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SERMONS
ON
DUTIES OF DAILY LIFE.

BY
FRANCIS E. PAGET, M.A.

RECTOR OF ELFORD.

“Caro reclamat; sed Patris
Urget voluntas: nos tua
Virtute da fortes sequi
JESU, quod exemplo doces.”



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P R E F A C E .

THE sermons in this volume being intended for Domestic Reading, it has been the writer's endeavor to make them as clear and simple as possible both in style and language.

In designating them as Sermons on Duties of Daily Life, he does not mean to intimate that he has done more than dwell upon some few of those Christian graces on which the Churchman's character is built up. He has not even endeavored to complete the circuit of the most eminent, but only to inculcate those which it seems specially needful, at the present time, to bring under the consideration of all classes.

Pulpit-instruction must always take its tone, more or less, from the religious character of the age. Every generation has its distinguishing form of error; for each, in succession, the tempter provides new snares or revives old ones. Against each heretical or schismatic tendency, as it arises, it is the duty of the Christian

Priesthood to warn the faithful. Hence, at different times, some one class of doctrines has been more urgently insisted on than any other; and this, not so much on account of the relative importance of those doctrines in the scheme of Revelation, as because, from special circumstances, there was at some given period a special danger lest the children of the Church should be perverted in some particular respect.

Thus, at one time, the activity of Infidel writers has forced the current of Theology into a channel in which Apologies for Scripture, and discussions on the Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, have been multiplied, till other subjects of equal importance have seemed well nigh forced into the back-ground. At another time, the maintaining and propagation of Socinian heresy has caused the Godhead of our blessed Lord to be assiduously maintained and defended by the orthodox, as if that were almost the only point on which a right faith is necessary. In every age the Church warns her children against the errors that are most likely to beset them, not *really* giving to any doctrines a greater importance than Scripture has assigned to them, but speaking under certain circumstances more fully of those which happen to be in dispute, than of those about which there is no controversy.

In the present volume it has been the Author's

wish and endeavor to avoid disputed topics as much as possible, not because he has no opinion of his own on the subjects which so unhappily agitate us, nor because he deems it undesirable that Churchmen, when fully instructed, should choose their side ; but simply, because the object of a Sermon is something more than to help persons to become judges of controversy ; and it is more than ever the duty of a preacher, in times of controversy, to remind his hearers that the way to be enlightened to discern divine truth is to seek it *in the practice of obedience*. (John vii. 17.)

Accordingly, in the ensuing discourses, he has said as little as possible on the religious questions of the day, and has preferred speaking on subjects in respect to which advice seems most needed, while party spirit is running high, and wherein Christian duties have been most forgotten. At the same time, he feels it due to himself and to the reader to say that he has uniformly enforced Church-principles, as they are called, wherever the subject under discussion has led to them.

And by Church-principles he means those which are in *entire* accordance with *the Church of the Prayer Book* ; a Church in which all things necessary to salvation may be found, and which offers us blessings and privileges far greater and more numerous than we choose to avail ourselves of ;—a Church which

is Catholic, not sectarian ; following primitive rule and practice, not the corruptions of divided times and later ages ; neither Romanizing nor ultra-Protestant, but evangelical and apostolical in the true sense of those terms ; a Church, in which there may be imperfections and deficiencies (as in her discipline, in the working of her system, and in the lives and tempers of her members), but with which, till they have lived up to her ordinances, fully and unreservedly, it does not behoove any of her children to be dissatisfied, and of which, therefore, it still less béhooves them to set themselves up as judges.

With the teaching of that Church, as exhibited in her Prayer Book, the writer has endeavored to identify his own ; and if there be anything in this volume which is not in accordance with that teaching, which comes short of it, or goes beyond it, the writer desires to repudiate and revoke it, and to submit himself in all things to her teaching.

And he begs the prayers of those who may chance to differ from him, as well as of those who agree with him, that what he has here said truly, may bring forth fruit unto perfection, and that what is unsound (if, unhappily, any such thing there be), may wither, and die, and find no entrance into his readers' hearts.

ELFORD RECTORY.

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

1844.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

SOWING AND REAPING.

HOSEA x. 12.

	Page
Sow to yourselves righteousness, reap in mercy. . . .	13

SERMON II.

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.

PSALM ix. 17.

The wicked shall be turned into hell: and all the people that forget God.	34
---	----

SERMON III.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

MATTHEW xix. 20.

What lack I yet?	55
----------------------------	----

SERMON IV.

THE SOURCE OF MAN'S SUFFICIENCY.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 5.

Our sufficiency is of God.	Page 76
------------------------------------	------------

SERMON V.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN
CHRIST.

MATTHEW xi. 6.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.	93
--	----

SERMON VI.

HOLINESS IN OURSELVES AND FORBEARANCE TO
OTHERS.

MARK ix. 50.

Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with an- other.	113
--	-----

SERMON VII.

ON SINS OF THE TONGUE.

MATTHEW xii. 36.

I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.	132
--	-----

SERMON VIII.

CHRISTIAN REVERENCE.

MALACHI i. 6.

	Page
A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a Father, where is mine honor? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts.	151

SERMON IX.

CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION.

LUKE ix. 62.

And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the king- dom of God.	172
---	-----

SERMON X.

TRUSTFULNESS.

JOB xiii. 15.

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.	192
---	-----

SERMON XI.

ON SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS.

ROMANS viii. 6.

To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.	212
--	-----

SERMON XII.

OBEDIENCE TO THE CHURCH, HER MINISTERS, AND
ORDINANCES.

HEBREWS xiii. 7, 8.

Page

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 232

SERMON XIII.

ON ALMSGIVING.

MATTHEW vi. 1.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 253

SERMON XIV.

ON PRAYER.

MATTHEW vi. 5.

When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are. 271

SERMON XV.

ON FASTING.

MATTHEW vi. 17, 18.

Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto my Father which seeth in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 289

SERMON XVI.

ON SOWING BESIDE ALL WATERS.

ISAIAH xxxii. 20.

Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters. 309

SERMON XVII.

THE PROMISES AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO EXERTION.

(A SERMON FOR ALL SAINTS DAY.)

LUKE xiv. 22.

And yet there is room. 327

SERMON XVIII.

OF DYING DAILY.

1 CORINTHIANS xv. 31.

I die daily. 345

SERMON XIX.

THE END OF ALL THINGS.

1 PETER iv. 7.

The end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore sober,
and watch unto prayer. 363

SERMON XX.

THE PILGRIM'S ABIDING FRIEND.

LUKE xxiv. 29.

But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us ; for
it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. . . . 382



SERMON I.

SOWING AND REAPING.

HOSEA X. 12.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy:

WE profess to call ourselves Christians. We acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. We believe that from Him, by Whose name we are called, emanates everything which can give us hope while we live, and which can save us from despair when we come to die. In Him, so long as we continue in Him, we are safe; apart from Him, our ruin is irrecoverable, irremediable. Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. His life is our example; His death our atonement; His resurrection is our justification, and

the seal of our acceptance ; His ascension is our assurance that we have an Advocate with the Father ; His promised return is our most awful warning, and highest encouragement. In Jesus the Son of Mary, we see One made like unto ourselves in all things, sin alone excepted, the partaker of our infirmities, the sharer in our temptations, and sufferings, and sorrows : One Who can sympathize with us, and feel for us ; Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, as having Himself experienced the full weight and bitterness of every trial to which humanity can be exposed. In Christ the Son of God, we see One, Who being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, is as able as He is willing to save us all. He is our hope and our fortress, our castle and deliverer, our defender in Whom we trust : in Him, and Him alone that trust is fixed ; and the grounds of that trust are His Incarnation and sinless life ; His agony and bloody sweat ; His cross and passion ; His pre-

cious death, and glorious resurrection; His shedding abroad the gift of His Spirit, and His constant intercession in our behalf. To us most miserable sinners, Christ is all in all, and the atoning sacrifice of the cross the one plea we can offer for final acceptance with God.

If, then, we speak of the necessity there is that Christians should lead holy lives, or of the possibility of our performing true and laudable service, we never speak as implying the notion that any service of our's can be *meritorious*, or that any amount of personal holiness could entitle us to *claim* a place in heaven. It cost more to redeem our souls, so that we must leave that thought alone for ever. Rather must we bow our heads to the dust continually, under the reflection that so guilty were we that nothing but the blood-shedding of our God could save us,—rather, as we lift up our eyes, to that hill of Calvary from whence cometh our help, must our one thought be that of the immeasurable mercy of Him who took pity on us children of perdition, who could do nothing

for ourselves, but increase the burden of our guilt and rebellion.

Such, I say, is our condition. In ourselves we can do nothing. To no works of our own can we trust for salvation. And yet the Bible, from one end to the other,—the New Testament as well as the Old,—is continually addressing us in language similar to that of the Prophet in the text, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.” We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, and admit that it will be through Christ’s merits alone, if in that world to come, our lot is fixed in heaven, not in hell: and yet we profess our belief that at the last day we shall be severally judged for our *actions*, and our eternal destiny decided according as *they* have been good or evil.

Now, as it must needs be of great importance that we should have clear and right views upon such a momentous subject as this, let us see what the Word of God, as expounded and witnessed to by the Church, teaches with reference to the necessity of a life of righteousness on our

part, and as to the grounds on which a reward will be given to the righteous hereafter.

The passage from which my text is taken, is a part of the writings of Hosea, whose denunciations against the transgressions of the chosen race are among the most severe which are to be found in the writings of the prophets, and therefore are peculiarly well adapted for the meditation of us Christians among the Gentiles, who have been admitted into Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and who, on that ground, are a "chosen generation;" but who, like Israel of old, have but too abundant reason to expect the outpourings of God's wrath on our wickedness and spiritual idolatry.

Among these predictions, however, of coming vengeance, will be found many invitations to repentance, and many promises of mercy, such as the good Spirit of God hath ever blended with His most awful threatenings. And such is the passage under consideration. Even while the Almighty declares that it is in His de-

sire to punish them, He reminds them of the gentleness He had heretofore shown them ; how, like a husbandman with untried heifers, who encourages them, and gradually accustoms them to the yoke, He had endeavored to win them to obedience. And then He exhorts them to be no longer restive and refractory, but obedient and docile. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy : break up your fallow ground : for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

The illustration here chosen from the works of nature, as they are usually called, is common to many other parts of Scripture : and the resemblance is so obvious between the progress of a seed from its first being committed to the soil, till the final harvest, with that of the gradual development of the principle of good in the soul of man, that I need not now stop to dwell upon it particularly. Suffice it to say, that in the passage before us the exhortation to repentance and a holy life is expressed under the metaphor of ploughing and sowing, and the promise of mercy

is conveyed under a similar metaphor of rain upon the seed sown, and of reaping a joyful harvest.

We are told, then, in the first instance, to “sow in righteousness:” and what this injunction involves we may gather from a consideration of the state of those persons to whom it was originally addressed. These, as we have seen, were the House of Israel; and when we remember that Hosea prophesied during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah,—that he was, in short, a contemporary of Isaiah, we must, of course, remember likewise, that the transgressions both of Israel and Judah had then well nigh reached their height; that they were “a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that were corrupters;” who had “forsaken the Lord,” revolting more and more, so that “the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint; and from the sole of the foot unto the head there was no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.”

Such being the state of God’s favored

and rebellious people when they were enjoined to sow unto righteousness, it follows that that command implied nothing short of a complete and entire change in all their ways and habits,—a thorough, unshrinking reformation,—an unqualified turning from sin to God.

And nothing short of this is required of *us*. It is to be hoped, that by God's great mercy, we have been so far preserved from breaking our baptismal vows, that none of us are in the actual state of open transgression, which they were, whom the prophet Hosea speaks of, as having "ploughed wickedness," and as being "reapers of iniquity;" but if at this time we are not harboring some cherished sin, it is to be presumed that there are few of us who, at some period or other, have not continued for a longer or a shorter space in deliberate and wilful transgression: all have to bewail an interminable catalogue of negligences and ignorances: and all have the evidence within themselves of an inherited nature so corrupt, that from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness in it;—of a nature in which

the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and with which, even to the last, the spirit must make war.

Now this "fallow ground,"—this soil, so hard and sterile, or so rank and matted together with roots of noxious weeds, must be broken up. Our hearts, which, in spite of our baptismal privileges, retain within them their original infection, must be brought into a state of religious cultivation. Vicious inclinations, sensual appetites, inordinate affections, must be rooted up. The tares must be gathered together in bundles, and burned. The soil must be ploughed;—that which lay below must be brought up to the surface, and exposed to the light of day. Self-knowledge and self-discipline must do their work, and the whole field be made fit for the reception and growth of the seed of righteousness.

And this if we do, the text leads us to hope that we shall reap in mercy; that is to say, we shall receive from the merciful hand of God our Father, an abundant reward of unfading happiness, and glory eternal in the heavens.

Here, then, is the broad fact laid down, that if we lead righteous lives *here*, discharging our duties to God and man, we shall certainly meet a reward *hereafter*. But since, when *thus* stated, it may seem to follow that our works are the immediate cause of our salvation, I proceed to show you that the maintenance of any such opinion would be *the most perilous and fatal error into which we could fall*, and to explain in what sense the statement *is* true, and in what sense it is *not*.

With this object in view I shall endeavor to establish these two points: first, that we have no grounds whatever to expect a harvest of mercy, without a previous sowing-time of righteousness; that is, that we must not hope for God's favor unless we fulfil what He has enjoined: and secondly, that when we have fulfilled what He has enjoined, we must not plead any merit of our own in having done so, but must look for the reward of our righteousness only from the free grace and mercy of God.

And now with regard to the first of these propositions. We shall not reap in

mercy, unless and until we have sown in righteousness. Without a holy life here, no man need expect or hope for a happy life hereafter.

This is a truth which I need not multiply quotation to establish. St. Paul distinctly assures us in his epistle to the Hebrews, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and in his first letter to the Corinthians, he maintains the same doctrine with equal clearness. "Know ye not," saith he, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." God is holy, and therefore His kingdom must be holy, and He will admit nothing into His kingdom which is not holy. To expect to enter that without holiness, would be as absurd as for the husbandman to expect a harvest, who has not tilled the ground, nor sown it with seed; and so the Apostle whom I have already quoted declares to

us. "Be not deceived," he writes to the Galatians, "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

Surely if it be possible to state a truth plainly and unequivocally, it has been done so in the passage which I have quoted to you. One would have thought that in this case, at least, there could be no doubt as to the true meaning of Scripture. And yet, even here, errors have arisen to darken and obscure the truth of God, for both the indolence and the pride of men have led them to devise some easier way of salvation than that which is offered in the Word of God; and accordingly, some have asserted that there is no necessity of righteousness in ourselves, since Christ's righteousness is our's, so soon as we rely upon Him; and others have taught that so as man fears hell, purposes amendment of life, and confesses his sins to the priest, he is safe from perdition, and will reap in mercy,

though he has neglected to sow in righteousness.

The fact is, that if we look into the various errors into which men have fallen, on the subject of religion, we shall find that those errors spring, for the most part, from the spirit of convenience and self-indulgence. If a doctrine be unpalatable, it is denied; or, if that be impossible, it is so qualified, or softened down, or explained away, or thrown into the back ground, that practically it is rejected altogether, by those who oppose themselves to it, even though they admit that it is to be found in the Word of God. When men dare not attempt to kill the truth, they do what they can to starve it. And this they do, even while they know it to be the truth. When the reason is unwillingly convinced, it remains, so far as effects are concerned, unsatisfied still. A bare assent of the understanding is no guarantee for future exertion. Men may be abundantly convinced that they who would reap in mercy, must sow in righteousness; and yet, as hourly experience shows, it is no easy task to induce them

to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. They will, if they can, make religion easier to themselves than God has made it.

And this consideration suggests a very awful thought. If those who admit the truth are so indisposed to obey it, what must be the case of those who allow themselves in principles which confound the distinctions of right and wrong: who, as the prophet says, "call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light, and light for darkness?" Of such persons it was that our Blessed Lord spake, when He declared, "If the light within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" Of the peril of their condition the Apostle spake, when he warned Titus, that while to the pure all things are pure, yet "unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Such and so great being the perils of

those, who either reject God's commandment, or who make it of none effect, through their traditions, I trust that you, who assuredly cannot plead ignorance, will take good care that you be not condemned hereafter, for deliberately resolving not to act up to your convictions. The world may suggest a hundred reasons, besides its own evil and contagious example, why you should not obey the law of Christ in all its strictness; and your own hearts may tempt you to listen to those who would teach you, that a seed-time of righteousness is not indispensable for those who would reap a harvest of mercy. But let the world and your own hearts say what they will, do you believe Him Who made them both, and Who is coming to judge both? For He, by the mouth of his Apostle, hath declared that in that day of wrath, and righteous judgment, "He will render to every man *according to his deeds*. To them who, by *patient continuance in well-doing*, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and *do not obey the*

truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

And now I must pass on to the last point to be considered, namely, that the reward of our service, if, as good husbandmen, we sow in righteousness, is not to be looked for of *right*, but as the *gift* of the free Grace and Mercy of God.

And really, to look at the matter in any other point of view seems so shocking to any well-regulated mind, which has learned to measure its own deficiency and weakness, and has habitually watched the workings of its indwelling corruption, that it seems almost an offense against God to speak as though it were *possible* that any could so far deceive themselves as to imagine that anything they could do would merit a reward.

For what are we that we should boast? A fallen race, outcasts from Paradise, born in sin, tainted, corrupted, defiled: owing our only chance of salvation to the free mercy of God, admitting us into covenant at Baptism, and requiring of us as our part of the covenant, that we

•

should keep His holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life; and who, therefore, when we have done all, have only done what was required of us, and what we have engaged ourselves to do; and who, in point of fact, never perform the hundred thousandth part of our duty in any one respect! And who, in those points wherein we are not utterly deficient, owe our ability to the assistance and co-operating grace of God the Holy Ghost, as freely, as undeservedly vouchsafed to us, in order to give us a good will, and working with us when we have it. Who are we, that merit and we should ever be named together; when every hour of every day is adding some item against us in those books from which we shall be judged at last? When even our best actions, when judged fairly by ourselves, must betray in them the corruption of mixed and worldly motives, and, therefore, before Him in whose sight the very angels are not pure, must be altogether sullied and defiled?

But granting our seed-time of righteousness ever so perfect or so plenteous,

how is God the better for it, that He should be constrained to pay us wages for it? How can *He* be the better for *us*,—He who sitteth between the Cherubim, Infinite, Eternal, Almighty, undisturbed by the madness of man, God over all, blessed for ever, disposing all things by the Word of His power, complete in His own perfections, and having need of nothing in the fruition and tranquillity of heaven, which is calm, and deep, and measureless, unfading, unchanging, unalloyed? What profit or advantage can we, or all the creatures that ever lived and died, be to him? No, brethren, His gracious intercourse with us, is not for His own sake, but for ours. Our worst rebellion hurts Him not, but ourselves, and our most devoted service is not to His advantage, but to our own. “If we sow in righteousness,” as it has been well said, “we sow to ourselves, and the harvest of this righteousness we ourselves reap.” But granting, for a single moment, and for argument’s sake, that any acts of ours were such as could endure to be weighed in the balance before God,

with the view to their obtaining a *deserved* reward; yet what proportion and comparison would there be between our works of righteousness and the expected reward? The service of a lifetime to merit an *eternal* weight of glory! The partial obedience of divided allegiance to claim the recompense of a fulness of joy at God's right hand for ever! Why, there is presumption in the very mention of it; and to hold such a doctrine were blasphemy!

I will conclude in the words of Bishop Bull, whose teaching and arguments I have followed in this discourse.

“He that hath sown the seeds of righteousness most plentifully, must look for his harvest of glory only from the mercy of God. He that is richest in good works must sue for heaven in the quality of a poor worthless creature, that needs infinite mercy to bring him thither: mercy to pardon his sins antecedent to his good works; mercy to forgive the sins and defects in his works; mercy to advance his works to the possibility of attaining an infinite and endless reward. He must

confess with St. Paul, that 'Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ.' That it is the rich purchase of Christ's most precious blood, by which alone a covenant of eternal life was established upon the gracious condition of 'faith working by love:' that it was the grace of the Divine Spirit promised in the same covenant, that prevented him, and cooperated with him, and continually assisted and followed him in all his good works: and consequently, that though his crown of glory be '*a crown of righteousness,*' that is of God's righteousness, whereby He is obliged to make good his own covenant; yet that it is *a crown of mercy too*, because that covenant itself was a covenant of infinite grace and mercy."

Here, then, is the sum of the whole matter. We shall never be saved *for* our works, but we shall never be saved *without them*. And knowing this, let us pray, and labor, and strive, that no day may pass over our heads without our having made some progress in the work of sowing unto righteousness; let us watch ourselves the more carefully, the more

progress we make, lest any taint of self-righteousness should render our poor services hateful instead of acceptable to God: and while we cheerfully and hopefully endeavor to work out our own salvation, as knowing that it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure; let us cast away every high imagination, and own ourselves, as in truth we are, to be most wretched, and miserable, and worthless; let our prayers of acceptance be ever couched in some such humble words as these, "God, for Thy dear Son's sake, be merciful to me a sinner!"

SERMON II.

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.

PSALM ix. 17.

The wicked shall be turned into hell: and all the people that forget God.

It is to be feared that through our familiarity with the words of Scripture, we oftentimes lose the force of what those words contain, just as we are frequently tempted to repeat the prayers which we know by heart, without thinking of their meaning, or of Him whom we address. Not a day, it is to be presumed, goes over our heads but we repeat the Lord's Prayer, for instance, twice at least; and yet who will say that this very habit of using the most perfect of all prayers so frequently, does not prove a snare to him;—that there are times in which, though he says the prayer, he does not pray,—that though he repeats the several

clauses one after another, he attaches no meaning to them, so that he both worships he knows not what, and asks he knows not what?

So again in another instance. I suppose if we had never heard it before, the gladdest tidings that ever fell upon our ears would be those in which is repeated to us so soon as we have made the general confession of our sins at the commencement of Divine Service, the declaration that God has given power and commandment to the Ministers of His Holy Catholic Church to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. What comfort is here for the weary and heavy-laden soul, over-burdened with a load of sins from the guilt and punishment of which it knows not how to escape! And yet, because this message of mercy from our Heavenly Father is thus graciously delivered on each fresh occasion of our expressing contrition, we listen to it as a matter of course, and too often, it is to be feared, without being at all seriously affected, or moved by it.

Now there have been those who, from their experience that the mind is apt to grow inattentive to objects with which it is familiar, have condemned all *forms* of prayer, as tending to make men careless and indevout. Men cannot repeat the prayers which they have been in the habit of using from their youth up, without sometimes saying them mechanically, and thereby offending God, and perilling their own souls; and, therefore, these persons argue, that it is better to lay aside such services as those which, blessed be God! we find prescribed for our use in our own branch of the Church Catholic.

Now (not to observe that where a minister and congregation are concerned, *any* prayer used by the former *must* be a form to the latter, whether it be read from a book or poured forth without premeditation) — I would just remark that this argument, if it proves anything, proves too much. If we are to lay aside the repetition of a well-known prayer because there is danger that our familiarity with it may make us heedless, we may, upon the same ground, give up the habit of reading

the Bible, for there is just the same risk that the more intimate we are with its contents, the more we may lose the sense of awe and reverence with which we always ought to peruse it.

How much better would it be, if instead of bewildering themselves with such a fallacy as this, people would learn to suspect *themselves*, and endeavor to ascertain whether the blame may not rather rest on their own shoulders than in the quarter where they are disposed to throw it! It is, of course, much pleasanter to find faults anywhere rather than in ourselves; and it is no easy matter to get the mastery over our indolence and waywardness; but the way of safety is a way of difficulties.

When, therefore, we find that formalism begins to attend our prayers, we had better look to ourselves, before we condemn the prayers. And this if we do, we shall, by God's mercy, be led to find the true causes of our indevotion, to guard against them, and to make the discovery that since prayer is as much a habit as anything else, he who prays the *most*

will pray the *best* ; and, as he who confines himself to one branch of a business will be a better workman than he who attends to several, so he who uses the same forms of prayer continually, will enter into their spirit better than he who, in his constant search after novelty, thinks more of himself than of God.

And now to apply what has been said to the passage to which I would call your attention. The text conveys a great and awful truth ; but it is a truth which is so continually repeated in every part of Scripture, and to which, therefore, our minds are so habituated, that we hear it, perhaps, without thinking more about it, than, admitting the doctrine generally, we contrive to satisfy our minds that the threatening does not apply to us, and that, terrible as the denunciation is, there are other parts of Scripture, in which the future doom of transgressors is more vividly and strikingly depicted.

This, or something like it, is probably the reflection that occurs to us, when the passage is read in the ordinary course of the Psalms, if we are allowing ourselves

in that careless state of mind which I have been condemning.

And yet there is a consideration connected with this text, which is enough to make even the most advanced Christian to fear and tremble when it occurs to him.

If, in David's day, when men were under the law, and had no promise of the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter to "teach them all things, and *bring all things to their remembrance,*" it was a known and recognized truth that they who forgot God should be turned into hell what fate must they expect, who having been admitted into the Church by Baptism, and having, therefore, the assurance that the Spirit dwelleth in them, do yet fail to remember their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier? Is it possible to find any excuse for those who are forgetful, merely because they will not apply to the Remembrancer, who is within them,—for those who have "the anointing which they have received of Him, abiding in them," and who therefore "need not that any man teach them,"

(that is, require, in this respect, no outward aids), seeing they have the Witness in themselves? Is it possible that forgetfulness,—so often alleged as an excuse under sudden temptation—can in their case be anything else but an adding of sin to sin?

Now let us take this view of the text, and see what lessons and warnings it may bring home to our hearts and consciences.

“The wicked shall be turned into hell; and all the people that forget God.” We admit the fact; but we ward off, as it were, the blow which seems threatening to fall on ourselves, who, we trust, are not among the openly and notoriously wicked, by assuming that those who “forget God” altogether are few in number, and we have the testimony of conscience that we ourselves are not of that number. We do not remember God as much as we ought, but still we do not forget Him.

Now in one sense this is quite true. I believe that no one who has once heard of God *can* forget Him, even if he desire it ever so much. A man may apostatize from

the faith, and fall so low, that like the fool of whom the Psalmist speaks, "He may say in his heart, There is no God." But think you that this will banish the thought of God from his mind? Think you that memory will fail when invited to do so? That oblivion is an act of volition? Or that conscience can be lulled to sleep when we will? No, we can no more escape the sound of its small stern voice, than we can, by a wish, stop the brain from exercising its functions, or destroy our sensibility to pain. A man may deny God, and resolve to forget Him. He *can* do the one, but the other is beyond his power: the devils themselves, they who have more power than man, and more cause why they should strive to keep the thought of God from their hearts, cannot do it; and for man to do it, is impossible. He may exclude himself from everything outward which may suggest the remembrance to his mind; he may go far, very far in unbelief: he may *almost* persuade himself to be an infidel. *Almost, not quite.* And the one thought which comes creeping in unbidden, when

he is off his guard, that after all there *may* be a God, is enough to drive sleep from his pillow. It may not be probable; it may be barely possible. But so long as that shadow of a chance is not got rid of, farewell to peace. And get rid of it he cannot. The thought of it robs him of his armor wherein he trusted, and comes upon him when he cannot escape from it, like that terrible vision which haunted the couch of the afflicted Patriarch: "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence and I heard a voice, saying, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"

But, my brethren, if even the professed Infidel, he who pretends to believe that there is no God, is still, in spite of himself, unable to forget Him, the mere pro-

fligate and worldly-minded man is even less able to do so. True, God is not in *all* his thoughts: but He is in some of them. And the remembrance of an offended Judge, whose wrath is as sure as it is irresistible, will inevitably come between such a person and his guilty pleasures. I do not say that long habits of sin will not deaden the voice of conscience, and cause the Holy Spirit to strive less and less with the guilty soul, but even in the most hardened there will be seasons when, do what it may, it cannot escape from forebodings of God's anger, and of the worm that dieth not. And we have the evidence of many a transgressor to the fact, that when all he most desired was in his reach—the gratification of his lust, his covetousness, his pride, his malice, or his dishonesty,—still, in the moment of fruition, the power of enjoyment was taken away, by that small voice which bade him think of the future consequences of his act. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

It appears then, that in one sense, even the most ungodly man alive does not for-

get God. The text, therefore, must apply to something short of *total* forgetfulness : and if it does, then there is very good cause why it should set us upon examining ourselves ; for although it is evident that even if we would, we *could* not altogether forget God, it is nevertheless much to be feared that none of us remember Him as we ought to do.

Now which be they who can be said to forget God ? I answer, all those who do not *habitually* remember Him ; who do not make it their *first* object on every occasion to learn how He would have them act ; who do not take His law for a lantern to their feet and a light unto their paths ; and who do not make obedience to His will the rule of their existence, as conscious that He is near them and sees them at all times.

And such persons may be found among those who are in the world's opinion decent and respectable, whose morals are unexceptionable, and who are diligent in attendance on all the outward ordinances of the Church.

For instance, a man may be regular in

his daily prayers at home, regular in frequenting public worship; and yet if he does this as a mere form, uttering words with his lips, while his heart, and soul, and affections are occupied with something else, and thus insulting Him, whose long-suffering has borne with his manifold transgressions, and whose bountiful goodness has given him life and health, and all things, what can be said of such an one but that he "forgets God?" And in proportion as any of us give way to this temptation, do we involve ourselves in the condemnation pronounced in the text.

So again, the man who is afraid of doing what he knows to be right, lest he should incur the ridicule of the world, and be set down as weak-minded, and bigoted, and enthusiastic: or he who does what is right, but professes to do so on other grounds than because he desires to serve God, is not he one who has forgotten that the Lord his God is a jealous God? Has he not reason to apply to himself that fearful threat, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words

in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the Holy angels?" Now seeing that as there are various manners of committing this sin, so there are various degrees of guilt attaching thereto, it will be well for each of us to ascertain that we have in this respect altogether escaped the crime of forgetting God. And when we remember the compromises men make with their consciences, and their cowardly contrivances for escaping the charge of being righteous overmuch; when we reflect with what sensitiveness we shrink from any step which seems like opposition to the way of the world, have we not cause for apprehension, lest *we* may have, in a greater or lesser measure, denied our Lord?

Again; what shall be said of those who act habitually as though they were unmindful of the attributes of God? of His all-seeing eye, and fatherly hand? of His power, and purity, and truth, and mercy, and justice? of those who comfort them-

selves with the profane, irreverent thought that He is even such an one as themselves, and that therefore He will sacrifice one attribute to another, be merciful at the expense of His justice, or sacrifice His truth to His tender compassion? Are not such persons forgetful of God, of what He is, and who He is? And are not each of us liable to fall into the same condemnation, whereinsoever we indulge the thought that He will appear on the Judgment seat, under a different character from that in which He has revealed Himself to us in the Bible?

From what has been said, you will, I think, perceive, that it is no imaginary and unreal danger, against which I would put you on your guard, but one that is constant, urgent, and the more insidious, because less suspected. We all profess to believe in God, and to serve Him. We are really subjects of His kingdom, and members of his Church, in possession of singular advantages, and inestimable privileges. Nominally, we are living as if we appreciated them; but the peril to us all is, lest we should be self-

deceived, and (like the Jews of old time, who called themselves children of Abraham, while they would not do his works) persuade ourselves that we remember God, as He expects us to remember Him, when, in point of fact, we have only just not forgotten Him utterly.

But, as I have already reminded you in the opening of this discourse, anything approaching to forgetfulness of God is a far more heinous offence in us, than in those of whom David spake in the text. Unto whom much is given, of him will much be required. From the moment when we are incorporated by Baptism into the body of Christ, we are no longer in the condition in which we were by nature. In ourselves, as well after Baptism as before, we are helpless creatures: but in Baptism we receive the gift of an indwelling grace to enable us to serve and please God. We are, therefore, without excuse if we forget Him. The Holy Spirit was poured into our hearts in order that we should not forget Him. It is His office to bring all things to our remembrance, both as to what we should do,

and what we should avoid. The more we obey His suggestions, the more acute will become our sense of obedience: the more we try to remember, the more entirely will he preserve us from forgetting. At all times, and under all circumstances, He is ready to assist us, to strengthen us in our weakness, and aid us in the struggle with ourselves, the world, and our spiritual enemies.

We are liable to sudden temptations, and in their suddenness, to many of us, at least, consists their danger: but it is under these sudden temptations that the aid of the Holy Ghost, honestly sought, is seen to be most strikingly effectual. The more urgent our need, the greater is the strength He vouchsafes. Therefore, if, under sudden temptation, we fall, it is a grievous thing, because there was help at hand which *might* have saved us; but when we have fallen, to plead *forgetfulness* as an excuse, is only adding sin to sin, nay, rather offering a direct insult to the Majesty of God, seeing that it is tantamount to an avowal on our part that the Eternal Spirit—(I am almost afraid

of saying such a thing) either could not or would not help us, or else that we despised His assistance.

I trust that what has now been said will induce you to think very seriously of the consequences of excusing yourselves in sin of any kind; for to plead forgetfulness is, in fact, an admission from your own lips, that you have forgotten God, and the text declares that they who forget Him shall be turned into hell. We have a corrupt nature; we are in the midst of an evil world; we are surrounded with bad examples. All these things are against us. But, as baptized Christians, we are the temples of God, and God's Spirit dwelleth in us, and therefore all excuses for sin are taken away. It is our own fault, if we are not enabled to stand upright.

Since, then, these things are so, let us look well into our hearts and see whether we habitually remember God, or habitually forget Him. What it is to forget Him, I have shown you. To remember Him is to *devote* ourselves to His service: to do all we have to do as in his presence, to speak as in His hearing; to regulate

our thoughts, as knowing that unto Him all hearts are open, and desires known, and that from Him no secrets are hid. It is to make "the one thing needful" the absorbing object of our hopes and interests, the gauge by which all our worldly affairs are tested and measured, the rule of our occupations and pursuits. To remember God is to live in watchfulness, and prayer, and self-denial. It is to have a love, that loves nothing more than Him, and a fear, that fears nothing but what offends Him. It is to have our minds so full of Him, as that when they are unoccupied with the necessary duties of our daily calling, instead of being filled with vanity and frivolity, they naturally and habitually fall back upon Him, His perfections and attributes.

This it is to remember God, and with less than this He will not be satisfied. But if he sees us honestly endeavoring to attain to this, He will take us by the hand, and lead us from strength to strength. Remembering Him in our youth, devoting to Him those years when the enemy is strongest, and danger great-

est, He will not forget us through the course of our after existence. The earlier we seek Him, the sooner we shall find Him; the more earnestly we strive to do His will, the better we shall know it; the more we dread a fall, the more shall we be enabled to keep our footing; the more we avail ourselves of the grace given us, the larger will be the supplies conceded us. We shall be brought on our way rejoicing; shall be supported in dangers, and carried through temptations; and when at length we have fought the good fight of faith, and death is about to release us from our warfare, we may trust in humble confidence through our Redeemer's merits, that in spite of our innumerable deficiencies, we may hear the Judge's pardoning voice in that tremendous hour, when "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God."

