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THEOLOGY AND LIFE

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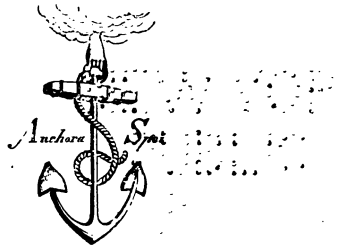
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THEOLOGY AND LIFE

Sermons chiefly on Special Occasions.

dwaid.
yes.
By E. H. PLUMPTRE, M.A.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY AND CHAPLAIN, KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON
PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S.



ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER

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MY DEAR LORD,

I owe the opportunity of preaching the first of these Sermons to your kindness, and it is printed at your request. For those that I have joined with it, I cannot venture to claim even such a measure of approval as that request may be supposed to imply as to its immediate object. Wishing, however, to collect a few Sermons, which had been published separately at intervals of some years, and to add to them others which I have preached recently at Oxford and elsewhere, I may be pardoned perhaps for bringing them out in connexion with what has, in some degree, commended itself to your judgment. I shall be glad if what I have thus added is in harmony with the spirit of cautious progress and reverential freedom which have characterized your Lordship's teaching, and the maintenance of which by the Bishops and Clergy of the Church of England, will best enable her to preserve or to regain her hold on the mind and the affections of the English people.

I am,

MY DEAR LORD,

Yours faithfully and obediently,

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON,
November 28th, 1865.



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I.

THE MINISTRY OF GREAT CITIES.¹

‘I have much people in this city.’—ACTS XVIII. 10.

TWO memorable instances meet us, one in the Old Testament, the other in the New, of the work which the servants of God have been called to do in the great cities of the world. To Jonah, the son of Amittai, the word of the Lord came, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.’² He shrank, as he might well do (sinful as the shrinking was), from encountering that wickedness, from facing in its living horrors all that dread ferocity and brutal lust which seem even now to glare upon us from the sculptured stone. He shrank from uttering the threat. Yet more did he shrink from the thought that the God of his fathers had any care for such

¹ Preached at the Bishop of London’s Ordination, Trinity Sunday, 1865.

² Jonah i. 2.

a people, any message for them. Was it not better to leave them to live and die in their iniquity? Was there not a broad gulf between the elect people and the heathen who knew not God? Why should he be called to bridge over that gulf? So it was that, stifling at once his sense of the wrath of God against all evil, and of His tender mercy towards all evil-doers, he fled from the presence of the Lord. Any enterprise, any perils seemed preferable to the task to which that presence called him. We know the issue of that wonderful history: how the prophet learnt at last that he could not flee from the Divine voice; how when he went he found an unexpected capacity for good, a repentance truer and wider than that which he had met with in the princes, the priests, the people of Israel; how he grieved that the effect of his own preaching as a prophet should have been to rob him of the glory of uttering a true prediction; how he was taught that the mercy of God was wide beyond all his poor and narrowing thoughts. 'Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city?'¹ Men care for their transient interests, their home affec-

¹ Jonah iv. 10, 11.

tions, the systems, habits, prepossessions, which have given them shelter ; should they not think of God as caring for those nations for whom He has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations ? By the most living, personal experience, the prophet was taught the lesson which the Lord himself proclaimed to the men of a later age, and to us, ‘ If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes.’¹

The lesson which St. Paul was taught, as in the words which I have read, was essentially the same. True it was that here there was no shrinking from the task. A necessity was laid upon him, and he accepted that necessity as the great blessing of his life. To him had this grace been given, that he should preach the great mystery of the gospel, which he of all human teachers was the first to grasp in its fulness,—the unity of mankind in Christ, Christ the head of every man ; Jew and Gentile, alike in their sin and their redemption, alike in the history of their fall and in their capacity for restoration, all concluded under condemnation, that all might be the objects of a boundless mercy. And yet here, too, as the very words spoken to him implied, there had been a shrinking and a

¹ Matt. xi. 21.

fear. He too had come to a great city, in which all elements of evil, Jewish malignity, heathen sensuality, seemed to have reached their height. Lust had come to be recognised as almost the law of life. The elements of the Church, which was to be as the first-fruits of a restored humanity, had to be gathered from among those who had been slaves to the foulest forms of it.¹ As he walked through the streets of such a city, and looked up and down, seeing the idol-temples and the harlots' houses, his work must have seemed almost hopeless. His experience of the Jews' quarter and its synagogues was hardly more encouraging. If he had been at first 'pressed in spirit,' as he had been at Athens, testifying that Jesus was the Christ, there came afterwards the sense of wasted labours and of his own impotence. There seems to have been for a moment the nearest approach that there ever was in St. Paul's life to timidity and quiescence. The words were needed which came to him from the Lord Jesus in the visions of the night, 'Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city.'² The ground of hope and confidence was that the work in which he was engaged was in very deed a Divine work, and

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

² Acts xviii. 9, 10

therefore could not fail. Christ was with him, though he knew it not, in those crowded streets, among those lawless and sin-stained multitudes. Unseen by the eyes of the flesh, manifested only at intervals to the eye of the spirit in dream and vision, He was yet there, and He could reveal to the heart of His servant the truth which was so greatly needed, 'I have much people in this city.' He, the Light that lighteth every man, who knew what was in man, had seen that there were many even there who had not closed their eyes against that light as it streamed on their souls from within, who would not turn aside from it when it should come more clearly through the preaching of the Word, through the records of His own Divine life. Below the rank growth of weeds there was the good ground. Below the surface of a life that seemed simply frivolous and corrupt, there might be, yes, there *was*, the honest and good heart, which, when it received the seed, would bring forth fruit abundantly.

The records of that experience of the prophets of the Old Testament and the New connect themselves very closely, I believe, with our work to-day. They have a lesson for us all, from the chief pastor of this million-peopled city down to the youngest among those who, with trembling hearts, and impulses in which they recognise a higher guidance

than their own, are solemnly devoting themselves to the work which is to us what the work of prophets and apostles was to them. To them also the word of the Lord has come, surely not less really than it came to the son of Amittai. To them also the Eternal Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will, has given gifts or powers, surely not less real, not less fitted for the work of building up the Church in our time, and among our people, than were those of the apostolic Church. In that infinite diversity of operations the form may change, the startling, the *preter*-natural, the marvellous may have passed away, but the *super*-natural remains, and still there is the one Lord, who bestows the power, and will call for the account, and all these things worketh that one and the self-same Spirit. You will not wonder, brethren, if, starting from these histories of the past, I speak less of the pastoral office at large, of the blessings, risks, duties, which are the same everywhere, and under all conditions, than of those which belong specially to you, the ministry of great cities, the special calling of the clergy of London, with its blessings and its risks.

(1.) Many among you, I believe, as you have looked forward to your work, or have actually entered on it, must have known something of the

feelings which almost drove the apostle, and actually drove the prophet, to shrink from what seemed so far beyond their strength. Something like a chilling sense of hopelessness must surely come on many a man as he walks through the vast extent of this 'exceeding great city.' If he has not to encounter the terrible ferocity of Nineveh, or the yet more fearful impurity of Corinth, there is yet enough of both to make him tremble. Brutality with its self-multiplying power, fruitful in wretchedness at all times, often exploding into crime,—whole districts peopled by prostitutes and thieves,—squalid poverty, made more horrible by its contrast with stateliest pomp and an ever-increasing luxury,—dangerous classes, barely repressed in times of order by police control, and ready to emerge, should disorder come, into a reign of terror,—all this is what we see daily. We grow callous to it; we seek to forget its existence; thousands seem to succeed in forgetting it altogether; but there it is, and sometimes at least it forces itself upon our thoughts. And when it does, when you take the measure of the work that lies before you, it brings with it, I am sure, a painful, almost bewildering sense of disappointment. We ask, were there worse scenes than this in the three days' journey through which the prophet passed? Were the streets and lanes of the city

worse in Corinth than they are in London? What are these better for all that we boast of as won by our own right hand, or inherited from our fathers? Civilisation, freedom, Protestantism, the Church of England, Christianity itself, what have they done for these?

Our work to-day in this place is, in part at least, an answer to that question. Year by year for centuries the call has gone forth, and has been answered. The great crusade against darkness and evil, of which the apostle was the foremost preacher, has gone on ever since. It is something that an evil which might otherwise have been paramount and pervading, should be acknowledged, fought against, controlled. You, brethren, are followers in that noble army of the Cross. Some of you, at least, are renouncing prospects of more rapid success, lives of greater ease and comfort, the culture and the tastes of a society in which you have delighted, in order that you may give yourselves to your Master's work, and seek, as He did, to reclaim the lost, and to preach the gospel to the poor. Others there are who have learnt the same lesson, or one yet harder, who have kept that work in view through the many changes of their lives, never forgetting the magnitude of the evil, never ceasing to labour to overcome it. And for both there is the encouragement and the lesson

which these two narratives have taught us. We too need to remember what the prophet learnt, that all pity, sympathy, patience, passionate eagerness to overcome evil with good, that we can feel, are but faint reflections of His infinite compassion, Whose we are and Whom we serve. To forget that these also are children of the same Father ; to be hopeless as to the possibility of their repentance and restoration, to think that all we have to do is to proclaim a destruction which we are sure we shall witness ; to think more of what touches us, as the withering of the prophet's gourd touched him, the failure of our theories, the encroachments on our ease, the loss of our tranquillity, than of the joy which is in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, is to repeat the sin of Jonah. To forget that even in the dark places of the earth there is the presence of the Light that lighteth every man ; that the Divine Sower scatters His seed broadcast even where we see only thorns and briars ; that the Lord may have ' much people ' even in a city which seems to us a very Babel, city of confusion, city of destruction, is to yield to what was for a moment the passing weakness of St. Paul.

