do not know them, or misunderstand them, yet do not lose their souls or materially suffer thereby. In the human economy the eye is most useful, and the hand most

helpful; but we may lose both hand and eye, and yet live in good health. But if we lose the heart, or the lungs, or the brain, then life—physical life—is put an end to. We see therefore in our physical economy, parts that are essential, and parts that are subsidiary. So in a bridge; we may take down the railings, and yet the bridge will stand; but if we take out the keystone, the bridge must fall. So in the things that are in the Bible: take away some things, and you deprive Christianity of that which is ornamental, beautiful, useful; but you do not take away that which is its very essence and its substance. We may therefore expect that the Spirit will not teach us, in all circumstances, and everywhere, all things; for we find good men differ in their interpretation of subsidiary things: but we may expect that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things that are essential to our present safety, and future prospects and happiness.

Having seen this first function of the Holy Spirit as the Teacher of all things, let me notice a no less interesting function of this blessed Comforter—that of the Remembrancer—“He will bring all things to your remembrance.” It is a very remarkable fact, and one that we do not need to be told, (for we all know it,) that not only has the intellect been weakened and the heart corrupted, but the memory also is crippled and impaired. And not only has the memory lost its power to retain its trust, but it has the tendency to let go the holy, and to keep in it only the impure and the unholy; than which I know not a stronger evidence of the corruption that has passed upon our nature. The Holy Spirit not only gives us new hearts by sanctifying

them, and better minds by enlightening them—not only makes us more fit to apprehend the truth by teaching us, but also improves our memories, by bringing to our recollection all things, limiting the all things by what I have said—“whatsoever I have said unto you.” One must see—and the first evidence of this may be in some degree restricted, but it is no less an evidence of the fulfilment of this promise—how impossible it is, that Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, could have written the Gospels that bear their names, unless this very promise had been made actual in their experience.

To put it on the very lowest ground, suppose that I were to select a common tax-gatherer, a fisherman, and a physician, in the nineteenth century, and were to ask this fisherman, tax-gatherer, and physician, to sit down and write out all the sermons that they have heard me preach in the year 1853. Each would attempt it; but you would be surprised how little they would be able to commit to paper, what mistakes they would make, what misapprehensions they would show; and how difficult it would be to write down, not simply the words, but the substantial truths they have all three heard week after week.

Let us take the 5th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew—that magnificent pyramid, that most eloquent thing, the Sermon on the Mount—the beatitudes of Matthew. It would be a greater miracle to suppose a tax-gatherer like Matthew—an illiterate, gross, vulgar-minded man, without education of any sort—to sit down and record that sermon, than to suppose that the Holy Spirit of God taught him, and brought to his remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto him.

He could not have invented it; for there was nothing like it in that age. Our acquaintance with it makes it look simple. Great discoveries, struck out by master minds, seem the plainest things possible, when once they are made. Before Sir Isaac Newton's day the whole economy of the universe was, in our apprehension, in confusion. He saw an apple falling from a tree, and from that he unfolded the great law of gravitation, or all things gravitating to the centre of the globe, and all the orbs gravitating to the sun, their centre. Now that the discovery is made, we can see how very natural it is—nothing more natural; and we wonder, and are amazed, that men did not discover it before: and yet it required the world to wait till a Newton came before that discovery was made. So, in the same manner, when we now read the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the morality is so purely what the tone and temperature of all social life should be, that we feel, nothing is more natural, than the 5th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew.

But if we need contemporaneous Latin writers—even Seneca, the best of them—or earlier Greek writers, Plato or Xenophon, we shall see how infinitely beneath the Publican of Galilee are the noblest inspirations of heathendom. So much is this the case, that we are constrained to infer, it is as impossible that Matthew the publican could have written the 5th chapter of his Gospel from his own genius, as that he could have soared to the fixed stars, or taken up the ocean in the hollow of his hand. I do not need arguments to prove the inspiration of the Bible; when I know these facts, it is irresistibly proved that Matthew wrote as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit; and that Spirit brought

to his remembrance the things that Christ had said unto him.