SERMON III.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

MATTHEW XIX. 20.

What lack I yet?

THERE is, I trust, no danger that any whom I now address are living under the fearful mistake of supposing that to lead a pious life is to *merit* that reward of eternal happiness in heaven, to which all of us, with greater or less fervency, aspire, as the termination of our prospects beyond the grave. None of you, I am sure, can have so far mistaken the doctrines taught by your spiritual pastors, as to have attributed the earnestness, with which they have pressed on you the necessity of a life of good works, to any belief on their parts, that good works could put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment. You all know that

we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by Faith, and not of our own works and deservings ; and that although good works are as sure a test of a lively Faith, as the quality of the fruit is a token of the nature of the tree, and are, therefore, indispensable, yet *in themselves* they are valueless.

Of this fundamental point of our Church's teaching, the least instructed of you cannot be ignorant ; and, therefore, at present, I need not dwell on it further than to say, that were any such errors prevalent among us, the narrative of which the text forms a part, would afford a lesson of deep and salutary warning against them.

“ Good master,” said the young Ruler of whom the Evangelist speaks, to our Blessed Lord, “ what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ? ” “ If thou wilt enter into life,” was the reply, “ keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which ? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder ; thou shalt not commit adultery ; thou shalt not steal ; thou

shalt not bear false witness ; honor thy father and thy mother ; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up : what lack I yet ? Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest ; if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, take up the cross and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful ; for he had great possessions."

Now, doubtless, this young Ruler, so far as he knew his own heart, believed himself to be quite honest and sincere in his professions, and that he was ready to go as far as any one in God's service : certainly he had done his best, according to his own standard, to keep God's commandments, and, therefore, he will rise up in judgment against many who now think disparagingly of him : unquestionably he was in the eyes of his contemporaries an eminently strict and pious man. He wished to do right. Young though

he was in years, he had got the better of those feelings which so often alienate the young from God. He had not forgotten his Creator: he was not ashamed of religion: he was not afraid of the ridicule and raillery of companions, who might have endeavored to persuade him that youth is the season for indulging instead of disciplining the appetites; and for pampering, instead of mortifying the flesh with its affections and its lusts.

He who knew what was in man,—the Lord and Maker of all, saw these promising dispositions, and this growing conscientiousness, and therefore (even though he was as yet a great way off from the truth) we are told that “He loved him”—loved him so well as to invite him under certain conditions to become, as it should seem, an apostle. “Come and follow me.”

However, he was first to be tried. And, in His love and mercy, the Saviour tried him in the very point where self-knowledge was most needful to him, by applying a test which showed this Ruler what, as yet, he little suspected,—the deceitfulness and the weakness of his own heart.

The young man had professed that from his early years he had "loved his neighbor as himself." "Do you really know the force of what you are saying?" —(such seems to be the general bearing of our Lord's remarks). "Have you ever seriously thought how much is involved in the command that you should love your neighbor as yourself? Now, I will put you to the trial in one point only: are you ready to sell all your goods, and give up your great possessions, in order that, from the proceeds, you may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and minister to the wants of your poorer neighbors?"

No. The young man was unable to make so great a sacrifice. He loved his ease, his comforts, his luxuries, and where they were not interfered with, he could find pleasure in the discharge of his duties to God and man. But these comforts were his weak points; and the moment they were put in jeopardy his good intentions faded away. He was dutiful only so long as duty and inclination did not clash; and herein he may serve as a

warning to us all. When called upon to deny himself and follow Christ, he went away; and though it is added that he went away "sorrowful," still he *went*. It was a grievous sin, and a throwing away of an opportunity which many of the Saints of God would have given worlds, if they possessed them, to have had within their reach. Yet, if his sorrow was of that godly kind "that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of," he must have been brought at last to the reflection, that as his obedience was now proved to be imperfect, and he had come short of the strictness of God's law in respect to this particular of loving his neighbor as well as himself, so the presumption was that in every other point of duty he was deficient, and thus he would be taught his *need* of a Saviour, as he had already been taught where to find one.

Now, brethren, if, as I have already said, there were any of us who were blindly trusting in ourselves, and leaning on the broken reed of our own righteousness, we should soon stand self-con-

demned, if we were to apply the incidents of the history we have been considering, to our own case; but feeling satisfied that you are not indulging in any such dangerous self-deceit, as that of supposing that any actions of yours are untainted by imperfections; or (granting them ever so perfect) that they are deserving of reward, I shall make a different use of the words of the text, and apply them to elicit an answer from the consciences of every one of us, wherein we are most deficient of that standard of holiness, at which our blessed Lord commanded his followers to aim, when he gave the injunction, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

I do not, however, now address myself to the openly and deliberately wicked,—to those who are living in open sin and wilful renunciation of their Baptismal vows, and who, if our Church had not lost her ancient discipline, would be cut off from companionship with the faithful till they had repented of their transgressions. If, unhappily, I am addressing any who are in the habitual neglect of prayer, or

who are little better than heathen men in their respect of God's name, or day, or house, or Sacraments,—who are guilty of profaneness, sensuality, or any other deadly sin, it is not to them that I am about to put my present inquiries.

I can only speak of them with sorrow and dismay, as of persons who have “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” And if, like the young Ruler in the Gospel, they should propose (what in their case would be) the awfully presumptuous question, “What lack I yet?” I can, alas, find no answer for them but this, that they lack *everything*, and that while they suppose that they “have need of nothing,” they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” They are very far from the kingdom of God.

But, if there be those among us (and such there may well be) who, like him of whom we have been speaking, “worshipping Christ,” and “loved of Him,” and obeying His commandments with honest purpose, however imperfectly, from their youth up, are yet painfully conscious of

their many deficiencies; to them I will apply the words of the text, though in such a manner, as will, I trust, *encourage* them to increased and cheerful exertions, rather than dishearten them under a despairing and paralyzing sense of their helplessness and guilt.

In the question then, "What lack I yet?" How far am I "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing?" I would have each one of you ask his heart how far he has been enabled to keep the vows which were made in his behalf at Holy Baptism, and what has hitherto been his growth in grace: what mastery he has gained over his corrupted nature, and besetting sins: and what those several points are, in which he feels himself to be most defective, and has most ground to recover, and wherein he must use redoubled exertions to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.

In order to judge accurately of that standard of perfection which God is pleased to set forth as the model of our imitation, we must refer, not to the opinions and language of the world

around us, but to His own Word. He has set forth His Eternal Son, the Head of the Church,—as the example which the members of His body are to follow. No lower standard, no, not that of the purest Saint or the highest Angel, will be sufficient. If we follow them it must only be as they followed Christ. Doubtless, it may seem easier and pleasanter to take for our pattern of imitation something which we think attainable without any very great difficulty. Doubtless, we often give ourselves credit for our humility, when, devoid of envy, we say of some one, whom we suppose to be further advanced in holiness than ourselves, “Ah! if ever I could arrive at such a pitch of excellence, as such or such a person, I should be content.”

And very probably we should: but God has given us another standard of perfection; and though He has never taught us to believe that we shall reach it, He has enjoined that our lives shall be spent in *trying* to do so. With nothing less than this will He be satisfied: at nothing less than this must we aim.

And this caution is the more requisite, because we live in times when party-feeling in matters of faith is apt to create false standards of religion. It was our Lord's injunction to his followers, "Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven:" but this is a command, which is, I fear, practically forgotten by a great many persons. They look to what is said or done, or reported to be said or done, by the leaders of the party they have chosen, and beyond this they do not look, and so are, of course, led to judge of their own condition, and of that of their neighbors, by the same process of reasoning which insured to the Pharisees a character of holiness, because they made long prayers, and gave their alms in public.

It was right to make prayers: it was right to give alms: but religion did not consist in these things only. And so among ourselves. "It is very common for Christians," as has been truly said, "to make much of what are but petty services: first, to place the very substance of religion in a few meagre observances,

or particular moral precepts which are easily complied with ; and then to make a great vaunting about their having done what in truth every one who is not a mere child in Christ ought to be able to do ; to congratulate themselves on their success, to condemn others who do not happen to move exactly along the very same line of minute practices in detail which they have adopted ; and in consequence, to forget that, after all, by such poor obedience, right though it be, still they have not approached even to a distant view of that point in their Christian course, at which they may consider themselves, in St. Paul's words, to have 'attained' a sure hope of salvation."

If then, such persons propose the inquiry, "What lack I yet?" an answer might be given to them which would show the real extent of their deficiencies, and prove them to be in a very different state from that in which the spirit of self-deceit would place them. That they may have made *some* progress in the way to heaven may be reasonably hoped ; but that they have not advanced as far as they

might have done is evident. An advanced Christian makes no talk about himself, and least of all, does he draw any comparison between himself and others, except to his own disadvantage.

I have warned you against referring to any other standard than your Bible,—to any other example than that of Christ, for your model of imitation: and I would now further impress upon you that when you make the inquiry, “What lack I yet?” you must be guided to your answer, not by the state of your religious feelings, but by a strict review, and an unshrinking self-examination, whether or not you can trace in yourselves a steady progress in the true life of the Spirit, a gradual maturing and ripening of the full fruit of holiness.

There is, in fact, no criterion so little to be trusted, no beacon more likely to mislead us, in estimating our Christian progress, than arguments drawn from the state of our religious feelings. Religion does not consist in excitement, but in action: and as it by no means follows that acts will follow excitement, so neither

is it to be supposed that excitement is a necessary accompaniment of action. Different men are constituted differently. Some have acute feelings, some have not. Some are more easily affected than others. No man who is in earnest, but will have *some* natural fervor—a fervor which must be trained, not repressed. It is not the duty of a Christian to repress it; indeed, without it, he could scarcely, perhaps, keep himself in the way of duty. He will have, as the Psalmist had, “delight” in the law of righteousness, warm indignation against the disobedient, sorrow with tears for the perverseness of those who love not the truth: but still this fervor will vary in intensity in different constitutions, even though it be a fervor of affection, and not of passion. And, therefore, it is conceivable that a man may discharge his daily duties to God, without his being sensible to himself of any very lively emotions within him; his heart and feelings may appear to himself cold and unexcited, and yet this may not arise from unbelief, but from his natural temperament of mind. And on the other

hand, there is a state of religious excitement which may seem to give life and vigor to the soul, and be a token of the special favor of the indwelling Spirit, but which all the while is of no more real value, than are the pale and chilly moonbeams in ripening our harvests, and bringing our fruit to perfection.

In frames and feelings there is always the risk of some delusion, but there is no mistaking the good works which spring from a lively faith. "Ye shall know them by their *fruits*." This is the only safe criterion by which we can judge either of others, or of ourselves. And if, day by day, we look into our actions, and see that the daily duties, be they little, or be they great, are watchfully performed, as in God's, the Judge's, presence, and as becomes men for whom Christ died; if we know by the pain the struggle costs us, that out of our reverence to Christ's commands, evil thoughts and evil tempers are struggled with, and controlled so soon as they arise: if we are meek and patient and forgiving; pure and self-denying; true, and honest, and diligent

in our calling, because we know that Christ would have us so. If we are these things, not by fits and starts, now watchful, and now careless; beginning the month or the year well, but forgetting our resolutions before its close,—if we are steadfast and unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord; if we persevere in spite of difficulties, making fresh and fresh advances to perfection, and yet all the while confessing ourselves unprofitable servants,—if, I say, we have this sort of evidence as to the character of our lives, we have good hope that we cannot be deceived as to our real position in the sight of God; there is no danger of our dreaming on through years of self-deceit and self-satisfaction, to awake at last—*in hell!*

And now let each of us fairly put the question to himself, Wherein am I still deficient, “What lack I yet?” If we have read our Bible aright, if we have listened to the teaching of the Church, we know that our whole life should be a continual advance in holiness, and pro-

gress towards perfection. We are never to fancy that we have attained to that degree of righteousness which is sufficient. In *this* sense no degree of righteousness is sufficient, because if there be yet a higher step which we *might* gain but do not, that omission of our's is an offence in God's sight, and there is no offence against Him but *may* peril our salvation. We must beware, then, of all which may hinder or impede our progress. To halt, to look back, to slumber, are but so many tokens of impending ruin. To halt is to run the risk of the waves overwhelming us; to look back before we have reached the mountain's top, is to be consumed, or to stand motionless for ever; and to slumber, is to let the bridegroom go by to the wedding feast, and shut to the door. Let us, therefore, beware of mistaking words and professions for Christian Faith, and of confounding good feelings with good works; and further, let us beware of another error no less perilous; that, namely, of trusting to outward forms, and setting little store by the inward spirit.

We are Christ's soldiers, and, as fight-

ing under His banner, our duty is not only not to lose heart, but to press forward and gain more ground continually. There is no safety for us but in victory, no resting-place but the grave. Are we living in this belief? Are we winning our way forward? What fruits of the Spirit have we to show? What lack we yet?

It is not necessary that I should go through the various points of Christian duty, and ask you with reference to each, how far you have attained unto the diligent discharge of them. This can be done better by your own consciences than by my lips. But as each one of us knows that there is a sad record against him of things both done and undone, so each of us knows too, at this very moment, the particular points wherein we *might* have attained to greater holiness than we have yet done. One of us, perhaps, knows that he might have put more effectual control on a hasty temper; another, that he might have been less ready to think evil of his neighbor; a third, that he might have been more careful

and exact in speaking the truth ; one might have been less proud ; another less envious ; another more chaste in thought or word ; another more industrious, or more regular. Some might have given up more leisure to prayer, or more money to alms-deeds. Some might have fasted and denied themselves more strictly. Some might have prepared themselves better for the Holy Communion. Some might have come more frequently to Church ; and some might have been more devout when there.

Examine yourselves in such points as these, and then you will have but little difficulty in ascertaining where further progress is needful.

But then, having ascertained this point, we must not sit down with our hands before us, awed at the thought of the little advance we have made in our heavenward course, in proportion to what might have been expected of us ; on the contrary, we must reflect that the need is so much the more for instant and increased exertion. If ever, hitherto, we have persuaded ourselves that it was possible to

stand still, yet, now at least, let us awake to a sense of the fact, that every step which is not so much nearer heaven, is, in fact, a slipping backward towards the gates of hell.

Stand still we cannot: and with the aids we have to help us forward, it is an offence even to desire to do so. For if God bids us encounter trials, it is He who is as willing as He is able to bring us through them. If Christ our Lord calls us to take up after Him the cross which once He bore for us, he will enable us to endure its bitterness. If He charges us to aim at perfection, it is that by the grace of His Holy Spirit, He may bring us on, by little and little, to a height of holiness, which, if we saw it all at once, we should suppose to be unattainable, and so abstain from making the attempt.

Lost, wretched, miserable, perishing sinners are we in ourselves, after all that we can aim at or achieve. Idle, good-for-nothing, unprofitable servants, even if we had done all that we were commanded to do. God tells us this, and I trust we are satisfied of it.

But because God tells us this, and because, in spite of all our weakness, and infirmities, and sins, He, for His dear Son's sake, loves us, and willeth not that any should perish, let us take special care that His love be not bestowed on us in vain. Let us watch and examine ourselves continually: let us repeat the inquiry again and again, "What lack I yet?" What more must I do, in order to be fruitful in *every* good work, and to increase in the knowledge of God? And ever, as ascertaining our manifold deficiencies, we set about removing them with diligence, and seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to help us in our efforts, let us cast out of consideration the amount of progress made, and rather studying what is *to be*, than what *has been* arrived at, let our feelings and language be identified with those of St. Paul: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

SERMON IV.

THE SOURCE OF MAN'S SUFFICIENCY.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 5, part.

Our sufficiency is of God.

IN matters of every day life we reckon him unwise and obstinate, who does not care to profit by the direct experience of others. The sick man, who declines to make trial of some medicine of suspicious or doubtful efficacy, may, indeed, lose a chance of recovery; though yet, on the other hand, he may escape the danger of having the bad symptoms of his malady increased. But if his physician addresses him and says, "I know and understand your complaint, for I have had it myself, and have found speedy and certain relief from the medicine which I offer you," surely the patient who then hesitates must be very weak-minded and very dis-

trustful, because he rejects an evidence with which he *ought* to be satisfied.

Now, one reason why we ought to receive the words of the text with great attention, is because they teach us what, with reference to the matter therein spoken of, was the direct experience of St. Paul.

You will, no doubt, remember that his second letter to the Christians of Corinth contains in its opening chapters a strong assertion of the high importance of his own dignity as an Apostle, and a defence of the course pursued by him in the execution of that arduous office.

In the second chapter, he had expressed his thankfulness to God, who, "wherever I go," saith the Apostle (if we may thus venture to paraphrase his words), "makes me to triumph in the cause of Christ, and who spreads forth in every country through which I pass, the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of his gracious dispensations. For I am, in my ministry, the sweet fragrance of Christ to God, both in those whom I may be the means of saving, and in those who perish. To

the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who," continues the Apostle, "is sufficient for these things? Who, in so arduous a ministry, will dare to presume on the sufficiency of his own natural powers?"

And then St. Paul goes on to say, that while he thus speaks of his ministry, he has no thought of commending himself and his past exertions. Such a course, he reminds them, must needs be unnecessary at Corinth, where those to whom he wrote were the most satisfactory testimony in his behalf. "Ye," saith he, "are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men: you are, as it were, a letter written by Christ Himself, and intrusted to our charge,—a letter written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. And such trust,—such a lawful cause of boasting, therefore, I have through Christ toward God. Not, indeed, that I presume to imagine myself competent to do anything praiseworthy by my own natural

strength,—not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God.”

Here, then, we have St. Paul, first contemplating the difficulties and responsibilities of his trial, and thus asking, “Who is sufficient for these things?” and then answering his own question with the reply, “Our sufficiency is of God.” And this language we find him using continually. If he alludes to his having labored more abundantly than others, he adds, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” If he speaks to the Philippians of his active discharge of his duties, he attributes his success to the true cause, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me :” if he exhorts them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, he gives, as a reason to encourage them in their exertions, “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

And how it was that the blessed Apostle gained his knowledge of this most important doctrine, we learn from that

memorable passage, where, after speaking of the thorn in the flesh (whatever that might have been), which was sent him, lest those abundant revelations which he received from heaven soon after his conversion, should have exalted him above measure, he declares that he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him, and received from the Lord this answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

And now, as to the *fact*, that that grace was indeed able to support him in all dangers, and carry him through all temptations, it seems almost unnecessary to speak. Trace his life from his conversion to his martyrdom, and you will find it a record of the power of God, making the spirit to triumph over the flesh, and enabling it to face and conquer trials and troubles which else must have overwhelmed it. What was it but the sufficiency of God which made St. Paul to become in labors more abundant, in stripes, and prisons, and deaths, more frequent than any of his companions?

What but this enabled him to endure without shrinking that dark catalogue of sufferings to which his faithfulness exposed him, the stoning, and the shipwrecks, the journeyings and their accompanying perils, from false friends and open foes, from civilized men and savages? What but this supported him in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness? Yea, it was this which gave him strength to take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. It was this which enabled him to spend and be spent, to fight a good fight, to keep the faith, yea, and at length to die a Martyr in behalf of his crucified Lord.

Here then, brethren, is a case in which we have the testimony of direct experience to guide us. We know that St. Paul was even such an one as ourselves, encompassed with the same infirmities, surrounded by like temptations. We know what he did and suffered; how, out of weakness, he was made strong, and we know further, the source of that

strength which enabled him to overcome in his long warfare with the world and the devil. "Our sufficiency," saith he, "is of God." It remains, therefore, that we who have the same necessities, should learn from his example to seek a strength which is not our own.

Accordingly, while our Church teaches us that we have "no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have a good will;" while she bids us acknowledge that we have "no power of ourselves to help ourselves,"—that "through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without God,"—that "without" Him "we are not able to please" Him,—and that from Him "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed," she leads us in all her services to pray for the help of that grace which can alone give us such readiness of body and soul, as to enable us to accomplish what God would have us to do.

It is scarcely necessary to remind you that the condition of man since the fall of Adam has been such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. By nature we are born in sin and the children of wrath. But God in his great love, wherewith He loveth us, brings us into covenant with Himself by Holy Baptism, and places us in a state of salvation,—in the way, that is, to be saved. In that blessed Sacrament, we die in sin and rise again unto righteousness; are made regenerate: born, as it were, again; and so become new creatures with reference to what we were before. God adopts us for His children; admits us into His Church; thereby making us very members incorporate in the mystical body of His Son; yea, and makes us, as the Catechism expresses it, “children of grace.” We become heirs and partakers, that is, of the grace, help, and assistance of the Holy Spirit. He is shed abroad in our hearts, first, in such measure as is requisite for our infant necessities, and then in such

additional degrees as our years and capacities render needful. Our bodies, washed in the laver of regeneration, He makes His temples, and (supposing us to adhere to our part of the baptismal covenant) that Divine Presence will grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength, till we come unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

This, I say, is the merciful intention of the ever-blessed Comforter towards us: this, if we did not grieve Him, and frustrate His operations, would be the work which He would carry out in the soul of every member of the Holy Catholic Church. And if He does not this, the fault lies only in ourselves, for He is ready to help us to the uttermost; He, if we only sought it duly, would give us strength to preserve our baptismal garment pure and white, unstained by sin, and unspotted by the world.

But, though, at Holy Baptism, we were placed in a state of salvation, and were set upon the road to heaven, it was left to ourselves to choose whether or no we

would avail ourselves of the privilege, and whether we would adhere to the narrow path of life, or betake ourselves to the wide gate and broad way that leadeth to destruction. Herein our trial is made to consist. Though no longer exposed to God's wrath and damnation, on account of the sin of our first parent Adam, our forefather's nature yet abides in us. The lust of the flesh, the infection of our nature, still remains even in the regenerate ; Baptism makes no difference in this respect. It does not eradicate our malady, though it points out the means of cure, and enables our constitution to bear the necessary remedies. We have, therefore, each of us, a traitor still within, —our hearts, and the corruption that is natural to them ; while without there is the world ; and both from within, and from without, the devil has power to tempt us to our ruin.

This, then, is our condition. We have vowed to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh ; and yet we are so constituted that they are the things which we are most inclined to follow. We are ex-

pected to walk by faith, our nature leading us to walk in the sight of our eyes. We are required, from first to last, to keep up a constant warfare with self, while our appetites and feelings incite us evermore to indulge ourselves.

Such being the case, there are few, it is to be feared, who escape that pollution from which regenerating Baptism has once set them free. Negligences and ignorances are the lot of all, and most, perhaps, have fallen into a course of wilful sin.

Now what hope is there for such persons?—Of course, as far as *this* world is concerned, they can never be again as when they left the font: but, blessed be God, we have no reason to fear but that the blood of Christ can cleanse from *all* sin, as well actual as imputed, as well after Baptism, as before it. They, indeed, who have sinned against light and warnings, must not expect that God will accept them without ten times greater repentance and contrition than they exhibited before they had such privileges: but still, no earnest penitent is cut off

from hope. His very penitence is a proof that God has not rejected him, for none can repent truly without the aid of God's Holy Spirit, and he who repents truly (so repents, that is, as to amend his life), has the witness within himself, that the Spirit, which was given him in Baptism, has not wholly withdrawn from him, but rather is renewing him day by day.

It is a grievous thing to fall into sin, but we may, in some measure, draw the poison from the wound we have inflicted on ourselves, by learning from our fall the extent of our weakness. It may be, that we trusted in ourselves, and so have transgressed. If so, the evidence is now before us, that our sufficiency is not in ourselves, but of God. When we think we stand, we are sure to fall. When we stay ourselves upon our God, we are enabled to stand upright. The limbs live through their union with the body; the fruit comes to perfection because it receives nourishment from the roots. "I am the vine," said our blessed Lord to his disciples, "Ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the

same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.”

Nothing can be done effectually, nothing can be done as it ought to be done, without the co-operating grace of the Holy Spirit. Without that, resolve as we may, strive as we may, all will end in disappointment. We shall sink under temptation, or grow proud of our seeming success, or be self-deceived, or inconsistent. Somehow or other, how great soever may be our early promise, we shall bring no fruit to perfection; the frost will destroy it, or the worm devour it; it will wither, or be cankered, or drop from the bough ere it be half ripened. “Without Me ye can do nothing!”

What then? Since the grace of God is all-sufficient; and since that grace alone enables us either to have good desires, or to bring them to good effect, are we to take no further trouble, and suppose that we have nothing to do but to surrender ourselves to a state of spiritual inactivity, expecting that all will be done for us, and that we are to do nothing for ourselves,—and that without any exer-

tion on our parts we shall be formed and fashioned after the model of Christian perfection, transformed by the renewing of our minds, and so made ripe for glory?

That be far from us! It fares with us as with the Apostle of old: Satan desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, and unless we resist him with all the energies of mind and body, of heart and soul, he will work his will upon us. Therefore, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We have to engage in an arduous contest; and we must not shrink from it, for we have this encouraging assurance, "My strength is sufficient for thee." We have to engage in an arduous contest, but we must enter on it in no rash spirit of confidence and presumption, for the same voice declares, "Without Me ye can do nothing." We have commenced our warfare, and we find our arm strengthened, and our heart waxing bolder; take we heed, then, to make the acknowledgment, "Our sufficiency is of God." When

all is done we shall be still unprofitable servants, and only have performed that which it was our duty to do. But we can never make any progress, even in this unprofitable service, without the grace of God, and that grace will only be vouchsafed in proportion as we covet it earnestly, seek it heartily, and profit by it diligently.

Our sufficiency is of God; but our diligence must be our own. We must "eschew evil and do good, seek peace and ensue it, *for* the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." *He will help them who strive to help themselves*, and none other; for diligence is the test of sincerity. And in proportion as we realize to ourselves the thought that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and in proportion as we learn our own weakness, and desire His strength and assistance, we shall exert ourselves more and more to co-operate with Him, even as He, in His mercy, is pleased to co-operate with us. In order that the flesh may gain no mastery over us, we shall keep

it in subjection by fasts and mortification, and by disciplining it to endure hardness. In order that our hearts may not betray us, we shall exercise them in all that may render them humble and obedient. Our appetites we shall hold in check, by denying and thwarting them, even in things innocent. Our eyes and our tongues we shall strictly control; and so far as in us lies we shall endeavor to make our mortal bodies not unmeet for the presence of the Spirit of Purity and Truth.

And while we thus regulate ourselves, so far as external objects are concerned, we shall not be less diligent in availing ourselves of those means of grace which are placed within our reach. Prayer and meditation on the Word of God; a willing and devout attention to the ordinances of the Church; and above all, regular participation in the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, will so stablish and confirm our hearts as to prepare them, like good ground, for the reception of heavenly seed.

May we, brethren, learn daily to value

more and more the inestimable privileges to which our Baptism gave us the title; may we dread more and more to forfeit them. May God, for His dear Son's sake, increase in us continually His manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness. May He fill us with the spirit of His holy fear, both now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON V.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN CHRIST.

MATTHEW xi. 6.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

THE circumstances under which these words were spoken were as follows. St. John the Baptist, having heard in his prison the works of Christ, sent two of his disciples (through whom, as it seems, the report of the Saviour's miracles had reached him*) with this message to our blessed Lord, "Art Thou He that should come?"—the Shiloh, that is, of the Fathers,—the Messiah of the Prophets,—“or do we look for another?”

It has not been revealed to us why the Baptist deputed his followers to make such an inquiry, and hence there has arisen considerable discussion on the sub-

* Luke vii. 18.

ject, in which some have gone so far as to suppose that St. John's own faith had, in some measure, failed him, either because his expectations of the temporal glory of the Messiah's kingdom had not been realized, or because he found himself left without succor under circumstances in which he had expected a miraculous deliverance.

The probability, however, seems to be that the message was not sent by the blessed Baptist for the satisfaction of any doubts of his own, but for the conviction of his disciples. That St. John himself could have doubted that Christ was the Messiah, seems incredible, when we remember the several occasions on which he had acknowledged Him to be such in the fullest and clearest manner.* But with respect to his followers, the case was different; and as they had already given proof that they were not altogether without some jealousy of our Lord and His disciples,† and would, therefore, be less

* Compare John i. 6, 7, 8, 33, 34, 36; iii. 26, 29—36; v. 33.

† Matt. ix. 14.

willing to receive the truth when their master should be removed from them, he sent them, while he was yet alive, to that Messiah in Whom he desired them to believe, even as he did himself.

Accordingly they came, with the inquiry on their lips, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" — "And in the same hour," writes St. Luke in his account of this event, Jesus "cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight." Now, you will remember, brethren, that it had long since been pointed out by Isaiah, as a distinguishing note or mark of the Messiah's kingdom, that "*then* the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."* "Jesus," therefore, "answered and said unto them, Go and show John again, those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are

* Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”

He does not tell them in so many words that He is the Christ,—for (as one of the Fathers of the Church observes,* with reference to this incident), “the testimony of deeds is stronger than the testimony of words,” but He gives them such an evidence as might satisfy their doubts, adding, at the same time, by way of silent reproof and appeal to their consciences, the words I have chosen for my text: “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”—My low estate that is, or My disclaiming all intention of having My kingdom in this world, or My failing to exert miraculous power in behalf of your imprisoned master, have been obstacles in the way of your belief: I do not say that these things are no trial, but I pronounce a blessing on him whose faith surmounts it. Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be ashamed of My doctrine, nor discouraged by any temporal evils, from obeying it.

* St. Chrysostom (quoted in the *Catena Aurea*).

The religion of the Gospel was never brought before our race as a thing which would have attractions to the natural man. On the contrary, it proclaimed, at the outset, to all who adopted it, that it required them to undertake a war of extermination with their natural appetites, or in other words, with their indwelling corruption. And, such being the case, it was manifest that even where the preaching the doctrines of the Cross was not met with determined hostility and opposition, it would be received with coldness, mistrust, prejudice and dislike. The evil-disposed and worldly-minded would hate it with a perfect hatred, and so far as they could, become persecutors of those who favored it. Those who trusted in their own righteousness, and were satisfied with themselves, would find a cause of offence in it; and as these persons must always form a large class, it is no wonder that our blessed Lord's preaching found no favor with a great body of His countrymen. But all this had been predicted long before. Isaiah had forewarned his countrymen that the Lord of Hosts Him-

self, while offering to be "a sanctuary," should become "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the house of Israel,—a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

And when our Lord began to preach, He announced to those who heard Him that he should himself be a scandal and offence to the world, that His Doctrine should be a stumbling-block, and that His followers should be hated of all men for His name's sake.

Nor did the event fail to justify the prediction. One while, His countrymen were "offended in Him," because He was "the carpenter's son," and so they rejected His doctrine out of prejudice to His person. Another while, His very disciples not only were "offended because of Him," but "forsook Him and fled" from Him in His hour of trial, because He did not manifest His divine power for the destruction of His enemies.

And so with regard to His teaching. He bids the young Ruler, who professed a desire to inherit eternal life, go and sell his goods and give to the poor; and the

result is, that the rich man is offended ; “when he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” So again, on another occasion, when He had answered the inquiry of the Pharisees, with respect to the payment of tribute, in a manner that ought to have filled them with both remorse and conviction, all that is recorded of them is, that instead of acknowledging Him for their Lord and their God, “they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way.” And so once more, when He had declared in the synagogue at Capernaum, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you,”—we are told that those who heard Him murmured at the hardness of the saying, that, in short, it was an offence to them ; and it is added, “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.”

Nor was it otherwise when the Bridegroom was taken from them. We have only to read the Acts of the Apostles to see how continually the evil tempers and prejudices of men made the preaching of

the Gospel an offence to them. And the Epistles are full of evidence to the same point. St. Paul testifies to the Corinthians that the doctrine of Christ crucified is unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, foolishness :—a hindrance that is, and an obstacle, and a discouragement, and an occasion of falling. And the same Apostle speaks to the Galatians of “the offence of the Cross” as though the expression were quite familiar to them: while St. Peter, addressing himself to the faithful, declares that unto them that believe, Christ “is precious, but unto them which be disobedient” He is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even unto them which stumble at the Word.”

Enough has now been said to show you that the religion of Christ Jesus our Lord was, even from the first, an offence to those to whom it was offered. So it has been throughout all ages. His Doctrines, His Ordinances, His Church, His Ministers, have been so many stumbling-blocks to the world; and so, no doubt, they will continue to the end. It is

the world's way, and the Church's trial. And, therefore, brethren, it behooves us, each for himself, to reflect how far we have hopes of being inheritors of that blessedness which He, who is the Church's Head and Lord, has pronounced on those who are *not* offended in Him. In the remainder of this discourse it will be my object to offer some suggestions to your notice, which may aid you in your inquiry.

And first I must observe, that our condition is very different from that of those to whom the Gospel was first preached, and, therefore, if we are offended at it, there is far less excuse for us than there was for them. We profess and call ourselves Christians; we continually declare our belief in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. They, on the other hand, had been brought up as Jews or Heathens, and for them to embrace Christianity involved a change in the opinions, feelings, and habits of a life-time. If, to such persons, the doctrines of the Cross were a stumbling-block, it was surely no

great marvel, human nature being what it is.

But with ourselves, as I have already said, the case is widely different. The Church can never appear to *us* as a new sect struggling for existence, and everywhere spoken against; she comes before us, supported by vouchers of unquestionable authority, and hallowed with the reverence of ages, the birth-place and the home of all that has been great and noble and of good report in the eyes of man, of all that is precious in the sight of God. Into this Church we were admitted when infants, and so put in possession of privileges which can be found nowhere else: to this Church we declared our allegiance in the face of God and the congregation, when we were confirmed by the Bishop; and with this Church we solemnly proclaim our communion, whenever, in the house of God, we join in that Book of Common Prayer, which it is our happy privilege, as members of the English branch of Christ's Catholic Church to possess,—that Book of Common Prayer to which we confidently appeal as

expressing the sense of the Universal Church,—the Truth, as it has been held by the consent of all times, places, and persons.

Shame, therefore, and grief it were for us to be offended in her. Undutiful, yea, unnatural were it for the child to lift up his hand or his voice against his mother. The Church to which we belong is Christ's representative and vice-gerent on earth to us. We know that in her the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments are rightly administered, by a clergy holding their succession from the Apostles, and, therefore, we do not doubt that the Church of England is the Church of Christ in England,—the English branch of the One Holy Catholic Church, apart from which there can be no safety.

How, then, can any, who call themselves her children, find cause of offence in her? Are they wiser than she? or purer? or better? Is their judgment infallible, that they set it against her's? Is their life so heavenly that her ordinances are of no use to them?

Perhaps some one will answer that it is by no means the same thing to be offended in Christ, and to find matters of offence in His Church. But to this I reply, if the Church teaches as Christ teaches, then it is Christ's teaching: but if she does not teach as Christ teaches, then there can be no safety in her communion. But there are those who allow themselves to stay in her communion, and who yet lift up their heel against her; who outwardly are in her ranks, but assuredly are not of her, because they are offended in her.

Such, on the one hand, are those who would lower her Sacraments into mere outward signs, denying their inward grace;—who dislike and would alter her Liturgy; who speak with contempt of her holy ordinances of fast and festival;—who revolt at her ceremonies, and will not tolerate the thought of reviving her ancient discipline. And such, on the other hand, are those, who, because she has lost some privileges and some blessings which she had while yet in communion with Rome, would despise her

in what they call her low estate, would cast in her teeth her loss of discipline and fellowship with other branches of the Catholic Church, and who, in a Romanizing spirit, seek rather to forget the errors and superstitions, from which she was reformed, than to remember the inestimable blessings which have (by God's great mercy, and in spite of our demerits) been secured to her.