(2.) The fact that this is your work, and that you are called to labour among scenes like this, brings with it one blessing that may almost com-

pensate for much that you renounce. Calm ease ; leisure for thought and study ; a flock not altogether beyond the shepherd's power to count, and guide, and feed ; tranquil days and pleasant scenes, Nature's great gifts of beauty in sky, and field, and stream,—these may fall to the lot of others, though even of these, as years pass on, and our population grows, the number is rapidly diminishing. But for you there is at least what there is sometimes wanting,—the daily and hourly call to a perpetual activity of service. Elsewhere, leisure which might be fruitful, as it often has been, in good, in study, self-knowledge, the culture of a true theology, may pass into a listless indolence. You will sigh, it may be, over and over again for a little of that leisure, will grieve that you must leave so many glorious books unread, so many of earth's fairest scenes unvisited, but you will find that the experience of the past will be your experience also. The very pressure of overwhelming duties will teach you to make the most of opportunities. What are the tasks of others will be your refreshment. It has passed into a proverb, that more is done in the leisure of a busy man than in the business of a man of leisure. The gleaning of the grapes, in the one case, is better than the vintage in the other. It might almost seem to be one of the lessons of our Lord's teaching, that

there is less risk of unprofitable service, though the sin when it comes is greater, when the servant has received from his master the five talents than the one. The picture has of course another side. There is the risk, which none of us may venture to ignore, of haste, incompleteness, distraction. The ceaseless accumulation of details, the sense of routine creeping over us even in our highest duties, the intrusion of a work which is secular in nature, and which yet we find ourselves obliged to do, upon our more spiritual service, all this involves risk and difficulty. We may lose unity of aim, the inner harmony of life, time for self-knowledge or for prayer, communing with ourselves, communing with God. We must note these as evils against which we have to guard. If we yield to them, they may sink us fatally below the level of those whose work seems less productive ; but, like all risks and difficulties, they bear their fruit if we face and overcome them. They may bring, what otherwise we could not gain, the power of organizing and directing, decision, promptitude, punctuality ; doing the right thing at the right time. Through what distracts we may feel more and more the attracting power of the true centre of our life, and even in the ceaseless stir and tumult round us may have our ears open to the harmony of a heavenly music.

(3.) Yet another blessing belongs also, I believe, specially to you : for you there is the ceaseless education of intercourse with many men of thoughts and feelings different from your own. What prophets and apostles were taught, in part, it is true, by the Spirit of God within them, but in part also, as Jonah at Nineveh, Peter at Joppa and Cæsarea, Paul at Athens and at Corinth, by coming in contact with men of other races and modes of thought, that you too are taught. For you, what have been called the idols of the den, the visions of the solitary dreamer, the nightmare terrors of the heated fancy, are comparatively distant dangers. You learn, as others have learnt in past ages, the great lessons of mutual sympathy, respect, forbearance. Throughout the history of the Church of England, the clergy of London have, as a body, been honourably distinguished by their freedom from the panics, the passions, the prejudices which have disturbed the Church's peace, interrupted her work, too often alienated from her the heart of the English people. Doubtless, the difference never can be again what it was in the seventeenth century, or the eighteenth. In the world of thought, as in the world of trade, our freedom of intercourse, so rapidly increased, so constantly increasing, tends to level inequalities ; yet something of the same contrast remains still, and per-


haps must remain always. You know by living contact what others know through books or journals only. A name that for those at a distance is cast out as evil, as that of a troubler of the peace of Israel, is for you the symbol of noblest thought, or widest sympathy, or genial kindness, or indefatigable labours. You see, in closest union often with the fantastic ritual which irritates and offends, the love which shrinks from no labour, however repulsive, and whose very excesses rise out of the desire to bring worship, in all its beauty, where hitherto squalid vice has reigned in all its foulness, confession and forgiveness where hitherto there has been only a hardened and brutal apathy. Even Dissent itself comes before you with a less exasperating antagonism, because you learn to feel that the field is so wide and waste that the Lord of the harvest may recognise even the sowing and the reaping of those whose mission is less direct than ours. You come to see in the existing schism less a sin to be rebuked than the inherited penalty of faults in which our fathers, as well as theirs, were sharers. If it should ever be given to the nineteenth or the twentieth century to undo the guilt and the confusion out of which Dissent arose, we may well believe and hope that the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in, will be found among us here.

Here, again, there is a danger close at hand. Our tolerance may pass into doubt, or, what is worse, indifference. We may catch the secular tone, the flippancy and irreverence that pervades much of our lighter literature, and runs into our social life. We may be content to leave all questions open, not only as giving freedom to the conscience of others, but as content with uncertainty ourselves. While others exaggerate the demand for definiteness and precision, we may lose our standing-ground altogether, and see all things through a mist. The Church's teaching, Biblical interpretation, the truths that are the ground-work of all religious life,—all this may come to seem to us as fraught only with bewildering controversies. In tracing the history of past campaigns, in the excitement of present skirmishes, we lose sight of the fact that a vantage-ground has been conquered, and that we are disloyal and unfaithful if we abandon it.

And in our consciousness of this danger we may rush blindly, very blindly, into another. We may recognise the spirit of the age in which we live only to thwart it and defy it. We may exult in the loudness, the intensity, the notoriety of our protests. In act and in word we may go back to the dogmas and the practices of a past age. And if so, the issue will be what it has already been in

a thousand cases. As there is no solitude comparable to the loneliness which one may feel in a great city, so there is no narrowness so narrow, no bitterness so bitter, as that which is fostered by this self-chosen isolation, where everything invites to fellowship.

(4.) A far truer remedy is to be found in that for which your position gives you special advantages, and on which I will venture to say yet a few words. You, and those elsewhere whose work is like yours, are better able than others to take a right estimate of the relative magnitude of the questions that from time to time are at issue, of their bearing on the work, which is greater and wider than them all. Ritual is good; order, comeliness in worship, is a duty; psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are a source of joy when they attract, not hearers, but worshippers; when they sustain, animate, edify. When they cease to do this, when they become simply a source of suspicion and distrust, when the charm of the ritual is that it defies custom or authority, when it leads to a simply æsthetic worship and a supercilious criticism of other forms of it, the limit is passed, and it is time to retrace our steps. Questions of ecclesiastical organization, ultimate tribunals for causes involving doctrine, the constitution and functions of our synods, the grievances



which to many minds seem so formidable in the relation of the State to education and the Church, all these have doubtless an interest of their own, and as we picture to ourselves the ideal of a perfect Church, appear of immense importance ; but what are they as compared with that **great work** which lies before us here, as we look out on this vast multitude of human souls, and try to catch something of His thoughts who saw the thousands thronging round Him, and had compassion on them because they were as sheep that had no shepherd ? Or take another instance : how much strength is wasted, how much good left undone, by our failing to distinguish the relative magnitude of the evils against which we have to fight ? In a great city we see much on every side that offends us, as inconsistent with Christian holiness. Many forms of amusement, not among the poor only ; Sunday trading and excursions ; infidel literature and lectures,—these come across us, and we cannot ignore that they are evil, and the cause of evil. We would fain strive, if we had the power, by some new and more rigorous legislation, to crush them altogether. And yet in proportion to the width of our experience, we shall come to see that some of these things are as the least of two evils ; that greater and more lasting harm would probably grow out of a forcible repression of them ; that

they are symptoms even more than they are causes of the great disease ; and that we can better advance what we have at heart, the work of Christianizing the heathenism which still exists around, by other agencies. Other and worse evils are close at hand. Selfishness, hypocrisy, indifference, godlessness, these are on every side. Ignorance, sensuality, impurity, in all their hideous foulness, meet us as they met prophet and apostle of old. Against these let us concentrate our attack, and fight with all our strength. For such a contest we need the old weapons—the helmet of salvation, the girdle of truth, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, our feet shod with the readiness of those who know that they have a gospel of peace to proclaim to those that are near, and to those that are far off. And then, as of old, we shall find that the weapons are mighty, and that we have unexpected allies. They that be with us are more than they that be against us. Christ ‘has much people in this city.’ And you, brethren, who are here to-day, as among those whom that Lord has in very deed claimed and called as His,—to you, also, that which you witness to-day is much more than a spectacle, however solemn, much more than the inauguration of a professional career, however sacred. As the priesthood of the sons of Aaron, though it had

a distinctive reality of its own, bore witness of the priesthood of every Israelite, so also does that of the Christian Church. Our office, separate and distinctive as it is, speaks to you of that great society in which, as the body of Christ, every member has a vocation and ministry of his own. Your prayer that we may be 'clothed with righteousness' for that work, is one which you may well offer also for yourselves. And the prayer should pass into act: more willing service, more hearty co-operation, time, money, gifts of wisdom or of speech, employed in fighting against evil, and building up the Church. This is what our work needs for its completeness and its success. It will be well if we can reckon among the blessings which belong to the ministry of great cities, that it recognises and employs the multifarious activity and the diverse gifts of that people which Christ claims as His.

II.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD.¹

'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron, and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil.'—LEV. VIII. 1, 2.

VERY wonderful and awful in its solemnity must have been that scene of the first consecration of the priests of Israel. The people in their tribes were still encamped under the shadow of the rocks of Sinai. They had seen the thick darkness resting on its summit, and the lightning flashes witnessing of the Divine glory within the darkness. They had heard the thunder, and the voices which filled them with fear and terror, which they entreated they might hear no more. They had been afraid to draw near to the presence of the Lord. Since that dread hour they had had a perpetual witness given them of that presence. The 'tabernacle of meeting,'² the place where God meets with man, to pardon, to purify, to illumine,

¹ Preached at the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol's Ordination, December 1863.

² I take this as a truer rendering of the Hebrew than either 'tabernacle of the congregation,' or 'tabernacle of witness.' See Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. TABERNACLE.

had been reared in the midst of them, every part full of a mysterious meaning ; the whole structure pointing to truths, glorious even then in their half-disclosures, seen by us to have been more glorious still. But who, out of the families of Israel, were to meet with God in that sacred tent, to draw near to Him, to stand before Him ? The people as a nation had drawn back from its high calling to be a kingdom of priests. They had shown by that reluctance, and not less by their sensuous worship of the calf of Egypt, that they were utterly unfit for it. Another priesthood therefore was needed. To Aaron and to his sons was given the blessing which the people had cast aside, the duty of bearing witness of truths for which the people were not yet ripe ; and now in the sight of all Israel the great leader was bidden to take them, consecrate them, sanctify them.

Momentous in the lives of the individual men, momentous in the history of the people and Church of God, must that time have been. Every act was a parable of some inward truth. They were washed with water in token that the pure in heart alone can see God, or draw near to Him and worship Him. Garments of glory and beauty were given to the high priest, others hardly less goodly to his sons ; each having, it may be, a hidden meaning of its own, all teaching at least this lesson, *that order, and beauty, and man's highest skill find*

their fit place in the worship of the Most High, are good for man, and not otherwise than acceptable unto God. On the breastplate of the high priest were to be the twelve precious gems, each with the name of a tribe of Israel upon it, in token that his highest work was to be that of intercession ; that he was to bear ever upon his heart, or within it, the names of those for whom he ministered, in whose behalf he stood before the Lord of Hosts. Within the breastplate were to be the Urim and Thummim, witnesses, as the names imply, of Light and Truth,¹ of the inward illumination which the true priest needs in order that he may speak as the oracles of God ; of the integrity which sustains him against all corrupt influences, against the fear of man, against the madness of the people. And after these there was the anointing oil, poured upon Aaron's head, running down to the skirts of his clothing, symbol of the abounding grace of God, refreshing, purifying, sanctifying, making life fragrant with the holiness of heaven, even as the oil itself, pure and holy, breathed forth the odours of frankincense and spikenard. Lastly, there was the solemn act of consecration. Dipping his finger in the blood of the covenant, the Lawgiver was to touch the ear that was to be open to the Divine voice, the hand that was to be

¹ I must again refer to what I have written elsewhere. See Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. URIM AND THUMMIM.

ready, the feet that were to be swift in the activities of Divine ministrations.