But to see how precious, in reference to us, are the truths that the Spirit thus brought to remembrance, let us take any part of the Gospels—the parable of the Prodigal Son, or the beautiful incidents in the Acts, or the conclusive reasoning of the Apostles, or the doctrines applied to the circumstances of their hearers—all indicating the supernatural teaching of the Spirit of God, and see what a vacuum remains. If we will just reflect what the writers of the New Testament were, and then read what they have written, we shall have no difficulty in concluding that they were not the authors, but simply the *amanuenses*—that they were not the originals, but simply the copyists from a grand and living Original. I can tell by reading a book, by the very strain of the writing, whether the writer is a mere copyist, or whether he writes his own original thoughts. First-rate judges, looking at a painting, would say, “That painting is from nature.” First-rate men, reading a poem of taste, would say, “That poem is genius thinking for itself—striking out thoughts for itself.” If we look into the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we shall see they are not copyists, but that they sketched from a magnificent Original, always present and ever before them. They who doubt the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament, are the credulous men. It needs a wonderful amount of credulity to be an infidel; needs but common sense to be mentally a Christian; inspired common sense to be savingly a Christian.

But how interesting must this function be to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come; that the

Spirit is still promised to bring to our remembrance all things whatsoever Christ has said! Whatever the Father has promised, whatever Christ has declared, that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us as our Remembrancer. This function is not exhausted, it is still experienced by believers. There are times, for instance, when, if deeply convinced of sin, we are prone to rivet our thoughts upon this single conviction, and so to look at the sin that we lose the Saviour. But what a blessed experience is it when the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance such a text as this: — “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” Or again, suppose we are led, by the plausibilities of error, to look aside from the truth as it is in Jesus; and to look to human things, or ecclesiastical things, and to seek peace, and comfort, and joy from them: how blessed the remembrance of such a text as this, “They have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water;” and we flee from the cisterns thus described as broken, and fall back upon the fountain ever full and ever flowing. Or perhaps, in God’s providential government we have found all things running cross. We lose our property, we are bereaved of our children, our hearts are desolate and sad: and we say in agony of heart, and apparently as the finding of our experience, what the Patriarch said so sorrowfully of old, “All these things are against me.” But how delightful when the Remembrancer brings to our recollection the blessed truth, that instead of being against us, they are as much for us as they were for the Patriarch;

and what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Or perhaps we have fears. We say, I fear my God hath forgotten me; all his billows roll over me; all things run cross to me; I seem to be left alone, and friendless, and an orphan in the world." How blessed to feel rush into our fears this bright thought, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? She may forget" — a highly improbable possibility — "she may forget; but I will not forget thee: I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands: I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee:" a text intensely strong in the original: it is, literally translated, "I will not — no, never leave thee; I will not — no, never forsake thee;" the strongest language that can possibly be employed. It is not, therefore, I argue from all this, it is not so much unknown truth that we need to know, or denied truth that we need to be convinced of, for our comfort; but forgotten truth that we need to be reminded of, or brought to our remembrance or our recollection.

And how blessed is this function of the Holy Spirit in another respect! We may be travelling where no Bible is accessible; we may be laid upon a sick bed, where nervous irritability will not allow us to read, or render us almost unable to hear another read for us. But there and then, in the shadows of approaching dissolution, and the solitariness and sadness of a sick bed, is a Remembrancer who can cast light upon thoughts almost effaced from the memory, and make luminous and beautiful, and full of comfort, texts we heard in infancy, which are now the consolations of sickness or age.

How precious, in the next place, is this office of the Holy Spirit in prayer! He reminds us of promises that we can plead, of mercies that we have experienced; so that we can urge, as the Psalmist does in the 4th Psalm, the mercies received yesterday as reasons for new blessings to be received to-day. And how important is this office of the Holy Spirit in days of abounding error! Men come and state things so plausible, that we are almost constrained to say, I must have been "mistaken." It is very wrong, however, to suppose that, when a person gives an argument against the Bible which we cannot answer, we must, therefore, accept that argument; we are to lay it aside and say, "I cannot answer it; but I have not a doubt that it can be answered; I will ask those who know more than I do, and see whether an answer can be given or not." A very foolish man may ask a question that two wise men will require twenty days to answer. I must never think, because a plausible objection is stated, through the sophistry of which I cannot see, that therefore nobody else can see through it. It is not that the argument is sound, but that I am not enlightened. But when the Holy Spirit thus brings to our remembrance plain, simple truths in his own blessed word, by one of those texts we may repel the objector, as our blessed Lord repelled the tempter: "It is written; it is written; it is written." Thus the Holy Spirit is precious to us as our Remembrancer. John Newton, an excellent and accomplished divine, was a refugee from his home, far off; he was standing at the helm, tossed upon a tempestuous ocean, in the momentary prospect of a watery grave. A text flashed on his memory, he knew not how,—we know now, and he knew before he