Now that both these classes of persons are in the way, at least, to extreme peril, I must needs express my belief. Depend upon it, a man is guilty of no slight sin who allows his mind to become unsettled in its allegiance to the Church. He has made the first step towards apostasy, though as yet he knows it not, and probably has no suspicion of danger so long as he abstains from an overt act. But as has been most truly said, "One does not *begin* to fall, when the fall becomes sensible."*

Others may take what course seems right in their own eyes, but a Churchman has no right to be offended in his

* Bp. Wilson.

Church. If the matter of offence relates to an article of faith, in which belief may affect salvation, he must reflect that he is offended not with the Church merely, but with Christ, for the *Church* holds nothing to be an article of faith but what "may be read in or proved by Holy Scripture,"—the inspired Word of God.—If, on the other hand, it be a form, or ceremony, or matter of discipline, then, since the Church has the power of determining such matters,* for a man to be offended here, is to go altogether out of his own province. He is not to direct, but to obey. The child has not authority over the parent, but the parent over the child. When the parent has laid down the law, the affair is settled; the child has no business to question, criticise, or dispute. The thing required, not being in itself unlawful, the duty of the child, is, as I have said, to obey with a willing mind. And so it should be with us. Difficulties in our religion (independent of difficulties in the evidences) must be received as a matter of faith. The religion itself being

* Articles xx.; xxxiv.

proved to come from God, we must take what we find in it, without further questioning. And so, likewise, with reference to the Church; whatever difficulties we may find in her constitution or her ordinances, so long as what is prescribed is not contrary to the Word of God, we are bound to obey with cheerfulness, and a glad surrender of our own judgments.

And I will content myself with giving you a single reason why such a course will, in the end, prove best. *It will be the most conducive to your soul's health.* Look out upon the world around you, and see the case of those who find stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence (whether on this side or that) in the Church of which they are members. They never seem to advance to any exalted height of personal holiness. They are sincere and in earnest, but their earnestness and sincerity begin and end in party feeling. They discuss, and argue, and criticise; and thereby pander to their own vanity: they make themselves heard, and the world, it may be, admires their energy: but where is the *fruit* of their exertions?

Unstable as water, they cannot excel. Whatever question agitates the so-called religious world, excites them, and they eagerly identify themselves with one or other set of opinions. And where the dutiful and humble-minded are glad to hold their tongues and keep silence, maintaining the even tenor of their way in the quiet discharge of daily duties, these persons spend their lives in straining at gnats and swallowing camels, paying tithes of mint and cummin, and neglecting, it is to be feared, the weightier matters of the law, self-discipline, justice, mercy, charity, and the love of God.

But let us, my brethren, avoiding the snares into which they fall, whose undisciplined minds put no check upon their natural wilfulness and self-confidence, endeavor to appropriate to ourselves the blessedness promised by our Lord in the text. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

It has pleased God to make everything connected with our condition in this world, a trial of our faith and patience. Our religion has its mysteries, and its diffi-

culties: our Church-membership has its hindrances, and (so far as man is concerned in it) its imperfections. But these difficulties and hindrances are our appointed means of trial. Through them, and in spite of them, we must make our way: they must be vanquished and overcome like any other temptation.

But since it is a far easier matter to maintain our post, in the first instance, than to regain it when it has been once lost through carelessness, let me in conclusion exhort you to be on your guard against admitting any feelings of discontent as to the position in which, as Churchmen, the Providence of God has placed you. Depend upon it that little good is ever likely to accrue to you, from any display of your ingenuity in discovering causes of offence. There is nothing but danger that can result from unsettling your own minds or those of others; and each of us, we may be sure, has enough to reform within, without setting himself up to judge the Church. It is quite time enough to cry out for more privileges, when we have availed ourselves to the

utmost of those within our reach : it is quite time enough to pronounce her ordinances insufficient to satisfy an earnest mind, when we can declare, as in God's presence, that we have lived up to them. The many who speak in a rude irreverent way about her, are probably incompetent to speak at all ; they merely follow a popular clamor, and have no real knowledge as to what she does, or what she does not teach. But where any one, professing attachment to the Church, and not uninstructed in her doctrines, is disposed to be offended in her, surely it is but fair to inquire of him whether he is carefully living up to what she prescribes to him. If he is not, he is wholly unfit for the office he has assumed.

I would fain hope that those whom I address are so rooted and built up in the faith, so thankful for the innumerable blessings they have received at her hands, that they have not a wish, nor a thought, beyond the Church of the Prayer Book ; and that they are so satisfied that all things necessary to salvation may be found within her pale, that they would

never join with those who find cause of offence in her. But while I gladly believe this of you, let me remind you, that to be a sincere Churchman implies something more than a mere profession of principles. It implies a constant, diligent walking in all the Church's ordinances. It implies habits of discipline and self-restraint. It implies a life spent, according to your means and abilities, in prayers, and fasts, and alms. It implies steadfastness, and diligence, and discretion, and humility: a dread of false doctrine, heresy, and schism, and yet a charity that thinks no evil and hopes the best; that loves the sinner, even while it hates the sin. It implies a spirit of patience and forbearance, a readiness to submit to misrepresentation and calumny, and a willingness to forgive them and pass them by. It implies an earnest desire to remove all causes of offence, and a special care of creating them; but it, likewise, implies a full *practical* belief in our Saviour's words, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me;" and an earnest fear lest by putting any slight upon the Church,

we should incur the anger of the Church's Lord, of Him who declared to the founders of that Church, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me."

SERMON VI.

HOLINESS IN OURSELVES, AND FORBEARANCE
TO OTHERS.

MARK ix. 50.

Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

WHATEVER may be the difficulties and uncertainty attending the interpretation of that part of our blessed Lord's address to the beloved disciple, which immediately precedes the passage I have just read to you, the text itself has no obscurity whatever. It is the simple enunciation of a command which we are all bound to obey; and the general drift and connection of the context will, in spite of those parts, whose meaning is less obvious, be so far clear to the careful reader of his Bible, that he will be at no loss to discover the kind of circumstances, under which the discharge of the duty here prescribed becomes especially needful.

Those persons who have made it their business to defend our Holy Religion from the assaults of unbelievers, by careful consideration of those external evidences of its divine origin, which are unnecessary to men who, like ourselves, have, as I trust, the testimony of its truth within us,—these Apologists of Christianity have been wont to adduce, as one among many other proofs in favor of our Lord's commission from on high, that if He had been a deceiver, He would never have fixed upon such persons as those whom He actually selected to be the first preachers of the Gospel. And a moment's reflection will suffice to convince us that there is great force in the argument. An impostor would have chosen instruments who gave promise of immediate usefulness; if he intended to make them partners in his deceit, he would have fixed on the subtle, the cool-headed, the daring; if his object was to deceive them, he would have invited none to be his disciples but the weak, the dull, the unsuspecting.

But instead of this, we find the Founder

of Christianity choosing for His followers a class of persons whose minds were just of that very temper, which, supposing Him to have been a deceiver, would have given Him most trouble. The Apostles (I am, of course, speaking of them as they were before the day of Pentecost) showed themselves to be anything rather than ready to give implicit faith to their Master's teaching; they were frequently jealous of one another; there was little or no bond of union between them; and the moment the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered abroad.

If such men became, in after times, the successful preachers of the Gospel, it could only be, first, because what they preached was true, and, therefore, God was with them; and secondly, because they had prepared themselves for their task of Christianizing the world, by disciplining themselves into obedience to those rules which their heavenly Master laid down for their guidance.

Now I will show you how that which I have been saying applies to the text. It appears that on a certain occasion a

strife arose among the disciples which should be greatest. Our blessed Lord had just before been transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John, and it is not impossible that the favor shown to them might have been resented by some other of the Apostles, who felt themselves their superiors in age, or of nearer kin to Jesus. Be this as it may, there was a strife; and He who read their hearts, availed Himself of the opportunity to warn them that the temper they then exhibited was the very last which would find favor in His kingdom. "If any man," said He, "desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." And then, after setting a little child before them as an emblem of that freedom from pride, and contentiousness, and ambition, which is indispensable to those who desire to be greatest in the kingdom of God; after admonishing them of the peril in which they stand, who, by their evil tempers, put stumbling-blocks in the way of the weakest of God's servants; and of the necessity of making *any* surrender rather than incur such a risk;

He concludes by declaring that as every burnt-offering under the law was first salted with salt, and then consumed by fire: so every one who has been instructed in the doctrine of the Gospel, if, when he is tried, he be found not sincere, shall be destroyed by the eternal fire of Divine Wrath. "Salt," he adds, "is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." The doctrine, that is, wherein I have instructed you, will make you wise and good, will save you from the corruptions of the world, and enable you to teach others to preserve themselves unto life eternal. But if you, thus instructed, shall, instead of teaching others, fall away yourselves, either through hope or fear of any earthly thing, you will become the most unprofitable and inexcusable of men. Take heed, therefore, that ye continue steadfast in the faith yourselves, and let no ambitious designs, no foolish contentions among yourselves, or fear of outward suffering or persecution, hinder the propagation of truth among others.

Here, then, was the rule for the first disciples of the Lord, and in them for us. They were to have salt in themselves,—to have within them a fixed and settled principle, pervading their whole character, and preserving them untainted, and uncorrupted, amid surrounding evil. And with this distinctive mark about them, which could not but, in great measure, render them different from the mass of mankind, and even (in proportion as they had more or less of it) different from those who received like faith with them, they were to have peace one with another: to be free from jealousy at others' privileges, and from envying their attainments; to be ready to give them credit for the same purity of motive by which they were actuated themselves; to temper their zeal with discretion and charity; to be humble about themselves, and to think more highly of others than of themselves; and to postpone all personal considerations to the advancement of their Master's cause, and making His religion lovely in the eyes of men. They were to have peace one with another, because, else, their labors

would be all in vain ; for a kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. They were to have peace one with another, because, else, offences must needs come, and their Lord had pronounced His sentence of wo upon him by whom the offence cometh.

In few words, then, the admonition of the text seems to require this, that they who are Christ's servants employ themselves in the quiet discharge of their own duties, instead of interfering with others ; and that in their intercourse with others they exhibit "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," which, the Apostle assures us, "is, in the sight of God, of great price." And I conceive that this admonition is one to which it behooves us to pay great attention, especially at the present time, when there seems on all sides a determination to forget it.

It pleased God to make it the trial of our fathers, in the last generation, that their lot should be cast in a season when men were in a state of apathy and slumber, with respect to holy things : the standard both of faith and practice was

very low, and the Church being inactive, her authority and ordinances were despised.

Our trial is of a different, but not less perilous kind. We are living in the midst of controversy and agitation; when there is everywhere much noise and clamor about religion, and much open profession of it, without, I fear, anything at all approaching to a corresponding practice. I am speaking of ourselves, as Churchmen: for with all that is without we have nothing to do. It is sufficient that we judge ourselves. With those who are gone out from us, we have no concern, except in our prayers for them. Those who will not "hear the Church," ought, so far as associating with them is concerned, to be unto us as heathen men and publicans. "Mark them," writes St. Paul, "which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, and avoid them."

Looking, then, to our own branch of the Church Catholic at the present time, we find in it much of angry partisanship, much of strife and debate, much of jea-

lousy, suspicion and uncharitableness. Such ever has been, such must ever be the case, when men are in earnest. And grievous as is the sight, nevertheless it is an evidence that there is still life within us. Let us pray Him Who is ever bringing good out of evil, that as sparks of fire are produced by the collision of flint and steel, so the truth of God may be more clearly made manifest in this war of antagonist principles, that so meek and quiet minds may learn their way more clearly, and also that the good which is brought to the surface by all this troubling of the waters, may retain its buoyancy, while the evil may sink like lead into the depths!

Yet, while we admit that controversy is a sign of life, let us never forget that they who love controversy for its own sake cannot be otherwise than hateful characters, with tempers far removed from the kingdom of God, and having but little of that Spirit whose fruits are not hatred and variance, emulations and strife, heresies and envying, but love and peace, and long-suffering, and gentleness, and temperance.

To rush unbidden into controversy ; to be a voluble talker about other men's opinions ; to use harsh words ; to judge, and criticise, and condemn, are sure signs of a weak, unchastened, unchristian spirit, unable to control itself, and, therefore, wholly unfit to pass sentence on others.

And it is one of the worst features of the present time, that, in almost every class of society, some of these fluent talkers are to be found, who, so long as they can attract notice to themselves, and render themselves conspicuous, seem to care little or nothing for the mischief they may be doing, for the calumnies they may help to disseminate, the minds they may unsettle, the stumbling-blocks they may put in a brother's way. They give no thought that what they scatter are firebrands. "It is sport," saith Solomon, "it is *sport* to a fool to do mischief."

And it is a yet more sad consideration, that many of those who so forget the law of Christ are the young, the rising generation. And no wonder ; for the tree is known by its fruits. Never was there a generation less inclined to give honor

where honor is due, by which age was treated with less reverence, and the opinion of elders with less respect ; in which knowledge was more shallow and superficial, in which, with respect to that knowledge, there was more self-confidence, and self-conceit ; and in which there was more waywardness, wilfulness, and impatience of control.

Why need we marvel if, among minds so constituted, we find some who are not afraid to look down upon and despise their parents ? who think it no shame to set themselves up as judges of the opinions and motives of their spiritual pastors ? who count it a proof of their superior discrimination that they are dissatisfied with their Church, and hanker after something which they find not in her, though they neither carry out her system in themselves nor make the most of the privileges which she confers on them ? Can it, in any sense, however, be said of such persons, that they have " salt " in themselves ? I trow not.

For let us consider what it is to have salt in ourselves. Is it not to be rooted and

grounded in our opinions upon full and sufficient reasons, not as taking a one-sided view, still less as choosing our side from party-motives? but because, having adequate knowledge, and having allowed ourselves ample time for deliberation, and aided ourselves with the judgments of those whom God has set over us, we have at length arrived at a sober decision? Is it not, moreover, to make our practice consort with that decision? Is it not to be *thoroughly* furnished unto all good works, instead of exhibiting a motley inconsistency, voluble in words, but deficient in deeds? Does it not involve, too, something of the principle of "keeping ourselves to ourselves," as the saying is; of not thrusting in with irreverent haste the expression of our own crude opinions upon all occasions? Does it not imply with respect to our actions, an obedience to the Apostolic injunction, that we "study to be quiet, and to do our own business," and with reference to our words, that we attend to St. Paul's exhortations, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how

ye ought to answer every man ;” and, “ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers ?” Will not he who has “ salt” in himself, have gained some knowledge of the defects of his own character, and will not this knowledge teach him to refrain his lips from expressing strong opinions either about individuals or doctrines ? Will not the experience of his own past wickedness and infirmities, of the many mistakes into which he has fallen, and of the many silly things he has said and done, make him humble about himself, and incline him rather to shrink from observation, than find a morbid pleasure in rendering himself conspicuous, and glory in making his friends uneasy by his adoption of extreme views ? Will he not,—if he has salt in himself, if he is in earnest, if he has any adequate notion of the position in which he stands, and of the work which he has to do,—will he not be among those who feel the truth too deeply to allow themselves to make it the subject

of common, and therefore, of irreverent conversation? Of course, in saying this, I do not mean that people are not to make up their minds decidedly on the subjects which agitate us, nor to express their honest opinion upon proper occasions: but I do mean that it is a mark of a light, and vain, and frivolous mind (to use no harsher term) to be continually speaking on such subjects: it is a mark of a very undisciplined mind to speak at all in tone of self-confidence, and as if none were wiser than ourselves: and it is a mark of a very uncharitable, and, therefore, unchristian mind, which allows itself to attribute evil motives to those who differ from it, to speak of them slightly, and unkindly; and above all, which is not afraid to gratify itself, by saying just the most irritating thing in just the most irritating way, when they who desire the peace of Zion would rather suffer anything personally, than increase the distractions which they see around them. "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

While the world stands, there must always be points upon which the most de-

voted and conscientious servants of God will differ. There always have been conflicting opinions on the subjects which agitate ourselves, and there is no prospect or likelihood that it should ever be otherwise. It is a well-known fact that those who drew up the Articles of our own Church, did so with the wish of comprehending, not of excluding, as many as possible. They fixed, as it were, certain limits which could not be passed over by those who continued to hold communion with us : but the space within those limits is a wide one, and there the exercise of individual judgment was permitted. "There must always," as it has been most justly said, "be allowable points of difference in the opinions of good men, and it is only where such opinions are carried into extremes, or are mooted in a spirit which tends to schism, that the interference of those in authority in the Church is called for."

The rule laid down by the Lord for His disciples was, that they should have peace one with another. And we possess abundant evidence that in the first ages of the

Church, among those who were Christians indeed, mutual forbearance, peace, and love, was the distinguishing characteristic. "See how these Christians love one another," was the confession of their very enemies. And yet we know that for all this, there was no time-serving concession of principles, or yielding up of truths which ought to be maintained. We all remember how, when St. Peter was to be blamed, St. Paul withstood him to the face; and how so sharp a contention arose between St. Paul and St. Barnabas, that "they departed asunder the one from the other." And yet we may be sure that there was no breach of Christian communion between them. In the essentials of religion, in those things, that is, where belief affects salvation, they walked by the same rule, they minded the same thing. And where, in things of lower consequence, they differed, each acted according to his honest opinion, and gave his brother credit for doing the like.

Let their example be a guide to us. Let us learn from them something of that

spirit of Christian charity, which, "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." The better we think of our neighbor, and the worse we think of ourselves, the more likely are we to be right in our judgment. The more we have salt in ourselves, the more glad shall we be to have peace one with another.

It is a very easy thing to make a show of being religious. There is little difficulty in working ourselves up into a state of excitement about the so-called religious questions of the day. A mere smattering of knowledge will enable us to talk boldly and fluently on the subject. A very little cleverness and assurance will enable us to silence grave, earnest-minded persons, for they will not condescend to argue with us. And we shall not have much trouble in deceiving ourselves into the belief that we are a great deal wiser and better than our elders, our appointed ministers, or even than the Church herself.

If to have these outward signs of religious fanaticism is to be held tantamount to being religious, religion is a much easier thing than the Bible represents it. But it is a thing which, though it may amuse the head, will never amend the heart. It may interest the fancy, and excite the imagination, but it will have no effect upon our lives and manners. From such a religion, and from those who so exemplify it, let us turn away. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is a widely different matter, and they who exercise it will find little in it that is easy, even though in its difficulties there is the accompaniment of a present reward. If we would be consistently and truly religious, we must have salt in ourselves and have peace one with another. In all that relates to ourselves we must be strict, unsparing, merciless. In what relates to our neighbors we must be full of tenderness and compassion, ready to meet them half way, and put the best construction on all they do. We must distrust ourselves, our motives, our tempers, our judgments. We must learn to think meanly of ourselves, and not to be

offended when others think meanly of us. We must learn to hold our thoughts and words in control. We must beware how we get into ways which may prove a snare to us by making us insincere. Above all we must take heed how we condemn our neighbor. Of ourselves, and our own errors and transgressions we *may* know all that we will: but of him, we *can* know but little: of his motives, his opportunities, and the excuses that are to be made for him, we *must* continue in ignorance. The only questions of any consequence as respects him are, whether we have helped him by word and good example, and whether (if need has arisen) we have forgiven him as God for Christ's sake forgave us?

As respects ourselves, however, there is a question which it behooves us often to ask ourselves, and diligently to answer; and that question is this: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. . . . But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

SERMON VII.

ON SINS OF THE TONGUE.

MATTHEW xii. 36.

I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

THIS text, inasmuch as it affords us a sample of the extent to which the inquiry will be carried, and of the minuteness and particularity of the investigation which will take place at the last day, may be considered one of the most awful and alarming passages that is to be found in the whole compass of the revealed Will of God.

It is enough to make our very hearts die within us, to reflect that for every *wicked* word we shall be judged on that day in which the balance shall be struck between good and evil, and our lots be cast in heaven or hell.

It is terrible enough to think of what

may be the amount of *evil*,—known, and confessed, and unquestioned *evil*, which may fall from the lips of any one of us, in any single year of our lives: but the Scripture I have just read to you teaches us, that for every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Every idle word, every thoughtless speech, every unprofitable, unedifying conversation, every frivolous and foolish remark, everything that we ourselves should be the first to pronounce not worth repeating, will be repeated in the face of the assembled world, before men and angels, and form part of the Accuser's charges against us.

The blasphemers, and the profane swearers, will hear their sentence of well-deserved condemnation: this we know from many a passage of Holy Writ; but if this be the case, how can we hesitate to infer from the text before us, that he who speaks lightly or irreverently of Holy things,—who can point a jest with scriptural quotation,—who presumes to trifle with the Law of God, by softening down

or explaining away what that has strictly enjoined,—or who talks at all about religion, when he knows that his doing so, will expose it to the mocking of unholy tongues; how, I say, can we hesitate to infer that such a person has involved himself in an amount of guilt, as great as it is probably unsuspected, and that he will be judged hereafter with a very different judgment, and by a very different rule, from that which he at present expects?

“Whoremongers and adulterers,” our Bible tells us, “will God judge:” and the same volume assures us, that “he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.”—Such being the case, can we fail to draw the conclusion which my text renders so obvious, that the expression of implied impurity,—the words which raise or encourage a sensual thought, the sentence uttered with a double sense—language such as the world uses when it would palliate the enormous guilt of fornication and adultery, and which in its way is to speak as though things were venial, because they

are common,—shall we fail to draw the conclusion, that any language, in short, which has uncleanness in its source, or which fosters, however remotely, those fleshly lusts which war against the soul,—is hateful in the sight of Him, Who is Purity itself, and readeth hearts; and that it will be judged by Him hereafter, with a righteous judgment?

“All liars,” saith the Word of God, “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death:” and in this fearful doom is to be comprised not only he that maketh,” but he that “loveth a lie.”

Seeing, then, that these things are so, can we avoid the manifest deduction from my text, namely, that they whose conversation is chiefly about their neighbors' actions, and who, (in order to make that conversation agreeable and amusing in the opinion of the world) are perpetually on the look-out for anecdotes of their neighbors' follies and infirmities,—who repeat without scruple the tales and calumnies of the day,—who purposely misrepresent, or who carelessly exaggerate,—

who tell the truth, but not the whole truth,—shall, in proportion to their error, be called on to account for it, before the judgment seat of Christ?

And, to quote one more instance,—(common enough, it is to be feared, in the present times, and therefore very needful for the consideration of all),—we are solemnly warned by St. Peter, that they who “speak evil” of their fellow-christians “shall give an account” thereof “to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” For the calumniator, therefore, of his neighbor’s good deeds and motives, for the censorious, for the back-biter, for the mischief-maker, for the malignant and uncharitable man who arraigns the sincerity and disinterestedness of those with whose religious opinions he disagrees, the vengeance of God is preparing. He that judgeth his brother, shall himself be judged: he that condemneth his brother, shall himself be condemned.

Now if this be true,—and who shall gainsay it?—Can we any of us read the solemn warning of the Saviour in my

text, that "every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," and reading it, can we lull ourselves into the belief that it is innocent, that it is harmless, that it is *safe*, to make those questions which are agitating and distracting our Church, a subject of common conversation, on common occasions?—That we shall not be held responsible for it, if by any word of our's we increase existing animosities and divisions?—If we allow ourselves to make use of party epithets, to talk irreverently and uncharitably, to put stumbling-blocks in the way of weaker brethren, to say anything which, if repeated, will excite angry feelings and irritation among those with whom we differ: to disseminate those unprofitable, or ill-natured rumors of the day, with respect to the excesses (whether on one side or the other) of those who maintain extreme opinions, and whose judgment may not be as sound as their intentions are pure?

I know how little scruple many have in doing these things; I know how easy is the process of self-deception, how easy

to persuade oneself that denunciation of error is a duty of all persons at all times, that not to maintain what we believe to be truth is to betray it, and that that is religious and edifying conversation, which, in point of fact, is little more than tattling and censoriousness. I know how little apt we are to suspect our motives in such matters, or to consider whether our apparent zeal may not be a cloak for maliciousness or some evil temper: but it is impossible not to trace the perilous effects which this sort of license produces on the souls of individuals, and it is no difficult task to perceive the evil which it brings upon the Church, and, therefore, I come to the conclusion that herein an offence is committed against God, for which, as for more obvious transgressions, men will be held accountable hereafter.

Having made these observations, I proceed to offer some remarks on the circumstances under which the words of the text were spoken.

It appears that, on a certain occasion, some wretched being had been brought

to our Lord, "possessed with a devil,"—one, in whom, besides the usual characteristics of possession, there were united the terrible afflictions of the loss of sight and speech.

At the word of the Redeemer the evil spirit was cast forth, and, immediately, "the blind and dumb both spake and saw." The Pharisees, unable to deny the miracle, yet unwilling to admit the Divine authority of our blessed Lord, attributed the cure to the agency of the chief of the devils, even while their own hearts must have borne them witness, that so gracious and merciful an act could only have emanated from the Author of all good,—the Holy Spirit of God.

Our Saviour reminded them of this, and pressed upon them the argument, that if Satan were to cast out devils,—if the *source* of evil was to become the *destroyer* of evil, his kingdom would come to an end, and the powers of hell be overthrown. But our Lord's address to the Pharisees did not end here. They had been guilty of the most fearful sin into which man,—at that time, and in

their days,—could fall; and, therefore, that Saviour whom they denied, in His love and mercy, proceeded to warn them of it. They had been guilty of that blasphemy, which Scripture designates as the “sin against the Holy Ghost;” they had involved themselves in the guilt of that *one* sin, which the Word of God declares can never be forgiven.

The nature of their sin was this: seeing the miracles which Jesus did, and knowing in their own minds that they were done “with the finger of God,” these unhappy men wilfully hardened their hearts, and professed to believe that God’s work was the work of devils.

Now, why was this sin unpardonable? Simply for this reason,—because, as it is the Holy Ghost alone Who leads men to repentance, puts into their minds good desires, and gives them grace to bring the same to good effect, so long as any persons deny the Godhead and power of the Holy Ghost, refuse Him admission into their hearts, and wilfully and obstinately blaspheme His name, so long is it impossible that they should ever be led

to faith and repentance; and without faith and repentance none can enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Sin against the Holy Ghost, therefore, is unpardonable, *not* because *He* will not *pardon*, but because *men* will not *accept* His forgiveness. Sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, because, in rejecting Him, men reject the only means by which they can be forgiven.

The Spirit of God strives with them, warns them, admonishes them unceasingly, by that voice of conscience which He has placed within them; but if, in spite of this, He is deliberately blasphemed and rejected, He can do no more. Almighty though He be, it is not in the scope of His designs to *force* men to receive Him against their will; else they would no longer be free-agents. Therefore, when He is finally rejected, the sinner must be left to his fate; to remain unforgiven in this world, and also in that which is to come.

There is consolation, brethren, in the thought, that it is *scarcely* possible, perhaps, for Christians at the present day to

fall into that precise degree of sin, of which our Lord warned the hard-hearted Pharisees.

But if we have ground of consolation, it behooves us to remember that we have also abundant need of watchfulness. We may not be in great danger of committing the sin against the Holy Ghost of which the Gospel speaks ; but every *wilful* sin at least *tends* that way. Whenever we purposely and deliberately break one single vow which we made at Baptism, whenever we knowingly resist Him, Whose temples we are, whenever we intentionally grieve Him, and harden our hearts against His admonitions and His grace, we are most assuredly on the same path (though we may not have advanced far along it) with those who in the end committed a sin which was unpardonable. Six transgressions there are especially, which, as holy men have taught us, do forerun the sin against the Spirit of God : despair of salvation, presumption of God's mercy, impugning known truth, envy at another's grace, obstinacy in sin, and impenitence. Now, in some

of these offences the tongue *must* be the offending member, in all of them it *may* be. Let this thought make us ever more and more watchful over our words, and more and more careful in disciplining those hearts, out of whose abundance our mouths speak.

This was the point which, on the occasion of which we are speaking, our blessed Lord urged upon the Pharisees. He intimated to them that there was utter inconsistency between their words and actions: He taught them that language such as theirs *could* only be the index of a thoroughly depraved heart. "Either," said He, "make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit." In vain, that is, do you Pharisees pretend to holiness of heart, while with your mouths ye speak such blasphemies; for as a tree is known by his fruit, so a man's words are the signs of the disposition of his heart. Either, therefore, forbear blaspheming, or else pretend not to religion at all. - And yet, "O generation of vipers, how can ye,

being evil, speak good things?" Your hearts are evil, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things." And more than this,—(it is thus I would venture to paraphrase the passage), not a word you utter falls to the ground unheeded. *Nothing spoken by man is a matter of indifference. If it is not good, it is evil.* Evil words shall of course be punished; they are tokens of an evil heart: but evil words are not the only things for which you will be held responsible, for "I say unto you that every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." By your words as well as by your actions you shall be judged, be those words never so trivial or unimportant: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Such, brethren, were the arguments addressed by our merciful Lord to the Pharisees of His day, and such were His

warnings; and we must be very presumptuous, or very careless, if they fail to awaken in us a sense of the dangers into which we are liable to fall, unless, like the Psalmist, we pray the Lord continually to "set a watch before our mouths, and to keep the door of our lips."

But God will never help us, where we do not endeavor to help ourselves. His strength is the remedy for our weakness, not of our indolence. And it were as vain to expect that we should be preserved from "offending with our tongue," unless we avail ourselves of the means which are within the reach of everybody for keeping our mouths as it were with a bridle, as it would be to expect God to feed us as He did Elijah, without our using any exertion of our own to procure our food.

The lesson you have heard to-day may for the time, make you think seriously of the nature of sins of the tongue: but the feeling will be a transient one, and you will return to your former carelessness, unless you take active measures for getting the mastery over yourselves. The pow-

er of control does not come of itself: it is, under grace, the result of a confirmed habit,—the consequence of many petty victories, in many petty conflicts.

Now these incessant struggles with our natural inclinations and impulses, in matters which seem at that moment of no great consequence, are among the most irksome to which we are exposed in the course of our spiritual trial. But if they be irksome, they are by no means unimportant. It is by these little matters, and our behavior in them, that our sincerity is tested; by them God judges whether we are in earnest in our professions, whether we desire to serve Him or no. He knows full well that it is often a sore trial for us not to render railing for railing: He knows what pain and grief it is for us to hold our tongues and speak nothing under calumny, misrepresentation, and injustice. He knows that the liar, the swearer, the foul and filthy talker, must all have great and continual difficulties in the task of reformation. For by the mouth of His holy Apostle He has warned us, that “the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly

poison ;” and has declared that “if any man offend not *in word*, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

But our heavenly Father, Who knoweth whereof we are made, has given us the grace of the Holy Ghost to aid us in difficulties which are really beyond our power ; and, for the rest, every one of us knows that, to a great extent, he can, if he will, preserve himself from sins of the tongue ; and that care, and prayer, and watchfulness, and a determination to think of what we are about to say, before we begin to speak, are means which will not only preserve us from more flagrant offences of the lips, but from those habits of “idle” conversation which many think so venial, but which are, in truth, so perilous.

In conclusion. We are not our own ; we have been bought with a price ; and, therefore, we must glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are God’s. All must be done as becometh Christians. Every member must be disciplined into obedience unto the head. All that offends

must be cut off, plucked up, rooted out. The tongue as well as the eye, the hand, and the foot, must do the will of Him Who made it. Therefore, brethren, look well to yourselves, and see *what* are those things you chiefly talk about, and *how far* they tend to edifying.

I do not tell you that *religious* subjects are to be the only subjects upon which earnest-minded men will speak. There is a religion of the lips, which is very different from the religion of the heart, and which is oftentimes the mask of hypocrisy, and oftener still the nurse of spiritual pride and self-deception. Rather, I would say, that those who are most religious would be too reverential to speak much about it in ordinary conversation. But if called upon to state what the familiar discourse of Christians ought to be, I would point out some things which are quite indispensable, and describe it generally as innocent, harmless, such as angels may listen to, and such as may in no way tend to hinder our growth in grace.

And much that is tolerated in the com-

mon converse of society is none of these things. Do you ask me what I mean? I reply, that my meaning is, that neither indelicacy, nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, are harmless, or innocent, or edifying. I mean, that to "make a mock at sin," or retail the deeds of those who commit it, is not harmless. I mean, that trifling and frivolity are not harmless. I mean, that to utter those conventional falsehoods which the world counts as no falsehood, is not harmless. I mean, that to tell tales and anecdotes of scandal is not harmless. I mean, that to encourage religious dissension, by party language, uncharitable censures, irritating remarks, is not harmless. I mean, that no one word which we utter, is harmless, which can either derogate from God's honor, or put a stumbling-block in the way of a fellow-creature.

Of these things, I most solemnly warn you, as knowing that "for every *idle* word" which you shall here speak, you shall hereafter be judged. And I exhort you to remember, that however high may be your advance in holiness in other respects,

however high your profession, if you give way to sins of the tongue, your labor will be all in vain : that if you offend in this one point, you shall be held guilty of all : that though you had all faith so that you could remove mountains, and had not charity (in *word* as well as deed), it would profit you nothing : that there is one text laid down in Scripture, by which you may try yourselves, with the certainty that you cannot be misled by it : and that text is this : “ If any man among you *seem* to be religious, *and bridleth not his tongue*, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is *vain*.”

SERMON VIII.

CHRISTIAN REVERENCE.

MALACHI i. 6.

A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts.

THERE IS a sin which is so common among us,—and which is so bound up with our whole tone of thought and action,—which pervades the people of this country, high and low, so universally, that we have almost ceased to look upon it as a sin. Many of us, probably, if charged with it, would be quite unconscious of having been guilty of it, and still more of us would, in all likelihood, feel themselves injured if it was hinted to them that, as a nation, we are altogether defective in one of the very first principles of all religion, whether true or false. The sin to which I allude is that of *Ir-*

reverence,—a want of respect for the presence, power, and majesty of God, arising from thoughtlessness or practical unbelief.

Now, I shall not deem it necessary to prove to you, that God has a right to expect from us the fullest tribute of veneration which we can offer, for this truth is a self-evident one. He is the Creator; we are the creatures: He is the Redeemer; we are they whom he has purchased to Himself: He is the Sanctifier; we are they who need sanctification: He is Eternal, Almighty, Infinite; we are mortal, weak, finite: He is all light and goodness, and purity, and truth; we are poor miserable sinners, grovelling on the earth, lying in darkness, and in the shadow of death, full of guilt and corruption, and unable, by any efforts of our own, to guide our feet into the way of peace. To Him we owe everything that we are, or have, or hope for, and therefore to Him is due the acknowledgment thereof. As His mercy claims our love, so do His power and goodness our reverence.

This is a conclusion at which we must

have arrived, if we had only the light of nature, as it is called, to direct us; but in addition to this kind of witness within ourselves, we have the testimony of Scripture afforded us in the fullest manner; so much so, indeed, that there is, perhaps, no one duty so continually enjoined upon us in the Sacred volume as this of Reverence.