All this, we know, solemn as it was, has passed away for ever. The priesthood of the sons of Aaron belongs only to the past. In its place there is the one great High Priest of mankind pleading for all and sacrificing for all, 'Himself the sacrifice, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners ; entering within the veil ; ever living to make intercession for us. In its place, also, there is the universal priesthood. What Israel refused to be, what kings and prophets desired to see, and saw not, has been fulfilled in the Church of Christ. We are a kingdom of priests. Each of us may come as a priest to the throne of grace ; may draw near, may pass (strange and startling must the words have sounded to the ears of Hebrews) through the veil into the Holiest of All. Each of us may offer the living sacrifice of body, soul, and spirit, and the incense of prayer and adoration. Other priesthood, other sacrifices than these, in the strict sense of the words, as they were used of the sons of Aaron or their offerings, Scripture does not teach, the Church of England, at least, does not recognise.

And yet not the less does that first ordination in the Church of the wilderness remain the type and pattern of all subsequent ordinations, the *parent*, as it were, in no doubtful ancestry, of the

service of this day. Whatever thoughts of solemnity and awe, whatever meanings deep and high we have found in the history of their day of consecration, we may transfer to the work of this hour and this place. Measured by what it really is, for all who bear any part in it, it is to the full as critical, as pregnant with untold consequences for the far futurities, as was that dedication of the sons of Aaron. Looked at from one point of view, it presents, of course, a common and familiar aspect. It is the decent ceremonial by which men are admitted to the profession they have chosen. We look for the names of those who are ordained as we look for the names of those who are called to the bar, or receive commissions in the army. It is fit in either case that there should be some kind of examination as a test of fitness. Inevitably, in the nature of things, such an act as this must present such an aspect. But it presents also another, and a very different one. It is nothing less than the solemn dedication of men to be servants of the Most High ; ministers of the Church of Christ ; stewards of the mysteries of God ; not priests themselves, as the sons of Aaron were priests, with the old functions and the old prerogatives, but appointed witnesses of the priesthood of Christ ; appointed witnesses also of the universal priesthood ; called to be living representatives of

all that belongs to the essence of the priestly character. Through all the future of the individual life, through all the future of the history of the Church of Christ, will the issues of this day reach. For good or for evil, whether men will hear or whether they forbear, as a savour of life or a savour of death, they will last for ever. Well may we ask hesitatingly, as we think of this, Who is sufficient for these things? Well may all solemnities of the past dwindle and disappear before the surpassing solemnity of the present.

For consider—(1.) How great and serious is the charge which falls at this time on the chief pastor of the flock, on him who has to judge whether men are fitted in mind and heart for the Shepherd's work. On him, and on those who act with him, there rests the burden of a responsibility often painful, and at times absolutely overwhelming. The one keynote that runs through all the rules which Scripture gives him for his office, through all the prayers and counsels of the Ember season, is that he is to 'lay hands suddenly on no man.' Woe for them with whom the decision rests, if through undue laxity they admit into the sacred ministry of the Church of Christ, those who by life, character, conversation, are manifestly unfit for it. Woe for them if, through mistaken leniency, they receive to the office of a teacher those whose lips can never

keep the knowledge they have never gained. Woe for them once more, if they throw open the gate, of which they keep the keys, so wide that men may enter there who have cast aside the faith of which the Church is the witness and the keeper, or make it narrow with tests and barriers which she has not sanctioned, so as to shut out those whose faith in Christ is true, and whose hearts are in their Master's work. Surely they, if any, need at such a time those graces of which the Urim and Thummim were the symbols,—the illumination which will give them a right judgment in all things; the integrity to abide by that judgment, courting no man's favour, fearing no man's blame.

And for you who this day enter on a new work, trembling, it may be, with the sense of your weakness and inexperience, conscious at least of some promptings in which you recognise nothing less than the call of the Eternal Spirit; for you too, unlike though your priesthood may be to that of the sons of Aaron, the remembrance of that their day of consecration is not without its lessons. You also, if not as substitutes for other men, yet as their representatives, guides, teachers, are called to a life of special devotion, to tread the courts of the visible sanctuary, to dwell also in the sanctuary that is invisible. All that ritual by which they were set apart for their solemn work has its

counterpart in spiritual realities for you. Lives that are pure and blameless, as of those for whom 'the cleansing with the washing of water by the word' has not been fruitless; the robes of white linen, fair and pure, made white in the blood of the Lamb, the purity, *i. e.*, of the higher priestly life hiding from sight the 'shame of the nakedness' of whatever has been selfish, mean, impure; the blood of the Mediator of the New Covenant sprinkled upon ear, and hand, and foot; every power of heart and mind quickened into a fresh activity by its fellowship in that redemption; the unction from the Holy One, the sevenfold gifts of the anointing Spirit, breathing forth from your lives in knowledge and wisdom, and meekness and gentleness and love;—these are your consecration. Of this every act of this solemn service bears its witness.

No easy and light task had those sons of Aaron before them. Do not dream that any easy or light task lies before you. A people stubborn and rebellious, the rivalry of Korahs and of Dathans, foul sins of apostasy and lust, this was what they had to encounter; for such as these they had to intercede. But the high priest, if he were true to his calling, did not the less continue to plead even for the unthankful and rebellious. He 'stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was

stayed.’¹ He was called to bless, and not to curse. In the midst of all dissensions, schisms, oppositions, the twelve stones on his breastplate bore witness that he was the priest of an undivided people, one in their election by the Lord of Hosts, one by virtue of the everlasting covenant. When he ceased to remember this, when he failed to have compassion on those that were ignorant and out of the way, seeking for power and honour, courting the favour of kings, or speaking smooth things to the people, then the priesthood was dishonoured. Their sins of ignorance, selfishness, rapacity, were reproduced in the godlessness, the discords, the apostasy of the nation. Like difficulties and like dangers lie before you also. The very work of your ministerial calling, in proportion as you do it honestly, may rouse opposition and dislike. The way of truth will be evil spoken of, sometimes through your own faults and weaknesses, your haste, your inconsistency, your want of thought; but sometimes also, without such faults, men may say all manner of evil of you, because, according to the light and grace given to you, you are zealous in your Master’s work. The strangest misconstructions may be put upon words and acts. The simplest proclamation of the cross of Christ, of the grace of God, may expose you to the taunt of the ignorant and foolish (I may not

¹ Numb. xvi. 48.

shrink from repeating the words which men actually use), as an Evangelical or a Methodist. The simplest endeavour to restore order and beauty in a ritual which has been left in slovenly confusion, may lead to the reproach of being a Romanist in disguise. The simplest assertion of the limits of our knowledge of things Divine, of the facts of the 'sundry times and divers manners' in which God 'spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets,'¹ may cause men to class you with the rationalist and the unbeliever. Do not wonder if these reproaches come from those who would have called the Master of the house Beelzebub. Do not wonder if they come also from those who think that they are doing God service. It is not strange that men should, at such a time as this, be fearful and suspicious. It is still less strange that fear should issue in the injustice of an indiscriminating panic ; but not the less be true to the idea of the priestly calling. It is yours to bless, and not to curse ; it is yours to bear upon your hearts the names of all parties, sects, divisions in the Church of Christ, with the thought that they are one in Him ; to look out, not with scorn, or anger, or indifference, but with a Christlike compassion, upon the wanderers and the weary ; dwelling yourselves in the tabernacle of God, to lead them also to its doors, that they too may enter in

¹ Heb. i. 1.

and dwell there. It is yours to meet all difficulties, hindrances, with the prayer which asks for those high-priestly gifts; 'let thy light and thy truth lead me';¹ let thy illuminating presence guide me through the mists and shadows, let thy integrity keep me from crooked paths, and from the instability of the double mind. And then the blessing of the priesthood shall be yours also. To the clergy of the Church of England, true to their vocation, rising to its height, it may yet be given to stand between the living and the dead, between the living hopes and energies of faith which yet remain, and the hypocrisies, the denials, the apathy which are spreading death. The plague has begun, now walking in darkness, now smiting in the noon-day, but you, with the golden censers and the prayers of faith, may yet avert it. Wherever your lot may be cast, be they few or many who come under your influence, there are those, men and women, young and old, whom you can lead through like stages of initiation, repentance, purity, renewal, to share with you the blessedness of the truest and the highest priesthood, to offer with you the sacrifice of heart and will to the Holiest of All upon the altar of the living God.

¹ I am glad to find the Rev. J. J. S. Perowne adopting my suggestion that the words of the Psalmist may possibly involve a reference, more or less distinct, to the Urim and Thummim. See his *Commentary on the Psalms*, I. 203.

III.

ANATHEMA FROM CHRIST.¹

'I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'—ROM. IX. 3.

ALL who have ever thought of these words at all must have thought of them with wonder and amazement. How startling, how amazing they have been, is shown not more by the thrill, half of horror and half of noblest sympathy, with which we hear them, than by the attempts which men of colder nature, or tied up by logical formulæ, have made to evade them. The apostle, it is said, might have cherished that fearful wish in the days of his Judaism; in the time before his conversion he might have been content to undergo a temporary excommunication, to submit to pains and penalties like those of the men who were put out of the synagogue; he might have wished it for a moment, and then checked the wish; it was just a rhetorical hyperbole to express the intensity of his

¹ Preached before the University of Oxford, May 7, 1865.

natural affection. From all these miserable and unworthy shifts of incompetent interpreters we have now happily escaped ; and as regards the literal meaning of the words there is an almost wonderful unanimity. Critics of every school,¹ honoured, half-trusted, denounced, are agreed that the words can mean nothing else than this : that for his brethren's sake, his kinsmen according to the flesh, St. Paul was willing to accept all that is involved in the thought of everlasting condemnation, eternal separation from his Lord, yea, craved with a passionate earnestness that it might be so.