died,—a text that his mother taught him when a child, listening to her—the most effective teaching of all; and that text was the secret of his salvation. No doubt it was the Holy Spirit that brought up that buried fragment, that cast new and holy light upon that almost faded flower; that brought to his recollection a truth long buried—but not dead, and it became a living seed, and grew up unto life eternal.

VIII.

The Spirit the Source of Victory.

ZECHARIAH speaks of the erection of a material temple — tells us the decree of Heaven that it was to be completed, not by the resources of human power, nor by the expedients of human wisdom, however proper these might be as instrumentalities in their place, but by the direct and almighty power of the Holy Spirit of God. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

What applies to a holy temple that has passed away, not one stone of which rests any more upon another, may be still more justly, I think, applied to that spiritual temple which is composed of living stones, resting on the Rock of Ages: the only Church in the universe that God truly consecrates, and the only Church, one stone of which shall never be removed.

Power is the thirst, the consuming thirst of millions of mankind. Conquest, one of its passions, has been long the aim and the maddening ambition of the nations of the earth. Many a conqueror has felt what one of old is recorded to have said, that he would rather be the first in the humblest hamlet, than be the second in imperial Rome. So strong is the instinctive

desire of fallen nature for power; so averse is it to anything that would lay low its power, and show that when strongest it is most weak; for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

We need also to learn, that the very greatest power that man has attained, has been, at the best, signally precarious. It seems as if there were a certain table-land in human life, in which, like the highest lands amidst the Alps, covered with perpetual snow, it is impossible for life to exist. It seems that there is in human life a position, or power, or eminence, and rank, so perilous, that none can walk securely, and few can breathe at all. The snows of Russia are the sepulchre of a large army; the waters of the deep have buried many a proud navy; the tempest of a people's passions, generated in the sense of a people's wrongs, has often swept away dynasties and thrones a thousand years old. The warrior's sword, the statesman's budget, the banker's pen, have all in rapid succession exemplified in the history of the world, that they are destitute of all power when God is opposed to them, or they opposed to God; and that, after all, they are possessed of comparatively little power in compassing the great ends for which man is born into the world. We need to be occasionally placed in the presence of the great, the vast, and the sublime, that we may feel how little we are. It is well that we should experience painful failures, that we may learn by personal experience, what we will not learn from the prescriptions of Heaven, how weak is human power, how frail is all mortal might.

In the affairs of this world, the sentiment, "Not by

might or by power," has been illustrated again and again. Battlements and bulwarks are not always a nation's strength; armies and navies are not always and everywhere the elements of certain victory; science, literature, civilization, do not always guarantee immortality to a people. All these have failed in succession; and the history of the state, like the history of the Church, contains many a chapter whose heading might well be, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

It is also a very singular fact, that infidels and persons opposed to everything like a sense of religion, have accepted, not these words, but their substantial sentiment as their deepest experience. Robespierre, who tried to work the world without God, was constrained, ere he closed the experiment, to say, "If there be not a God, we must invent one, for there is no power in man to carry on the world without him." Napoleon, on entering Russia, told his marshals that in war fortune, or, translated into Christianity, God, has as much to do with success as ability; and, when returning as a refugee from Russia, his eagles trailing in the dust, he told the Abbé Dupré, "We are high in the morning, but we know not how low we shall be in the evening." Napier, the historian of the Peninsular war, says, "Fortune always asserts her supremacy in war; and often, from a slight mistake, such disastrous consequences follow, that in every age the uncertainty of war is a proverb." These did not know the full force of the language they uttered—it was, translated into the language of inspiration, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The acceptance of the truth, "Not by might or by