The very *beginning of wisdom, we are taught,—its foundation as well as its superstructure—is to be laid in “the *fear* of the Lord.” Him, the Psalmist tells us, we must †“serve with *fear*, and rejoice before Him with reverence.” ‡“His secret is with them that *fear* Him,”—“His eye” is “upon them;” His “Angel encampeth round about them, and delivereth them;” His §“blessing,” His “salvation,” and His “mercy,” are “with them that *fear* Him from generation to generation.” And, therefore, it is, that the Apostle tells us, to ||“perfect holiness in the fear of God,”—to “work out our own salvation with

* Prov. i. 7.

† Psalm ii. 11.

‡ Psalm xxv. 14.; xxxiii. 18.; xxxiv. 7.

§ Psalm cxii. 1.; lxxxv. 9.; Luke i. 50.

|| 2 Cor. vii.; Phil. ii. 12.; 1 Peter i. 17.; Heb. xii. 28.

fear and trembling,”—to “pass the time of our sojourning here in fear,”—and to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.”

But it is needless to multiply quotations. As Christians we believe, or at least profess to believe, that in order to serve God acceptably, we must serve Him “with reverence and godly fear,” and this is the point on which I am prepared to maintain that we are lamentably defective, so much so, that the reproof addressed to Israel in the days of Malachi, may, with as great, or even greater, appropriateness be applied to ourselves. “A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts.” The censure was, in the first instance, applied to the Priests, who had rendered “the table of the Lord contemptible,” and dishonored His altars. They seem to have thought anything good enough for Him, and His service. His house lay desolate, while their own

were ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Their tables were covered with luxuries, they ate the fat and drunk the sweet, while, upon His altars, they offered polluted victims, cheap and refuse, to Him they "brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick." Under such disgraceful circumstances, well might it be asked by the offended Majesty of Heaven; "If I be a father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a master, where is My fear?" As a father, His children had shown Him no love; as a master and Lord, the tribute of their reverence had been withholden from Him.

But, brethren, in our own case, that which was the sin of the priests, has ceased to be confined to the priests alone. As it was with the priests, so is it now with the people, or, perhaps, so is it with all. We do not deny that God is our Father and Master. Far otherwise. With our lips we readily acknowledge Him, but our hearts are far from Him. We do not consider the force of our words, when we confess Him, or what they involve

We speak of Him as our Father and Master, but we tacitly persuade ourselves that in His case the paternal and domestic relation is something different from what it is among ourselves; that we are not His servants and children, in the same sense as we are with regard to such of our fellow-creatures as hold such a connexion with us. And in one respect we are not, for in addition to all that the most affectionate child and devoted servant can pay, God has this further claim upon us, that He is our God. But this is a consideration from which we shrink, and so endeavor to persuade ourselves that His Godhead rather diminishes than enhances His claims upon us on other grounds. We give Him the cold acknowledgment that we believe in Him as our God: but we do not attempt to realize and exhibit that fervor of love and reverence, which we should exhibit towards an adored parent or master. We have little of that ever-present awe which would not fail to affect us if we habituated ourselves to think of Him as He really is.

To exemplify what I mean by a parallel instance among ourselves to that which formed the subject of one of the prophet Malachi's reproofs. Irreverence was shown in his day by the character of the offerings made to God. Instead of bringing the firstlings of the flock,—the best and most perfect, the men of that day thought it sufficient to sacrifice what was torn and crippled, what was cheap and paltry, and would be of no value in the market. They offered to God of that which cost them nothing. Now *we* have no temptation to commit precisely the same kind of sin, but in the nearest approximation to it of which our circumstances admit, we are just as guilty as the house of Israel. Look at the state of our Churches; their decay, their dirt, their damp, their sordid neglect: hear the grudging, niggardly words of those who are called upon to repair them; examine the spirit in which those repairs are carried on. I do not mean that there are not praiseworthy exceptions; but viewing the case generally, must it not be owned that there are very few places in which

cheapness has not been the first consideration in church-repairs? Well, therefore, may God demand of us, the richest as well as the most covetous people on earth, "If I be a father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a master, where is My fear?" It is true that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; and the most glorious pile that man could erect would be all unworthy of Him; but so it was true, likewise, of old time, that He needed not the offerings of Israel. "All the beasts of the forest are Mine: and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I be hungry, I will not tell thee: for the whole world is Mine, and all that is therein." Yet as, in the one case, He declared that the paltriness of the offerings had polluted His altars, and made His table contemptible, so, on the other, we may not doubt that for us Churchmen to permit our churches to continue in their present condition, is an offence no less heinous in His sight. It is a proof that we do not care to honor Him, an evidence that we do not fear Him, a certain token of irreverence.

But it may be said that an excuse for the state of our churches may be found in the local circumstances of particular parishes, and that at any rate, so as our hearts be right, it matters little under what external circumstances we worship. The Israelites might have offered a similar plea.

But admitting the fact for argument's sake, let us take this view of the subject, and examine whether our hearts *are* right, and whether we *have* as much reverence for God's presence in His house as we ought to have. I know no passage of Scripture which tells me that God withdraws Himself from His consecrated dwellings, when the service of prayer has ceased: rather, I infer, that they are "a settled place for Him to abide in for ever." But even were this not so, were God only in His church occasionally, surely, a spot which He from time to time visits with His presence is holy ground. And yet, how do we use it? If a church be entered when no service is being performed, are there many who have much scruple in treating it as if it were an or-

dinary room? Do they not talk loud, and carelessly, as if there were nothing sacred in it? If curiosity leads them there, will they not be prying about, and criticising, perhaps, within the precinct of our Holy of holies, the Lord's table? If a parish meeting is to be held, will not the church, in some places, be the scene of brawling and mutual recriminations between persons who are opposed to one another elsewhere? If church-repairs be going on, will not the workmen be usually found with their hats on, as if there were no peculiar sanctity in the scene of their labors? Now, would not such instances as these (and I might mention many more such, and far more painful ones, that have come within my own experience) go far to show that the spirit of reverence must be at a very low ebb among us? They indeed who do such things, do them without any intention of offending God. They do not think about Him: but this is their sin.

And now to go a step further. Is there any difficulty in tracing the same frightful spirit of irreverence in congregations

of Christian men assembled for public worship? If we believe anything that God tells us, we must believe this, that where two or three are gathered together in His name He is in the midst of them. And, surely, if we at all realized this truth, we should have some awe of coming into God's presence, especially as we come there to confess ourselves miserable sinners, who have need of pardon. But what is the sight which obtrudes itself upon our notice almost every Sunday? Are there not those who seem to study nothing but their own convenience, as to the time when they shall reach church; and who think it no disgrace to themselves, nor interruption to the congregation, that they come in late, Sunday after Sunday, and who thus venture to join in acts of prayer and praise without having first confessed their sins? Is it anything unusual to find persons who will not give themselves the trouble to join in a single response from one end of the service to the other? Is it a thing unheard of, that there should be whispering and talking in God's house?

Are persons never to be seen, whose habit it is to be staring about them, instead of attending, or laughing with one another (I almost tremble to speak of it), when they ought to be praying to God to save them from hell-fire? Are there none who are too idle to stand or kneel, as the Church directs them? And even where outward behavior is decent, are there none of us who join in the prayers without attending to them, and so make them a mockery? Are there none (and this is a most awful consideration) who even approach the Lord's Table without at all realizing to themselves that there the Body and Blood of Christ are VERILY and INDEED taken and received by the faithful? And who thereby become partakers of the sin of Israel in its most aggravated form, by making "the table of the Lord contemptible."

Now I appeal to your hearts and consciences when I ask, would any one of these things be done, if there were that deep spirit of reverence and godly fear among us, wherewith the Almighty can alone be acceptably served?

But it is not in God's house only that we show our indifference to Him. The manner in which we treat His Name, His Day, His Word, His Ministers, as well as His Sacraments and Worship, all is so much evidence against us that we have not that abiding awe of Him which is due to Him. We receive the Bible as His Word, and we read it, but then, *how* do we read it? Some of us rarely, many of us as a mere task. We read the words, but do not study them, or try to get an insight into their meaning. We do not even try to realize the threatenings or the promises of Scripture. We do not consider *Whose* Word it is. If we did, we should not argue about it, or talk confidently of understanding it, or speculate rashly upon its mysteries. Least of all should we be quarrelsome and contentious about it, but humble, and diffident, and docile, and thankful.

Again, look at His Name and Day, and ask yourselves how far you give them the reverence that is due them? I will take for granted, that no one of you is a profane swearer, for of all irreverent acts,

that is the most irreverent. No one who is guilty of it can pretend to the name of Christian: it is a sin which goes as far as any to forfeit baptismal grace: it is a sin for which, if there be any truth in the Word of God, hell-fire is prepared. But if you be no swearers yourselves, do you allow an oath in others? do you hear it, and let it go by unreprieved? Why, if you had any adequate reverence for God, you would withdraw from the swearer's company as from one infected with the plague, as dreading lest the earth should open and swallow him up quick, or the roof should fall down and crush him. For *whose* name is it that he takes in vain? Is it not that of the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, Whose *Name is Holy*, the King Immortal, Invisible, Whom no man can see and live? Can audacity and presumption go further than using *that* Name lightly?

So again, we ourselves hallow God's Sabbaths up to a certain point. We attend Church, and observe a certain gravity and restraint in our words and actions for the remainder of the day. But what

a service is this! how poor, how feeble, how cold! Surely, if there was anything like a real reverence for the Lord our God among us, we should serve Him with fear, and rejoice with trembling, after a very different fashion from that in which we now observe His day. Our *worship* then would bear some resemblance to the worship of heaven; our *rest* would have in it some foretaste of that "rest which remaineth to the people of God."

Look once more to the evidence which our treatment of the Church and her Ministers affords of the irreverential spirit which has spread among us, and eats us up like a canker. If we did more than *profess* to stand in awe of God, should we adopt the coarse, bad habits of the world, in its way of thinking and speaking about both? Should we, with respect to our Ministers, allow ourselves to think more of the faults, and follies, and foibles of the man, than of his office in the Church of God? Should we forget that he, albeit unworthy, is the earthly representative of Christ to us,—that he

hath received the power of binding and loosing, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for his Priestly office, by the imposition of hands,—that he alone has authority to administer the Sacraments, and to offer up prayers for the congregation,—and that of him the Saviour hath declared, “He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me?”

And so with regard to the Church, that Holy Communion of Saints, of which we are members; if the spirit of reverence were within us, instead of viewing it like a mere human thing, for rude fingers to touch, and unchastened tongues to speak about, we should contemplate it, as indeed it is, the awful fabric raised by those Hands Which the nails pierced; cemented together by Blood Which issued from the Wounded Side; His dwelling-place; the token of His presence; One, Holy, Catholic; the haven of the broken-hearted, the heritage of the faithful, the home of Saints.

Lastly,—(and so deeply imbued are we

with the spirit of irreverence, that I almost dread to dwell on the topic, lest I should subject it to profane discussion) what shall be said of the manner in which we treat the Sacraments? Are there not some who would cast aside the thought of their pre-eminent sanctity, and lower them into mere signs and memorials? Are there not those who, in the face of Scripture and the Church, deny that the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed to the faithful in one, and the Lord Christ Himself, His body, and His blood, received in a spiritual manner in the other? And, is not the result of this, that men think lightly of the infringement of their baptismal vows, and turn their backs upon the Holy Eucharist, or partake of it as if it were scarce different from a common meal? Once more I ask, could such things be, if we at all realized to ourselves, that, in order to serve God acceptably, we must serve Him "with reverence," and pass the time of our sojourning here "in fear?" "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a Father, where

is Mine honor? if I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts."

From what causes such a spirit of irreverence has grown, and spread till it has taken possession of us; in what was its origin; and how it has been fostered, I cannot now stop to express an opinion, though these are matters which are very full of interest, and of warning.

The fact itself is before us, and the bitter fruits of our profaneness and irreverence are ripening day by day. What, if the time of ingathering be at hand, when *irreverence* shall have passed into professed *unbelief*? "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?"

I do not say that our national and individual irreverence *will* end in open apostasy; but the tendency is, of course, that way; and we are in the greater peril, because the infection has spread both silently and universally. We go down lower and lower, without suspecting where we are. We have, as it were, destroyed our landmarks: we have left ourselves no standard wherewith to try whether we are irreverent or no;—I mean

no such standard as may attract and rivet the attention of the careless and thoughtless,—that is of the majority of us.

What then must be done? We cannot, any of us, singly, bring back the reverence of a better day, but each, in his own person, may train and cultivate that spirit of holy fear, without which God cannot be served acceptably. Therefore, let each among us endeavor to realize to himself, more fully than he has yet done, the Presence of God among us. He is present in His Church, in His Sacraments, in His Ministers, in His Poor: present among us everywhere, and at all seasons; in the works of nature, and revolutions of providence; in the still small voice, and in the temple within us. We must bring this thought home to our hearts, and awe and reverence will accompany it. We must learn how the Church and the Prayerbook teach us to show reverence; and we must walk by that rule. We must watch ourselves in little things, and reflect continually before Whom they are done. We must be very careful what we do or say before

our children, or our servants, lest they should encourage themselves in profaneness, by any act of our's. We must avoid speaking of religious subjects before those who are likely to ridicule them. And yet, we must never be ashamed of appearing religious: we must never dread being laughed at for obeying God's law. We must avoid, as much as possible, speaking of the religious disputes of the day. Nothing encourages hard-heartedness and profaneness more than a love of controversy. We must endeavor, quietly and humbly, to raise the standard of religious feeling among those with whom we live. And, above all things, we must keep watch over the example we are setting, and the state of our own minds, and the manner in which we habituate ourselves to think of God. Strange and ungrateful would it be, if His mercies in Christ Jesus were not the foremost subject of our contemplations; if we did not love Him as the God of all comfort, Who is full of tender compassion, Who remembereth whereof we are made, and pitieth us as a father doth his children.

But, as a Father, we must pay Him the honor that is due ; and we must not forget that he is a Master as well as a Father, and that, therefore, He claims our fear as well as our love. He calls us to Him lovingly, but his calls are not to be trifled with. He speaks to us with gentle accents, but wo be to us if we refuse or think lightly of Him that speaketh : “for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven ?” He has given us promises, privileges, and made us inheritors of His kingdom : but it were better for us that we had never been born, than that we should treat any of them irreverently.

“Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. *For our God is a consuming fire.*”

SERMON IX.

CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION.

LUKE ix. 62.

And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

It seems to have been the usual custom of our gracious and merciful Lord, both to point out to those who seemed inclined to become His disciples, that in embracing the Gospel, they would expose themselves to a trial of no ordinary severity, and also to afford them some opportunity of testing the sincerity of their motives.

It was with the first object in view, that His chosen followers were again and again admonished, that they should be “delivered up to councils, and scourged in the synagogues,” “cast into prisons, and brought before rulers and kings;”

that some of them should be "persecuted," "afflicted," and "killed,"—and that they should be "hated of all nations for His name's sake." The high-wrought expectations and brilliant day-dreams of the temporal glories of Messiah's kingdom were annihilated at once; they were taught that His kingdom was not of this world; and that was inculcated upon them from the first, which their after-experience so abundantly verified, that houses and lands, friends and kindred, must be resigned when they became His disciples,—that all that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,—that if in this life only they had hope in Christ, they would be, of all men, the most miserable.

But, besides these kinds of warnings, the Redeemer took a further step to bring home to the minds of His followers that of them much would be required: He put them in the way of trying what manner of men they were, and how they really stood affected towards Him. Some, therefore, who approached Him most eagerly, He, for a while, repelled; of

others, He required the sacrifice of that one thing which was dearer to them than a right hand, or a right eye; to others, who were inclined to be offended in Him, He spake some yet harder saying, which caused them to turn away, and others, who loved Him, to cling to Him more closely.

It was, when He had predicted His future Ascension, and His knowledge of the unbelief of some of His followers, that "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him;" but it was that very secession which called forth the glorious acknowledgment of St. Peter, on which the Church is founded. "Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

The young Ruler, who had great possessions, and knew not that he loved them better than he did a heavenly treasure, was tried in the point wherein he was weakest. In that trial he failed, but the event which resulted from it was, that thereupon the Lord made His promise to those who forsook all and follow-

ed Him, that even in this world they should receive "an hundred fold, and in the world to come, life everlasting."

The Syro-Phenician was treated at first as though, in consequence of her being a Gentile, no miracle of mercy could be performed on her daughter; but the apparent repulse was only intended to test her sincerity, and so the end was not only that the devil was cast out, but her marvellous faith is spoken of in all the world, and is the example and comfort of all who are named by the name of Christ to this day.

Thus it was, that from time to time, as fitting occasion and opportunity offered, our blessed Lord instructed His first adherents to consider well the step they were going to take, and to examine into the truth of their professions, intimating that though there was danger every way, the greatest danger lay in the path of those who involved themselves in heavy responsibilities, without considering and ascertaining the nature of the burden which they proposed to themselves to carry. "For which of you," said He,

“intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, *and counteth the cost*, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

And now to proceed to a more immediate consideration of that passage of Scripture which stands at the head of this discourse. The text is, as it were, the climax of three replies, made by our adorable Redeemer to as many persons, who, in different states of mind, proposed to become His disciples. “It came to pass,” writes the Evangelist, “that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” Here we have a person (in the parallel passage of St. Matthew, it appears that he was a scribe or doctor of the law) who, not having as yet given any proof of his sincerity, nev-

ertheless. expresses his readiness to address our Lord as "Master," and to follow Him whithersoever He should go. Perhaps, he imagined that Jesus would shortly come to great power and glory,—perhaps, as one of the Fathers suggests, he sought to follow the Lord, because of His great miracles, for the sake of the gain to be derived from them, as Simon Magus did, when he would have given St. Peter money: and so our Lord shows him what the *cost* of following Him would be,—that it would lead to no accession of worldly fortune, but to a sharing in the privations of One Who had neither lodging nor home of His own. However, this Scribe was not sent away; but He Who knew what was in man, so spake as to convict him of his evil intentions, at the same time permitting him, if he would, to become a disciple of the cross, with the expectation of poverty.

Pass we now to the next case. "And" Jesus "said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but

go thou and preach the kingdom of God." The former instance was that of a stranger; the present is that of one who already followed Jesus, and was His disciple. The former called Him Master: the other confesses Him as his Lord. The disciple does not ask whether he shall follow him, for he already believed that he ought to do so, but prays to be suffered first to bury his father: the other offers to follow, not really seeking a master, but by means of his master seeking gain for himself. In the latter case, the spirit exhibited seems to have been altogether of the earth, earthy: in the latter, there was only that tinge of earthliness in which natural affection still struggles for the mastery over duty. The disciple, whoever he was (perhaps a son of Zebedee*), had a parent on his dying-bed,† to whom he

* Compare Matt. iv. 21.; viii. 21.; xx. 20. And see Blunt (J. J.) on the Veracity of the Evangelists, p. 13.

† It seems probable that the disciple's father was not actually defunct: "nam apud Judæos mortui sepeliebantur eodem die, quo obierant—Acts, v. 7—10.; Matt. ix. 23." (Rosenmüller in Matt. viii.) His wish seems to have been to return home, and stay there till his father's death, and then to return to Christ.

felt that his first care was due. When the days of mourning for his father should be ended, then he was ready to devote himself to the service of the Gospel. But into that service he had *already* entered; to that he was pledged: a dispensation had been committed unto him, and he was now to learn that henceforward neither his will nor his actions were in his own power. "Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." You, that is, when you became a preacher of righteousness, were severed by that very act from all your earthly fortunes and relations: to return to them again would be to forfeit your present position. No; do you follow me; and leave the discharge of that which else would have been your natural office, to others. On you a higher duty has devolved: and if you fail to discharge it *now*, the opportunity will pass away for ever.

The last lesson given on this momentous subject is the incident recorded in the text. "Another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them

farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

In this, as in the former instance, the person concerned was a disciple, one to whom the ministry of the kingdom had been committed: like him, he was in earnest, and desired in sincerity to obey his Master's will. But he had this evidence of superior faith and zeal to his companion, that, whereas the one desired to return home and tend his earthly parent till attention was needed no longer, the other merely desired to revisit his family for a moment, in order to bid them farewell, and then rejoin his Lord and Master. But he, too, had miscalculated the amount of that Master's requirements. "Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." As he who drives the plough must, from the moment in which he begins his labor to that in which he ends it, look forward continually, and keep the lines of furrow close

to each other, side by side, or his work will be spoiled ; as to turn away from, or to cease to attend to his prescribed task, are sure signs that he is not a trusty servant, or worthy of his hire ; so, for one who has engaged himself to follow Me to betray a hankering after what he has left behind, is an evidence of his unfitness for the discharge of the awful duties in which he has involved himself.

Such, brethren, was the manner in which our Lord and Saviour inculcated the necessity of steadiness and resolution in those who received his religion. Primarily, the admonitions were given for the benefit of those who belonged to the sacred ministry of His Church : and the two latter were addressed to persons whose objects, under any other circumstances, would have been not only innocent but praiseworthy. Yet He, Who Himself wept at the grave of Lazarus, reproveth a son who desires to follow his father's remains to the tomb. "Let the dead bury their dead." He, who, amid the agonies of the cross, did not forget to commend His own mother to the charge

of the beloved disciple, rebukes a follower who only desired to bid farewell to those who were nearest and dearest to him. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Now, why was this? Why was such severity of tone (for under the apparent circumstances of the case there *was* severity) adopted, with respect to persons desiring to do what, at any rate, seemed lawful? The answer is, that in *their* case the course which they desired to pursue was *not* lawful. They ought already to have counted the cost of following Christ, and becoming preachers of His Gospel. They need not have entered His Ministry unless they had chosen it. There was no constraint or compulsion. But having made their choice, they were bound to abide by it, and if it involved difficult sacrifices, and painful surrenders, those surrenders and sacrifices must nevertheless be made. Their profession was not to be made and then cancelled: their allegiance must not be doubtful. What might once have been lawful to them

was so no longer, for their lives were to be devoted to a single object; and nothing was to be thought of a second time which came in collision with, or was a hindrance to it, even though the thing were in itself praiseworthy. The Gospel was to be preached in all the world; the whole race of mankind was to be invited into the fold of Christ, and they who were the messengers of glad tidings, were bound to postpone all other considerations to that of devoting themselves, body and soul, to the mission whereupon they were sent.

The warnings, therefore, which we have been considering, were addressed first of all to the ministers of the Gospel, but they are in a great measure applicable to us all, seeing that devotion, resolution, and stability, are no less essential to each private Christian in his vocation and calling, than to those who, by the Holy Ghost, have been made overseers of the flock, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own Blood. Let us consider the text, then, with reference to ourselves.

And first, as to what is meant by "put-

ting our hand to the plough?" In the case of the person to whom our Lord spake,—the phrase, no doubt, meant the entering on the work of the ministry; in our own it must be considered as that act of our lives in which we were brought into covenant with God, by our renunciation of the world, the devil and the flesh; by the profession of our faith in Christ crucified, and by the vow to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of our life. When we were admitted into the Catholic Church by Baptism, we put our hands to the plough. We made our choice, or rather, it was made for us by those who had the experience which we as yet possessed not, and we have each since, in our own persons, ratified and confirmed the same, in the face of God, and of the congregation, so soon as we came to years of discretion.

Thus we have put our hand to the plough. Life and death having been set before us, we have made our election between them. With the full knowledge that the way of safety is steep, rugged,

narrow, we have chosen it instead of the broad and easy one, which leadeth to destruction. With the full knowledge that our affections and appetites within, and the world without, would attract us in one direction, we have deliberately preferred to shape our course in another. We have declared that we will give our full allegiance both of body and soul to Him under whose banners we have engaged ourselves to fight, and that we will be His faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives' end.

And so far, all is well. We did well and wisely in putting our hands to the plough: but nevertheless, this act, though a wise act, and a godly, will only serve to increase our condemnation, unless we fulfil the duty we have undertaken. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, *and looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God."

It is not sufficient that we begin well: we must continue in the course we have chosen. Unchecked by difficulty, unbaffled by disappointment, unwearied by exertion, undismayed by danger, we must

hold our bold, straightforward course, with eyes fixed on one object, with hands engaged in one task, with hearts steadily and unflinchingly devoted to the one great cause. There are many things which will tempt us to linger, many to turn aside; many a voice which we yearn after, will seem to upbraid us for passing by; many a scene of gay and dazzling pleasure will lure us to pause and join it; but so sure as we look back we are undone, even as that unhappy woman who perished midway between the cities of the plain and the mountain of refuge. "Remember Lot's wife."

In what, then, as regards ourselves, may the sin of "looking back" be said to consist?

In few words it is this: it is to mourn after those things which we resigned, when we engaged ourselves to walk in the steps of a crucified Saviour. It is to endeavor to unite the service of God and Mammon, to try to live a spiritual life, and yet to avoid mortifying the body, to seek a reward in heaven, and at the same time to enjoy the world, to aim at reaching the

crown of the redeemed, without sharing the cross of the Redeemer. It is to hear the truth, and then to excuse ourselves from obeying it: it is to learn the strictness of the law of God, and then to soften it down and explain it away, and so make it a dead letter. It is to hesitate and waver in our profession through fear of what may be said about us. It is to set our affections nominally on things heavenly, and to prize earthly things really, though secretly, a great deal more. It is to be so occupied and entangled with what we see passing around us, as practically to forget the things which are not seen, that invisible kingdom which is as true, certain, and close to us, at all times, as those things which our eyes can see, and our hands can handle. It is, as it has been well described, "to have God upon our lips, and the world in our hearts."

And of those who yield themselves to this,—the *natural* temper of all our minds,—we are taught that they are "not fit for the kingdom of God:" though outward members of His visible Church, they are not fit for, or worthy of their position.

They are trees with a show of leaves, but no fruit, whose end is to be cut down, uprooted, and burned.

My brethren, these are awful considerations for us all; for none, it is to be presumed, can look back upon their past lives without knowing themselves to have been guilty, not only of longing after things which they have vowed to renounce, but of numberless actual backslidings; and this, when, by the grace of the Holy Ghost Which dwelleth in them, they might, if only they would, have been kept from falling.

All that is past, however, is now irremediable. We cannot undo what has been done. We can only live on in humiliation, and penitence, and prayer for forgiveness, in the hope that as God sees our sincerity and earnestness, He will, for our 'Lord Jesus Christ's sake, bring us back again gradually, and so far as it is possible, to the position we have lost.

But all depends, under grace, and God's mercy, upon our keeping our hand diligently to the plough, and looking steadfastly forward for the time to come.

Let us consider, therefore, that we have not only a most arduous work to do, but that if we have been hindered, it is because we have put hindrances to the doing of it in our own way. Let us reflect that our time is very limited, and that of our brief day we have already lost much. Firm, steadfast, unshrinking resolution for the time to come, is, under such circumstances, our only chance of safety. The Holy Spirit (blessed be His mercy!) is willing to co-operate with us. Our Holy Mother, the Church, is ready with her instructions, and ordinances, to fence us about with such external aids as may render the habits of a life of devotion more easy to us, and backslidings less of a temptation. The rest remains with ourselves. We must endeavor to realize our true state, that, as I have already said, in our steadfastness is our only chance of safety. We must keep our eyes fixed on one object—the working out our own salvation. From this object nothing must divert us: it must absorb us wholly. No sacrifices must be counted too costly to attain it; no surrenders too great to se-

cure it. We must bend all our cares and studies this one way; and no allurements of the world, no earthly success, no domestic afflictions, must interfere with it. All must be laid aside which comes in competition with it; everything must be thankfully received (trial, suffering, sorrow, be it what it may), which may help us forward in our pursuit of it. If need be, we must leave the dead to bury the dead, and be ourselves without a place wherein to lay our head. We must be ready to give up all that most we cherish and love the best, without repining and without regrets; for "no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

To encourage us in such a course, we have all the most gracious promises which are written in the Word of God. And on the other hand, to deter us from backsliding, we have there the admonitory record of the fate of those who in the hour of trial have mourned over what they had once professed to resign. And the lesson which the history of these judgments affords, is, that they who hesi-

tate are undone ; and that whatever their previous advancement may have been, if they once *deliberately* look back, when they have put their hands to the plough, their labor proves all in vain.

“ ‘Remember Lot’s wife ;’ for she was one,” as Bishop Andrewes instructs us, who “fell when she had stood long, and who wofully perished at that instant when God’s special favor was proffered to preserve her : when, of all other times, she had means and cause to stand ; *then*, of all other times, she fell away.” Having been brought out of Sodom, and warned of the danger that would ensue ; having Angels to go before her, Lot to bear her company, her daughters to attend her, and being now at the entrance of Zoar, the haven of her rest, that very time, place, and presence, she made choice of to perish in.

And she who died with her face towards Sodom, was one whose sin it was that she “looked back.” She did not *go* back, she only *looked* back : and she never looked forward more !

My brethren, let us think of these things

SERMON X.

TRUSTFULNESS.

JOB xiii. 15.

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.

THESE are the well-known words of that Holy Patriarch whose praise is in all the Churches, for the patience and trustfulness with which he bore the trying of his faith, and submitted to the merciful chastisements of his heavenly Father.

It is a great matter with *us*, my brethren, if, when we can weep no longer for a bereavement, we begin to endeavor to resign ourselves to God's will: if, when bodily pain, or worldly anguish, have come upon us, and after a while are lightened, we acknowledge God's hand in the matter, and on that ground abstain from murmuring, we make as though we had done something very exemplary. Yet this man, when his servants had

been slaughtered, his flocks and herds carried off, his children all slain in a moment by the fall of their house, and himself "smitten with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown," gave way to no hasty repining, nor expressions of impatience; he "neither sinned nor charged God foolishly;" but declared, as you have heard in the text, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Therefore it was, that when he had been tried, "the Lord turned the captivity of Job," and "blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning;" therefore it was that the Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, classes him with Noah and Daniel, as among the most eminent of those whose righteousness might, under certain circumstances, have not only delivered their own souls, but been a plea for mercy in behalf of their native country, when it had trespassed grievously: therefore it was, that St. James holds him up for our imitation, as an "example of suffering affliction, and of patience."

Job endured, as seeing Him that is in-

visible ; he had that faith which has realized to itself the conviction that somehow or other all things are working together for good to them that love God, and which calmly submits itself without anxiety to whatever God sees fit to lay upon it. This Christian grace of trustfulness, is, in a great degree, the same as faith ; only faith comprehends trustfulness ; it is the larger term of the two ; faith being that process of the mind by which it assents to *everything* which God has made known ; whereas trustfulness seems rather limited to those circumstances in which belief is connected with *endurance* : thus, it was *Faith* which taught Abraham to believe that Sarah should conceive and bear a son, though he was himself an hundred years old, and it had ceased to be with her after the manner of women ; and it was *Trustfulness* which enabled him to stretch forth his hand, and take the knife to slay his son, though by the very act it seemed as though he would himself make the performance of God's promise impossible, namely, that his seed should be as the

stars of heaven. It was *Faith* which incited Job to offer burnt-offerings according to the number of his children ; it was *Trustfulness* which, in the midst of bereavement, worldly loss, and bodily suffering, drew from his lips the glorious acknowledgment, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Now let us, in the ensuing discourse, say something upon Christian Trustfulness.

None of us can have lived any length of time in the world without having, as part of our appointed trial, been visited with pain and sickness, with the loss of friends, and with more or less of temporal misfortune. How these chastisements have been borne by us, has depended upon how far we have taught ourselves to look upon them as a precious legacy from Christ our Saviour, as a portion of His Cross, as a token of His love, and of His desire that we should be united with Him in the fellowship of sufferings. It is to be feared that there are very few of us but have given way in some measure to impatience and repinings ; it is to be

hoped that none of us have so used our chastisements as to turn into curses what were sent to be blessings, and that our hearts have not been hardened instead of softened by the visitations of God. I will assume that we have received our trials in a Christian spirit, at least so far as this, that we have not endeavored, while under their pressure, to resist and rebel against God. And this being the case, I will ask you whether, now that the first pangs and bitterness of those trials are over, you cannot see for yourselves that they were sent for a wise and merciful purpose? Can you not trace how, and in what respect, it has been good for you to be in trouble and disappointed? How well it has been for their survivors as well as for themselves, that "the righteous have been taken away from the evil to come?" How disease and pain have worked together for your good? Looking back ten, twenty, thirty years, upon what, at the time, you considered the great misfortunes of your life, can you not now see the gracious designs with which they were sent? Will you not own that what

Providence chose for you was far better than what you would have chosen for yourselves? Will you not acknowledge that, all things considered, you would not *now* wish that things should have been different? And if this be the case (as I suppose will be generally allowed), have we not at once a most powerful argument in favor of trustfulness, and a most satisfactory evidence that "in quietness and in confidence" will be our strength? "Thou wilt keep him," saith the prophet, "*in perfect peace* whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

In proportion as we have the Spirit of Christ (and if we have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of His), will be our desire to be made like unto Him in all things; and this resemblance can never be attained without a following of Him in the path of suffering; and a submission and trustfulness like His as we pass along it. He would, had it been possible, have escaped the sharp and bitter agony of the Cross: but when that could not be, He

calmly reposed Himself in trustful reliance on His Father. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done." And it is upon this ground that both the Bible and the Church exhort us to a performance of the duty I am inculcating upon you. "Let us," writes St. Paul to the Hebrews, "run *with patience* the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." And so our Church, when, in her office for the Visitation of the Sick, she would speak her word of consolation to those whose bodies are racked with disease and bodily pain, reminds them that "there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons, than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles, and sicknesses. For He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter

into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ: that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life."

Now, I would fain hope, brethren, as I said before, that you are all so far in earnest in your Christian profession as this, that, at least, you acknowledge God's hand in all the trials that befall you; that you receive them as His chastenings Who correcteth in *love*; and that you endeavor to meet them in the spirit of trustfulness,—a spirit more or less strong in proportion to your individual growth in holiness,—but still, of such a character in each of you, that it enables you to check at once all disposition to open unthankfulness and murmuring.

And so far it is well; but at this point we are exposed to a temptation which it is of the highest importance to us to resist; and which, if we yield to it, will effectually hinder our progress in the course of discipline, by which our wills are being brought into submission to God's.

The danger to which I allude, is that of endeavoring, by any movement of im-

patience, to lighten the burden which our Heavenly Father has laid on us ;—of taking matters, as it were, into our own hands, and so thwarting, or making of none effect, the merciful designs of Providence towards us. Our duty is to lie still under the rod, and to be silent when we are smitten. But then we must take care that our passiveness and silence are the result of Christian principles. There is a silence which arises from sullenness, and a passiveness which comes from apathy or despair, and which is near akin to that fearful frame of mind, in which a man has only to obey the advice of Job's wife to her husband,—namely, to curse God and die.