So accepted, the words present many aspects, and suggest many trains of thought. We may turn to them as the highest example extant of that heroic goodness (*ἀρετὴ ἡρωικὴ*) which other ages saw dimly as an ideal far distant, as showing how near the love of man could come to the love of Christ, as being what has well been called the very ecstasy of a love beside itself in the delirium of a charity illimitable. Does it not lead us on yet further ? Does it not, if we understand it rightly, supply the true key to St. Paul's teaching as to the atonement by which man is reconciled to God ? Does it not help us to take many steps

¹ It may be sufficient here to note the *consensus* of men who represent such different schools of theology as do Dean Alford, Dr. Wordsworth, and Mr. Jowett.

towards a clearer apprehension of what no man can grasp in its fulness, the mystery of atonement itself?

Terrible enough would have been that word Anathema, 'accursed from Christ,' if it had brought with it only the thoughts which a Jewish reader would have associated with it. To come under all the curses, dark and dread, which were written in the Book of the Law; to be cursed in waking and sleeping, going out and coming in, in buying and selling, in the city and in the field, to be shunned as a leper was shunned, hated as a Samaritan was hated, shut out from fellowship with all human society that had been most prized, from all kindly greeting of friends and neighbours; this was what he would have connected with the words as their least and lowest meaning. The Christian reader, possibly the Jewish also, would have gone yet further. The apostle's own words would have taught him to see more. To be 'delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh;'¹ to come under sharp pain of body, supernaturally inflicted, and to feel that that excruciating agony, or loathsome plague, was the deserved chastisement of a sin against truth and light; to be shut out from all visible fellowship with the body of Christ, and therefore from all communion with Christ himself;

¹ 1 Cor. v. 5.

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to be as in the outer darkness while the guests were feasting in the illumined chamber, here too to be shunned by those who had been friends and brothers,—this would have been the Christian thought as to excommunication in the apostolic age.

But beyond all this, the apostle found a deeper gulf, a more terrible sentence. To be anathema from Christ, cut off for ever from that eternal life which he had known as the truest and highest blessedness, sentenced for ever to that outer darkness, the wailing and gnashing of teeth,—this was what he had prayed for, if it might have for its result the salvation of his brethren. He had but just asked triumphantly, ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’¹ Now he is prepared, for that reward, if it were so possible, to separate himself. In proportion to his experience of the life which was no longer his, but Christ’s, who dwelt in him, in proportion to his anticipation of the glory yet to be revealed in the manifestation of the sons of God, was the measure of this marvellous sacrifice, not of a lower happiness for the sake of a higher, but of all, of every kind, to which he was willing to submit.

And all this, we must remember, was for those who, as it was, were making his life, apart from his hope in Christ, of all lives most miserable.

¹ Rom. viii. 35.

Others had cast away their earthly life, as obeying their country's laws, defending their country's freedom, with armies looking on, and trumpets sounding for battle ; or had died as witnesses to the truth, martyrs to the cause of wisdom ; or had faced disease and death in many a foul and hideous form at the call of natural affection for friends, parents, brothers. Thousands have left names which mankind will not willingly let die, which stand nobly forth as beacons for the world to gaze at. Tens of thousands are written only in the book of God's remembrance, to be manifested hereafter when the thrones are set and the books shall be opened. But here there was no such motive, no such tie. It was not even for the 'just man,' irreproachably 'righteous,' lacking only the charm that draws out love ; it was not for the 'good man,'¹ genial, generous, large-hearted, for whom some one would even dare to die, that he sought to sacrifice himself. No ; it was for those who 'pleased not God, and were contrary to all men,'² through whom 'the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles,'³ who dogged his footsteps everywhere, slandering his fair fame, and persecuting him in every city ; it was for these, or such as these, that he was ready to be anathema from Christ. Here was his own precept carried

¹ Rom. v. 7.² 1 Thess. i. 15.³ Rom. ii. 24.

to its highest point. He was 'not overcome of that evil, but was overcoming evil with good.'¹ Wonderful as was that hymn of his in praise of charity, here was what went beyond even that. The words 'endureth all things' received an interpretation which, had we not found in the apostle's own words, we should not have dared even to imagine.

Two or three thoughts connect themselves with this before we pass on to what appear legitimate inferences from it—(1.) That which St. Paul thus prayed for was in its very nature, we know, impossible. In whatever sense the words were originally spoken, they remained true in their application to such a prayer: 'No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.'² Great as is the power which one man may exercise over the wellbeing of another, though disciple may owe his very self to teacher, and faithful pastors rescue souls as brands snatched from the burning, as sheep wandering and lost in the very valley of the shadow of death, this bearing of another's burdens, this acceptance of another's curse, lay beyond all human power.

¹ Rom. xii. 21.

² Ps. xlix. 7, 8. The primary meaning is obviously that, whatever else riches may do, they cannot avert the stroke of disease and death, either from their possessor, or those whom he loves.

Each must bear his own burden. No man can say, as the patriarch's mother said of old, 'Upon me be thy curse, my son.'¹ (2.) Though impossible in itself, human history has shown wonderful approximation to it. Vicarious sacrifice, the voluntary acceptance of evil, labour, suffering, reproach, ignominy, of all that we connect with the idea of a curse, for the sake of some good which others are to gain by it,—this has been the very law of all progress, the condition of all highest excellence. From the poor mother in her half-blind affection, starving, drudging, sinning, that her child may live, to the patriot, soldier, martyr, all are in their several ways exponents of that law. A larger portion of the curse of sin falls upon them than they else would have to bear, and by it they help others to escape from it. The apostle himself, like many a prophet before, like many a preacher since, did know a sorrow and continual heaviness, and did encounter nakedness, and peril, and sword, and tribulation, and so fulfilled his calling, and began a work never to end, and left an impress to last for ages even on the world's history, to last for ever in the souls of those who through him have learnt a truth which otherwise they had not heard of. Nor had there been wanting witnesses to this truth, as well as examples of like greatness. Dim

¹ Gen. xxviii. 13.

foreshadowings of what was afterwards to be revealed we find in history and legend, mingled oftentimes, as in the tales of Codrus and Iphigenia, with dark thoughts of the Divine nature as relentless and unjust. Once it had found distinct, articulate utterance. The grey discrowned king, wandering in exile, fearful to look upon, speaks to the daughter whose life was one long sacrifice to duty, the triumph of affection over self, the free acceptance of the curse that had fallen upon the house of Labdacus—

ἀρκεῖν γὰρ ὄμαι κἀντὶ μυρίων μίαν
 ψυχὴν τὰδ' ἐκτίνοσαν, ἣν εὐνοῦς παρῆ:¹

'That one soul working in the strength of love
 Is mightier than ten thousand to atone.'

If we point, as we rightly may do, to the conscious or half-conscious prophecy of Isaiah, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed,'² as one among many tokens that the truth of the atonement was present to the thoughts of Israel, may we not as rightly point to this as among the most striking of the unconscious prophecies of heathenism? Do not the words

ἀντὶ μυρίων μίαν
 ψυχὴν

present a wonderful parallelism both of expression

¹ Sophocles, *Œd. Col.* 498.

² Isa. liii. 5.

and of thought to those, 'a ransom for many' (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν),¹ which the Church has rightly treasured up as the charter of her life? (3.) Still limiting ourselves to these approximate instances, that we may reason from them to the law to which they point, we find that there is a wonderful union in them of joy and suffering, of curse and blessedness, of defeat and victory. The mother's hunger becomes more endurable; through the flames which flicker round the martyr there comes 'a moist whistling wind.'² In the midst of battle the wounded soldier feels a peace that passes understanding. The surgeon, the pastor, the nurse, who for the sake of others face pestilence and death, are more than conquerors through Him who loved them. St. Paul himself, at the very moment when he prayed that he might be accursed from Christ, was entering more fully into the joy of his Lord than he had ever done before, because then, more than ever, that mind was in him which was also in Christ Jesus. As the Master 'did not count equality with God a thing to be snatched at as a prize, but emptied himself'³ even of the 'glory which he had with the Father before the

¹ Matt. xx. 28.

² Song of the Three Children, ver 23.

³ Phil. ii. 6, 7. It may be well to state, for the sake of general readers who may be startled by a rendering so different from that of the authorized version, that I follow Bishop Ellicott in thus interpreting these words. See his Commentary *in loc.*

world was,¹ of the conscious energy of the Divine attributes, so did the servant count that the glory yet to be revealed was not 'a prize' for himself, was content, even while he pressed forward to the mark of his high calling, to forego even that, and to 'empty himself' also of the blessings of the adoption and the promises. And therefore the joy of the servant also, like that of the Master, was unspeakable and full of glory. As the heart knew its own bitterness, the bitterness of that self-surrender, so there was a joy with which the stranger did not intermeddle.

Can we wonder that, with this as the dominant feeling in his soul, looking at the mysteries of God through the medium of his own experience and the experience of mankind, the apostle should have gone yet further? Believing as he did that what is impossible with men may yet be possible with God; conscious that it was the presence of Christ in him that raised him out of his natural selfishness into this supernatural charity, was it strange that he should believe (I speak after the manner of men, setting aside for the moment the fact that he was divinely taught) that his Lord had perfectly accomplished that which he failed to attain to, had done what he prayed that he might do? To one who had passed through that ex-

¹ John xvii. 5.

perience there would seem nothing strange or improbable in the thought that as he sought to be accursed for his brethren of the stock of Abraham, so Christ might, in very deed, become 'a curse for us,'¹ for Gentile and Jew, for his brethren of the whole family of man. As in proportion to his sympathy with all men he was ready to bear another's burden, so he would be able to apprehend the thought that He who 'learnt'² an infinite sympathy with our infirmities, and was tempted as we are tempted, might be able to bear the yet greater burden when the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all. As he could say, with no boastfulness of speech, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak; who is offended, and I burn not?'³ sharing, as it were, by that intensity of sympathy, sins that were not his, temptations he had never known; so, reasoning upwards from the lower to the higher, from the sinful to the sinless, from the

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

² The thought that the human nature of our Lord, as it 'increased in wisdom' (Luke ii. 52), so also passed through the successive stages of progress to a perfect manhood, 'learning' by His own experience 'obedience' and sympathy, is beyond all question the point of view from which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews looks at the mystery of the incarnation (Heb. iv. 15, 16; v. 8, 9). Popular theology, oscillating between Apollinarius and Renan, seems unable to contemplate the growth in mind and spirit, through stages analogous to those of other men, of the true and archetypal humanity.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 29. It may be questioned, I think, whether any interpretation which limits the 'burning' of this verse to anger against evil is in any degree adequate. The one other passage in which St. Paul uses the word is 1 Cor. vii. 9.

human to the Divine, he would find it the simplest, as well as the most wonderful of all truths, that 'God should have made him who knew no sin to be sin for us ;'¹ to identify Himself with man's evil, struggle with its power, bear its chastisement, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. As he passed through that craving after conscious participation in a curse, through that actual life of sacrifice, to the blessedness of one who knows that the sacrifice is accepted ; as he could say, ' If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all ;'² so he would be able to understand how, in the highest of all Sacrifice, the curse and the blessing, the glory and the shame, were joined inseparably ; how at the moment of keenest anguish and sense of desolation, and the bitter cry, ' My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?'³ there was also the fullest acceptance, the most entire confidence, the union unbroken and undisturbed of the Father and of the Son, the return after a moment to the conscious utterance of that trust, in the words, ' Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit.'⁴

May we not go further, and say, that what thus seemed true and natural to St. Paul, was indeed

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

² Phil. ii. 17.