power," is gaining ground every day in the convictions of mankind. Men once thought that there was might only in the sword, in splendor, in greatness; and the possibility of impression only in those who were arrayed in fine purple, or who wore diadems, and wielded the sceptres of the world. But they begin to find now that there are other elements of might than victories; that there is such a thing as moral power; and that the greatest man is not always he who gains the greatest number of battles. He who feeds the poor, who clothes the naked, who sacrifices in order to serve them who can give him no recompense again, is not unworthy of the name of an illustrious hero. He who visits the prisoner, the sick and the oppressed; and, at the sacrifice of health, and talent, and time, ministers to the broken heart, and binds up the bleeding spirit, begins to be thought great. His footstep may be noiseless as an angel's wing; but it leaves an impression behind it, lasting as the structure of the earth itself. There is greatness that the vulgar eye cannot appreciate, a grandeur that is not expressed by physical might or apparent power; there is omnipotence in the falling dew-drops and in the slanting sunbeams, as in the crashing of the thunder, and the explosions of the earthquake. What seems might is not always strong; what seems power is not always success; there are loftier elements than these; "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," and therefore, says the Apostle, "they are mighty."

The same thought begins, too, to dawn in man's estimate of a nation's greatness. It begins to be felt that moral elements have something to do with a nation's grandeur; that victory in battle is not the only nor

the most lasting glory. There is a rivalry of peace more beautiful and heroic than the rivalry of war; lowly things, that the carnal eye does not notice, may be the elements of lasting strength, and of a higher and more imperishable renown, than the sound of the trumpet, and garments rolled in blood, and the shock of victorious or vanquished empires. Ships, laden with the missionaries of the everlasting Gospel, are as sublime a sight as ships armed with soldiers. Iron may be beaten into rails, as properly and more beautifully than into cannon, and sabres, and muskets, and bayonets. The ships that cross the ocean, like the white doves of commerce, bearing books and letters to mankind throughout the whole earth, are sights at least as beautiful and impressive, as ships carrying defiance, and all the elements of bloodshed and war, over all the ends of the earth. It begins to be felt that there is such a thing as moral greatness, and that nations are built up, not altogether by military might, or physical power, but, to a very great extent, by those unseen and silent, yet effective forces which are applied, and crowned with success, by the Holy Spirit of God.

The idea of the passage, without specially dwelling on its very words, begins to be felt in the elevation and improvement of the masses of mankind. It used to be thought in former times, that the prison, and the police, and the penitentiary,—the last, the very mildest that was dreamed of,—were the only means of regenerating or improving society. It was thought that the punitive was superior to the preventive, and that there was no hope of keeping society together except by coercive or repressive measures. But the ancient prophecy has cast its indirect light upon men's minds, and

the great truth, announced by Heaven, begins at last to be seen partially in the world. The domestic missionary, sent from house to house,—the Ragged School, placed in the lowest of neighbourhoods,—the Tract-distributor, the Scripture Reader visiting the dark alleys of our great metropolis, sowing seeds, that, long hidden, will grow up into harvests of good, are recognised as means and elements for the amelioration and progress and dignifying of society, more mighty than the prison, the police, or the penal settlement. I do not say, that all these movements are the exact or direct recognitions of the words of Zechariah; yet, when God is about to make a great truth universal, he casts forelights of it. Men begin to bask in the dawn before they see the sunshine; they begin to hear, in faint echoes, the great truth that is to spread from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. They receive an inspiration within, that makes them welcome with greater cordiality a fact that is soon to be without; and so give token and evidence long before, that God is about to do a great and a lasting work upon the earth.