Trials are sent us, not for the purpose of teaching us to harden ourselves into insensibility, as, ere now, has been the vain endeavor of some who knew not God : they are sent us in order that when we feel their acuteness, we may raise our thoughts to Him Who alone can lighten them, and bless them to us. They are sent us, not to provoke us to grow sullen under them, but rather as evidences that

we are the objects of God's tender and fatherly care, and consequently, as incitements to thankfulness. They are sent us, not to drive us to despair, but to help us in acquiring that healthful, elastic tone of mind in which cheerful trustfulness has its perfect work; in which, let what will come upon us, and how hard soever it may be, at the moment, to endure, we have still the firm, abiding conviction, which *nothing* can shake, that God is doing what is best for us, and that if we will only submit ourselves unreservedly to Him, He will, in His own good time, give us "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

The feeling, therefore, which ought to predominate in our minds, under all the chastening visitations to which we are exposed, should be this, that it is *sin* to doubt the gracious purposes of God towards us, or to receive them in any other than a thankful spirit. We must remember God's promises to His Church, and consider that what was promised to the body, was promised to the members

likewise ; “ Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” And again, “ I, even I, am He that comforteth you : who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass : and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ?”

Under such circumstances, then, and with such convictions, we shall be in no hurry to ease our shoulders from the burden which God hath laid upon them ; we shall not try to shift it off, nor writhe under it. We shall not be impatient and restless, striving how we may release ourselves from that which pains us. We

shall bear the rod, and Him Who hath appointed it, and lift up our hearts in the trustful spirit of Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

It is hard to do this;—(in our own strength, I am sure I need not remind you, it is impossible;)—it is hard to rejoice in tribulation; to yield "most humble and hearty thanks" when some object who has been the light of our eyes, is removed "from the miseries of this sinful world;" but He Who sends our trials, sends them one by one, as we are able to bear them, gradually teaching us by our own experience that it is *good* for us to be afflicted.

"Before I was in trouble I went wrong, but now have I kept Thy law." So that by degrees we are led onward from strength to strength, and our trustfulness increases (if so be our hearts are right with God), even with the growing intensity of our trials.

And how mercifully we are dealt with, we shall be the more ready to acknowledge, the more we reflect upon the *manner* of God's visitations towards us. Could

our eyes pierce into the future ; could we look into each successive grave that is opened beside us, till we have reached our own ; could we at once, and at one view, reckon up the amount of pain and sickness, of misfortune and temporal loss, of disappointment and blighted prospects, which is allotted to each in his earthly career ; could we apprehend, at the outset, all that is involved in a *daily cross*, and a following of Him Who died thereon,—the path, how arduous, how rugged, how full of peril ; how, as each ascent is gained, a higher, and a higher peak still opens upon us, which must be surmounted ere the summit can be reached ; could we, at our first profession, know all which that profession requires of us, our spirits would be broken, our resolution would fail, and we should shrink, perhaps, altogether from the contest. But our merciful Father, in His love and tender compassion, leads us on by little and little, according to our strength ; showing us no more of the way than we can accomplish without exhaustion ; concealing the coming, till we have escaped the present

danger, and thus gradually teaching us to trust Him, to wish for no more light than He vouchsafes us, and to be content to follow step by step in the direction where He calls us, even as faithful Abraham, "when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out, *not knowing whither he went.*"

Surely, the experience we have all had, during the course of our earthly pilgrimage, is an all-sufficient argument for trustfulness! Surely the words of the Son of Sirach must come home to every heart! "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright and constantly endure, and *make not haste* in time of trouble. Cleave unto Him, and depart not away, that thou mayest be increased at thy last end. . . . Believe in Him, and He will help thee; order thy way aright, and trust in Him. Ye that fear the Lord, wait for His mercy, and go not aside lest ye fall. Ye that fear the Lord, believe Him, and your reward shall not fail. Ye that fear the Lord, hope for good, and for everlasting

joy and mercy. Look at the generations of old and see : did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded ? Or did any abide in His fear, and was forsaken ? Or whom did He ever despise, that called upon Him ?”

“ Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him. For He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are but dust.” As to a father, therefore, we should look up to Him, with the docile, trustful temper of little children, who have no fears so long as they can cling to a parent’s bosom, who have no thought but that their parents *know* what is best for them, and will *do* what is best by them ; who obey simply, and submit themselves dutifully, and trust themselves affectionately and thankfully ; smiling even through their tears, as a parent’s eye gleams on them, and loving not the less while yielding to fatherly correction.

In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, under the pressure of adversity, or in the extremity of pain and sorrow, the duty is still the same, “ Though

He slay me, yet will I trust in Him :” and the reward of trustfulness is still the same, that “in the midst of the sorrows which we have in our hearts, His comforts will refresh our souls,”—He will be “the *strength* of them that put their trust in Him.”

But it is not in personal and domestic trials only that this spirit of trustfulness will be our safeguard and support. In all those perplexities which arise from our own position in the Church, and the Church’s position in the world, and which would otherwise bewilder us, our trustfulness will come to our refuge. If our own way seems more full of difficulties than usual, we have only to trust God, and *obey* Him so far as we *know* His will, and in the end our way will be made clear to us. If clouds seem gathering round His Church, and love is waxing cold, and truth failing, and the faithful are diminished from among the children of men, trustfulness is still the remedy for our perplexity; for that assures us that somehow or other God will protect His own, and maintain His own cause. “The

Lord is King, be the people never so impatient: He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet.”

And believe me, brethren, there never was greater need of a trustful spirit among Churchmen, than at the present time. Without are fightings, within are fears: a spirit of controversy, fierce and cruel, implacable and unmerciful; holy men going to extremes on either side; extremes on either side fraught with danger; and timidity, cowardice, and a temporizing, worldly temper, attributed to those who would keep the middle path. So it has been in times past; so I suppose it will continue to be till this most miserable world shall pass away. But what is the Christian's duty under such circumstances? Is it not to keep close to the Catholic Faith, maintaining *that* whole and undefiled, hankering after nothing more, and satisfied with nothing less? And what is the Churchman's duty as respects the Church? Is it not to endeavor to carry out her system fully and unreservedly in his own person? I suppose there *are* some things which we

all wish the Church did more insist on. We all wish the Church to be what she is, "and as much better as God shall please to make her." Certainly, one *cannot* speak of present practice and want of discipline, without desiring something beyond what *is*. But what then? Will this make the Churchman discontented with his condition, half a traitor, and altogether unthankful for his actual privileges and blessings? No. He knows that he may desire lawfully, and indeed practise lawfully, more than the Church *insists on*: but he also knows that he may neither desire nor practise more than she *allows*. And upon this very simple rule he acts; and thus his difficulties, and doubts, and scruples, are removed; and he finds by the sure test of experience, that if we honestly try to do God's will, He will make clear the path in which we ought to go, and support us as we walk along it.

If only we can bring ourselves to a sincere and steadfast resolution, like that of Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," we are thoroughly prepared for the worst that can befall us. Be

the persecution what it may, the persecutor can but slay the body. Be the tyranny what it may, it will soon be everpast, and thereafter cometh rest and security.

A time of sharp and bitter trial may be at hand. At least, all things seem tending that way; at least, many of us, it is to be feared, have abused their day of grace, and so have deserved to be sifted like wheat, to be winnowed with the fan of vengeance. But come when it may, the *faithful* follower of Christ crucified has this pre-eminent consolation, that the sharper the humiliation, suffering, and persecution, the nearer will he be brought into the fellowship of Him Who was despised, and rejected, and mocked, and spit upon, and scourged, and crucified. And the *trustful* servant of God has this assurance, that he who trusts in God shall "*never* be confounded," and that that Catholic Church, of which he is a member, is guided and guarded by the Most High: that "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed;" that "the Lord will help her, and that right

early:" that though the heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved, God hath but to show His voice, and the earth shall melt away: and finally, that in every conflict that awaits her, "the Lord of Hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob is our Refuge!"

SERMON XI.

ON SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS.

ROMANS viii. 6.

To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

THE term "to be minded," here used, has reference, in the original Greek, to the affection which a person sets on any given object, and the great pains which he uses in obtaining it. Thus, in the third chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, where the same expression occurs, our translation renders it, "*Set your affection on things above.*" It is, in fact, an exact equivalent to the common phrase among ourselves of setting one's heart upon a thing.

The minding of the flesh, therefore, or "the lust of the flesh," which, as we are taught in the ninth article of our Church,

“some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is the employing our whole thought, and pains, and time, in gratifying and in providing for the gratification of mere bodily appetites: while, on the other hand, the being spiritually minded, or the minding of the soul, is an earnest seeking after the things of the unseen world, a determined renunciation of everything which may interfere with the soul’s communion with God, and a steadfast walking by faith and not by sight.

The result of adopting this latter course, St. Paul informs us, will be life and peace,—peace, that is, even amid the trials and sorrows of this lower world, and life eternal in duration and happiness in the heavens. But to be carnally minded,—to mind the body to the neglect of the soul, is death, can only issue in everlasting misery and perdition.

The doctrine here set before us is repeated so continually in Holy Scripture, and lies so entirely at the foundation of Christian morals, that it will, no doubt, seem to many an exhausted subject,

and one about which nothing more remains to be said. And this would be true, if it followed as a matter of course that men acted upon their convictions, and thought much about truths with which they are familiar. Unhappily, however, the reverse of this is the case. We admit the evil and exceeding danger of a carnal mind, but we remain carnal-minded. We allow that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace, but we go on from day to day as if life and peace were not worth having. We are exhorted to set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth, and to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, and we are reminded that our conversation and citizenship are in heaven. Of these things we acknowledge the truth, but it is to be feared that many go no further, or at most resolve within themselves that they will become spiritual-minded, when this world and its concerns are fading from their view, and the next is opening upon them. We all, perhaps, more or less, allow ourselves to think of spiritual-mindedness as a quality to be attained at the end of life, rather than as

one which is an indispensable accompaniment of its whole course. It is, indeed, true that the higher a person advances in practical holiness,—the nearer he goes on to perfection, the more spiritual-minded will he become, so that the dying saint, who has been serving God diligently through a long career, may at last be only a little lower than the angels; his spiritual-mindedness may, and will at the close of his pilgrimage, be much more developed than it was at first, but it is worse than vain to suppose on that account, that spiritual-mindedness will grow up, men know not how, out of the dregs of carnal-mindedness; that if they have served the world in their youth, and given their affections to it, those affections will, as a matter of course, fix themselves on God as life advances.

The fact is, that people blind their eyes to their real condition. They indulge in the very common fallacy of keeping obligations to which they are *already* pledged out of sight: just as, because it happens to be the fashion, some persons, at the present time, take upon themselves vows

of temperance, apparently never reflecting that they have *already* made such a vow when they were admitted into covenant with God at Baptism; or, just as is said to be the case among the Roman Catholics, when monks and nuns, on making their profession, engage themselves to die to the world, and are laid upon a bier, and the office for the dead celebrated over them, as though their dying to the world was some new thing, and as if in Baptism they were not *already* dead,—buried with Christ and raised with Him, to new hopes and a new life.

And this same fallacy, I say, frequently appears in the case of those who profess to be striving after spiritual-mindedness. It does not seem to occur to them that the very adoption of Christianity has pledged them, at the outset, to that which they are disposed to look upon as one of the latest and highest acquirements of the Christian. Yet if any one will turn to that epistle from whence my text is taken, or indeed to any of the Apostolic writings, he will find that the inspired writers as-

sume it as a matter of course that they who have been baptized are living up to their profession. They will hardly allow themselves to imagine that those for whom God had done such great things,—forgiving them their sins, making them His own children by adoption, and translating them into the kingdom of his dear Son, would be so ungrateful, not to say so insane, as to make light of their privileges, and imagine they might go on after Baptism, as they had done while still heathens. The Apostles addressed those to whom they wrote as “Saints,” as “sanctified in Christ Jesus,” as “elect,” as “washed, and sanctified, and justified;” as if, in short, they were serving God both in body and soul, and as if they had altogether renounced the devil, the world, and the flesh, in consequence of their adoption in God.

And it is upon this ground that the Apostles exhort their converts to continued exertion. “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” “Remember that ye in time past were without Christ, being aliens from the common-

wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. . . . But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. . . . I, therefore, . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through

Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

Now it is quite evident from all these passages (and many others might be adduced), first, that the carnal mind is death; and secondly, that it was not a thing to be supposed by the Apostles, that they who by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, had been put in a state of salvation, would be other than spiritually minded.

But how was so great a change to be effected in the souls of believers? Does Baptism act like a charm? Will the mere sprinkling of water, accompanied by the words of the Priest, change the whole inward disposition, so that the works of the flesh shall be instantaneously superseded by the fruits of the spirit; and uncleanness, idolatry, envyings, murders, drunkenness and such like, give place at once to "love, joy, peace, long-suf-

fering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ?

Assuredly not. St. Paul says expressly that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be;" and he tells the Galatians that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." St. Peter likewise admonishes the Christians to whom he writes "to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;" and St. James says, "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Thus it is evident, to use the language of our Articles, that the infection of our nature doth remain in them that are regenerate, whereby the lust of the flesh, or the carnal mind, is not subject to the law of God. Baptism, therefore, does not in itself make us spiritually minded, but only pledges us to become so, puts us in the way of becoming so, and helps us to become so. Our original incapacities are removed thereby,

and we have the promise of such grace as may enable us to battle effectually with our indwelling corruption. Corruption dwells in us in spite of Baptism: but by Baptism another tenant is admitted into our hearts; there He makes His Temple, and thence, if we do not resist Him, He will expel the original occupant. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

It appears then, on the whole, that though, as baptized Christians, we engage ourselves to cease from "the minding of the flesh," and to mind the things of the spirit, the flesh is still strong within us to seduce, and the difficulties of becoming spiritual-minded are so great, that in our own strength we cannot attain unto it: yet that, nevertheless, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. It is at least worth while, therefore, to aim at a spiritual mind.

How comes it, then, that so many Christians appear to make no exertions to become spiritually minded, or, at any rate, act as though they considered it rather a quality to be sought after when many other Christian graces were attained, than one which should pervade and characterize their whole existence?

I fear the answer to this question is to be found in the indifference with which persons are apt to look on their baptismal vows. Because God in His mercy does not refuse His grace and forgiveness to those who have fallen into wilful sin after Baptism, therefore men have come to look on it as a matter of comparative indifference whether they break their baptismal engagements or not. They despair of keeping them unbroken to their lives' end, and therefore make little exertion to keep them at all, forgetting all the while that they who sin in defiance of light, and warnings, and promises made and ratified, can hardly expect as ready a forgiveness as those who sinned before they were brought under the law. Surely the Judge of all the earth will do right,

and draw a broad line of distinction between sins of ignorance, and sins of presumption. Would that men would think more of this, and while they gratefully acknowledge that the Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, be less ready to follow the ways of the multitude, and to think *lightly* of sin after Baptism!

And now let us consider wherein spiritual-mindedness consists, and what aids we all have towards attaining it.

I would describe spiritual-mindedness, then, as consisting in a following of God's will instead of our own, as a subjection of the body to the spirit, a deliberate seeking after things eternal instead of things temporal, and this under all the circumstances of our daily life. He who is spiritual-minded will be a man of prayer, for prayer alone can fix his thoughts on the world unseen. He will live in habits of self-denial, for not otherwise will he gain the mastery over those fleshly lusts and appetites which war against the soul. He will cultivate a temper of awe and reverence for holy things, as knowing that irreverence is the first step to unbe-

lief. He will be diligent in self-examination, that so earthly things may gain no unsuspected hold over his affections. He will be very careful whom he selects for his companions and familiar friends, lest evil communications, or intercourse with worldly-minded persons, should have the effect of entangling him with the cares and pleasures of life, or lowering that standard of perfection at which he is aiming. He will never be anxious to speak much openly on subjects connected with religion, as knowing the danger to *himself* lest his professions should outrun his performances; and the danger to *others*, lest, from his example, they should get into a careless way of speaking of holy things. His light will shine before men, because they who watch him will see that he is diligently discharging the duties of that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him; but there will be no ostentation or display: rather he will live in his own thoughts, and be so cautious of exposing them to that world which he has renounced, that to casual observers there will seem nothing peculiar

about him. The great mass of Christians, it is to be feared, owe what they have of religion to accident rather than to any other cause. They do certain things because it is the way of the world to do them; they abstain from others because the habits of society seem to require it. Convenience, expedience, personal gratification, an unwillingness to be singular,—these are the motives which apparently influence them. The Gospel has no hold upon them personally. If they are the better for it, they are only so mediately; what they do is done in imitation of others, and out of mere habit. But the spiritual-minded man acts *upon principle*. God's law is the rule of his daily life, and that by which he tests all things. His actions are done as in God's presence; when he speaks he remembers that angels are listening. He never allows himself to think that anything which he does is trivial or of no consequence. There is a right and a wrong way of doing everything. Everything may be done either to the honor or the dishonor of God. Accordingly, he tries to keep this thought

before him, not only when matters of importance are to be decided, but amid the little details of every-day life. He endeavors to carry out in his practice the duty which the Catechism has taught him, that he should love God with *all* his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, that he should worship Him, and give Him thanks, and put his whole trust in Him, should call upon Him, should honor His holy name, and His word, and serve Him *truly, all* the days of his life. To the spiritual-minded man, God will be everything, and the world nothing. In the active occupations of life, he will, with the Psalmist, "set God always before him," that so he may be preserved from being ensnared by the world. And when his thoughts are withdrawn from his necessary engagements they will at once fall upon religion, as upon the thing on which they are centered.

And now, brethren, as to the aids which we all have towards attaining such a disposition of mind as we are assured by the Word of God is "life and peace," but which we know, by our own experi-

ence (as many of us are in earnest) is most difficult to be attained.

The first and chiefest aid is that of God the Holy Ghost, Who was given us in our Baptism, and whose office it is to enlighten us; to bring all things to our remembrance, and to strengthen us to do God's will and keep our vows. He dwelleth in us. He is ever ready to assist us. He puts into our minds good desires, and gives us grace to bring them to good effect. He cleanses, and purifies the heart. He converts us where we need a change: He renews us where anything has been decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by our own carnal will and frailness. How diligently, therefore, should we listen for His voice, how carefully should we attend to it when heard! how watchful should we be lest by thought, or word, or action, we should grieve Him, or quench the fire which he has kindled within us! How earnestly should we pray Him to abide in us continually, to give us tender consciences, to give us hearts of flesh, and remove our hearts of stone, to enable

us to see Him Who is invisible, and to live for things eternal.

The next great aid which has been provided for those who are aiming at spiritual-mindedness, is to be found in the privileges which the Church offers us. The object of her whole system is to take us out of the world, even while we are living in it. Her ordinances, so spiritual in their nature, so powerfully calculated to help us to realize things unseen, and so continually recurring, are, if only used rightly (that is, without formalism or hypocrisy), the things of all others to root out the carnal mind, and give us the mind of Christ. As she sees Christ in all things, so will she lead us to do the same. With her daily round of prayer and praise she would prepare us, while still on earth, for the never-ending services of heaven, and the unceasing adoration of her Lord. With her Fasts she will teach us to die with Him to things temporal; with her Feasts she will bid us lift up our hearts to that kingdom where all is "life and peace." With her Holy Sacraments she gives us blessings so

awful, that the very thought of them ought to urge us to strive after the grace of spiritual-mindedness, since even to speak of them without it were a heinous transgression.

Other aids to this most necessary grace there are, on which, after what I have already said, I need not dwell particularly. Prayer, watchfulness, self-denial, meditation, are among the chief of them. Others will suggest themselves to your thoughts. And so with one observation I will conclude ; " To be carnally-minded is death, to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Here, then, life and death are set before you. And you have, each of you, in the face of God and the congregation, chosen life. On the strength of that choice you were made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven. Are you walking worthy of your vocation? If you are carnal-minded, you are not. Your only chance of salvation is in acquiring the grace of spiritual-mindedness. But the time is short. See then that you set about your duty to-day. To-morrow it may be too late.

If, on the other hand, you have the honest testimony of conscience within, that you have made some progress towards the attainment of the spiritual mind, you may take to yourselves the comfortable assurance that you are in the way of life and peace,* you are gradually passing from death unto life, from that living death which is man's condition in this world, to the true life of the soul; you are beginning to taste of that

* S. Augustin, in Joann. v. 24. "In hac vita transitur a morte ad vitam; in hac vita quæ nondum est vita, hinc transitur a morte ad vitam. Quis est ille transitus? *Qui audit verba mea, dixit, et credit ei qui misit me.* Servans ista credis, et transis

"Audi Apostolum dicentem ad Timotheum, *Præcipe divitibus hujus sæculi, non superbe sapere, neque sperare in incerto divitiarum, sed in Deo vivo, qui præstat nobis omnia abundanter ad fruendum. Thesaurizent sibi fundamentum, bonum in futurum, ut apprehendant veram vitam.* Si debent thesaurizare, ut apprehendant veram vitam, profecto ista, in qua erant, falsa vita est. Apprehendenda est vera; migrandum est a falsa. Et qua migrandum? quo? Audi. Crede; et transitum facis a morte ad vitam.

Id. de Continentia, c. 7. "Pax perfecta tunc erit nobis, quando natura nostra Creatori suo inseparabiliter cohærente, nihil nobis repugnabit ex nobis."

S. Ambros. in Luc. Lib. v. "A te pacem incipe; ut cum fueris ipse pacificus, pacem aliis feras."

S. Chrysostom in Rom. v. 1. *εἰρήνην ἔχειν, τοῦτό ἐστι, μήκει πολεμεῖν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν.*

peace which the world can neither give nor take away : of that peace which is only found where man identifies his own will with that of God, where the flesh is subdued to the spirit, and where the creature is endeavoring to mould and fashion himself in all things as may be most pleasing to the Creator. I do not say that as yet you will attain to the *fulness* of life and peace ; for past transgression and present imperfections will render that impossible : but you will at least have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious, you will have judged by actual experience of that which He has in store for them that love Him. And hence you will have a source of comfort stronger than any other which the world can offer you, for it is *a growing* comfort,—one which will wax stronger and stronger continually, the further you advance in the path you have chosen.

May that comfort be your's, my brethren, in all time of your tribulation, in all time of your wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment !

SERMON XII.

OBEDIENCE TO THE CHURCH, HER MINISTERS,
AND ORDINANCES.

HEBREWS xiii. 7, 8.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

It seems to be the opinion of some of the most eminent persons who have left us their commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews, that St. Paul is here referring to those Pastors or Bishops who were *dead*,—(having, perhaps, witnessed a good confession, and been “slain for the Word of God, and the testimony which they held),”—and not to the *living* rulers of the Hebrew Church;—the precepts, with respect to *them*, being given afterwards, in the seventeenth verse of the chapter before us. “Obey them that have the

rule over you, and submit yourselves : for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.

If this be a true view of the case, the passage I have chosen for my text must be looked upon as an exhortation to the Hebrew Christians to cherish the remembrance of those who, in times past, had preached and labored among them ; to adhere to the doctrine which they had taught, " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ;" and to stablish themselves, amid their trials, by the recollections of the exemplary and glorious close of the lives of such holy men.

Even in those early days there had been a little band who had not " counted their lives dear unto themselves, that so they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Such had been holy Stephen, the Proto-martyr of the Church. Such was James, the brother of John, whom Herod killed with the sword. Such was Antipas, the " faithful martyr"

of Christ, who was slain at Pergamos; and such, no doubt, were divers others whose names are written in imperishable characters in the Book of Life, though the world has forgotten them.

Now we, who live in these last times, are basking, as it were, in the full blaze of those luminaries which cheer and enlighten the Church of God. To us, perhaps, Christ is nowhere more fully revealed than in His Saints; nowhere have we such evidence of the regenerating, renewing, invigorating, sanctifying power of the grace of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man. To us the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the blessed choir of pure and virgin souls who have kept themselves unspotted from the world, all speak one language of encouragement; they cheer us on to live as they lived, to love as they loved, to serve as they served, to take warning by their errors, to follow them as they followed Christ. We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, that it were shame and disgrace unutterable if we failed to run with pa-

tience the race that is set before us. It is indeed one of our highest blessings that it is given to us to look back upon the triumphs of those Saints of God who fought a good fight, and kept the faith. And in proportion as we value this source of consolation ourselves, can we understand how encouraging to the Hebrews would be that exhortation which I have chosen for my text. It is evident that the Church was no longer at rest. Persecution lay in the way of all who endeavored to live godly in Christ Jesus. They who went forth unto Him without the camp must needs bear His reproach. Difficulties were increasing, perils thickening, hearts failing. Should they go, or should they not go? They were honest and sincere, but they needed some thought to inspire them to meet the assaults of the evil, cruel world; they desired some assurance that the trial to which they were exposed was not *more* than flesh and blood had already felt. What comfort, at such a season, to be reminded of those who had already met the buffetings of the storm, and had anchored safely in the ever-

lasting haven! "Remember them which have" had "the rule over you, who," in times past, "have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," the tenor of their lives, and the termination of their labors,—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Now I might very well take occasion from these words to press on you a lesson which has been too much forgotten among us, though I trust we are beginning, at least, to remember it. Of course I allude to the manner in which we have laid aside the recollection of those who were our fathers, and who ought to be our patterns in the Faith. There was a time when too much was thought of the Saints departed. They were honored with an honor which I fear amounted to Idolatry, or at any rate to something most sadly like it, and they were invoked as if, in some sense, they could be mediators between us and God. These were grievous errors. But the abuse of a thing ought not to take away its use; and to go into one extreme because the other is wrong is no

proof of a sound judgment; for all extremes are *bad*. Our fathers angered God by giving His honor to the Saints. It is likely that we anger Him, by withholding the honor which He would have us render them; that, namely, of remembering how faithfully they served their Lord, and following them in their unshrinking devotion to the object of their faith, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." I might, therefore, very profitably inculcate upon you the duty of meditating much and often on the lives of those holy persons who are commemorated in the services of our Church; and I might dwell with advantage on the privilege which has thus been vouchsafed us, but I shall rather prefer, on the present occasion, to direct your thoughts to another subject, which reflection upon the text will suggest; I mean the disposition of those persons to whom St. Paul addressed his exhortation. The very form of that exhortation pre-supposes that they to whom it was addressed were persons who were willing to obey the Church, Her ministers and Her ordinances, as be-

ing to them the representatives of Him Whom having not seen they loved, and Whom, though ascended up on high, they knew to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." I propose, then, to make some observations on this spirit of willing obedience.

And first let me observe that obedience is due to the Church upon the same grounds on which it is due to God Himself. To obey that which He desires us to obey, is in fact to obey Him. His two most precious gifts to man are the Bible and the Church; and these two gifts are so intimately connected with each other, and so thoroughly intended to be used in conjunction, that the one without the other, would be, comparatively speaking, valueless. The Church without the Bible, would be the world without the sun; the Bible without the Church, would be as the sun shining in empty space, with no planets travelling round it, to be warmed by its heat, and lightened with its rays. God has given us the Holy Bible for the purpose of making His will known to man, of teaching us where to look for

the means of grace, and of leading us forward by inspiring us with the hopes of Glory. God has given us His Holy Church to instruct us in the sound knowledge of Scripture, and to guide our steps according to his revealed will. The Church teaches us how to carry out into practice, what is written in the Bible; it assists God's servants to walk sincerely in the faith of Jesus Christ, and live to the glory of God the Father. The Church is the appointed means through which we are brought into covenant with God. To the Church's keeping are intrusted the blessed Sacraments, and the ordinances of religion. To the Church is committed the keeping up the three-fold order of the Ministry, the only channel through which we can be quite sure that the grace of the sacraments is conveyed to those who receive them. Thus the Bible and the Church together contribute mutually to the work of God in the soul of man.

But, it may be asked, since the Bible and the Church seem to have so prominent a part assigned them, is there no danger lest men should put the Bible, or

the Church, in the place of the Saviour? To this I reply that there is such a danger;—a very serious one, as experience has shown, and such as it behooves us to guard ourselves against. The Bible and the Church are liable to abuse in common with everything else that is most valuable. Where is the gift of God which man has not, or may not turn to his own destruction? There have been those, before now, who have made outward forms, and their trust in Church privileges, a substitute for inward piety, even as there have been those whose boast of Bible-knowledge, and self-confident reliance on their own private judgment in expounding Scripture, have led them far away from Scripture-truth, and Scripture-holiness. The more good there may be in the right use of a thing, the more may be its evil when perverted. The Bible and the Church are, as I have already said, two of God's choicest gifts to man, and yet man may make either the one or the other the subject of an idolatry as portentous as he ever has exhibited towards his money or his pleasure; he may,

through the one or the other, defraud Him of His honor, Who hath expressly proclaimed Himself to be a *jealous* God.

But what preservative is there against so great an offence? I reply, that so long as we not unduly exalt the one over the other, or use one to the exclusion of the other,—the Bible without the Church, or the Church without the Bible,—so long as we give to each the relative importance, and maintain each in the relative position which God has assigned to them, we shall do well, and be safe from danger. He who uses his Bible rightly will never put the Church in place of the Saviour: he who submits himself to the Church's guidance will never, even unconsciously, put his own private sense of the Bible in place of the Saviour. He will test what the Church teaches him by the Bible; he will be guided amid the difficulties of Scripture by learning what the universal testimony of the Church (always, in all places, and by common consent) has been concerning them. And thus both the Church and the Bible will lead him to the truth as it

is in Jesus. Together they will take him by the hand, and lead him to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The Bible will set before him continually, Who it is that is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; The Church, no less continually, leads him through outward ordinances and allegories to Him that is within the veil; she brings him to the House of God, which is none other than the gate of heaven, puts into his mouth the words of prayer and praise, and gives him the blessings of an apostolical ministry to instruct, admonish, and comfort him.

In all things she speaks of Christ. From Him, as from a fountain of living waters, all her teaching emanates: to Him, as to its Object and its End, it all returns. He is all in all. When we have Him we have all things, we are full, we abound, yea, are complete in Him.

And see how the Church carries out this thought in all her public services. Examine the construction of her form of Morning and Evening Prayer. Is it not so arranged that every part speaks of

Him? that He is, as it were, the one idea which pervades the whole, that which gives to the whole its tone and coloring? Is not every prayer offered in His name, and on the plea of His merits and prevailing intercession? Is not the voice of thanksgiving raised to its highest fervency, when it offers its praise "*above all*, for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ?" Are not the Psalms, the Lessons, the Epistles, the Gospels full of Him? Is there any one brought more prominently forward than He, in that course of daily service, which, in theory at least (and oh! that it were in universal practice!) the Church offers from one week's end to the other, year by year continually? Does she not desire to make her unceasing worship harmonize with the attribute of Him whom she worships, and who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?"

Again, look at that sacred calendar of the Church's year, and say whether it be not full of Christ? In Advent, she reminds us of His first coming, and exhorts to prepare for His second. At Christmas

she sets before us the circumstances of His Birth ; at Epiphany of His manifestation to us Gentiles. Then, Sunday after Sunday, she exhibits Him in His childhood and youth, till Lent brings us to His temptation. For forty days we pass with Him a season of mortification and deepening gloom, till at length we approach the ineffable mysteries of His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His precious death and burial. Then burst upon us the splendors of His triumph, His glorious resurrection, and no less glorious ascension. Then, after that, comes the calm repose of the Sundays after Trinity, in which half a year is given us to contemplate at leisure His doctrine, and the subordinate events of His life ; while all the while, each Friday as it passes, brings before us, as a day of humiliation, the recollection of His Cross, and every Sunday that dawns, brings with it a weekly commemoration of His triumph over death and hell. Nor is this all ; for, interspersed throughout the Sacred year, He is brought before our minds again and again in the history of those

Saints of His, who adorned His doctrine in all things, and shed their blood in testimony of His truth; and on that account are remembered in those anniversaries in which God is thanked for the light and comfort of their example.

Finally, look at the occasional services of the Church, and say whether they too be not full of Christ.—First and foremost are the sacraments of His own institution; wherein at Baptism our infants die and are buried with Him, and rise again with Him to newness of life,—with His Cross signed on their foreheads, and pledged that they will continue His soldiers and servants unto their lives' end: and next there is the Holy Eucharist, the commemorative sacrifice of His death, in which, by an unspeakable mystery, His Body and His Blood are verily and indeed communicated to the souls of the faithful. And so in the other rites and ceremonies of the Church, Christ is visibly set forth before His people continually. In holy matrimony we are reminded of “the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and His Church:” in the

visitation of the sick, the privilege of suffering with Him is set before us: and in the burial of the dead, He Himself meets us with the consoling assurance, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Surely, brethren, the Church does not exalt herself into the Saviour's place. Surely there is no danger that they who teach as she teaches should put the Church in the place of the Saviour. If they claim obedience to her, it is because they are persuaded that out of her there is no safety. If they lay stress upon a careful attention to her ordinances, it is because they know that He Whom those ordinances bring before us is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

But, brethren, the text teaches us that more is required of us than obedience to the Church and her ordinances. It is expected of us that we show a willing respect and submission to the Ministers of the Church. "Remember them which

have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." So again, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly for their work's sake." These, and similar passages of Scripture which might be multiplied to a considerable extent, show us very clearly that, if the minister of Christ has duties towards the flock committed to his trust, the flock has likewise its duties towards its minister. And this is a truth which is sadly forgotten, or kept out of sight at the present day. If a clergyman neglects his flock, it is (as it ought to be) a scandal and a reproach, and the rumor of it will spread indignation from one side of the country to the other, and be a fruitful topic of declamation for the uncharitable and disaffected. But who ever hears a word of reproach against those who neglect all their duties to their ap-

pointed minister? Is the voice of public indignation loud against those who never pray for him, who show him no outward tokens of respect, who are offended at his godly admonitions, who thwart him whenever they can, and are not afraid to calumniate him and speak evil of him falsely? One reason of this is, that they who thus transgress God's law have numbers on their side, and the world is strong and powerful to silence the voice of unpalatable truth. But another reason may be found in those natural feelings of delicacy which have prevented the Clergy from speaking of their own claims, and so those claims have been in a great measure forgotten. It is always painful to humble-minded persons to speak of themselves or to magnify their office, and still more so, under circumstances in which they feel they may be charged with desiring to become "lords over God's heritage," and to "have dominion over" the people's "faith," even while in their hearts they know that they have no desire beyond St. Paul's,—“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and

ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

However, brethren, our office is to declare unto you the whole counsel of God, the entire circle of your duties. And therefore it is an error that we have shrunk from claiming for ourselves that submission and obedience from you, which is assuredly our due as the Priests of God, however unworthy in ourselves. —Forgive us this wrong.

It is one of the most melancholy circumstances in the present crippled state of the Church, that many of our parishes are so large that many members of the flock can hardly know their clergyman by face, and therefore no such intercourse passes between them as, in theory at least, the Church intended. Let those among us who have the privilege of ministerial advice and instruction prize it, and profit by it, for most assuredly they will be judged hereafter for the use they have made of it.

If it should be your misfortune to have one set over you who is careless, or ignorant, or unfaithful, the affliction is a

heavy one : but take heed what you do : for you will but add sin to sin, if, instead of patiently submitting to the trial, and making the most of the means within your reach, and humbling yourselves under the chastisement, you make your pastor's errors the excuse for your own neglect of weighty duties, and betake yourselves to irregular sources of instruction, and give way to a schismatical spirit. The way to meet such a misfortune is with prayer and humiliation.