³ Matt. xxvii. 46.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 46.

true in itself, and in harmony with God's natural order? If we look to the life of Christ as the example of a perfect humanity, would it not be strange if we should find nothing there of that vicarious suffering which enters so largely into our poorer, lower forms of human excellence? Were the cravings of the noblest human hearts to be disappointed precisely at the moment when they seemed to be attaining their fulfilment? Was the disciple to be greater than his Master, and the servant above his Lord? And does not the whole tenor of the records of the gospel bring this before us as its dominant characteristic? If we were to deal with that narrative as one has lately dealt with it; if it were to us nothing more than the life of a noble-hearted though unsteadfast idealist; if that death were to be only as the tragic catastrophe of a romance of history, would it not be true that the whole soul of the idealist was saturated with the thought of sacrifice; that the death was foreseen, freely accepted, courted, as the one true expression of the thought? He came 'to give his life a ransom in the place of many.'¹ As the Good Shepherd, 'he laid down his life for the sheep.'² He would 'give his flesh for the life of the world.'³ His blood was shed like the blood on the day of atonement, 'for many,' yea, for all, 'for

¹ Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45. ² John x. 11, 15. ³ John vi. 51.

the remission of sins.’¹ It was poured out, like the blood sprinkled on the people at the foot of Sinai, as the token of that ‘new covenant,’ made not with Israel, but with mankind; not ceremonial, but spiritual, pointing not to temporal blessings, but to everlasting life. Whatever thought we start with as to that death, it must run up, if it have any truth, to this. If we speak of it, as we may with truth, as ‘the greatest moral act ever done in this world,’² must it not include that, the omission of which would place it below the efforts and the yearnings of those who have found in it the source of their love, and the pattern of their life of sacrifice, below the unconscious efforts of those whom the Light that lighteth every man was leading to a true nobleness? If we say, as we may with truth, that it was ‘the noblest martyrdom,’³ to what truth did it bear witness but this, that when sacrifices

¹ Matt. xxvi. 28; Luke xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 25.

² Jowett, *Essay on the Atonement*. I venture to express my conviction that the phrase as such has been the object of undue censure. What is defective in the statement is, that it seems to imply an antagonism between the highest morality and a sacrifice so offered and accepted: ‘Not the sacrifice, not the satisfaction, not the ransom, *but* the greatest moral act. . . .’ It is but right to add, that a fair estimate of the whole passage shows, that though ‘sacrifice’ is thus denied (rashly and unwisely, as I must think) in words, this ‘self-renunciation,’ which is the essence of the sacrifice, is abundantly recognised in the context.

³ We too commonly forget, in our zeal for a great truth, that this language, which some of us would probably reject as unworthy and irreverent, embodies an aspect of our Lord’s sufferings and death to which He himself gives prominence (John ix. 37), and which was equally prominent in apostolic teaching (1 Tim. vi. 13).

and offerings availed not, One was manifested, saying, 'Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God?'¹ The sacrifice of the death was the crown and consummation of the sacrifice of the life, the culminating act, the ultimate expression of that obedience which was the true oblation,² the acceptance of man's nature, with the weakness, degradation, curse, which had fallen upon it and become inherent. It was a true satisfaction, for it 'satisfied the divine craving,' as has well been said by one of highest place and highest honour, 'after a perfect holiness,' for the self-sacrifice of a perfect love.³ It

¹ Ps. xl. 6-8; Heb. x. 5-9.

² Thus in Phil. ii. 8 stress is laid on the fact that Christ 'became obedient unto death,' while in Heb. v. 8, 9, the 'obedience' which He learnt by the things that He 'suffered,' stands in close connexion with the perfect consecration which made Him a High Priest for ever. So, in Heb. x. 5-14, there is the same connexion between His coming 'to do the will of God,' and the 'one offering,' by which He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

³ Archbishop Trench, *Sermons preached in Westminster Abbey*, Christ the Lamb of God, p. 174. This substantially was the 'satisfactio' of Anselm's treatise, *Cur Deus Homo*. The following extract will show that the same view has been held in conjunction with extreme Protestantism: 'The Spirit of God asserts plainly that Christ by His most holy life satisfied the law and righteousness of God, and places the price by which we were redeemed, not in His sufferings only, but in the conformity of His whole life to the law of God. And it ascribes our redemption to the death or blood of Christ in no other sense than because He was thus made perfect; and so from that last completing and noblest act, without which our salvation could not have been accomplished, and which was the bright mirror of all excellence, it gives a name to the whole act, yet so as not to separate the death from the whole previous life.' I have translated from the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, c. xv. The original may be found in Niemeyer, *Collectio Confessionum*, p. 734, or Augusti, *Corpus Libr. Symbol.*

was an atonement, because those whom sin, the sin of a self-centred life, had long divided—God, the pure and the just ; man, the polluted and unrighteous—were in that sacrifice set at one again ; man's nature seen in that mystery of suffering as in harmony with the Divine will, and gaining power to draw all men unto it, and so to reconcile them also to their Father in heaven.¹ It was a ransom, because it was the price fully paid, which many men, prophets, kings, sufferers, preachers of righteousness, had striven in vain to pay, and by which the captives were delivered from their bondage, and the exiles restored to their home.² It was a propitiation, because there, as in the Tabernacle of Witness, men might take refuge, no longer

¹ The thought of this reconciliation 'in *one* body by the cross,' this 'making in himself *one* new man, so making peace,' this 'bringing nigh by the blood of Christ of those who were far off' (Eph. ii. 13, 17), must be admitted to be *the* aspect of atonement which most answers to its etymological meaning, which is the key-note of the whole Epistle in which the words just quoted occur, which is dominant in the teaching both of St. Paul and St. John.

² The word 'ransom,' fitting accurately as it does to the Greek so translated, can have no other meaning than this. The life of Christ was given as a condition of deliverance. The question with which men have in earlier and later times perplexed themselves, whether the price was made to the evil power which held men in captivity, or to the Father to whom the sacrifice was offered, arises in part from an undue desire after logical precision in language necessarily figurative, in part from their forgetting that Death is, in the language of Scripture, personified as an alien and tyrannous power (Rev. xx. 13), from whose fear Christ by His own death has delivered them (Heb. ii. 13, 14). In this point of view the life thus offered may be thought of as a tribute paid by the perfect Man, as by all other men, to One who exercises a permitted sovereignty, but with a power, in submitting to the 'first death,' to deliver men from the 'second death,' which no other offering of man's life could have.

under the spreading wings of the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, but under the very shadow of the wings of God.¹ Without shedding of blood, without the surrender of the life of which the blood was the symbol, there was no remission of sins, for all sacrifice was imperfect which did not extend to the whole man as well as to the things that he possessed; and the blood shed upon the cross was 'precious,' because it was the visible token of the offering of a perfect life.

Some other thoughts suggest themselves, and must not be repressed. We meet often (it is the common complaint of many earnest and devoted minds) with doubts and denials as to the atoning work of Christ, and the sacrificial character of His death. Sometimes we may trace, though it is well for the most part, even here, to judge nothing

¹ The word 'propitiation' occurs three times in the authorized version of the Bible. In Rom. iii. 25 it stands for *ἱλαστήριον*: in 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10, for *ἱλασμός*. In the two latter passages the prominent idea is that of the 'sin-offering,' the 'atonement' of the Mosaic ritual. But in the former, it is scarcely possible to overlook the fact, that the forms of the word appear to have been chosen in order that it might at least include a reference to that other sense of 'mercy-seat,' in which it is used in the LXX. of Exod. xxv. 17, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (viii. 5). The cross of Christ is, by the blood which he shed upon it, the mercy-seat of the New Covenant, and the access to it is no longer limited as of old to the high priest, but is open 'by faith' to every man. The fact that this aspect of the mercy-seat was recognised by a Rabbinical disciple of the school in which the apostle had been trained, has a significance which commentators have not adequately recognised. 'Our wise men teach,' said Simon ben Gamaliel, 'that when a heathen comes to enter into the Covenant, our part is to stretch out our hands to him, and bring him under the wings of God.'—Jost, *Gesch. Judenthums*, i. 447.

before the time, the workings of an evil heart of unbelief. Men are unwilling to own that there is a sin to be atoned. They would fain persuade themselves that all evil, the evil in the world, the evil in their own lives, is but a necessary step in the progress toward good, and merge in some Pantheistic formula the eternal differences between truth and falsehood, between wrong and right. Sometimes scorn or indifference as to this truth may be but the symptom of a cynical levity which is indifferent to all truth, and is irritated at the presence of what, if true, ought to be acknowledged as supreme. But sometimes also it goes (who can doubt it?) with a character which makes us sigh wistfully that being what it is, it were with us, not against us, loving, devoted, self-sacrificing, surrendering ease for duty, popularity for what it holds to be the truth, pleasure, health, it may be life, in its sympathy with sufferers, its desire to rescue sinners. Why they reject what is indeed the very crown and perfection of all that they feel to be best and noblest we know not. It may be that men, wise above what is written, intruding into those things which they have not seen, have perplexed them with the technical and forensic formulæ of human systems. It may be that they have had forced upon them a mode of stating the truth which seemed to them at variance with the

righteousness of God, involving a contrast, almost an antagonism, between the mind of the Father and of the Eternal Son who came to do that Father's will, narcotizing what ought to be the intense consciousness of personal responsibility. How far the fault is their own, how far it belongs to others, we know not. God knows. But if in what is most essentially Christlike, they are followers, 'imitators' of Paul, as he was of Christ, we may at least venture to hope that they, 'willing' to do God's will, will one day 'know of the doctrine whether it be of God.'¹ He is educating them in ways we see not, guiding them in the one path that leads with no swerving to the right hand or the left, to an apprehension of the truth. Their experience of the lower types and foreshadowings of the mystery of sacrifice, at present clouded and indistinct, may ripen into knowledge. We may rejoice and give thanks that 'that mind is in them which was also in Christ Jesus.'² We may believe that if in this matter any such man be otherwise minded, God will reveal even this unto him. Meantime they may help us by putting us to shame, quickening us to emulation, provoking to love and to good works. We may help them by prayer, sympathy, forbearance, by refraining from hard words and harsher judgments, by so setting forth

¹ John vii. 17.