If all this is recognised thus far in society, it ought to be recognised—as it will unquestionably be felt—in the experience of the ministers of the everlasting Gospel. A minister may be brought up, like Paul, at the feet of another Gamaliel; he may be accomplished in all the wisdom and learning of the world that now is; he may have studied, and studied properly, at the most celebrated universities of the earth; he may be gifted with the greatest eloquence, speak with the greatest power; he may so preach that the miser shall relax his grasp of his gold, and the hero forget,

for a little season, all his glory ; but, unless the Holy Spirit be in his heart, the spring of his inspiration, and be upon the people to bless the instrumentality employed by him, his words will prove like the tinkling cymbal or the sounding brass, or like the pebble cast into the lake — the waters agitated for a moment, only to relapse into a more permanent and decided calm. The vehement eloquence of Bossuet of old ; the severe and logical eloquence of Bourdaloue ; the pathos of Massillon, disturbed for a moment a vicious court — made some condemn, others admire, and thousands applaud ; but the moral and spiritual effect was as evanescent as the early and the morning dew : there was scarcely an impression left for twelve months behind. There is still needed, in the present day, more and more, the descent of the Spirit of God on the hearts of preachers and of people ; and if we felt this more, we should quarrel about ecclesiastical crotchets far less. It is not a question of vital moment, whether the Bishop or the Presbytery shall ordain the minister ; but it does seem to me a question of vital importance, ‘ Has that man a consecration from the Throne, a call by the Holy Spirit of God, a commission as an ambassador of Christ, which we may distinctly recognise, but which no episcopal or presbyterial power in the south or the north can possibly communicate, or, thank God, ever prevail to take away ? ’ The preaching which shall arouse the world, and sanctify the Church, must have the Holy Spirit as its inspiration ; that fire which shall kindle in men’s hearts a new and an inextinguishable glow, and fertilise the whole mass of our social life with a new and a lasting vitality, must be kindled from the altar of God ; that minister who shall be the means

of creating life, must himself have been created by the Spirit of God. The ministry that God will bless must be a ministry that God has made. What the poet said of poets — *Poeta nascitur, non fit* — “A poet is not made, but born,” may be said of a minister. He is not a Bishop-made man, nor a Presbytery-made man, but a God-made man — an anointed minister of God. His hope of success is not by might, nor by power; the blessing is not by might, nor by power. The Holy Spirit employs consecrated instruments, but the Spirit is the Author and the Finisher of the work; and He who begins and ends it, claims, as is most justly due, all the honour, and the thanksgiving, and the glory. Satan will delight to see Christians quarrel about the mode in which ministers are to be elected, if he can only prevent them from praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon ministers and people. And if we dealt less with ecclesiastical disputes, and engaged more directly in earnest prayer to the Fountain of all might and of all power, we should see our Church’s desert-places begin to rejoice, and her most solitary places to blossom even as the rose.

What a specimen of a God-made minister was the Apostle Paul! He preached the Cross as if he had stood by the very Crucifixion itself. He spoke of the intercession of Jesus as if heaven was opened, and he saw him at the right hand of God; and of the resurrection of the dead as if the trumpet-peal were ringing in the chambers of his soul, and he saw the great white throne, and the mustering groups that gather around it to hear irreversible decisions. And if the minister of the Gospel be endued by the Holy Spirit, he will speak with power, because with demonstration of the

Spirit of God ; while he does all that diligence can do, and avails himself of all the resources that learning can furnish, he will yet speak, not in the words which man's wisdom, falsely so-called, teaches, but in the words which the Holy Ghost himself teacheth. And the minister thus learned is great. Let him preach in the lowliest chapel, or in the loftiest cathedral, he adorns them, they cannot adorn him. Let him belong to this Church or to that Church, it is the Church that is benefited, not he. If he is called by the Holy Ghost, this is his credential, this is his ordination ; and all that we can do on earth is to recognise the seal and the signature of our God, and to commission him to do what his heart already has been summoned to do — preach the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Alexander the Great, borne on a golden shield over all the provinces of conquered Asia ; Cæsar, trampling upon the rights of a great people ; Napoleon Buonaparte, the scourge and the conqueror of a large portion of the globe ; Frederick the Great, a great warrior, but reckless of human life, look to me poor and mean beside the august magnificence of Paul, called by his God to leave all man loves at home, and to face all man dreads abroad, in order to win souls to his blessed Master, and spread the kingdom which is built up and maintained, not by human might, nor by national power ; but by the Holy Spirit of God.