If, on the other hand (and this I suppose is the case with almost all), it has pleased God to set over you one whose heart is in his work, then I most earnestly entreat you to reflect how exceeding great will be your future punishment if you fail to obey the admonition of the text. Remember him who has the spiritual rule over you, and whose office it is to speak to you the word of God. His faith, tested by its accordance with the word of God, and the teaching of the Church, do you follow, considering the end of his conversation, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He

comes to set before you that Saviour Whose gracious purposes of mercy to you have been from everlasting, Who left His Father's glory to die for you, and returned to it to intercede for you. He comes to set before you Christ crucified, and to teach you that in the taking up of a daily cross, and in the crucifixion of all your unruly affections, appetites, and tempers, the only true following of Christ consists. Learn, therefore, to look upon your appointed minister, as your best and truest friend. Seek his advice and guidance in all the events of your life. Reverence him for his Master's sake, and try, at least, to love him for his own. Give him your confidence; open your griefs to him; lay bare your hearts to him, their scruples and doubtfulness; confess your sins to him (not, of course, as though *he* could forgive them in his own individual capacity, but as a proof of your own sorrow for them, and) that so you may receive his ghostly advice, and counsel, and the comfortable assurance of absolution from God. Receive his warnings with thankfulness, his reproofs with lowliness

and submission. Even if you feel them to be unjust, remember that they were kindly meant. Work with him, and work for him.

And because he who thus watches over you is a sinner like yourselves, full of infirmities, and ignorances, and weaknesses; since he is set in the midst of so many and great dangers, and has the hardest and the most perilous office to discharge which is assigned to man, bear with him and forgive him where the need shall be, take heed that you do not add to his anxieties, and increase his sorrows; and above all things, pray for him,—pray for him fervently and unceasingly, that he who thus preaches unto others, may not himself prove a castaway.

SERMON XIII.

ON ALMSGIVING.

MATTHEW vi. 1.

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”

EVERY reader of the Gospels must have observed that the sin against which our blessed Lord most frequently warned His disciples, and those who attended His preaching, was that of hypocrisy. So frequently were certain particular classes of His countrymen charged with this offence, that the very term of “Scribe” or “Pharisee” is almost synonymous in our minds with that of hypocrite. The most painful pictures are set before us of the conduct of these persons : how they sounded a trumpet before them when about to bestow their alms ; how they stood praying in the corners of the streets

in order to be seen of men; how, for a pretence, they made long prayers even while they were devouring widows' houses; how the matter of their prayers was full of a spirit of exclusiveness and presumption; how, when they fasted, they disfigured their faces in order to attract observation; how they perverted the truth with subtle casuistry, and endeavored to confound the laws of right and wrong, teaching that to swear by the temple was nothing, but that he who swore by the gold of the temple was a debtor: how, under professions of religion, they excused themselves from supporting their parents; how they made the Word of God of none effect, and rejected His commandment that they might keep their own traditions; how they made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within were full of extortion and excess; and how they paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

It is impossible to read the description of such characters without shame and

indignation, and without a hope that, bad as they were, their numbers, as compared with the great body of their countrymen, were very limited. It may have been so, but yet it is quite evident that there was danger of hypocrisy, and no slight danger, in the case of *all* to whom our Lord addressed Himself; or else we should not read that "when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another," the blessed Jesus "began to say unto His disciples *first of all*, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy:" nor again, at that sermon on the Mount, when he was surrounded by "great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan," would He have spoken so strongly against hypocrisy in prayer, in almsgiving, and in fasting, unless He had known that such admonitions were much needed, seeing that His discourse on that occasion was confined to a simple exposition of the duties of daily life, adapted to the

cases and understandings of all classes of hearers.

It is evident, therefore, from this fact, that hypocrisy was not a rare sin in the days of our blessed Lord; and since human nature is very much the same at all times and under all circumstances, it may be presumed that this vice, which we can scarce mention without loathing and repugnance, is not so uncommon, as we may be disposed to imagine, among ourselves. And if we are inclined to deny the fact, it can only be because we have taken up some false notion of the meaning of the term "hypocrisy."

What, then, is a hypocrite? Simply one who pretends to be something which he is not, who calls himself one thing while he is another, whose practice is different from his profession.

Now if this be the true meaning of the term, and I know no other, it is quite clear that in so far as we are walking unworthy of our Christian calling, we are, one and all of us, *hypocrites*.—What a fearful consideration is this, when we reflect that our Lord Himself,—the future

Judge of quick and dead,—has spoken of that place “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” where there is “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” as “the portion of the hypocrites!” What an argument it is against allowing ourselves to make high professions, that every profession so made, may, in the end, only serve to increase our condemnation! What an inducement ought it to be to us to be diligent in self-examination, and in tracing our motives to their source, when we consider, that in order to constitute a hypocrite, it by no means follows that a person should be *conscious* that his professions and his practice are at variance. For aught we can see, the Pharisees and Scribes were not aware that they were inconsistent; they seem to have deceived themselves as well as others, and not to have known that they were hypocrites!

Now, without entering at present more fully into this charge of hypocrisy, as applicable in a greater or less degree to all who call themselves Christians, but who do not live up to the Christian rule, I

would ask your attention while I endeavor to set before you the subject of almsgiving, as viewed with reference to our Lord's warning already alluded to. The whole passage is as follows. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : that thine alms may be in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly."

Here, then, we are taught, first, that almsgiving is a Christian virtue, and secondly, that almsgiving is acceptable or unacceptable to God according to the motive from which it springs. Let us enter into some detail on both these subjects.

As to the fact that almsgiving is a Christian virtue, it is indeed altogether

unnecessary to say much. If one of the two great commandments of the law be that we should love our brethren as ourselves; if the love which we exhibit towards our brethren will be taken hereafter as the test of our love to God; if we have the promise that a cup of cold water given to a fellow-creature for Christ's sake shall not lose its reward, there can be no doubt that to help the poor and needy out of our substance is as much a duty as any other point of the moral law. And, in fact, there are multitudes of direct injunctions on the subject. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." "To do good, and to distribute, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" These, and other texts of Scripture, which the Church enjoins to be read before the collection of alms at the Holy Communion, abundantly prove what I have asserted.

Nor, so far as I know, are persons usually inclined to deny their responsibility in this matter. The question in its practical bearing is not whether we should give alms, but *how much* we should give. And on this point men in general seem to have satisfied themselves. *The rule appears to be to give as little as possible*, and this, because giving is rather looked upon as a duty than as a privilege, as a thing to be rather done out of the fear, than out of the love of God. Yet what saith the Scripture? "He that soweth little shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously. Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." "Charge them who are rich in this world, that they be ready to give, and glad to distribute." "Be merciful after thy power. If thou hast much, give plenteously: if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little."

And further, by way of *warning*, we are told of the young ruler, who could not make up his mind that it would be a pri-

vilege to sell all he had and give to the poor, and follow Christ, and who thereby lost the honor of being an apostle ; and by way of *example*, we have Zaccheus whose habit it was to give half of his goods to the poor.

It appears, then, that the Christian who is in earnest will give not *as little*, but *as much* as he can in the way of alms-deeds. He will lay it down as a rule never to be departed from, that a certain proportion of his income shall be set aside as consecrated, as holy unto the Lord, and to be spent as unto the Lord, on the poor of Christ. And this he will do whether he be wealthy or the reverse. If he has much, he will give plenteously ; if he has little, he will give gladly of that little. Whatever be his means, he will so arrange the disposition of them that there shall be something superfluous, something which he may offer to God, and be so spent as to bring down God's blessing on the remainder. It has often been said, that if we do not proportion our charities to our means, we are likely to provoke God to proportion our means to our charities, and

make us able to give no more than we do. This is of course true, and it is a fair argument to be addressed to those who are indisposed to act upon higher grounds; but he who is striving to serve God faithfully would be glad (if it were possible) to outstrip, with his ready zeal, the commands of the Most High, and therefore to him such an appeal would be unnecessary. There are few, however, who, from their circumstances in life, and the absence of family and other claims, could follow the example of Zaccheus; hardly any, perhaps, who would do *rightly* in doing that which was proposed to the young ruler; but all, I should suppose, have it in their power to make some sacrifices, and to forego somewhat in order that they may minister to those who are less well off than themselves. Those who are rich may give largely, and prove that they are giving largely by stinting themselves in the luxuries of their tables, their apparel, their equipages, and so forth. Those who have no money to bestow may give their skill, their time,

their ready service to those of their brethren who need them. 7

I fear, brethren, it is quite impossible to look at the extremes of splendor, and the extremes of misery, which are to be seen in this country, without coming to the conclusion, that we must have adopted a very false notion as to what is required of us with respect to those who are suffering from the evils of ignorance, poverty, and disease. That individuals may be found who are making to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, by sanctifying their wealth to Christian purposes, there is happily no doubt; but the mass of us, it is to be feared, have little taste for self-denial, and little desire to acquire such a habit. The proof of this is, that we limit our liberality to the standard adopted by the world around us; whereas, as Christians, we ought to give all we can spare, and, as Christians, we ought to be *able* to spare all that is not actually indispensable. For all that we have we hold in trust, and for all that we hold we shall have to

account hereafter, even to the uttermost farthing,

But it may be said, that although we do not do all that we ought, still a great deal is done, and no appeal is brought before the public which is not immediately responded to.

Now I will grant this for argument's sake : but let us at the same time remember the words of the text : "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."

It is quite clear that a certain amount of almsgiving *must* be public. This is inevitable ; but is there any need that so large a proportion of our alms-deeds should be made public, as is the case at present ? Almost every printed subscription-list seems to carry with it a two-fold evil : first, there is the evil that the left hand knows what the right hand has been doing, and secondly, it is a perpetual incitement to niggardliness ; men are thereby induced to give, not accord-

ing to their means, but according to what somebody else has given.

But allowing that publicity must occasionally attend upon almsgiving, and that it is sometimes desirable for the sake of setting a good example, may it not be asked whether people are as willing to give away their money, when their liberality will remain unknown, as when it will come before the world?

Herein, brethren, you will do well to search and examine your hearts, for herein we may find within us, unthought of, and unsuspected, the creeping root of hypocrisy. Some of our charity must be public; but is the greater portion of it *private*? Do we endeavor as much as possible to make it private? Do we give with simplicity, thinking no more about it when our alms-deed is done; or are we tempted to compare our own liberality with the niggardliness of others, and look on what we do with self-complacency? Again; upon what principle do we give? Is it in order that we may establish a character for humanity and generosity? that we may be popular, as

it is called? or do we make our offerings with single-heartedness, as unto God, and for the sake of Him Who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich? Do we see Christ Himself in His poor and afflicted, and do we therefore treat them as we would treat Him,—reverently, I mean, and with delicacy, and not as though we were patronizing them, or as wishing to make them feel that they are under obligations to us? Have we *less* satisfaction in ministering to those whose obscurity is likely to prevent their being able to say much about what we have done for them, than in giving assistance to those who are in a position to speak in such a manner of our liberality, that we are likely to hear of it again? Do we, in short, in any respect, think more of our public charities than of our private alms-deeds? If we do, can it be fairly said that we do not partake of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees?

It would be a most happy thing for us all if a custom prescribed by our Church, indeed I may say *very strictly* enjoined,

but which, through our hard-heartedness and covetousness, has till lately fallen into disuse, were revived universally. If, as every Sunday came round, the people had the opportunity of doing what St. Paul so strongly recommended, I mean offering their alms according to their ability, in that part of the divine service which is called the Offertory, there would be much less scope for hypocrisy and ostentation than there is at present. Those who could give but little, would not, as now, be often prevented from giving at all, because they can only give a little ; while the rich, from the frequency of the call made upon them by the Church, would get into the habit of thinking more of the responsibilities which wealth involves. They would learn to view their condition more as the Bible teaches them to view it, and to act upon the conviction that riches are a peril, and a snare, and that they only are happy who are continually offering them to God.

Again, there is something in the facts that the alms of each individual at the Offertory are, as it were, offered in pri-

vate, though the offering in its collective amount is public; that no one knows what another gives; and that the whole is offered in one sum upon God's altar, the common tribute of rich and poor, mingled together without distinction or difference: there is, I say, something in these facts which is admirably calculated to make us realize to ourselves that we are in very deed members one of another, and to divest us of those feelings which lay at the root of hypocrisy in almsgiving.

It does not fall in with the design of this discourse to point out the special objects to which your alms should be directed: but I may say, in passing, that, as a general rule, you are likely to do more good by bestowing your alms in your own neighborhood, where you know the history and condition of those to whom you minister, than by contributing to objects which (for there is a fashion in charity as well as in religion) happen to be the fashionable claimants of sympathy. At any rate there is least danger to yourselves in such a course, least danger of

self-deception and hypocrisy.—In saying this, however, I do not mean to dissuade you from co-operating with those venerable societies, which, under the sanction of the rulers of our Church, are laboring for the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen, the promotion of education and Christian knowledge among ourselves, the restoration or erection of churches, and the supply of curates for populous places. I am sure when we reflect upon the mercies which, as a nation, we have received; as we see on all sides the proofs of national wealth; as, in the midst of comforts and luxuries such as Tyre and Babylon never knew, we witness such destitution, and poverty, and heathen ignorance, and crime, as I should hope no other nation, calling itself Christian, was ever yet afflicted with; we *ought*, all of us, from highest to lowest, to lend our aid at the cost of even the severest self-denial, to remove the load of misery, moral, social, and physical, with which we are surrounded. If we have any bowels of compassion, if we have any real love for Christ Who died for us,

we shall have pity on our brethren, and do what in us lies to remove from ourselves the stigma of being at once the most prosperous and most covetous, the most favored and most ungrateful, the most luxurious and hardest-hearted people, for whom the cup of vengeance is prepared.

May God have mercy on us, and forgive us our sins of omission as well as of commission! May His good Spirit pour into our hearts such a measure of grace as may enable us to battle successfully with all greedy and ostentatious tempers! May He give us a dread of hypocrisy, of professing more than we practise, of loving the praise of men more than the praise of God! May He keep us from deceiving others, or ourselves! May He make us liberal, generous, open-hearted, ready to give, and glad to distribute, and with all our other graces may He give us the grace of a lowly and an humble mind!

SERMON XIV.

ON PRAYER.

MATTHEW, vi. 5.

When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.

WE are sent into this world in order that we may go through such a course of discipline and trial as may fit us for a better; in order that we may learn by practical experience, that it is a happier thing to submit ourselves in all things to God, than to have a will of our own; in order that we may be taught that apart from God there is neither light, comfort, nor safety, and that in communion with Him is the soul's chief good to be found. Thus we are gradually prepared to enjoy heaven,—a place for which by nature we have no desire, and which, even were we admitted into it such as we are by nature, we should find to be no portion of happiness

to us, but a scene of insupportable constraint, wherein we should find nothing which would be in unison with our affections and desires.

Now, prayer being the most effectual method of bringing our souls into communion with God, Holy Scripture sets before us the duty of prayer in the strongest possible terms, and represents it as that which must occupy the greater portion of a Christian's life. "Watch and pray" is the exhortation of our Lord to His disciples. For them He provided a form of prayer, while His own life was a pattern and example of it. And the Holy Apostles were no less urgent in teaching their converts that prayer was to be the business of their existence. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." "Watch unto prayer." "Watch and pray always." "Pray without ceasing." "Continue instant in prayer." These, and a hundred other texts to the same purport, will readily occur to the recollection of all who are in the habit of reading their Bibles.

Accordingly, the Church has, from the

times of the Apostles, provided for her children that they should never be without opportunities of public prayer, well knowing that thus she had the best guarantee that private devotion would not be neglected. She has declared universally that, so far as in her lies, the people shall never be without places in which to pray, or without a priesthood to pray for them, and with them. It is, indeed, our shame, and guilt, and misery, here in England, that, for the most part, our churches are locked up from week's end to week's end; and that, except on Sundays, we may look in vain through the courts of the Lord's house for either priests or worshippers; but so long as the Prayer-book exists, we have a witness against us, for there it is enjoined that morning and evening prayer should be read daily in our churches throughout the year; and it seems to me that a clergyman is just as much bound to discharge this duty, when only two or three will come and join with him, as he is to baptize infants, or bury the dead which are brought to him.

But our sloth and unbelief, how much soever they may prevent the Church's intentions from being carried out, cannot prevent her from being a witness against us, her unthankful and disobedient children,—any more than they can prevent those who, in times past, amid much of error and superstition, yet had their churches open for prayer and praise night and day, and had their seven-fold course of daily prayer, from rising up in judgment against us; who are open-mouthed in our boastings of superior knowledge, purity, and devotion.

Yet, on the whole, it appears that, however defective we may be in our practice, we none of us make any question as to the *duty* of constant prayer, and therefore it is unnecessary that I should bring arguments to prove what you are quite prepared to admit; and I may, therefore, proceed at once to a consideration of the warning contained in the text. The Pharisees, like ourselves, fully admitted the necessity of prayer; and they went further than we do, for they appear to have been very diligent in the discharge

of their duty only ; unhappily, they prayed in such a way as to be guilty of the sin of hypocrisy.

Now there are people in the world who profess such a horror of the sin of hypocrisy, that they seem well nigh disposed to recommend the relinquishment of any habit which, by any possibility, might foster it. But was this the language of our blessed Lord? Far otherwise. He did not forbid His disciples to pray, because the Pharisees turned their prayers into a sin, but taught them how to pray in such a manner as that their prayers should not be turned into sin. “When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Now there is this difference between

this admonition and one which we considered in a former discourse, that to us at the present day there does not seem much temptation to fall into it. We are in danger, very many of us, of giving our alms in a public manner, for the purpose of gaining the applause of men, just as was the habit of the Pharisees of old ; but times and customs are so far altered, that nobody who did not wish to be thought a madman, would, now-a-days, stand praying at the corners of the streets. I am not expressing an opinion whether, abstractedly, there would be any impropriety in praying in such a situation ; I am simply stating a fact. Manners and feelings are changed ; *we* are rather *ashamed* of praying, than *proud* of it ; and were we to choose any public and conspicuous place like the corners of the streets for our devotions, we should not be respected but ridiculed. And *therefore*, the exact sin of the Pharisees is, perhaps, not to be found among us. Nobody is a hypocrite who has not some end to gain by his hypocrisy, and no advantage would arise to any man, in the present

state of society, from making such a public exhibition of himself, as that alluded to by our blessed Lord.

Nevertheless, Satan has not lost his advantage over us. He is ever skilful to adapt his snares to the tempers of the times: and when one form of temptation ceases to be attractive, he is never slow in finding another to supply its place; he is at no loss for expedients, and if he sees that one form of error has lost its power over us, he will readily prepare some more subtle method of seduction.

Now, let us consider how he tempts men to be hypocrites in their prayers at the present day, and among ourselves.

The Pharisees loved "to stand praying in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets," that they might be seen of men. They were so presumptuous as to assume the attitude of prayer for the mere purpose of producing an effect on the bystanders, while all the while they were not even attempting to lift up their hearts unto God, or if any of them were not altogether so profane and audacious as this, still they prayed from a wrong mo-

tive, and in such a manner as that their prayers were turned into sin. The probability seems to be, that those among them who were least ill-disposed were so self-deceived as to be, in a great measure, ignorant that they were committing any offence at all. They were unsuspecting of the depth of their own corruption, and had no knowledge of the motives that really actuated them. In the first instance, perhaps, they had been perfectly sincere and single-hearted, they had desired to serve God acceptably, and had entered upon His service, for its own sake, with zeal and devotion. By and by the notice of men came to them unsought; they found themselves spoken of as more religious than their neighbors; their society was courted by serious-minded persons; their opinions and actions were canvassed and talked about. There was something gratifying in this; it was an evidence, they persuaded themselves, that they were in truth leading a saintly life. And so the seed of vanity was sown in their hearts. And when the devil has once effected this, his work is well-nigh

done ; all the rest is easy, and follows almost as a matter of course. So we may presume it was with the Pharisees. The more they were admired, the more they prayed ; for admiration became necessary to them, and they could not live out of the excitement of public applause. And so by degrees, though they went on praying as much or more than ever, they contrived to substitute self in the place of God : they honored Him with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him ; they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God ; and without a suspicion of their grievous fall, or of the offensiveness of their conduct in His eyes, they believed themselves to be eminently pious ; yea, they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and they despised others, though all the while they were *hypocrites*.

Now if we consider the case of the Pharisees in this point of view, it will, I think, appear that persons at the present day are not without danger of falling into their sin, and the more so, perhaps, because at first sight it seems so very un-

likely that any of us should do so. I will exemplify what I mean by a few instances.

Among respectable people it is always in a man's favor, and is spoken of as a credit to him, that he is a regular church-goer, that he attends whenever he has an opportunity on the public ordinances of religion. Now let me ask whether it is not at least conceivable, that young persons might be found, who are in the habit of coming to church, not because God is their *first* object, but because they wish to please parents, or relations, or friends?

Might not a servant be found here or there, who, while he lives in what is called a religious family, will appear to be very attentive to his religious duties, but who, when he goes into a situation where none of these things are cared for, will become quite neglectful of divine worship? Are there many parishes, think you, in which no individuals might be pointed out (if we could read each other's hearts as God can) who come to church for the purpose of keeping well, as it is

called, with the clergyman, and with some secret thought of thereby benefiting their temporal interests as occasions arise? Again, in another class of life are there none who come to church for form's sake, and fashion's sake, and because they are used to it, rather than because God is in all their thoughts? Now, brethren, if an affirmative answer must be given, as I fear it must, to these questions, is there not evidence of Pharisaic hypocrisy among ourselves?

Let us go on to another instance.—We go to church, and, so far as lips and bodily motions are concerned, appear to be devout in our service of the Most High: but are we what we seem? Does it distress us if our thoughts wander? Do we strive to prevent them from wandering? Do we habitually consider in Whose presence we are, and Who it is that we address? Do we *say* prayers, or do we pray? Do we *feel* sorrow when we *express* it? *Are* we thankful when we *say* we are? I well know the difficulty of fixing our attention on sacred things as we ought to do, but are we, at

least, *trying* to be devout, at the time when before men we show all the externals of devotion? If not, here again is a further case of resemblance to the Pharisees.

Once more. Many of us, it is to be hoped, have the advantages of family prayer in our households. Now, are there any who will make a point of being at family prayers, where their presence or absence would be remarked, but who, nevertheless, are quite careless about their private prayers, or perhaps excuse themselves from saying them at all, on the plea that to join in the family prayers is sufficient? Would not such a habit as this savor strongly of hypocrisy?

And further, with respect to our private prayers. While we take good care to obey the first part of our Lord's injunction, by not praying as we stand at the corners of the streets, are we equally careful to attend to the remainder of His admonition? Do we enter into our closets, and shut to the door, and pray as diligently in private as in public? Should

we be equally distressed were we to forget our morning or evening prayers, as we should be if we were to find ourselves (mistaking the day) going about our week-day work on Sundays, when other people were preparing for church? If we were betrayed into such a sin as laughing or talking in God's immediate presence, in His house of prayer, I suppose we should, on reflection, be very much ashamed of ourselves, and very much grieved that we should have exposed ourselves to the condemnation of all reverent and serious-minded persons; but should we be as much ashamed and grieved at any irreverence or carelessness in our private devotions? If not, it must be admitted that we are so far like the Pharisees that we make more account of what men think of us, than of what we may be in the sight of God.

Lastly, I would observe that there is a danger to some, arising from the increased attention to Church observances, which it has been the privilege of our generation to witness.

Turn where we will, we find among

Churchmen a growing desire to avail themselves of such opportunities, as may be placed within their reach, of carrying out the system prescribed for their use in the Prayer-book. But a few years ago, when the revival of Divine service on the Festivals, or daily throughout the year, was spoken of, and more frequent administration of the Holy Communion recommended, the suggestions were met by the objection that such an attempt would be useless, for that people would not be induced to alter their established ways of going on. But they knew little of the living power that there is in Church ordinances, nor of the deep yearning of multitudes for them, who thus reasoned. Never, so far as I can learn, in a single instance, has an increase of services been without its results,—small at first, but gradually extending, even as the mustard seed, from being the smallest of seeds, will produce a tree in which the birds of the air can lodge.

They who have leisure, have generally, even from the first, been glad to devote more time to God and holy things ;

and they who have no leisure, have contrived to make it, so that there are now churches in this country, in which, every morning, two or three hundred men, in their laboring dresses, may be seen assembled in prayer, before they go forth to work for their daily bread.

Surely this is a most cheering symptom, among much that is disheartening, not to say appalling; it almost kindles the hope that, for *their* sake, the country may be spared, for had ten righteous men been found in it, even Sodom itself would not have been "set forth, for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

But because this is a good sign, so much the more sure may we be, that there is evil lurking near it; because this gives ground for trusting that many will be thereby called from Satan unto God, so much the more reason have we to expect that Satan will leave no means untried by which he may corrupt and destroy, or render inert what else would be full of promise.

Let us take heed then, as many of us as are gladly availing ourselves of such

increased means of grace as the Church puts within our reach, lest the devil, through his subtlety, and cunning lying in wait to deceive, should make all our labor in vain, which most assuredly he will do, if he can induce us to grow formal, to trust in forms, or to attend upon forms, for the purpose of gaining the applause of men.

With respect to the last point, indeed, there is not at present much danger: the tide has set in a contrary direction: but even calumny and reviling are not without their dangers, since they who are calumniated have always the temptation to think much of themselves, on that very account. And so likewise the feeling ourselves to be of a little flock who are serving God in His Church continually, keeping up the remembrances of His Saints of old, and His wonders of old time, observing fast and festival, and living by a rule of which the world without knows nothing, or, which knowing, it despises; all this has in it the seeds of the self-same danger into which the Pharisees fell. It may (or rather, through it,

Satan may) induce us to trust in our own righteousness and despise others ;—to set great store by forms and petty observances, and omit the weightier matters of the law ;—to “fast twice in the week and give tithes of all we possess,” and on that ground to grow presumptuous and self-confident.

“Salt is good ; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned ? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill ; but men cast it out.” And so, likewise, forms are good ; but if the forms have lost their spirituality, wherewith will they profit us ? they are altogether valueless ; they are positively evil.

Rest then, my brethren, not upon forms, but on Him to Whom it is the object of the Church’s forms to lead you. Be diligent and exact in carrying out the whole system which the Church prescribes to you ; but, when all is done, see that you are not trusting in your own imperfect obedience, or rather, I should say, in your own miserable deficiencies, but in Christ Who died to purchase our redemption. Pray without ceasing, continue instant in

prayer, and use gladly all the means which may aid you in acquiring the spirit of prayer; but set, meanwhile, a watch upon your hearts, lest any earthly motive mingle with and pollute your intercourse with the Most High. Be ye instant in prayer, both public and private, but very suspicious of yourselves all the while, and examine well lest there be lurking within some secret longing after human applause, some desire to be thought religious. Pray without ceasing; but when you pray, "be not as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

And "Oh Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and, in all our dangers and necessities, stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

SERMON XV.

ON FASTING.

MATTHEW vi. 17, 18.

Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

THE first point to which I would call your attention in the consideration of this passage, is the relation it bears to the context. It is the last of three instances adduced by our blessed Lord, in which, with respect to certain known and acknowledged duties, He put His followers on their guard against becoming hypocrites.

The two other points specified by Him were those of Almsgiving and Prayer. And as in neither of these instances does He think it necessary to insist on the observance of the duty, but only speaks of

the manner in which it is to be performed; so, here, He does not enjoin His followers to fast, for He assumes that they would do so, but shows them that there is a wrong as well as a right way of exercising this kind of self-denial.

He does not say, "*If* thou doest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee," or "*If* thou prayest, enter into thy closet," or "*If* ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance;" but "*when* thou doest alms," "*when* thou prayest," "*when* ye fast." It is taken as a matter of course that those who desire to serve God acceptably will do these things according to their abilities and opportunities, with glad and willing minds, without questioning or doubting. The three duties are, in this respect, put upon precisely the same footing. There may be cases in which it would be wrong to fast, in which a man has no alms to bestow, or in which retirement for the purpose of prayer is impossible, but these are the exceptions, not the rule; in ordinary cases, the discharge of any one duty is as much expected as the others.

Such, I think, at least would be the impression of any person who read the entire passage, if he could do so candidly, and without preconceived opinions. But in the present state of things there is not much probability that this view of the case will be readily admitted to be the true one, because there is a very strong repugnance among us to the act of fasting. We are a luxurious, pampered, self-indulgent people, who have altogether got out of the way of bodily mortification and self-denial, and to many the very name of fasting is an offence and an affront. Some excuse themselves on one ground, and some on another. With the plea that is commonly brought on the score of health I do not wish to join issue; but I desire to say a few words to those who allege that they do not fast, because fasting is not enjoined in Scripture. Prayer and alms-deeds, such persons say, are commanded again and again, but we find no law laid down on the subject of fasting.

Now to this I reply, in the first place, that it seems to me that there is certainly

a divine sanction for fasting in the precept appointing the Jewish great public Fast on the day of Atonement,* a day which, in its moral purpose, seems to correspond very much with the Church's intent in appointing the observance of Good Friday. And again, if the prophets were sent to command a special public fast, or to recognize and command the observance of those which were in use among the Jews, this also is a divine sanction.† Whatever was in practice under the Law, and is not abrogated by the Gospel, is still in force. We observe a Sabbath, but not the Jewish Sabbath: so we are to observe some fasts, but not the Jewish fasts.

Admitting, however, in the second place, that I can adduce no such imperative command with respect to bodily abstinence, as I can for prayer and alms-deeds; nothing so strong as "Pray without ceasing," or "Sell that ye have, and give alms;"—still for this an obvious reason may be alleged, which will tend

* Levit. xvi. 29—31, and xxiii. 26—32.

† Joel i. 14, ii. 15; Zech. vii. 5, viii. 19.

rather to confirm, than disprove the *general* obligation to fasting. Here and there, there may be some whose natural constitution and bodily infirmities are such, that it would be physically impossible for them to obey such a command without self-destruction. For *their* sake, doubtless, the command to fast was not made direct and universal; for we know that it was never God's purpose to lay on us more than we are able to bear, because our Lord Himself hath taught us that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" that is, as a holy man* explains it, "greater is the care to be taken of the health and life of man, than the keeping of the Sabbath." With regard to prayer, however, there are none who are accountable beings but can pray: and with regard to alms, the very poorest and most destitute man who lives may address his fellow sufferer in the words of St. Peter, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee;" may at least share his sorrows,

* Bede in loc.

and cheer him with kindness and sympathy.

But, my brethren, those who allege that their indisposition to fast arises from their being unable to find a direct command on the subject in holy Scripture, will do well to consider whither the carrying out of such a principle will lead them. Are they prepared to give up Infant Baptism, or the observance of the Lord's Day, or the blessing of the Church in marriage, or the Christian burial of the dead? Yet for none of these can we bring forward any express command. And yet, in behalf of fasting, we can allege a stronger scriptural warrant than for any of these. We can allege in its behalf, not only many examples of holy men under the elder Covenant,* not only much that has been written in the Prophets

* "The fast of Ai under Joshua; at Gibeah under the Judges; at Mizpah under Samuel; at Hebron under David; of Jeremia before the captivity; of Daniel under it; of Zachary after it: at Jerusalem, of the Jews, at the preaching of Joel; at Nineve, of the Gentiles, at the preaching of Jonas: all these . . . show that it was no stranger with God's people so long as the Law and the Prophets were in force."—Bp. Andrews' Serm.

and Psalms concerning it, but that it had the sanction of Him to Whom both the Law and the Prophets looked,—our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who fasted for forty days and forty nights, while He was being tempted of the devil. We can allege in its behalf, that, in the text and in other passages of the Gospel, He spake of it as of a custom which, at least, had within it the elements of usefulness to the souls of believers. We can allege in its behalf, that it was the constant habit of the Apostles and early disciples. We read of them approving themselves as ministers of God, as in other things, so “in fastings;”* St. Paul speaks of himself as “in fastings often.”† St. Luke tells us that it was while Cornelius,—that man of prayer and alms-deeds—was “fasting,”‡ the angel appeared unto him; and the same sacred writer both mentions the fastings of the Church at Antioch,§ and alludes in several places to the fastings which preceded the ordination of

* 2 Cor. vi. 5.

† Acts x. 30.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 27.

§ Acts xiii. 2

those who were admitted to the ministry of the Church.*

Nor did the practice cease with the Apostles and their contemporaries. Those who are acquainted with Ecclesiastical history are well aware that fasting always formed a part of the moral discipline of the ancient Church, and that the fasts of Lent and Pentecost, and Autumn, and Advent, and Epiphany, of the Wednesdays and Fridays, and at other seasons, were of early appointment, and generally received.†

The practice of our own Church before the Reformation, was the same as that of Rome, with whom she then held communion: nor in consequence of the Reformation has she rejected the use of fasting. On the contrary, above a fourth

* Acts xiv. 23.

† See Bishop Gunning on the Paschal, or Lent Fast, *passim*. Of the language in which the ancients speak of the advantage of fasting, let the following extract given by Bp. Gunning suffice. “Est jejunium pax corporis, membrorum decus, robor mentium, vigor animarum, castitatis murus, pudicitiae propugnaculum, civitas sanctitatis, magisterii magisterium, disciplinarum disciplina, Ecclesiasticae viae viaticum salutare.”

Chrysolog. de. Jejunio. Serm. 8.

part of the entire year,—the forty days of Lent, the Ember days, the Rogation days, the Vigils of a considerable number of Festivals, and all the Fridays in the year, except Christmas day, are appointed to be kept as fasts, and to be sanctified by self-denial, and mortification of the flesh. And our Church puts no obstacles in the way of those who may think it expedient to give up a still larger portion of the year to fasting in private, in order that the flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may obey all godly motions, in righteousness and true holiness.

It appears then, on the whole, that there is abundant warrant for fasting, both from the letter of Holy Scripture, from the examples of the Saints in all ages, and from the injunctions of our own Church : and this will be more than sufficient to induce those who desire to follow Christ and His servants, in all virtuous and godly living, to adopt the practice so far as it is in their power to do so. For such persons it would be enough if we could only show them that there was no harm in fasting, and that

it might by possibility aid them in the task of bringing themselves, body and soul, into subjection to the law of God : for they will gladly avail themselves of every help within their reach : but a practice which comes recommended to them as fasting does, will be received with thankfulness, and adopted at once.

To them, it will be no argument against it, to say that the custom has grown obsolete, and that few now-a-days practise it ; because in the first place, no earnest-minded Christian will ever think of taking the habits of the world as his rule of action ; and secondly, they who fast according to the directions given by our blessed Lord in the text, will fast in such a³ secret manner, that hardly anybody will know that they are doing so.

To them, it will be no objection against the custom to know that it is liable to abuse ; that some have fasted in order to gain applause from men ; that some it has led to self-righteousness, and others to formalism ; and that some have looked on it as an end, rather than as a means towards an end. These, the earnest-

minded Christian will look on as the dangers to be avoided: but he will not shun a certain advantage through fear of a contingent evil.

The Bible and the Church bid him fast, and therefore if he could himself see no conceivable good in fasting, he would feel himself bound to obey. He would endeavor to ascertain what rules had been laid down for his guidance, and having ascertained them, he would endeavor to do his best to carry them out in his practice.