² Phil. ii. 5.

the truth that it may be indeed glad tidings of great joy.

The lesson has also got another aspect. If it is true that there may be the power without the form, there may also be the form without the power. It is easy, fatally easy, to vindicate the truth of the atonement, to state it with all power of logic, rhetoric, emotion, and yet to be without the life which alone interprets it, without the mind which acknowledges the law of sacrifice. The truth, which ought to be the spring of peace and love, may become, as other truths have become, a very root of bitterness, the watchword of a party, the tool of a politician, the stepping-stone to fame and power. It lies in the very nature of things, that when so proclaimed it loses at once its beauty and its life. Men present the very aspect of the doctrine which they know to be most likely to cause some to stumble, because it is most likely to gain the approval of the timid and the weak. They define where Scripture and the Church are silent ; speculate on what lies behind the veil ; condemn, with a want of sympathy which almost passes into scorn, those who are in perplexity and doubt in different ages of the Church.¹ For them

¹ It is well to quote the wise and reverential words of the greatest thinker of the English Church. They present themselves in their calm truthfulness as a witness against the heated rhetoric of later and more one-sided apologists : ' How and in what particular way it (the sacrifice

the phases of thought which show how many sides the truth presents are as nothing, and the formula which cuts sharpest in the strife of words becomes everything. Not so did the apostle 'preach Christ crucified.' Not so was Christ 'lifted up' that He might 'draw all men' unto Him with the cords of an everlasting love. As something of the spirit of self-sacrifice, some 'filling up of that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the Church,'¹ is a condition of true insight into the mystery of that great sacrifice, so is it yet more the condition of proclaiming it so that we may win souls to Christ. We, upon whom has fallen, or may fall, the task of contending for the faith once delivered to the saints of God, for the authority of the written Word as a witness to the unity and universality of that primitive tradition, the record of a covenant resting on a sacrifice, we need to remember one kindly deed, one word of sympathy, one expression in act of the mind of Christ, one manifestation of the law of sacrifice, one acceptance of another's burden, is mightier

of Christ) had this efficacy (for obtaining pardon for sin), there are not wanting persons who have endeavoured to explain, but I do not find that the Scripture has explained it. We seem to be very much in the dark concerning the manner in which the ancients supposed atonement to be made, *i.e.*, pardon to be obtained by sacrifice. And if the Scripture has, as surely it has, left this matter of the satisfaction of Christ mysterious, left somewhat in it unrevealed, all conjectures must be, if not evidently absurd, yet at least uncertain.'—Butler's *Analogy*, II. 5, sect. vi.

¹ Col. i. 24.

than many treatises. If we fail to rise to that height at which we have gazed with terror and astonishment, if we cannot bring ourselves even in thought to wish that we were accursed from Christ for our brethren's sake, our kinsmen according to the flesh, it is at least possible to rescue them from some part of the curse which presses on them. We may sacrifice somewhat of ease, repute, tranquillity, popularity, inherited prepossessions, to fight against the evils that surround them. In so doing we shall not be anathema from Christ, but shall enter more and more into His blessedness and peace. The true, the lasting anathema, falls on those who neither love Him nor their brethren.

IV.

AIMING AT COMPLETENESS.¹

‘This also we wish, even your perfection.’—2 COR. XIII. 9.

DAYS like this are stamped, and will be stamped for ever upon the minds of those who pass through them, as having raised them, at least for the time, above the common level of their lives. They have felt the calling to a solemn work. They have trusted that that sense of a vocation was no idle dream ; that like all other good thoughts, desires, purposes, it was an inspiration, the work in them of the Eternal Spirit, inwardly moving them to a dedicated life, to the service of the ministry, to the preaching of Christ’s gospel. The true pattern, the ideal of that ministry, is present to their thoughts. Vaguely, indefinitely perhaps, yet earnestly, they picture to themselves as theirs all that they most admire ; cannot think of themselves as falling into the

¹ Preached at the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol’s Ordination, *Trinity Sunday*, 1863.

faults which they condemn or mourn over in others. Zeal without narrowness, charity without indifference, the labour of love, the serpent's wisdom, the dove's innocence, souls won to truth and holiness and Christ, a parish well-ordered, a flock loving and grateful, a life of activity and usefulness rewarded with respect and honour, crowned at last with the welcome of the Chief Shepherd, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,'—this comes before their minds as that which they hope and pray for for themselves, for which they would ask the hopes and the prayers of others.

Soon the experience of life brings its trials and temptations. Our eyes are opened to see things as they are. We find men prejudiced and hard. Selfishness thwarts us ; the bright promise of the dawn is overclouded ; the tares are mingled with the wheat, and the good seed is choked with thorns, and brings no fruit to perfection. The ideal disappears, and seems to belong only to the cloud-land of our fancies. We think that we must become more practical, take things as they are, be satisfied with average results. There creeps over us, often with a terrible rapidity, the spirit that aims at lower things, that looks back upon the higher purposes of solemn times as enthusiastic, visionary, Utopian.

The words of St. Paul which I have read—words

that come from the depth of his heart, and are the expression of his whole desire—rebuke that faint-hearted coldness, that mockery of a true wisdom. They come from one who, whatever else he was, was at least through all his life practical, earnest, active. They reveal the secret of the activity; they tell us of one who never for a moment lowered the standard at which he aimed; before whose mind there was ever present the pattern of an ideal completeness, of a perfection which might indeed be unattainable, but which, through disappointments, failures, weariness, was to be steadily pursued. The law of his ministerial life answered to that of his personal striving after holiness. As in the one he was ever 'forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth to those things that were before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,'¹ counting nothing attained while any victory over self, any labour of love, any share in the sufferings of Christ, remained incomplete; so it was with his thoughts and wishes for the churches committed to his care, for the individual souls with whom the providence of God brought him into contact. He never for a moment lost sight of the ideal of a Christian Church—completeness in all things. Nothing less than that would be the

¹ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

adequate consummation of his labours. This was the secret of his tenderness, his sympathy, his forbearance ; the secret also of his courage, his severity, his sternness. Running through every chapter of these two Epistles to the Corinthians, we trace this deep, pervading desire. He hears a report which might have satisfied many teachers ; he could give thanks for the grace of God bestowed on them. They 'came behind in no gift,' were 'enriched in all utterance and all knowledge,'¹ but there were faults, schisms, even heresies in teaching, gifts misused, ordinances irreverently handled, a ritual in disorder, the license of a false freedom bringing life and morals down to a lower level than that of heathenism. He could not rest till he had striven with all his power to conquer these evils. Completeness in creed, in ritual, in life, the completeness to which every gift of God, to which every power natural or spiritual bestowed upon His ministers was designed to be subservient, that was the mark of the high calling of God for them, as sanctification of body, soul, and spirit was for his own inward life. In one form or another the thought recurs in wellnigh every full utterance of the apostle's heart. If he thinks of Scripture, it is as that which is able to make the man of God 'perfect,' thoroughly furnished, completely fitted

¹ 1 Cor. i. 5-7.

out for all good works.¹ The object of his prayer and labour is, that he may 'present every man perfect in Christ Jesus,' that those for whom he prays 'may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.'²

Of the many glorious outgoings of that purpose, the words that stand in close union with it bring two prominently before us. The higher anxiety, which purified and strengthened, shut out the lower feverish, restless care—the thirst for praise or power, which stimulates and degrades. 'We are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong.'³ He could well bear suspicion, calumny, contempt, not indeed indifferent to them, holding it right, for the truth's sake, to vindicate himself against them; but having a joy with which they did not interfere, the joy of seeing his brethren, his disciples, his children, stronger than they had been before, stronger in the faith, stronger in their struggles against evil, stronger in their efforts after holiness. What mattered it that he heard of the whispers or the taunts of false teachers, who, carrying into the highest work the passions and the pettiness of a lower, 'handled deceitfully,' tampered with the Word of God which they professed to distribute, and attacked true teachers with all the bitterness of competition. He could bear

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

² Col. i. 28; iv. 12.

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 9.

to be thought weak, contemptible, worthless ; he could accept, if it were possible, the actual weakness and worthlessness with which they taunted him ; could be ' as reprobate,' so long as he knew that his labour was not in vain in the Lord ; that those for whose souls he cared were growing in grace and knowledge, in purity and strength. ' We are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong : and this also we wish, even your perfection.'

And out of this grew, in the actual order of his inner life, that which in outward expression preceded it, ' We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' The words are, as they might well be, wide and far-reaching. Something there is in them, it may be, of personal vindication. He had been charged with lightness and fickleness of purpose, with saying ' Yes' at one time, ' No' at another ; with employing craft, subtlety, guile, for the furtherance of his purposes.¹ His answer, in the full assurance of a conscience that acquitted, is, that all who knew him would feel, as he himself felt, that such a charge involved a moral contradiction. That pervading desire for the perfection, the completeness of those for whom he laboured, that exclusion even of ' the last infirmity of noble minds,' were incompatible with anything but the most essential truthfulness. To

¹ 2 Cor. i. 17.

suppose that one who had conquered the spirit of falsehood in the inner depths of his life, who, for the sake of God's truth, was bearing reproach, suffering, danger, could wantonly tamper with the truth, was to maintain a paradox monstrous and incredible. The frauds and lies of men grow out of selfishness, out of petty motives and low aims, out of thirst for influence or praise. He felt that he was free from these. He could, in this sense, do nothing against the truth. In the strength of that confidence he could well afford to be indifferent to the mere counterfeit of truth. Adherence to plans once formed when circumstances had altered, consistency in outward habits of life, in modes of speech, in trains of thought, when those among whom he lived were at the opposite poles of national or religious life, this mattered little to him. He could adapt himself, with the most wonderful versatility, to Jew and Gentile, to peasant, pro-consul, philosopher, now appearing as a Pharisee and a Nazarene, now treating the ordinances of the law itself as weak and beggarly elements. In the abiding thought of the presence of the Judge who is a discerner of the thoughts, it was a very small thing for him that he should be judged of man's judgment. As a Scribe instructed for the kingdom of heaven, he could bring out of his treasure things new and old. The most subtle

tact was one with the most open truthfulness, for tact and truthfulness alike were directed to one end, the salvation of men's souls, the spread of Christ's kingdom. He did not shrink from saying, We were 'as deceivers, and yet true.' 'Being crafty, we caught you with guile.'¹