But it may be said, If all the issue thus depends upon the Spirit of God, will not that tempt men to think, not to learn, not to study ? Just the reverse ; for, singular enough, the great law laid down in the Christian record is, that the very man who has the deepest and the most penetrating sense that the Holy

Spirit must do all, is ever found to be the very man who is most practically and diligently engaged in every hard, and arduous, and laborious work. The fact is, instead of being the ground of idleness, it is the only ground upon which there can be called into play true energy. The Apostle Paul himself says, in applying the same sentiment in another instance, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Why? "Because it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Instead of the sovereignty of God doing all being a reason for a minister relaxing his hand, and doing nothing, it is the very basis of his greatest efforts, the background of his most successful experiments to win souls to his blessed Lord and Master. Our duty is to do all as if all depended upon us, yet never to forget the fact that all depends upon God. We are not now invested with miraculous gifts; we must read, we must study, we must learn, as well as pray. If that maxim be an apostolical one, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat," it is only to transfer it to a higher platform when I say, "If any man will not study, neither let him preach." And, at all events, I know, that they who go into a pulpit to address an intelligent audience, without study, will not long have anything to say worth hearing, or anybody to hear it; they will dishonour God, instead of honouring him, by neglecting the means of God's own appointment. God will not bless their ministry, nor make it successful in winning souls.

I admit, a preparation made without God, or in defiance of God, or without a belief in his constant and ceaseless inspiration, is an effort that we cannot expect God will bless; but when we do all

that our resources can, and when we go with the consciousness that He must do all, or we can do nothing successfully—if we combine the praying heart with the diligent and active hand—it seems to me we attain that exact disposition, that right apprehension of the Christian ministry, on which God will pour down his own abundant blessing. And if ever there was an age in which the Christian ministry ought to be an educated one, I believe it is the present. I am not encouraging an illiterate ministry, which is a misfortune, or an indolent ministry, which is a crime; I am telling the ministry which is the most laborious—which gives its days and nights to the study of God's holy word—that something more is wanted than intellectual might, or the drudgery of protracted toil; that we must seek that blessing, without which even Paul may plant, and even Apollos may water, yet there shall be no increase at all. And to see the justice of this position—that a right apprehension of God's sovereignty in these matters is the basis of our highest exertions, I will notice that there is, in every department of God's world, and of God's work upon earth, a sphere in which man is helpless, and another, in which man is, by God's arrangement, necessary. For instance, in the fields I plant a vine—it is my business to plant it, and to prune it, and to watch it, and keep it; but I can do nothing in making the sap rise in the stem, in transmitting that sap into blossom, in ripening the blossom into grapes. There is a part that I can do, and that part I will do; but there is a part in which I cannot intrude, where God must do all, or nothing can be done effectually. In healing diseases there is a part that I can do; I can prescribe what experience has

proved to be most efficient, — I can find out what is most useful from experience in healing the wound, and I can apply it, and use all precautionary measures to facilitate the cure as speedily as possible; but I have no power over the restorative energies of the system; I cannot touch the central energy—I know nothing of that mysterious thing, vitality — physical, intellectual, moral. There is in the treatment of diseases a province where the physician is everything; but there is, above that, and beyond that, a province where the physician is nothing at all. So, in the Christian system, there is a province where man, the minister, can do much, and there is a province above that where Christ, the Master, must do all, or nothing can be done effectually. I can preach, and my words shall carry conviction to the outward ear, but I cannot rivet those words upon the heart, so that they shall be elements of sanctifying and saving power. And, singularly enough, God may intrude into my province, he may dispense with my instrumentality, he may supersede it; he may leave it alone, and take the work into his own hand, and it will be done; but if I try to intrude into God's province — to pardon sin, to regenerate, by sprinkling, the human heart, to make man, by ministerial manipulations, a new creature, I instantly go into a province where I ought never to be, and, like the fabled hero who rose on waxen wings to reach the sun, I shall only be melted by its beams, and my last end shall be worse than my first. I believe that the great secret of the innumerable errors of the day is, that we have not made a strict line of demarcation between what man, the minister, can do, and ought to do, and

what the Lord the Spirit alone can and will do, when, where, and how he pleases.