And here the question presents itself, what rules has our Church prescribed on the subject? The answer is, she has given us no rules at all. She bids us fast, each of us according to our ability, but she does not tell us *how* to do so. And this was a most prudent and thoughtful course to pursue towards her children.

It has been found by experience that minute rules and petty distinctions about meats and drinks, could never be of universal application, and had a great tendency to foster Pharisaic hypocrisy. If, when flesh was forbidden, a man was to be allowed to eat as much as he would

of fish, or vegetables, what was it but a mockery, to say of such a man that he fasted? It was always a temptation to adhere to the letter of the rule instead of acting in its spirit. Accordingly, while our Church enjoins bodily mortification, she leaves the manner of it to the conscience of each individual. She acts upon the same principle as that of her Lord, when, in answer to the remarks of His disciples on the subject of the expediency or inexpediency of marriage, He replied, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. . . . *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*" The Church well knew that there are those who, from natural weakness of constitution, are unable to bear a total abstinence from food, for any considerable length of time; and others who would injure their health by any severity of discipline. Therefore she lays down no particular directions. As with respect to alms, she says, let every man give according to his ability, not grudgingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver, so with regard to fasting, she would have

each individual exercise such an amount of self-denial as the strength of his constitution will admit. It is no act of holiness to injure our health: and on the other hand it is no proof of zeal, to shrink from even making the experiment how far we can wean ourselves from self-indulgences. There may be some who, on a fast-day, could drop one meal, or even two, without faintness and exhaustion. Others, on the other hand, would suffer severely. Let each do according to his ability. He who can abstain, let him abstain. He who cannot, let him contrive to take food of a less palatable or of a coarser kind; or if even this is inexpedient, let him use some other self-denial which his constitution will bear; let him forego some expected pleasure, devote something to God's service which he had intended for his own; let him do something, in short, that is distasteful to him; not, of course, as if there was any *merit* in such a proceeding, but simply by way of habituating himself to self-denial, and mastering his corrupt and rebellious will. Fasting,—I cannot re-

peat it too often,—is not an end, but a means, and therefore if we are unable to avail ourselves of this means we should try another. In itself, fasting is nothing; it is only valuable when it helps us to root out sin, and anything which contributes to that design is just as useful as fasting.

“We are wont,” wrote St. Chrysostom, “to ask one another, how many weeks we have fasted during Lent; and we hear some answering two, another three, another all. But what advantage is it, if we have kept the fast and not improved our conduct? If a man tells you, I have fasted the whole of Lent, let your answer be, I had an enemy and am reconciled to him; I had a habit of reviling, and have left it off; I had a custom of swearing, and this evil propensity is checked. It is no use for a merchant to cross the seas, unless he returns home, laden with goods: nor is there any use in our fasting, if with the act itself, all further good ceases. If our fasting has consisted merely in abstaining from meals, when Lent has ended, our fast will have passed

away. But if our fast consists in abstaining from sin, when the fast has come to an end the benefit will still remain, and will lay up for us treasures in the heavens."*

Thus a Father of the Christian Church puts fasting upon its true principles, according to the light which Scripture had already thrown upon it. For what saith the Spirit, speaking by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah; of the difference between a counterfeit fast, and a true one? "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold ye fast, for strife, and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast as I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to lay sackcloth and ashes under him?

* Chrys. in Antioch : Hom : 16.

wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord ?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor, that are cast out, to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?

Enough has, I trust, been now said to satisfy you that while fasting is a duty clearly enjoined by the Bible and the Church, its acceptableness with God wholly depends upon the spirit in which it is observed, and the results to which it leads. But since, at the present time, when so very few are to be found who fast at all, or who have any notion of obeying the Church with readiness and simplicity, there seems less danger of Pharisaic hypocrisy existing among us in this particular than in many others, I will bring my remarks to a conclusion, with some general observations on fasting.

And first, I would exhort you to remember that fasting is but one point among several which should be attended to in a season of humiliation. Its accompaniments ought always to be strict self-examination, confession of sins, restitution where it is possible, prayer, meditation, and alms-deeds. If these things go together with our fasts, there is little danger that our bodily mortifications should become a snare to us, that we should do them in order to attract observation, or put any trust in them when done.

Secondly, with regard to the act itself, it must be regulated according to our ability.* Those who have never fasted should not attempt too much at first, and be specially careful lest their bodily discomfort should lead to peevishness and irritability, or incapacitate them for the discharge of their daily course of duty. Those, again, who are not strong in health, or who are exposed to hard labor, must

* "The four excusations are either bodily infirmity, or ordinary penury of diet from poverty, or necessity, of greater toil and bodily labor, or zeal of some greater good offering itself upon dispensing with the fast."

regulate their abstinence accordingly. Those who cannot fast at all will contrive some other means of mortification. If they be in the highest classes of society, they will take care that what ought to be a time of mourning is not turned by them into a time of feasting; they will neither go to friends' houses for such a purpose, nor will they invite friends to their own; they will give largely towards purposes of charity; they will deny themselves as much as possible; they will give themselves up to retirement and prayer. In other ranks of life the same kind of system will be pursued. Servants, perhaps, will desire of their masters that the weekly cost of their maintenance shall be reduced during Lent, and the sum so saved offered for some pious object. And so in all other cases. Where there is a will there is a way. Whoever is in earnest will find out some way for himself, and a far better way, probably, than others could point out to him, of bringing his body into subjection, and mortifying his natural appetites.

The main thing for us all to do is to

keep our eyes fixed on the injunctions and practice of our blessed Lord and His apostles. "It was the Spirit of God," observes an ancient Bishop of our Church, "which led Christ into the wilderness to fast there like a hermit: you may well know therefore what spirit it is that sets any one up to fast like a hypocrite." Our Lord's injunction in the text was levelled against the hypocrisy of the Jewish outward fasts, and that He might go at once to the very root of the evil which renders self-denial so necessary to us all, He added, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where your *treasure* is, there will your *heart* be also."

This is the sum of the whole matter. If we are able to fast, we should do so. We are exhorted to it by God, and the Church: but we must fast to God, not to the world; to our own hearts, not to

other men's eyes ; to conscience, not to form.

And think not, that if you so fast, you will lose your reward. No, you will have a witness in your own approving conscience and a witness in Him, Whose eye never slumbers, and Who records the feeblest effort made for His Son's sake in the path of holiness.

Deny yourselves, then, to follow Christ ; let each day have its daily cross, and you will learn, ere long, that what now seems hardest and bitterest to you, has in it a sweetness more exquisite than can be found in self-indulgence and worldly joy. Life will become what it was intended to be, a continual preparation for death ; and temporal self-denial, a foretaste of eternal enjoyment.

And when the toil and travail of this miserable world are ended, you will look back on the mortifications, and prayers, and tears of your earthly pilgrimage, as the means which, under grace, and for your Saviour's merits, have borne you safe and undismayed to the mansions of the Saints in light,—and to the joyous Alleluias of your heavenly home !

SERMON XVI.

OF SOWING BESIDE ALL WATERS.

ISAIAH xxxii. 20.

Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.

THERE seems little doubt that the prophecy contained in the chapter from whence this text is taken, had a primary, and secondary fulfilment; the latter being the greater event, since the Messiah Himself was connected with it; while the former related only to the temporal fortunes of the house of Judah at a period but few years subsequently to that in which it was delivered. Thus type and antitype meet in the same prediction.

The sovereign alluded to, as "the King" that should "reign in righteousness," was Hezekiah.* If the prophecy

* See Lowth and Pole (iii. 329) in loc., and also Townsend's Chron. Arr.

was uttered in the days of Ahab, we may read its accomplishment in the early part of Hezekiah's reign: but if that monarch was actually on the throne, when Isaiah published his tidings of future good, then we must look for its accomplishment in the period immediately succeeding the invasion of the Assyrians, and the slaughter of Sennacherib; when, after "many days" of trouble, God's people were permitted (as it had been foretold they should) to "dwell in peaceable habitations, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places;" when "the work of righteousness was peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever:" when the effect (that is, as Bishop Lowth explains the passage) of God's goodness, and man's reformation, should give peace and unanimity at home, and freedom and security from the invasion of enemies from without.

There is, as I have said, no question but that the prophecy before us had its immediate and primary fulfilment in the days of Hezekiah; but after all allowance made for the uncertainty of inter-

pretation, and for a fact which is not without its weight, namely, that none of the writers of the New Testament have applied any part of this chapter to our Saviour, still it seems impossible not to admit that there are portions of the prediction which relate to happier times than Hezekiah ever lived to enjoy; and that when we read of days in which "the Spirit shall be poured from on high," in which "the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken;" in which "the heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly,"* we shall surely err through excess of caution, if we restrict the words of the Prophet to events which took place in Hezekiah's reign, and do not allow ourselves to believe that the Holy Spirit had a two-fold purpose in promulgating this prediction, of which the most important was to shadow out the glorious increase of grace and holiness, which in a latter day should be produced under the government of

* See Isaiah xxxii. 3, 4, 15.

Christ, and the privileges which should be then poured forth upon the Church.

I believe that it was to this latter dispensation more especially, indeed I think I might say, exclusively, that the words which I have chosen for my text allude ; and which I shall now endeavor to explain to you, in the hope that, by God's mercy, they may assist you to the discharge of a most important Christian duty, for which I fear that many persons scarcely hold themselves to be responsible.

“Blessed,” saith the son of Amoz, “are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.”

Blessed (that is, and the prophet seems to be drawing a contrast between those happy times, and his own), blessed shall those spiritual husbandmen be, who, instead of ministering to a stiff-necked and gainsaying people, wasting their strength in a barren and a weary land, where no water is, shall sow their precious seed in a soil duly prepared for its reception, wherever there is moisture to promote

its growth, and wherever a river can be found to irrigate and fertilize the lands through which it flows. Thither shall these husbandmen resort, there shall they plough the soil as best they can;—the ass and the ox (hitherto forbidden by Moses' law to be yoked together*) shall be united in one toil; distinction shall no longer be made between Jew and Gentile; what God hath cleansed shall no longer be called common; the Church Catholic shall comprise all; all who will, shall be led in green pastures beside the waters of comfort.

There is a parable you see, here, as well as a prophecy.

Now the parable is this. The seed is the Word of God. They who are said to be blessed are those who having valued that Word themselves above gold, yea, above much fine gold, desire to make others appreciate it likewise, and avail themselves of the privileges within their reach. And the land "beside all waters," in which it is to be sown, is the hearts of

* Deut. xxii. 10.

all who receive it, and suffer it to take root within them.

In a few words, therefore, we may state the Prophet's meaning to be this; that every one who endeavors to co-operate (if I may so speak) with the Holy Ghost, in inducing those who are within the sphere of His influence to become faithful followers of Christ, shall receive a special blessing.*

Here then, brethren, are the questions which I would have each of you very solemnly put to yourselves; How far have any of you desired to obtain this blessing? What steps have you hitherto taken to secure it?

Knowing as we all must, both *what* we are, and *where* we are,—that we are weak and frail, and fallen creatures, living in an evil world, where *everything* from within, and from without, is continually tempting us to our ruin, it might have been expected that for our own sake, and for our brethren's sake, our lives would

* “Felices sunt Evangelii ministri, qui omnes nullo neque docentium, neque docendorum, *gentis* discrimine docent.”

CASTALIO IN POLE.

be spent in mutually assisting each other, in mutual warnings and encouragements, and in striving to attract all, over whom we have any influence, to come and tread that narrow heavenward path, in which our daily prayer is, to be preserved ourselves.

But is this the case? is this the general way with mankind? does our experience give us any such favorable view of human nature, of our mutual sympathy for each other, of our mutual interest in each other's welfare, as to justify us in the conclusion, that the spiritual good of our fellow creatures is at all a matter of deep and absorbing interest to us?

God who seeth and knoweth all things, knows our hearts better than we do ourselves, and when He thought it needful to proclaim that He had a blessing in store for them "that sow beside all waters;" for those who should exert themselves to bring their fellow creatures to a knowledge and a practice of the truth; He knew what was in man, and that *selfishness* (by which I mean, that un-

holy self-love, which the New Testament speaks of as opposed to the love of God) was the strongest feature in his character.

Do I seem to speak harshly? The matter is one which we may soon put to the test. Among us all here present, is there one who will undertake to say, that, even within the narrow limits of his own family and kindred, it is his constant endeavor to make God's way better known, and His will better obeyed? Can a man, for instance, say that he does, who, with respect to his own children, is more eager to help them on in the world, than to make them brave and steadfast soldiers of Christ crucified, who, though in the world, are not of it?—Can any man say that he does, who, when he sees a kinsman or a friend habitually sinning against God, or leading a careless life without thought of, or care for religion, hesitates through false delicacy, or false shame, or from the fear of giving pain, to warn him of his danger? Can any one say that he does, who is not systematically framing his own life and conversation in such a manner as to adorn the

doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things ; to let his light shine before men, to give no offence in anything, to throw no stumbling-block in a weaker brother's path, to set no doubtful example for the young, to put no dangerous temptation before the inexperienced ; but, on the contrary, to make religion appear so lovely in the eyes of men, her ways so full of pleasantness, and her paths of peace, as to win them towards that, from which their natural impulse is to flee ?

Alas, my brethren, I fear that when we come to examine ourselves fairly in these particulars, few among us will be found who can avouch for themselves, that, so far as human infirmity will permit, they are uniformly striving to make even those who are nearest and dearest to them, and to whom they are bound by the closest ties of blood and affection, such as, in their hearts, they know God would have them to be, such as the voice of conscience tells them *they* might contribute to make them. But how limited and contracted a view of our duties would *this* be, even if we realized it, and carried

it out in our practice ! The text gives us another measure by which we may learn our responsibilities. We are there taught that if we would receive a blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation, we must "Sow beside *all* waters ;" not merely on the banks of this favored stream, which we hallow with the associations of childhood, or beside the margin of that glassy lake, on which we have seen the sunshine glittering, in our happiest hours ; but we must "sow beside *all* waters," the wild and the headlong cataract, the dark and stagnant pool, as well as beside the clear and sparkling watercourses which our fancy loves. How little soever may be the interest we feel in the region around us, how unpromising soever may be the aspect of the sky above us, how parched and arid, bleak and desolate, or rank and choked up with weeds, may be the aspect of the soil, we must remember that our part is to follow the example of Him who causeth His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. We must

be husbandmen diligent and wise; we must put our hands to the plough, and then sow the good seed, leaving it to Him to give the precious fruits of increase, at Whose Word "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear;" and Who, "when the fruit is brought forth, immediately putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

But what is the seed which we are to sow? It is to be the implanting of faith, of Christian principle, of godly fear in our fellow Christians' hearts. It is to be the "word in season," "the cup of cold water" given for Christ's sake, "the soft answer" that turneth away wrath, the friendly warning, the affectionate expostulation, the honest, yet humble, expression of opinion, the cheerful encouragement; all these are various kinds of good seed. The good seed is sown when we "hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost:" but, believe me, my brethren, the best and most fruitful seed of all is, the quiet, consistent example of a holy

life; faith that worketh by love,—faith unfeigned, and that love which is the fulfilling of the law.

Here, then, is seed which all may sow; here is seed which they who love God will sow “beside all waters.” Young or old, rich or poor, all may sow good seed. Wherever you are, whatever may be your calling, there is still a field before you into which you may cast the precious grain. In your families or in the world, among strangers or friends, amid your most active occupations as well as in the seasons of leisure, you have, each of you, in his own sphere and capacity, the opportunity of setting that in the soil which may hereafter take root and flourish, to the endless benefit of yourself and others. Each, in his respective walk, may leave behind him the trace of a good example, for the guidance, and comfort, and encouragement of his brethren.

I know it may be said that the attempt to do good universally, to bring all our friends, acquaintance, and dependents to obedience to the laws of the Gospel, is a disheartening, a thankless, a hopeless

task. But what then? Granting the assertion to be true, which, of course, I do not, ought the difficulty or even impracticability of what he attempts to be an hindrance to one who has faith in Christ, and in the strengthening grace of His Spirit? Surely no.

The fact is, that if the undertaking seem disheartening, *that* is your own fault: but thankless it is not; hopeless it is not. It is not, cannot be thankless to those who have faith in the promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." Discouragement is a trial, and ingratitude is a trial, but who are we that we should expect to escape trial? "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient." The good seed you have sown may long lie dormant, but who can say that when the favorable opportunity ariseth it will not revive and grow, and bring forth precious increase? The working of the leaven may not be seen at once, but who, on that account,

will venture to deny that when it has been fairly mingled with the mass, the whole shall not be leavened?

And as for those who would speak of the task as hopeless, all I can say is that "hopeless," is a term which the Christian will never apply to his Christian exertions. *He* must hope against hope; and, as I have already said, weak indeed must be his faith, if he cannot support himself under the recollection, that amid the disappointments of this nature, he is but bearing a portion of his Master's cross, and that, at any rate, he is working both for, and with the Holy spirit of God.

If, however, you tell me that you find the attempt to recall the sinner from the error of his ways is a *disheartening* task, then I must assure you, that that very fact, shows that you are working altogether upon a wrong principle. If you are laboring to promote the good of others, and expecting the reward of pleasurable feelings and gratifying emotions from the success of your labors,—painting visionary scenes of earthly bliss and conscious satisfaction in the success of pious exer-

tions, then I tell you at once that you are laying your foundations in the sand, encouraging hopes that never can be realized while human nature continues what it is, and that your exertions will begin, continue, and end in disappointment. If you would really promote the cause of religion among your fellow creatures, you must follow the system (if I may so venture to express myself) adopted, and be content with the treatment received by your Saviour. You will pray, and labor, and exert yourself in behalf of others, without being sanguine as to any immediate and visible result of your labors, your exertions, or your prayers. You will not "seek great things"* for yourself: you will be content if you can turn one sinner from the error of his way. For, as I have already asked, Whose disciples are you? Is it not enough that the disciple should be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord? What can be the amount of your weariness and painfulness, of your sorrows and disappointments, when compared with *His*? Why

* Jeremiah xxv. 5.

are *you* to expect thanks and gratitude when so little awaited *Him*?

“If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? do not even the publicans the same? If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.” But, my brethren, this is thankworthy, to love, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: “and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest, for He is kind to the unthankful and the evil.”

No; the course for us to pursue is to go on steadily, quietly, consistently, exerting ourselves in the cause of Christ and His Gospel, sowing the good seed beside *all* waters, not devoting ourselves to one, and forgetting another, but making ourselves, so far as we can, generally useful to all, trying to lead *all*, whom we can influence, with us in the path to heaven, and encouraging them in the words of Moses to the Midianite of old:

“ We are journeying to the land of which the Lord hath said I will give it you ; *come thou with us, and we will do thee good.*”

Our duty is to labor, each in our several stations, to promote the spiritual welfare of all whom we can reach whether by word or good example. Much, my brethren, to encourage you, much to delight you, much that will be gratifying to your feelings, you will undoubtedly meet with. And you need neither be insensible to such returns, nor unthankful for them, but *they* are not the things, the hope of which must incite you to exertion.

What you do must be done for *Christ's* sake ; because you love Him ; because you love His little ones, and “ His brethren that are in the world ;” because you desire to be like Him, and to follow His steps ; because from Him, and Him only, you look for your reward.

This must be your motive, your principle of action. In this, amid disappointments, you shall find support and encouragement ; in this you shall assuredly find hereafter, your eternal recompense of glory.

Bliss more perfect than tongue can tell, or heart conceive, shall be the portion of those for whom even the lowest place in heaven is prepared: but if, as we stand before the throne of God, redeemed ourselves, and absorbed in the reality of our own happiness, and the mercies of a Saviour's love,—if, I say, that joy can receive an addition which will overwhelm us with its fulness;—yea, if, in our unfading crown of glory, one more jewel may be yet inserted, which shall increase its blinding lustre, and enhance its inestimable value, that addition to our joy shall be to find the seed we have sown beside all waters, ripened for an harvest, whose fruit,—“good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” is now returned into our own bosoms;—that jewel in our crown shall be the knowledge that many, yea, that *one* immortal soul, aye, of the poorest, the weakest, the most ignorant of mankind, has been brought, through our instrumentality, to the Cross of Christ, and that we with him, and he with us, are now secure for ever amid the joys of our Lord.

SERMON XVII.

THE PROMISES AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO
EXERTION.

[A SERMON FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY.]

LUKE, xiv. 22.

And yet there is room.

“A CERTAIN man,” said our blessed Lord, in reply to one who had expressed his sense of the blessedness of those to whom it should be given to eat bread in the kingdom of God,—“A certain man made a great supper, and bade many : and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come ; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it : I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray

thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and, therefore, I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

It can be scarcely needful, my brethren, for me to remind you that this parable was addressed originally to the Jews, and had its primary reference to their reception of God's proffered mercies in Christ Jesus. They had been first invited as the most favored guests to the "great supper." The lost sheep of the house of Israel were first called into the fold. To them the Gospel was first preached.

But they refused the gracious invitation: they would not be convinced in spite of the clearest evidence that God could give or man receive, that the Lord Jesus was He to whom all the prophets gave witness; their pride and their prejudices forbade them to acknowledge *Him* to be the Messiah, Who confessed unhesitatingly that His kingdom was not of this world; they shut their ears against the "glad tidings of great joy;" they evil-intreated the messengers; yea, they crucified the King's Son,—the Eternal Son of God.

And so in due time, the punishment threatened in the parable, came upon them. Not one of those who were bidden and still refused to come, were made involuntary partakers of the privileges of the Gospel. In the path they had chosen they were allowed to walk; in the choice they had made they were permitted to abide. They were left to themselves to receive the recompense that was meet, namely, that they should eat the fruit of their own devices. In a few years after they had filled up the measure of their

iniquities, by rejecting and crucifying the Redeemer, those dreadful judgments of God, long foretold, all came to pass: their house was left unto them desolate; their beloved Zion, the city of David, was miserably overthrown by the Roman armies; myriads of their people were destroyed by famine and sword; myriads were led away captive, their place and name as a nation were known no more; and they accomplished the predictions which they had disbelieved, by becoming "an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither the Lord" hath "led them."

To the Jews, then, primarily, was the parable spoken; but it was not spoken to them alone. Like all other similar discourses of our gracious Lord, it was so framed as to convey its admonitions to the Church in all ages, and but little observation is required to detect beneath its surface much which is full of reproof, of correction, of instruction in righteousness to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

To us, sinners of the Gentiles, admitted

by God's free grace into the Church's fold, belongs the application of the parable in its spiritual, as to the chosen people of Israel of old, in its literal sense. We are they,—the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, the dwellers under hedges, and by the highway side,—who were called to the supper, when the first invited guests had excused themselves.

Let us then attend to this application of the parable reverently, and study those parts of it which more immediately concern ourselves.

He who makes the great supper, and bids many, is Christ our Lord. By the supper is meant that Gospel kingdom into which we were all called and admitted, when by Holy Baptism we were made partakers of its present privileges, were allowed to appropriate to ourselves its gracious promises, and admitted to the hope of its glorious rewards. Those who are sent to invite us to this heavenly feast, to call us to repentance, faith, and salvation, are the successors of the Apostles, the ministers of the Church Catholic, and all other means, which God of His

great mercy uses to bring us to Himself. The excuses sent by those who are thus invited, are still the same which the Jews alleged, to wit, the business, and the cares, and the pleasures, and the alluring sins of this present evil world.

Day by day, in each successive age, since the parable was first spoken, God has been sending out His servants everywhere, to invite new guests to the Gospel feast. Multitudes which no man could number, have been regaled by it, and nourished up to everlasting life thereby; "and yet there is room,"—ample room for more at the same board. All that hunger may come, and that thirst, may come, and both shall be satisfied. The hungry shall be filled with good things, and even the rich shall not be sent empty away.

Still the invitation goes forth, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" And, "let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" Still are the servants of the Most High, sent into all the world, to call mankind to avail themselves of the blessings placed within their reach. May

we at least, my brethren, not receive the grace of God in vain! May we not turn our backs upon the feast which He has so graciously spread for us! May we not perish, as multitudes before us have done, by making light of that which, when once lost, is irrecoverable!

“And yet there is room,”—Heaven, then, for Christ’s sake, and through His merits, is accessible to all! “Him that cometh unto me,” saith He, “I will in no wise cast out.” He rejects none who truly turn to Him with honesty and sincerity of purpose, but has compassion on their manifold infirmities, strengthens them in their weakness, and intercedes with the Father for them all. He died for our sins, rose again for our justification, and ascended up on high to be our advocate. By virtue of his meritorious sacrifice, He not only made atonement for our sins, reconciling us to His Father, that He may love us as He loveth Him; but He has likewise prayed the Father to keep us in His name, to keep us from the evil, even as we have vowed to renounce it; to sanctify and make us holy, even as

by our privileges we are engaged to become so; that thus we may become perfect in one, as He and the Father are: and so may be like unto God (who have already been made His children), partakers of the Divine nature while we are upon earth, and afterward partakers of the marriage-supper of the Lamb in heaven, where yet "there is room" for us all. "In my Father's House," saith He, "are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

O glorious and gracious promise! O blessed place! what a miserable thing it is that we cannot realize both the one and the other better than we do! that we cannot close our eyes and ears, and shut the avenues of our hearts, and become so wholly spiritual as to form some notion of the deep, unutterable bliss of a portion in God's presence! How poor, and cold, and dead are our purest and best imaginations respecting it! And all-imperfect and unsatisfying as they are,

who can but long to be there, where we shall have parted from this miserable and naughty world, and all our defilements, through the lusts of the flesh and the wiles of Satan, shall be purged and done away; and our earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, and we shall be clothed upon, and mortality be swallowed up of life; and the world, the devil, and the flesh shall find no place there; we shall be no longer led into temptation, shall be delivered from every evil, and the fear of falling shall exist no longer; we shall be free from all manner of sin, and, by consequence, from all manner of suffering. God will never be offended, and we shall never be afflicted any more; all tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.

But who are we, my brethren, that we should venture to hope for such things? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, what hope is there for us? For what are we compared with the Saints of old? —(those, to whose memory this day's festival is consecrated, and for the light of

whose example we are now blessing God!) Can we hope for admission into their inheritance, weighed down as we are, by the grievous burden of our sins?—Blessed be God, there is room for us, though the passage thereunto be too narrow for us, *together with our sins*, to enter in! No: our sins must be left behind. They must be laid at the foot of the Cross: and *then* the good Shepherd will own us as His sheep, will call us by our names, and admit us into His fold.

But is there this hope for *all*? are all allowed to run in the race? are all permitted to strive for admission? For heaven must needs be a large place, that can hold such a multitude of inhabitants as are already there. Daniel saw thousands upon thousands of happy spirits ministering unto God, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him. Angels of every grade, Cherubim and Seraphim, Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers,—multitudes which no man could number, the ancient inhabitants of that blessed place,—pure, and sinless, and undefiled, are ranged

around the footstool of the Eternal, "and yet there is room."

The glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, will doubtless have their portion there, praising God eternally, casting down their crowns of gold, amid the sea of glass and the rainbow-throne: but heaven hath many mansions; there yet is room.

The Patriarchs and Worthies of the elder covenant, "who died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and who, being persuaded of them, embraced them," and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth;—righteous Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses; Gideon, and Barak, and Sampson, and Jephthah; David also, and Samuel and the Prophets, —the cloud of witnesses, in short, that compass us about,—these will ultimately have their resting-place in that "better country," "the heavenly," which on earth they so diligently sought;—even in the City which hath foundations, whose

Builder and Maker is God. But we need not fear exclusion, for He that overcame the sharpness of death hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.—“And yet there is room.”

There too shall be assembled that mighty multitude of whom the beloved disciple speaks in the visions of the Apocalypse, who, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands, give honor to God and the Lamb.—And *we* may be among them, for “yet there is room.”

The faithful dead of every age and clime, those pious followers of a crucified Redeemer, “of whom the world was not worthy,”—who, in their measure, like Him have borne their cross,—have fought the good fight of Faith, and have come, perhaps, out of great tribulation, or been “destitute, afflicted, tormented,” will all be there, for God hath given them the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. His they were in time, members of His One Body, sanctified by His One Spirit, and His they will be in eternity, washed from their sins with His blood, and clothed in robes pure and white which

He shall give them. In number they may be numberless, multitudinous as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea's broad shore, but God's own Word assures us that the golden streets of the heavenly Jerusalem are a thoroughfare which is never closed; and its gates of pearl "shall not be shut at all by day; and there shall be no night there;" that whole "nations of them that be saved shall walk in the light of it;" but that yet "there is room."

Room for the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

Room for those that mourn, for *there* they shall be comforted.

Room for those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for *there* they shall be filled.

Room for the merciful, for *there* they shall obtain mercy;—for the peace-makers, for the meek, for the pure in heart, for *there* they shall see God.

Room for the weary, and the heavy laden, for *there* they shall have rest.

Room for *all*, who, walking in the steps of Christ, our Saviour, shall crucify the flesh, with its affections and its lusts.

Seeing then, brethren, that such promises as these have been made to us by Him, Whose name is Faithfulness and Truth, with what motives to unwearied exertions are we supplied! In what unceasing prayer, and constant perseverance, and unshrinking self-denial, should we pass our days, mortifying, and killing all vices in us; that so by the aid of that Holy Spirit, Who dwelleth in us, we may be made meet for admission into that blessed place! How diligently, and heartily should we implore Him, to prosper the growth of that heavenly seed, which He sowed in our hearts at Holy Baptism,—and to give us precious increase, that so we may have abundant “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

And while we thus seek strength and assistance from on high, as knowing that without that aid, our own efforts will end in nothing but shame and disappointment, how zealous, and watchful, and pains-taking, and devoted, should we be, “lest a promise being left us of entering into rest,” any of us should, in the end, come short of it.

To those among my hearers (and I confidently hope there are many such), who are honestly desiring and striving to lead the life of Saints,—but who, nevertheless, are subject (as all must be, on this side the grave) to the danger of falling,—to such persons, can there be a stronger incitement to cheerful and untiring exertion, or a higher source of support and consolation, amid the fatigues of their pilgrimage, and the perils of their warfare, than the remembrance that there is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” reserved in heaven for them, in those mansions, where they shall see their Redeemer face to face, and know even as they are known?

Again. Are there any now present, who are leading careless lives, with their lamps untrimmed, and their loins ungirded;—living, in short, “without God in the world;” for this world, and not for God; content to dwell in it for ever, and with no aspirations after things unseen; slothful, self-indulgent, without in-

ward principle, and so letting things take their chance, and influenced only by accident, or fashion? Then let me beseech them to remember, that although *as yet*, "there is room," they have need to take heed betimes, while the day of salvation lasteth, for the night cometh, when no man can work. "Then shall it be too late to knock, when the door shall be shut, and too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice."

Lastly: are there any, who know that they have wilfully grieved the Holy Spirit, by a deliberate breaking of their Baptismal vows, and a deliberate surrender of themselves to Satan, the world, and the flesh; and who now feel the iniquities of their past lives with an overwhelming and almost despairing sense of their deep guiltiness,—some weary and heavy laden soul, perhaps, that scarce dares to hope for pardon, nor even to "lift up his eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh his help,"—who is at length conscious of his responsibilities and his omissions, and who would now turn and seek for refuge, where alone is the hope of pardon;—

then, to such an one am I bound to offer the consoling reflection, that to him, and to such as he, is the word of this salvation sent. The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind of the parable,—they who had been worsted by the adversary, were *compelled*, with gentle importunity, to fill the vacant places at the rich man's board. And even thus it is that Christ our Lord, the seeker of the wanderers and the Saviour of the lost, invites the returning sinners. Your present sorrow for the past is a proof that He has not cast you off for ever; and though, in consequence of your grievous fall, it behooves you to go mourning all your life long, still there is no cause for faithless despondency. His word is sure; His promises fail not. His blood cleanseth from *all* sin which is repented of and forsaken. It will cleanse *your* sins as well as others'. Follow, obey, and hope in Him, and he will not exclude you from that heaven, the gates of which, when He had overcome the sharpness of death, He opened to all believers. Press on hopefully, for as yet there is room. Press

on in faith, nothing wavering; in continual penitence and humiliation, in prayer and watchfulness, in charity and every other good work.

Let the errors of your life past form the subject of a daily sorrow, working in you a repentance not to be repented of. And then, though, through the guilt of former transgressions, this world can never be otherwise than a vale of tears to you, though now you must needs go weeping along your way, bearing forth precious seed, you doubtless shall come again with joy bringing your sheaves with you. You shall stand in your lot at the end of days, with others, who, like yourselves, have come out of great tribulation, redeemed by Him Who is the Church's Deliverer from death and the grave; Who poured forth His blood like water to save you from the one, and has made the other the portal to the inheritance of the Saints in light.

SERMON XVIII.

OF DYING DAILY.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 31.

I die daily.

THE doctrine set forth in these few words seems to be this, that we must die while we live, in order that we may live when we die; that our whole life must be a kind of rehearsal of that which is inseparably connected with the dissolution of the body, a surrender of earthly interests, hopes, affections, passions, pursuits, and an entire indifference to those things which alone, in the opinion of the world, make life worth having; that our course of existence must be a type or shadowing forth of the agony of a dying bed, in so far as that is (or ought to be) accompanied by a patient endurance of suffering, a cheerful resignation to God, a trust-

ful submission to His will, a steadfast faith in His mercies through Christ, a thankful receiving of His fatherly chastisement, an uncomplaining spirit under the prospect of separation and bereavement, an earnest longing after the invisible world, an eager desire to see Him that is invisible, a looking for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come ; that we must habitually consider ourselves as mere strangers in this world, who are on pilgrimage to another ; and that so far from being dissatisfied with our condition, or allowing ourselves to be ungrateful, and to think it gloomy, and a hardship that our life is, in some sort, the protracted struggle of a living death, we must "count it all joy when we fall into temptation," and we must "glory in tribulations;" as knowing that "tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope : " yea, we must be glad to lose all things and suffer all things, if only we may "win Christ and be found in Him," if we may but "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and

the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to His death; if by any means" we "might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

It cannot fail to be in the remembrance of all, that the text forms part of St. Paul's exposition of the doctrine of the resurrection,—that most awful yet consolatory portion of Scripture which the Church has selected as the lesson for the burial-service, and on the strength of which she bids our mourners commit their departed friends to the ground "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself."

Into the general scope and bearing of the Apostle's arguments in favor of the doctrine he was inculcating, it is unnecessary that I should enter at present, as its connection with the subject upon which I intend to address you is not immediate. It may be sufficient, therefore, to mention that the text forms part of

one of those reasons which he alleges in confirmation of the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection, and his own belief in it. If, he argues, we Christians did not unhesitatingly believe that we should rise again after death, why should we lead such lives as we do? why submit ourselves to everything which can make life most miserable? Why continue we thus to chase a mere delusion? why thus submit to persecution and tribulation hourly, yet without an object? I declare by those hopes which I have in Him Whose servant I profess myself, my daily afflictions which I suffer for the Gospel are equal in their agony to death itself. "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

So the Apostle testifies of himself, and so in his second epistle he speaks of his condition more fully. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that

the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

Here then, brethren, is the rule for us to follow. Our mortal life must be a daily death, in conformity with the sufferings of Christ. For His sake we shall be content to "be killed all the day long." With Him, and for Him, we shall gladly suffer, that so in the end we may reign with Him.