But the words extend also to that other sense of truth, as being that which he was sent to preach, the message, the gospel, the whole counsel of God, which he had not shunned to declare. Here also that desire for completeness made it morally impossible that he could do anything against the truth. The wisdom that led him to look on things from many points of view, the largeness of heart that led him to sympathize with many forms of character, kept him from the narrowness and one-sidedness which are the fruitful soil of heresies and schisms. It might be enough for some to proclaim a single dogma, to carry the principle of obedience to the law, or freedom from it, to the extremest issues; to insist on circumcision, and new moons and sabbaths, or to claim the right of sitting at an idolatrous feast in an idol's temple. Those who cared little for the completeness in mind and heart of those whom they taught, might be content with leading men to become partisans of their own opinions. The

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 8; xii. 16.

apostle, with that thirst for completeness, could not so satisfy himself. The Spirit was evermore leading him into all truth, giving him fresh insight into the mysteries of God, into the meaning of law and prophecy, into the relation between the old and the new ; and in proportion as he rejoiced in this perfection himself, he desired to impart it to others. He could not preach circumcision or mutilate the gospel, to please the Judaizers ; he could not substitute a mystical dream for the faith and hope which were in Christ, to please philosophers. 'Nothing against the truth, everything for the truth,' that was the watchword of one who was seeking not for what men could give, but for the men themselves, who desired nothing less than their perfection. If they bear chiefly, as words spoken on this day may well bear, on the calling, the work, the responsibilities of the ministers of Christ's Church, they are yet applicable in no small measure to the life of every man or woman who has been claimed by baptism as a member of that, the mystical body of the Lord, who has, as such, a vocation and ministry, a place in which he has a work to do to the Lord and not unto men. But for us the duty is clear enough ; the commandment is exceeding broad.

Brethren, the lessons of such a life *are* broad

and plain. We are in our calling and degree successors to his ministry and apostleship. We have the same gospel to declare ; we shall stand before the judgment-seat of the same Lord. Let us at least strive to act in the same spirit, to follow, however feebly or remotely, in his footsteps. It is easy, fatally easy, to do otherwise, to take as the law of our lives that which we ought to look upon as a failure to be avoided, a sin to be resisted. It is easy, fatally easy, to fall into the routine of a decent professional life, to take up the watchword of this or that school, to be satisfied with things as they are, to go backwards and not forwards, to see defects which we do not care to remedy. We may not dare to judge others in such things, for in so doing we condemn ourselves. The fault is one which varies in degree, and it may not in all be equally destructive of energy and usefulness. But we are bound to declare, that in ourselves or in others, in proportion as it prevails, the temper that does not seek for perfection is at variance with the mind of all true labourers, of the apostles of Christ, of the Lord himself, who said, ' Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'¹ Not in idle dreams of the future, but in the daily activity of the present, should that desire manifest itself. We may go forth each of us to

¹ Matt. v. 48.

his appointed labour in God's great vineyard, aiming at nothing less than this. A perfect diocese, a perfect parish, a perfect school, completeness in knowledge and in life, in teaching and in ritual, —to keep this ideal steadily in view, to welcome every approximation to it, to resist all things that would draw us back from it, studies, pleasures, occupations, this we may well believe is the true law of the ministry of Christ, the true way to be good and faithful servants. It will enable us also to rejoice in our weakness if we know that others through us are strengthened. It will keep us from acting against the truth, from the doubt of partial knowledge, from the hypocrisy of spurious zeal, from the apathy of unbelief. It will strengthen us to do all things for the truth, to fight its battles, to contend earnestly, to stand before men as God's messengers, proclaiming it through evil report and good report, rejoicing when we win men to it, when we enlarge its borders, when the thoughts of men take a truer measure of its length and breadth, its depth and height.

We shall not be exempted, it may be, from the trials which are common to men, which men mostly feel in proportion to their earnestness and their depth. There will be weariness, vexation, failure, disappointment. Not in ourselves, not in our flocks, not in the Church of which we are members, shall

we find that completeness which we have learnt to crave for and to love. Old faults will reappear, the falsehood of extremes, the worldliness of party, sluggishness, sensuality, hardness. Our efforts will seem powerless ; our labours fruitless. That discovery will surely be a painful, but it may also be a blessed one. It may teach us to look elsewhere than to ourselves, and our efforts, and our machinery for that which we desire. 'Ye are complete in Him,'¹ who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification. In Christ we may find that which we look for in vain elsewhere. We may rest in His perfection ; we may be sure that He will in His own time impart that completeness to those who seek it ; that the Spirit which giveth life will make us perfect as He is perfect ; that the Church of the first-born shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

And for you, brothers and sisters in Christ, who are here to-day as witnesses of the solemn vows by which fresh labourers will bind themselves to the service of the Lord of the vineyard, for you also the words have their message. They bid you pray in the solemn moments which are now so rapidly drawing near, with all their awful consequences for the present and the future, that the Eternal Spirit may keep alive in the hearts of

¹ Col. ii. 10.

those whom He has called the fire which He himself has kindled, that, from the highest to the lowest of those who are or have been called, all may live up to the highest aims they have ever had a glimpse of, and rise to higher still. They bid you strive in your measure and degree to be satisfied with no lower aim for yourselves. A Christian household perfect and complete in order, love, unity ; a life complete in all its parts, in love of God, in love of man, in self-control, in self-sacrifice : you also are summoned to climb that height, to labour for that perfection. In the glorious work of building up the Church of the living God you may be fellow-workers with us. In Christ you too may strive after, and will find completeness.

V.

KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS.¹

‘ And he said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.’
—ACTS IX. 5.

WE do well to treasure up, whenever we can learn them, the facts that cluster round the turning-points in a great man’s life ; the great critical moments which made him what he was, for good and evil, leaving an everlasting impress on his character. In proportion to the work which such a man has done in the world, as prophet, or lawgiver, or ruler, are we glad to know what were the inner sources of those great achievements ; what forces were at work, directing, in the wonderful providence of God, the whole current of his being. The thoughts which rise unbidden in his heart ; the words which are borne to his inward ear as from some human or Divine instructor ; the account he himself gives us of the facts of the great change,—all these have an interest for us

¹ Preached before the University of Oxford, January 22. 1865.

far greater than that which attaches to any record of merely outward events, even than that which we find in the greatest actions of the man himself.


Looking to St. Paul as simply one of the great men who have stamped their minds and characters on the history of the world ; seeing in him one whose influence has had a wider range, and lasted longer than that of any other man, however mighty or famous, the account which he gives of the process by which he became that which he actually was might well attract us, as being of immense significance. I need not dwell on what is so familiar to us all, as the fact that that process was one of sudden and startling change ; that all the strength and intensity of his nature were transferred in a moment from one camp in the great battle-field of faith to the other ; that he who was before a persecutor and a blasphemer, and an injurious, became a preacher of the faith he once destroyed. If the record of the conversion of St. Paul were simply that of an internal conflict, of growing and gathering convictions, of strange dreams and omens ; if it were as perplexing and uncertain as are the stories of the conversion of Constantine, it would still be, for all to whom the history of the world is not a sealed book, a page in it which they may not lightly pass over.

But if we believe that the change of belief and heart was not merely a human, but a Divine work ; that the words which belong to it did not come into the man's heart by chance, but were spoken to his spirit by Him who is the Eternal Word ; if we think of that which he beheld, not as one of the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, but as the revelation of the Son of Man, then I am sure we are bound to study the whole history with a profounder reverence, to examine into each single circumstance belonging to it, with the fullest conviction that there can be nothing idle or superfluous in it, nothing arbitrary or capricious. If in a simply human experience, as, for example, in Augustine's account of his conversion,¹ we ask what relation the words or the thoughts to which a man traces some great convulsion in his whole nature bore to his previous life, to his habits of character ; if we seek to know what light they threw upon the past, what insight they gave him into the mysteries of his own being,

¹ 'I threw myself under a fig-tree, and wept bitterly . . . I uttered cries of misery—"How long? How long? Is it always to be to-morrow, and to-morrow? Why not now?" . . . And lo! I heard a voice from a neighbouring house, as of a boy or maiden, singing, saying, "Take it, and read;" "Take it, and read." . . . I rose, and interpreted it as a voice from heaven bidding me open the volume of Scripture, and read the first chapter I found. . . . I seized it, opened it, and read, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."'—*Confess.* viii. 29.

what guidance for the future,—then much more, infinitely more so, may we look for all this here. The Divine work must contain all, and more than all, the harmony, fitness, proportion, which we look for in the human. The words which were spoken were addressed to a given type of character, to a given state of feeling; they went, as they were designed to go, straight to the man's heart of hearts as no other words whatever could have gone.

There is an apparent strangeness, brethren, in the account which is given by himself, and by St. Luke, of the facts of St. Paul's conversion, which makes it all the more necessary to bear this in mind. That strangeness, that startling simplicity and plainness, carries with it, I need hardly say, the evidence of its own truthfulness. The temptation to a dishonest, or even to a weak nature, would have been to raise all the circumstances of such a change to the height of what would seem to men stately, Divine, terrible. All familiar speech, all that drew its birth from the common experience of mankind, would have been carefully excluded. The tongues of men and of angels would have seemed too feeble for so high a theme. There would have been the attempt to soar 'into the third heaven,' and to speak the words which it is not 'lawful,' is not possible, 'for a man to utter.'



St. Paul's language is, we know, very different. He uses here, as always, 'great plainness of speech.' He tells us, indeed, of 'the glory above the brightness of the sun' which shone round about him; tells us how in that brightness he saw a form which others did not see, and heard *words* which they did not hear, though the *voice* of Him that spake filled them with strange fears;¹ and then we come to that Divine message from the Lord of glory to the soul of his servant, and we find it simply this, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' The words came with a startling abruptness; were themselves plain and familiar. The young Jew of Tarsus might have read them in Greek books, or heard the proverb quoted a hundred times among his Hebrew friends. They belonged to the widespread treasure of similitudes and proverbs drawn from the simplest forms of man's life and work; and, as such, were not confined to any race or country. Those words St. Paul had probably had often in his thoughts, or on his lips. Never before, we may be sure, had they come to him as they came now; never before had he applied them to himself, and seen what they had to tell him of God's dealings with him. We may be sure that they were the very words he needed;

¹ Comp. Acts ix. 7; xxii. 9; xxvi. 14.

that none which we should have thought loftier and more solemn could have done their work so effectually.