There is the visible Church, that is, the company of all professors; the ministry may make them: but there is within that, like the kernel within the shell, the true Church; the Master must sign and seal them. There is a baptism that man can minister, when he sprinkles the babe with water, seeking a blessing; but there is beyond that the work that the Spirit alone must execute, in the change of that child's heart. There is, in the Lord's Supper, a province where the minister can do much; he can distribute the bread, and bless it, and give it to the communicants; that is his province; but the Lord, the Master of the feast, alone can create that inner communion between the soul and himself, which man can neither intercept nor create. So, the minister can pronounce how sins are forgiven, but when he attempts to step out of his own province, which is to pronounce, and assumes the jurisdiction of the Highest, which is to absolve, he tries to steal a beam from the glory of his Master, and he will only take a curse into his own bosom. Let us, then, clearly understand, that while we must do our part, and do it with all our might, we are to feel that nothing is done, if that be all; we are beyond that to lift up the waiting heart, and the earnest petition, that he who has sent the minister to do his part, will be pleased, additional thereto, to do his part, the inner, living, saving work, which endures for ever and ever.

Not only is there a part which man cannot do in the work of salvation, but there is much that man will not do. I suspect that very much of the inability that we

feel to believe, to pray, to love, to live, is not physical or material, but purely moral. I do believe, that, in the light of the judgment morn, the remark of this man and that man, "I cannot believe," will be discovered to have been but a phrase for, "I will not believe." The real inability is in will, and, hence, the Spirit's first work is, to work in man "to will," and next, "to do," of his good pleasure. And if there be things, then, that man not only cannot do, but needs the Spirit to do them for him; and if there be things that he will not do, he also needs the Spirit to do them. Melancthon, when he first saw the light of the glorious Gospel, and felt its precious influence on his heart, thought that he had nothing to do but to go forth and speak it, and the whole earth would accept so grand a Gospel. But he soon found himself compelled to make the just remark, that "Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon," that some men could not, and some men would not; and between the two, the progress that he made was of the most discouraging description.

But the Apostle Paul, on the other hand, states, that one of the grand secrets of his success was the combination of ceaseless, personal effort, with ceaseless leaning on, and looking to the Holy Spirit of God. Just mark his words: "I have planted"—there is toil, — "and Apollos watered,"—there is additional toil, — "but God gave the increase." You see man's part—planting and watering; but also God's grand part, without which, the planting and the watering would be fruitless — "God gave the increase." And when the Apostle speaks again of his labors, he says, "I have labored more abundantly than ye all;" but mark how

exquisitely and delicately he corrects himself,—“yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me. Wherever there is the most prayerful heart, there is the most diligent hand; wherever there is the deepest dependence upon God, there is the putting forth of the greatest energy by man. “Prayer and painstaking,” said one of old, “are sufficient to convert the nations.” I believe, that what is wanted in the present day is greater personal exertion on the part of ministers in their own sphere, and a still greater dependence on the Holy Spirit, who is omnipotent in his sphere.

The most eloquent tongue will lose its power, and the most able right hand its cunning, unless sustained, encouraged, and endued by the Holy Spirit of God. Cease to quarrel about patronage and popular election, and begin to pray; cease to dispute about Episcopacy and Presbytery, and begin to pray; cease to look to the Bishop or the General Assembly, and begin to look above them to the Spirit of God alone. If anything exerts on the mind a larger directive influence than Christ, you may call yourself a Protestant, but you are essentially a Roman Catholic. A Roman Catholic is not a man who believes in the Pope of Rome; but who believes that the priest can forgive sin, that baptism gives regeneration, who excludes all but his own, who thinks that no man has a commission separate from his Church. The man who places the Church in the room of Christ,—tradition, the Confession of Faith, the Thirty-Nine Articles, in the room of the Bible,—or himself in the room of either, is essentially a follower of the Church of Rome.

Let all our theology be comprehended in this — no justifying righteousness except in Christ; no regenerative power but in the Holy Spirit; no church upon earth, the way to heaven, but Christ alone; the Bible without a clasp; the Throne of grace with infinite welcome; heaven, with all its glory, not bestowed or won by might or power, but by the Holy Ghost.

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Prof. of Ch. Hist., &c.

Mercersburg, Pa., Jan. 31, 1855.

\* July, 1853, p. 138.

# Notices by the Press of Kurtz's Sacred History,

PUBLISHED BY LINDSAY AND BLAKISTON, PHILADELPHIA.

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