Perhaps, nay, I should say, most probably, to some who hear me, this description of the Christian's life on earth may seem unpalatable, forbidding, repulsive. And yet, I think, if you will search the Scriptures fairly and candidly you will find that I have spoken truth. We shall there see ourselves spoken of as being in possession of many privileges, blessings, and mercies: these we are allowed, nay, enjoined to use with thankfulness. And more than this, we are encouraged to "rejoice evermore," and to "be of good comfort;" and yet, on the whole, the Christian life is represented to us as one of sternness and severity, such as may be best described by a "dying daily."

Is this an offence to you? is it a stumbling-block in your path and a discouragement to you? do you feel deterred, and inclined to make no further advance in a religion which seems to exact such hard service from you? Remember this, then, that in the strong language of Scripture *you are dead already*. Since you came into the world you have never been otherwise than dead. When born into the world you were dead in trespasses and sins. God, however, took pity on you and changed your condition; but you are still dead, though in a different sense. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—"We be dead with Christ."—"Know ye not," asks St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

And this doctrine our Church sets before us in her collect for Easter Eve,

wherein she prays God, that as we are "baptized into the death of His blessed Son, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with Him." And still more emphatically, in the Office of Public Baptism, she prays for the child to be baptized, "that the old Adam may be buried," and that "all carnal affections may die in him." And subsequently, when he has been baptized, she speaks of him as being "dead unto sin," and as being "buried with Christ in His death," and prays, that as "he is made partaker of the death" of the Son of God, he "may also be a partaker of His resurrection."

Thus, both Scripture and the Church teach us to look upon ourselves as dead to this world, from the moment we are brought into covenant with God: but since, to each of us is allotted a longer or shorter period of sojourning therein; and since, throughout the course of our sojourn, we are brought into contact with the world continually, our condition may be fairly spoken of as a dying daily. Our business is to root out, destroy, and kill

those vices, which, as evil weeds, are springing up in us unceasingly. We have, as St. Paul says, to "crucify the old man;" to kill, that is, those corrupt tempers, and appetites, which are natural to us, and which remain in us though we have been made regenerate, but which are at variance with the love of God. And this can only be done, by a process of torment, slow, and lingering, like that experienced by a victim on the Cross. We cannot say to a lust, or carnal appetite, Begone, and return no more. We cannot cast out the evil spirit at once; all we can do is to struggle with it, and resist it; to keep every entrance by which it could gain admission, fast and closed. We cannot destroy the noxious plant at once, but we may tear off each bud as it shoots forth, and scrape away the nourishing soil from the roots, and prevent the genial warmth of the sun from shining on it, and the rain from refreshing it. And thus acting, we shall in time get rid of it in great measure. It will become weak, and dwindle away: and so long as we exercise a watchful care respecting

it, it will be unable to revive to our hurt. Yet, as all this is an anxious and toilsome process, those who are engaged in it, may be described as dying daily. Their life is a course of perpetual mortification; of killing and slaying those things which else would have strength to kill and slay them. "Ye are dead," writes St. Paul to the Colossians, "and your life is hid with Christ in God, . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

It appears, then, on the whole, that our condition in the world is this. We entered it, so to speak, in a state of living death; and while we continue in it we must die daily, in order that when our mortal bodies suffer death, we may, for Christ's merits, have a portion assigned us in His kingdom of life and glory.

Now, it is not to be denied, that such a view of life must needs be repugnant to those who have not learned to consider the working out their own salvation as the one thing needful. Youth and health

would be glad to look on life as a calm, unruffled scene of sunshine, which no clouds should overcast. The world, the devil, and the flesh, have but one advice to those who are inclined to yield to their influence. "Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the day of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." But never would these ensnarers remind him that for all these things God will bring him into judgment.

I say it is not to be denied that religion, viewed as involving a continual struggle with our natural appetites, has something very austere and unattractive in it; and it seems hard at first to understand how her ways can be ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace.

But the question for persons to decide is, not whether they like the prospect of a lengthened mortification and self-denial, of a perpetual battle with their appetites, and disease, and pain, and death; but whether, being as they are, partakers of

Adam's transgression, and liable to all the penalties incurred thereby, it is not far, far preferable to submit to any amount of suffering, during their short pilgrimage here below ; yea, if need there be (which, blessed be God, *there is not*), to make this earth a hell to themselves, rather than after spending a few short years in selfish gratification, to pass to death eternal,—a hopeless, never-ending condition of misery and torment? This is the fair way of putting the inquiry to our minds, and, so put, there can, I presume, be but one answer to it. It is hard when the world invites, to renounce it ; when Satan allures, to resist him ; when the flesh tempts, to deny it ; but if these, when yielded to, will keep me for ever from God, then I will fight against them all the day long, and, the Lord being my helper, they shall gain no mastery over me. It is hard to mortify the members that are on the earth ; to say to the eyes, See not ; to the ears, Hear not ; to the tongue, Taste not ; to the hands, Touch not, handle not. But if these be the things which place my soul in jeopardy, I will rule them and

control them with a rod of iron, It is hard to submit one's own will to God's, to resign oneself to pain, and sorrow, and bereavement, and worldly loss; but it were harder still to be partakers of a pain and sorrow that can never end; hardest of all to be shut out from His presence for ever. It is hard to look on death, to watch his coming year by year, to listen for his stealthy step, to feel the first touch of his cold finger, to meditate on the shroud, the grave, the worm; but if these be the things that shut out the prospect of the invisible world, and that separate me from Christ, then welcome death, and shroud, and worm. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

This, brethren, is the way to teach ourselves to die daily, and to look upon religion not as a cheerless, repulsive thing, but as that which, in spite of its awfulness, its stern demands, its exclusive claims, is worth all, and a thousand-fold more than all that we can surrender in its behalf.

And now let us apply what has been said to ourselves, and see in what respects

we can make our lives a counterpart of St. Paul's, by dying daily. His daily death partly consisted in personal perils, in persecutions, in bonds and imprisonments, and in the anxieties which arose from his care of all the Churches. So far our lot is dissimilar from his; but in other respects his trials were the common trials of Christians, and therefore we may learn from his general conduct, his unshrinking self-sacrifice, and his entire devotion to his Master's service, how therein we may die daily.

Now the first step towards dying daily, is to establish within ourselves, practically, the feeling that we may die any day. And by this I mean, not the mere admission that life is uncertain, in which each individual makes a tacit reservation in his own favor; but such a strong and enduring conviction as brings to our mind with the dawn of every day the reflection that that day may be our last, and realizes to us, in something more than words, that on each successive night we go to our bed as to our grave, and know not but we may awake in another world; which

makes us feel the necessity of so living, that, to use Bishop Ken's well known words, we may dread the grave as little as our bed; and which sets it down as the rule of our existence, that the contemplation of death is a thing never to be avoided and shunned, but to be kept as much in sight as the provision of our daily bread.

Another step towards dying daily is to learn to discipline our earthly affections, by dwelling much upon the thought that, though relations and friends are blessings to be enjoyed, and for which it behooves us to be very thankful, still they are only *loans* lent us by the Lord. He gives and He takes away; He either takes them away from us, or us from them.

And the same rule which applies to our earthly friends must be brought to bear on our worldly possessions. Houses and lands, name and fame, all that the world sets most store by, we must learn to hold cheap, either by making no exertions to obtain them, or by making ready surrender of them in any respects in which they may seem to interfere with our Christian

progress. We must discipline ourselves to part with them by voluntary privations, must make them as much as possible a matter of indifference to us, thankful if we have them, but ready to part with them, and unrepining when they are gone. For what saith the Apostle? "Brethren, the time is *short*: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it."

So much with respect to our dying daily to the objects with which we are surrounded. But there are other matters with regard to which our daily life must be a living death.

If we had never broken our baptismal vows it might have sufficed for us to spend our allotted time in watchfulness, and prayer, and praise; but as we are, we have most of us, it is to be feared, a heavy load of guilt attaching to us, and therefore each day must bring with it a

course of penitence and humiliation, and an acknowledgment that for our transgressions we have deserved death. We have to judge ourselves, in the hope that thereby we may escape the judgment of the Lord. We have to pray to God to mortify and kill all vices in us. We have to put our remaining corruptions to death; in whatever respect we find ourselves to be carnal, therein we have to die daily.

Our whole course of life must be a warfare and struggle with ourselves. The spirit must be taught to master the flesh: the body must be kept in subjection to the soul. Our whole man must be disciplined till it knows no will but the will of God. And this, under grace, can only be done by denying our appetites continually, even in things lawful; by habitually considering others rather than ourselves; by taking up our cross daily, and bearing it cheerfully, be it what it may; by striving to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and seeking Him in the ways of patience, endurance, and mortification spiritual and corporeal.

I do not tell you that this is easy. I do not say that it is pleasant to flesh and blood. But I dare assure you that its reward is with it, and that the peace springing therefrom is of a kind which the world can neither give nor take away. I dare assure you that not all the indulgence that heart can conceive, that not all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them, would compensate for one single minute spent in the agonies of hell; and that could we daily die a thousand deaths as agonizing as those which Christ our Saviour underwent for us, such an amount of suffering could not be worthy to be weighed against the risk of losing the lowest and humblest place in the courts of heaven.

Learn then, brethren, to die daily, that so you may live eternally. Die to the world, die to sin, die to self. And this not occasionally, and by fits and starts, but *ever*. Let your daily life be a living death. You will thus gradually learn to look on death not as a foe, but as a friend. It will be Christ to you to live, and gain to die. Your days will be spent in serv-

ing Christ, and looking for that death which will unite you to Him; as years roll on you will be more and more dead to the things of this world; your thoughts and hopes will be living in heaven: there needs but a little change, a dropping of the scales from your eyes, a casting off the garments of mortality, and your thoughts and hopes will be realized. The time is short: the trial is soon over: the long-looked-for summons comes; and then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the snare is broken, and you are delivered: the wings of the dove are given you; and so you flee away and are at rest.

SERMON XIX.

THE END OF ALL THINGS.

1 PETER iv. 7.

The end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

THE revelation here made by the Holy Spirit is repeated in other parts of the New Testament. It was not indistinctly intimated by our Lord Himself, while on earth ; and after He had ascended to the Father, His Apostles gave it a prominent place in their teaching. They spoke of themselves as living "in the last days," "in the last times," and grounded their exhortations to increasing vigilance upon the argument that "the night was far spent," and that "the day was at hand," that "the Lord was at hand," that "the day" was "approaching," and that "the coming of the Lord was drawing nigh."

Now perhaps we shall never ascertain

the exact ideas in the Apostles' minds when they used such language. At first sight it would appear like an expression of their expectation that the final consummation of all things would take place in their own day. And it is probable that as the Man Christ Jesus declared in the fullest and most awful of all His prophecies, that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father," so the Apostles, though God had not given the spirit by measure unto them, were left in the same ignorance, in this respect, as the angels themselves. Possibly, for our sakes they were even allowed to continue in somewhat of suspense, whether the generation in which they lived would, or would not, witness a catastrophe infinitely more terrible than that of the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the casting away of the chosen race.

But whatever may have been the actual state of the Apostles' minds in this respect, two things are evident, first, that they spoke as though the end of all things were immediately at hand; and secondly,

that since that time, what to *us* seems a long period, has passed away.

Now if the Christian world, instead of being what it is, were leading a life of faith, it is evident that the result of this would be, not that men would have grown careless and indifferent on the subject, but that they would be continually looking out for the coming of the Son of Man.

But men have never been willing to look out for the signs of the Lord's coming, nor to listen for the sound of His chariot wheels. It was so when Christ our Saviour would have gathered the children of Jerusalem together;—but they "would not," and so the end was, that "their house was left unto them desolate." And St. Peter in his second epistle forewarns us that the same shall be the case in these last days. "There shall come," saith he, "in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

And that which was the sin of an earlier age of the Church is certainly one of the marked offences of our own. They, of whom I have spoken, did not comprehend the nature of that particular coming which had been predicted, and so they would not watch at all, or if they did so at first, they soon grew careless. The same is the case with ourselves. I am not speaking of the openly wicked, who cast off, so far as they can, all thought of God, but of those who are considered decent and respectable people. And of them, I say, that, generally speaking, their tone is not that of men who are looking for Christ's coming. Yet we *ought* to be always expecting His coming, visibly or invisibly, either to judgment, or in some of those ways in which already the past has been made a type of the future. In every judgment which has come upon the Church, in every persecution which has befallen it, Christ may be said, in some sense, to have visited us judicially. And in proportion as men have looked out for Him, and recognized Him in these visitations, may

they be said to have been "watching for their Lord."

But now what I would have you to consider is this. Would not the habitual looking out for Christ, in the various dispensations of His Providence, be considered, by the ordinary class of what are called respectable people, to be the mark of a weak and superstitious mind? Would not those who are watching for the signs of His Advent, if at least they *confessed* that they did so, be pointed out as enthusiasts?

The question answers itself. Any serious-minded person among us who is in the habit of viewing the workings of Providence, in the hope that he may not be found among the slumberers when the Lord shall come, must know full well by past experience, that the deeper and more absorbing his thoughts on such matters are, the more he is forced to keep them to himself. His neighbors will not enter into his feelings: they can no more enter into them than the blind man can appreciate a fair landscape, or a deaf man the sweet sounds of music. Such an

one, therefore, for the most part, must be content to walk the world alone; there is a wall upon his right hand and upon his left. On the subject which most fills his mind, he must be silent, lest others should treat it irreverentially. He must hold his tongue and speak nothing, even though it be pain and grief to him.

But this very silence is a proof that the world will not bear to hear of truths which it dreads. It *will* turn away from the contemplation of them so long as it can, and occupy itself with other thoughts. "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

It appears, then, that one of the signs of Christ's coming will be the absence of all expectation concerning Him. He will come in an hour when the world feels safe from His arrival; either when

it is not thinking at all about Him, or when it has persuaded itself that the period of His Advent will be at some other time. He will come like a thief in the night, when men are asleep.

Now if this be the case, we, at least, have no reason to suppose that His approach *can be far distant*, for certainly were He to come *now*, He *would* take the majority of us altogether by surprise.

But there are other signs of Christ's speedy coming beside this, to which we shall do well to attend. Of course, I am not presuming to speak of the nature of that coming. It may be that the final consummation of all things is at hand: it may be that He is coming to visit and purify the Church by some sharp trial. On such a matter it would be as irreverent, as it would be beside my purpose, to express an opinion. The storm which seems gathering round, may burst upon us in an overwhelming torrent,—or the clouds may disperse, and the sun shine out once more in his strength. The crisis to which all things seem so rapidly tending, may be His last coming, or

merely such a type and foreshadowing of it, as the Church has seen already. But since in either case, our duties are the same, the only thing for us to do is to look out for the tokens of His coming, that so *we* may be prepared for it. What those tokens are, — “the signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity,” we have all read in Holy Scripture; and when we see those tokens, or any of them, it is the part of true wisdom to be watchful and observant. “Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”

But are there, it will be asked, any such tokens now in sight, as those which the voice of prophecy has set forth as harbingers of His coming?

I answer, that since He left us the world has *never* been without them; for since that time, men have been living

“in the last days,” and have been taught to believe that “the end of all things is at hand.” Therefore, even when the world and the Church have seemed in the most tranquil state, it has been the duty of Christians to be anxiously watching. And consequently, still greater becomes the urgent need of vigilance when there is any appearance of such a state of things, as that which we are taught to expect will precede the *immediate* coming of the Lord.

Now, from the nature of things, we are bad judges of the relative importance of events which take place in our own day, and in which, perhaps, we ourselves bear our share; and therefore it is quite possible that I may be more or less mistaken in what I am about to say: but I beg you to observe, that mistake in this case is on the side of *safety*. No possible harm can arise from it. Whereas, mistake on the other side is full of most imminent peril. Our duty is to watch *at all times*, and therefore if Christ should *not* come when we are looking out for Him, it matters not; for we are still in the path

of duty. But were He to come when we were *not* looking out for Him, and when our hearts were overcharged with the cares of this life, then we could only expect the fate of that servant who would not watch.

With this observation, and without doing more than glancing at the mere surface of things which are within the knowledge of all, I would say that it seems impossible to look at the world and the Church at the present time, without seeing in them many things which seem tending towards a tremendous contest between the principles of good and evil, such as we are taught to expect will take place before that day when the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven, when "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

For look out upon the face of the world and see what is passing therein,—not in our own nation only, but among all the civilized people of the earth. Can any description reach their case so fully

as what is briefly comprehended in those two words of Holy Writ, "distress," and "perplexity?" Is there not a general loosening of those bands which hold the frame-work of society together? a feverish restlessness which rejects all that has been long established, though there is nothing better to supply its place? are not even the worldly-minded, and they who least watch the ways of Providence constrained to observe and own the fact that the course of events seem rapidly hastening to some portentous crisis in the annals of mankind? Everywhere the leaven of anarchy and revolution seems to spread, and if, as yet, nation does not rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, it is only because each has more than enough to occupy it at home. Intestine trouble;—the presence of evil men skilful in misleading the ignorant;—a growing irksomeness of restraint to authority;—extremes of poverty and luxury;—on the one hand privations and sufferings of which it is dreadful to think, and on the other, extravagance, effeminacy, and a love of selfish comfort which

have ever been one of the surest signs of a decaying people ; these, and many other things, on which I cannot now dwell particularly, all point to the same way, namely, to the disorganization and disruption of society among the most important nations of the world.

And now, turning from the world to the Church, shall we see aught therein but what should lead us to believe that “the end of all things is at hand?” Time was, when the privileges of the Gospel were offered to the Jews, and rejected by them. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and the wild olive tree was grafted in that it might partake of the root and fatness of the good olive tree. The Saviour came unto His own, and His own received Him not, and so He turned unto the Gentiles. Among us sinners of the Gentiles the Church was planted, and has continued with us from Apostolic times. But how have we benefited by the blessing? Have we not reason to fear that we must have exhausted the long-suffering of God,—that our season of trial must

be well nigh ended, and "the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled?"

For what has been the history of the Church of the Gentiles? Has it not been, from first to last, a catalogue of schisms and offences in that body which Christ enjoined to preserve its unity? Has not one heresy succeeded another, and error followed upon error, with a variety and rapidity that have been inexhaustible? Has there not been incessant strife, and hatred, and variance, and emulation? Have not distractions torn the flock of Christ asunder, and disfigurements marred its fair beauty? Is not the East divided from the West, and are not both tainted and infected with the foul, clinging leprosy of corruption and superstition? And even in those branches of the Catholic Church where faith seems purest, is there not a separation from the rest of Christendom, and a total absence of communion and fellowship? Surely such a state of things would have justified, at almost any period of its existence, the application of the Saviour's prediction, to the Gentile Church, that in the last days

“many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another,”—that there shall arise “false Christs, and false prophets,”—and that “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” And if such has been the state of things among us for long, what possible ground have we for expecting that our transgressions and disunion will be tolerated much longer? The graft, wild by nature, which was grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, has failed to bring forth fruit: what is there to plead why it should not be broken off for ever?

I do not mean (God forbid!) to say that the Gospel has been preached among the Gentiles in vain. The noble army of Martyrs, the goodly company of Saints belong, for the most part, to the Gentile Church. Individual piety there has been among us, and individual piety would have saved Sodom. God is ever gathering in His elect,—separating the wheat from the tares, winnowing the seed from the chaff, thoroughly purging His floor, and collecting the wheat for His

garner. But looking at the Gentile Church in the mass, and tracing its history since the prayers and alms of Cornelius went up for a memorial before God, can we speak of it with other feelings than those of shame and pain,—or than as acknowledging that it has proved itself unworthy of its mercies, and therefore as being only fit for judgment!

And now, bringing our inquiries nearer home, what shall we say of the condition of our own branch of the Catholic Church? What grounds have we for hoping that *we* shall escape in the great and terrible day of the Lord's coming? How far have English Churchmen done their duty, how far are they doing it towards their poor and ignorant brethren? Bear witness the spiritual destitution that exists among us, and the state of our manufacturing population, where those who are not schismatics, are heathens. Bear witness the state of our vast Colonial possessions, which we all but leave without even the semblance of the three-fold order of the Ministry. Bear witness the niggard measure of our offerings to

God. Bear witness,—(to go one step further) the amount of national transgression, whether among high or low; our worldliness, our covetousness, our irreverence, and, above all, our miserable divisions which are of themselves sufficient cause why God should withdraw his face from us for ever.

The suggestions which I have now made, will, I trust, suffice to convince you that we have good reason to apply the admonition of the text to ourselves. We know that we are living in the last times. We know that Christ's coming cannot be long delayed. We do *not* know whether *the* Antichrist is yet among us, but we are sure that even now there are many Antichrists. We do *not* know whether Christ's final coming to judgment be very near, but we do know that there are some at least of those tokens to be seen, which, as heretofore they have ushered in events that have been former types of his coming, so they may be expected now to be signs of some approaching visitation.

Here, then, is the ground of our admo-

niton to you: and the admonition itself is, that we be "sober, and watch, unto prayer." — Plain and simple directions these, which all can understand, and which it is in the power of all, who seek for gifts of grace, to obey.

O that there were such an heart in us that we could learn to realize the unseen world, and live in a state of watchful expectancy, as men who are looking for the speedy coming of their Lord! that instead of entangling ourselves with passing interests and objects, worldly success and temporal advantages, we would endeavor to grow indifferent to all that does not bear some close relation to our spiritual condition! that we would discipline ourselves into habits of self-control, that so we may view things calmly, and with eyes undimmed by the false glare of this world! that we would instil into our hearts something of that temper which enables men to become martyrs and confessors; — something of that hardness which despises luxury and comforts, and which is bold in act and careless of suffering; — something of that habitual communion

with God, which can only be arrived at through a life of prayer;—something of that watchfulness, that unceasing vigilance, in what the world calls trifles, which is the only safeguard against our being taken by surprise, the only pledge that *we* shall not be slumbering, when all others are taken unawares! O that we would enter more fully upon the discharge of those duties required by Him Who will come to be our Judge, when He bade us stand with our loins girt about, and our lights burning, like unto men that wait for their Lord. “Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.”

What things may be coming upon the earth we cannot tell; what trials may yet await the Church we know not; how near at hand, how fierce, how terrible they may be. Only we may be sure that there is nothing bad which we have not deserved. Only we trust that there is yet space and grace for individual repentance. Only we have this comfort, that even when Antichrist himself is among us, his reign will be brief,—for

the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

May our good and merciful Lord,—He Who by His blood-shedding redeemed us, and Who is now our Intercessor,—may He aid us to acquire the spirit of soberness, and watchfulness, and prayer. May He give us strength according to our need, and enable us to rejoice in tribulation, and triumph in suffering for His Name's sake

SERMON XX.

THE PILGRIM'S ABIDING FRIEND.

LUKE xxiv. 29.

But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us ; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

IF there be something which is deeply affecting in the Evangelist's brief account of the several interviews which took place between our Lord and His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead, and before He ascended to the right hand of the Father, there is something no less humiliating in the want of faith, and slowness of heart, exhibited by those who for a long season had had such abundant proofs that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Yet, amid all their weakness, the tokens were not doubtful of their loyalty, their honest sincerity, and true affection ;

and if the resurrection of their Lord was an event altogether beyond the reach of their most sanguine hopes, their deep sorrow at His loss, and the expression of their trust,—shaken indeed, yet scarcely overthrown,—that it was He who should have redeemed Israel, may nevertheless be taken as an evidence that their errors, and infirmities, and prejudices, were in great measure those of their times, their country, and condition in life, while their virtues were altogether their own.

The incident recorded by St. Luke, and to which I am about to invite your attention, is an illustration of my meaning.

On the day of the Resurrection, two of the disciples were on their way to Emmaus, a village some short distance from Jerusalem. In what frame of mind they journeyed we can be at no loss to discover, for when our Blessed Lord appeared to them, we are told they were engaged in communing and reasoning together, of all the things which had happened so recently at Jerusalem, and that His first question to them (for as yet their

eyes were holden that they should not know Him) was in these words, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, *and are sad?*"

Their answer showed their doubts and their suspense. Their minds were full of Him, whom they acknowledged as "mighty in word and deed, before God, and all the people," yet nevertheless they could not bring themselves to speak of Him as *more* than "a prophet;" they manifest their astonishment at the tale of the reported resurrection, yet never seem to call to mind the many predictions which had been uttered on the subject.

No sooner, however, does the Saviour begin to expound to them the Scriptures concerning Himself, than their hearts burn within them, they listen with the deep interest of men whose thoughts are all centered in one absorbing subject; who honestly seek for more light and knowledge, who desire to be convinced, and to be led into the way of truth. Their hearts revive as they listen to the teaching of their unknown companion; they

feel that it is good to be in his company ; and when he seems disposed to part from them, they constrain Him to continue with them :—“ Abide with us ; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”

Now, for your present instruction, my brethren, perhaps I may be permitted to apply these words in a spiritual, rather than in a literal sense, and to draw from them some encouragements which may support you along the dim, uncertain path of the unknown future, and direct you to that One Abiding Friend, that one unfailing and unvarying Source of godly hope and consolation, which, amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life, will never fail us at our need, or disappoint us of its succor, as “ a very present help in time of trouble.”

It may be affirmed, then, that our own condition in this our state of earthly trial, is not wholly unlike that of the disciples to whom I have alluded. At least like them, we tread a path of sorrow, with blinded eyes, and uncertain steps ; like them, we wander forth (if so be we have renounced the world) desolate and lonely ;

like them, we have learned by woful experience the extent of our own infirmities and incapacities; like them, as we commune together, we are sad, and, in truth, have much to make us so.

Why, then, should we not betake ourselves to the same Friend in whom they found solace? why should we not address our prayer deliberately and habitually to that Saviour whom they invoked unconsciously? why should *we* not say to Him, as *they* said, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

Far spent indeed it is, even to the youngest, and healthiest, and strongest among us: far spent, inasmuch as by every one of us time has been wasted, which can never be re-called, opportunities neglected, which will never be vouchsafed again, talents abused or frittered away, not one of which can be so treated with impunity, and means of grace despised, not one of which, but if duly improved, would have shown itself of inestimable value. The day is far spent. To many of us but few more working hours remain.

And this we know by our own sensations. We feel the inroads of time, the ravages of care and sorrow, the weariness of lengthened toil. The infirmities of advancing age, and the failure of our powers of life, are unequivocally warning us that night is coming on, that before long we shall be able to work no more, that the years draw nigh when we shall say that we have no pleasure in them. To none of us is there any assurance that the day is not far spent, for even though in respect of the usual length of years allotted to man, we may not have yet lived out half our time, who can tell that his sun shall not go down while it is yet day? who can tell how near, or how far distant, that night may be in which "his soul may be required of him."

"It is toward evening!" Hour after hour has passed away; the early dawn,—the fresh and joyous morning,—the scorching noontide with its heat and burden,—the afternoon with its weariness and exhaustion,—each in turn have departed; and change and chance, and sin and sorrow have been the companions of each.

The hopes which we conceived in the brightness of our prime have shrunk and withered : the schemes which our maturer years were to have ripened, have, for the most part, ended like untimely fruit in rottenness and decay : yea, whether in the main, success or disappointment has been the result of our exertions, the closing day must elicit from every one of us the same confession, that "all is Vanity." Pleasure, riches, power, rank, youth, strength, beauty, health, all perish in the using. "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity!"

"It is towards evening!" Hour after hour has passed away ; and though *we* have labored on to the last, not an hour has elapsed but some one of our fellow-laborers has been called from our side to go home, and receive his wages from the Master's hand. When we were children, the children whom we loved, and who were the companions of our merry games, died around us, and gave us, perhaps, the first taste of that sorrow, which has ever since been mingled with our cup. In our youth we were shocked at seeing

those of our own age fall beside us under some sudden blow, and we mourned at the time with all the depth and emotion of young and feeling hearts. But we lived on; yea, we lived to manhood, still shocked and warned by the successive deaths of those contemporaries who seemed but as yesterday to have the same prospects of life with ourselves.

And now, as in increasing years we look back, and see, perhaps, not one in ten of those with whom we started on our career surviving: as we find our children ready to succeed us, and a new generation preparing to supply our place; and as we feel within ourselves the certain signs of decay and dissolution; what thought,—as year by year, Advent and Christmas, Lent and Passion Week, Easter and Whitsuntide return (seasons sanctified each by its own associations of the past); what thought, I say, can come more naturally to our minds than this, that our remaining time must needs be short; that our opportunities of serving God in the courts of His House are rapidly drawing to an end;

that "it is toward evening, and the day is far spent?"

Amid such reflections as these (and I have named but a few of the most obvious of those which must find an answer in every heart), I know nothing but the thought of Christ's abiding presence, of His being in us, and with us, the Sharer of our trials, and the Companion of our pilgrimage, which can in any way fill up the aching void occasioned by bereavement; which can pluck out the stings of sorrow and disappointment, and change our despair and repinings at the vanity of things temporal, into grateful acknowledgments, and child-like trust, that He, Who in hitherto preserving us, has, at the same time, been gradually weaning us from this world, therein has afforded us abundant grounds of hope that He, Who has hitherto delivered, will yet deliver.

It was the Psalmist's humble trust that the loving-kindness and mercy of God should follow him all the days of his life: and surely they who are conscious that they are endeavoring to walk in the

Psalmist's steps, may repose themselves on the same comfortable hope.

Pilgrims along life's stern and dreary way, we have still, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, a companion in our path, Who walks beside us, unseen, indeed, yet close at hand, Who sympathizes with us as having shared our infirmities and sorrows, Who is our Brother as well as our Lord, Who, though as yet our eyes are holden that we should not know Him as He is, knows us, and loves and pities us in spite of that knowledge, and Who is willing to tarry with us, and to be the Guide we so much need, or rather, Who hath already guided us, and hath talked with us by the way, even before our hearts began to burn within us.

How gracious have been His counsels to every one of us! Oh! how great has been the sum of them! For creation and preservation, for regeneration and adoption,—for the blessings of this life, and the hopes of another; for Redemption purchased for us, and the Church, and the Sacraments, provided to apply it to us; for the mercies bestowed upon us

every day, for the protection vouchsafed to us from hourly perils, what thanks do we owe to Him, Who never slumbereth, nor sleepeth, Whose eye is ever upon us for good, Whose ear is ever open to our prayers? Can we doubt that the past is a guarantee for the future? Can we hesitate as to *Whose* presence should go with us, in order to secure us rest? Can we be uncertain as to the fittest prayer to Him Who alone can preserve our going out and our coming in from this time forth for evermore?

“Abide Thou with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” God our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, has been with us hitherto, and that is the guarantee, that unless we grieve Him, resist Him, and drive Him from us, He is ready to continue with us to the end. “Why art thou,” then, “so vexed, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God: for I will yet thank Him, which is the help of my countenance, and my God.”

This, my brethren, is the state of mind

at which the Christian will be continually endeavoring to arrive,—a simple committal of himself to his God and Saviour, with prayers for His continual presence, and entire, unreserved, unhesitating trust in His ever-watchful Providence.

The Christian knows that so long as God continues him in the world, he must continue in the fellowship of his Saviour's sufferings, and therefore, his desire is to be made like unto Him in faith and patience. If hitherto he has had much of trial, he trusts that this, his experience, may enable him to meet those troubles which are in store for him hereafter, in a better and more submissive spirit. If as yet God's chastening hand has fallen lightly on him, he endeavors to discipline himself that so he may bear the rod when it comes upon him. If as yet, neither chance nor change, sickness nor sorrow, nor care, nor anxiety, nor disappointment, have dimmed the brightness of his eye, nor imprinted a furrow on his brow, he soberly reflects that the probability is that some or all of them will speedily be

his portion, and he prepares himself in them, "to meet his God." The fewer the trials that have as yet been sent, the heavier may be those which are impending. The rarer the opportunities hitherto of showing forth faith and resignation, the brighter must be the light exhibited, when God shall put him to the test.

Known unto God only, are the destinies which await any one of us: and which of us has only a few more weeks or months of existence, none but He can tell. But of this, at least, we are *all* aware that to *none* of us can many years remain; to any of us death may even now be at our doors. "We bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told." And therefore the Christian makes daily preparation for that which may come at any time, and which at some time must come. And this preparation consists in a steadfast and determined weaning of himself from the affections and interests of this world; and a calm looking forward to those visitations which the chastening hand of our Heavenly Father prepares for all those whom He

does not see fit to take early unto Himself, and who therefore are the more tempted to look on this world as a home, rather than as a brief resting-place, and to value its good things above their proper value.

The Christian knows that the longer he lives, the more sorrows must await him, more disappointment of hopes, more breaking of long-established ties, more changes, more pain, more tears, more bereavements, more death. And he knows that these things must fall on him, as his own strength is failing, and as sickness and infirmity are wearing down his bodily powers and the buoyancy of his mind, and bringing him to the house appointed for all living.

The man of this world shrinks from the contemplation of this, his inevitable fate, and if forced to look forward to it, he asks whether it be possible for thought to conceive a more dismal state of things? And dismal to *him* it is,—dismal to all it must be who have not habituated themselves to the thought that their blessings are given for a time only,—dismal to

all who have not learned to rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; to possess as though they possessed not; to die daily, and to sacrifice by mortification, and constant self-denial, even things indifferent, for Christ's sake.

But to those who are living for eternity it is *not* so: to such persons (and God grant that you, my brethren, may be of the number) the inevitably increasing sorrows of mortality do not present a cheerless prospect, for it is beyond the grave, and above this fleeting world, that the Christian has fixed his hopes and desires. And therefore it is no sad sight to him when breathless and weary with the race, to find the goal in view. His conversation is in heaven, not on earth, and therefore the latter years of his life have a joy and peace which his youth knew not. Then he was perhaps more or less undecided in his choice; or dazzled and bewildered with the false glare of pomps and pleasures; but now he feels himself approaching the confines of that unseen world, into which his aching sight has long striven to penetrate; the scales are

falling from his eyes : the veil which has been interposed between him and the light of day is wearing thinner and thinner, year by year. And through its shadowy folds he discovers his treasure gradually accumulating, where neither fraud nor force can deprive him of it. He knows indeed that evening is approaching, and the day far spent ; but he knows by the same token that the time of his departure is at hand, and, in humble confidence in God's mercies through Christ Jesus, he trusts he is bound to a shore where trials and sorrows shall find no place.

The hour of death,—that hour with blessings on its wings,—is that which is to give him the liberty, and rest, and peace which here he has not. He long has looked for it, and therefore he calmly meets it. Not boldly and presumptuously,—God forbid ! with no blind self-confidence, or irreverent self-righteousness,—God forbid ! but meekly and trustfully, without despondency, without dismay : with trembling, and yet with godly hope. He knows the Saviour in Whom he has

trusted, the all-sufficiency of His Atonement, and the power of His Intercession with the Father. He has experienced for many years God's mercy and loving-kindness, and wretched and miserable sinner as he knows himself to be, he still trusts that mercy and loving-kindness to bring him peace at the last, and to provide him a place, even though it be the humblest and lowliest of all, for his blessed Redeemer's sake, beneath the footstool of that Redeemer's throne !





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