Can you not imagine, brethren, what an entirely new light that message would throw on the zeal and vehemence in which the persecutor had gloried ; how utterly they would reverse the judgments which he had passed on them ? They revealed to him that he, the pride of the schools of Jerusalem, the rigid and scrupulous Pharisee, was, like the brute beast in that proverbial speech, struggling against the guidance of one mightier and wiser than himself, and by that resistance bringing upon himself nothing but an increase of pain and confusion. He was himself 'kicking against the pricks.' In his blindness and ignorance he did not, or would not, see the first promptings of the Almighty hand that marked out his true path for him. There had already been, as the words imply, signs and tokens of the will of God, *goads* that entered deep into his soul, and brought with them pain and misery ; but he went on in spite of these, crushing all feelings of pity, doubt, remorse, and steeling himself into what seemed to him a noble and heroic hardness. These words bring before us a new phase in the mind of that persecutor. They probably have been applicable, in a greater or less degree, to many others. Men


do not bring themselves to the relentless sternness of the persecuting spirit all at once. There are checks, doubts, sympathies, feelings of sorrow, promptings of humanity, that enter their protest against it. But the men who have 'the zeal for God' which is 'not according to knowledge' close their hearts against the protest. They persuade themselves that they are doing God service. The triumph of a dogma, the destruction of a heresy, seems to them of greater moment than the love and righteousness and joy which they might attain by submitting themselves to the guidance of God's good Spirit. They have persuaded themselves that men may rightly be coerced or terrified into the profession of a belief or a denial, and they carry that principle to its logical and terrible conclusion.

If you ask, in what way had St. Paul been kicking against the pricks—what were the goads that had already been striking home? the answer must be, first, indeed, that the whole work of God upon his soul, as upon the souls of all men, lies behind the veil, and that we know it only in part; but also, that in what is recorded, there is much that must have had this effect on him. If we believe (as wellnigh all students of the Acts are led to believe) that Saul of Tarsus and Joses of Cyprus had been of old, in their earlier youth,

companions and friends, that all that belongs to fellowship of heart and intellect had been their inheritance, so that they too were

‘Together nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill,’—

must we not believe that his first separation from that friend must have been as bitter as was afterwards his second; that he must have witnessed with a sorrow, which turned to anger, the alienation of that noble and loving nature, of those surpassing gifts to speak to men’s hearts and spirits, from the cause of Pharisaism, their accession to that of the Nazarenes? That change, the conversion of the Son of Consolation, was enough to make him question the soundness of his own convictions; enough to make him ask whether the society which could win over such a man must not be rooted and grounded in the truth. Can we read the speech of the master and teacher of the young zealot, without feeling that that also brought a warning against the spirit of hostility and bitterness to which he was committing himself? The caution and timidity of Gamaliel were indeed alien to the nature of Saul of Tarsus; the temporizing neutrality of his speech could find no echo in the heart which for good or evil was always *thorough* in all it undertook, ‘moving altogether if it moved at all.’ But those closing words, ‘If it be of God



ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God,'¹ while they were spoken to the assembled Scribes, were meant probably for that young disciple whose fiery eagerness the prudent Rabbi was seeking, though ineffectually, to restrain. At the time they did but excite him to greater vehemence ; but if his nature was not different from that of other men, that solemn warning must have afterwards sounded in his ears in the lulls of passion, and the revelation of 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,' may have been the answer to the doubts and fears that, after all, it might be possible that he was fighting not for God, but against him.

One other scene comes before us in the history of the Acts, which we may think of as included in the list. I know not from whom St. Luke was so likely to have learnt all that he has to tell us as to the work, the defence, the death of the martyr Stephen, as from the 'young man who kept the garments of them that stoned him,' foremost among his enemies and accusers. If this were so, then the words in which the story is told will serve to show how deep an impression the facts of it left behind them. At any rate there he was ; and we can without difficulty picture to ourselves what it must have been for one in whom zeal and pity were struggling

¹ Acts v. 38.

for the mastery, in whose nature there was all the capacity for sympathy which was afterwards perfected by God's grace, to look upon that face which seemed to all who saw it 'as it had been the face of an angel ;'¹ to watch the upturned gaze as of one who saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God ; to listen to the last intercession, which showed that love was stronger than death, and had been made perfect by suffering. To imagine that all these things had no disturbing effect on him, is to suppose the nature of St. Paul dull and callous to a degree beyond all experience. To believe that they haunted him, vexed him, were with him by night and day, and that he strove with the ruthless energy of an iron will to trample on them and defy them, is in harmony with all that we know of his character, with much that is on record of that of other persecutors. And see, brethren, with what wonderful precision the revelation is addressed to the feelings of a man in that condition. He had tried to persuade himself that the words which spoke of the invisible world as actually manifested to the martyr's spirit, were the utterances of a madman and a dreamer. Now to him also 'the heavens were opened,' and he too sees the form of the Son of man exalted in the glory of His Father.

¹ Acts vi. 25.

He had listened to that long history of a people always annulling by their own wilfulness the calling and election of God ; always resisting the grace of God's Holy Spirit. Now he is taught that he too is 'a chosen vessel,' an instrument of God's choice for the noblest and highest work which it could be given to man to do. Hitherto he had been setting his will against that election, kicking against all the pricks that were signs and tokens of it. To persevere in that course was to plunge deeper and deeper into a misery that would know no end. To yield himself with a free and hearty assent unto the will of his Lord, even though it was only to learn how great things he must suffer for His name's sake, was to close with the offer of salvation, to enter into the kingdom of God. In that moment all the veils of passion, prejudice, tradition, which had hitherto concealed the truth from him, were drawn aside, and Christ was revealed not only to him but 'in him.'¹ He learnt to recognise the dependence of his own life on that of Christ, to see in Him the source of all goodness and righteousness and truth that he was conscious of in himself.

No words or thoughts of ours, brethren, can rise to the height of this great mystery. St. Paul himself could not translate his experience into

¹ Gal. i. 16.

language. To have been 'caught up into the third heaven,' to have been 'carried into the paradise of God,' would have been fit symbols of the mighty change, as they were of other like revelations.¹ Beyond all the words which he has placed on record, there were the 'unspeakable things' which it was not lawful, was not possible, for him or any man to utter. But that point in the history which stands out with such wonderful prominence, on which we have dwelt to-day, brings, I believe, some very distinct truths home to us, which we shall do well to gather up and treasure in our remembrance.

(1.) The whole narrative, and above all those memorable words in which the Son of man is revealed, assert the truth of an election. There was a fore-ordained choice and purpose for the apostle, which rested upon the groundwork of the sovereign will, *i.e.*, upon the sovereign love of God, the Eternal and Unchangeable. St. Paul saw, and we may see in his experience, the pattern instance of a great law. He was chosen to bear the gospel of Christ unto the nations. Special gifts were bestowed on him for that high office. All the events of his past life converged to it, and formed a preparation for it. So it was with others. The Twelve stood in the same relation to their

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

Lord. They had 'not chosen him, but he had chosen them.'¹ All the members of the great body of which Christ was the head, were chosen in like manner, each to his special work, each supplied with special gifts and powers. All who believed and were baptized were, he was certain, 'chosen' to that which their faith and their baptism represented. They were 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.'² They were 'chosen before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame.'³

And the same truth, brethren, holds good of us. As there are diversities of gifts, administrations, energies in the natural world, one man given this work to do and another that, one man mighty and eloquent and honoured, another thoughtful and wise, another patient and laborious, but all resting on what, in that region of man's life, we habitually speak of as the providence of God; so in the Church of God, which is His kingdom, there are like differences, resting on the same unity. There may be those among us to whom some special work is assigned, to which they too have

¹ John xv. 16.

² 1 Pet. i. 2. I have placed the words of St. Peter side by side with those of St. Paul, as showing that in this point they were essentially at one.

³ Eph. i. 4.

been elected, predestined before the foundation of the world. The work of the evangelist, or pastor, or teacher, may be given to us. Our gifts may point to some work in Church or State, whether it be to guide the thoughts of men, or meet the moral evils of our age, or strive with its doubts or unbelief, or 'serve tables' in some work of secular activity, which yet may be done to the Lord and not unto men. If so, in due time the work will appear. The calling and election will manifest itself. Well will it be for us if they recognise it and yield to it. All the blessedness or misery of this life and of the life to come hangs upon our accepting or rejecting it. But if there is no such special vocation; if there are no gifts indicating that we are in that sense 'vessels of election;' if we do not see our way clearly, and do not recognise our work in life, we are at least not left in doubt as to that other election which belongs to us and to all the children of God. 'This is the will of God, even our sanctification.'¹ That is what the 'good pleasure' of God, the sovereignty of the everlasting mercies, has marked out even for the least and lowest of the heirs of His kingdom. All are sharers in that predestination which points to our being conformed to the image of His Son. Whatever perplexities or hard

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

questions men may set up as stumblingblocks in their own path, or in that of their brethren, this 'foundation of God standeth sure' as the eternal hills. If we are tempted by doubts, bewilderments, despair, let us rest on the assurance that 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'¹ If temptations of a different and lower kind assail us, let us stand fast in our faith, knowing that in resisting them we are confirming God's election, and are sure of His help.

(2.) As in other things, so also in the manner in which he was led to recognise his calling, the history of St. Paul is set forth as a pattern history. In all such cases, in those especially where the call is to Christ's great work, entire devotion to some noble cause, there are preludes and intimations of the final crisis, promptings from within and from without pointing in the same direction, breaking in upon the calm tenor of a man's life, troubling him with vexing thoughts, until he has read them rightly and seen into their meaning. If he resists these, perseveres in a path which he has chosen for himself, he is as one 'kicking against the pricks,' and he brings on himself proportionate loss and misery. Then comes the moment when the summons to the work, the call to the sacrifice, is clear and unmistakable, and that

¹ 1 John i. 6.

is the great turning-point of his life. In yielding cheerfully and gladly, even if he is shown 'how great things he must suffer' for the name of Christ, there is freedom, and blessedness, and peace. In resisting, though all may prosper outwardly, and the world smile on him, there is the forfeiture of all that God designed for him; there may be the sentence of utter exclusion from the fellowship of God's kingdom.

And does not the law hold good, brethren, of that other election, which points not to special office and administration in the Church, but to sanctification of the heart and will? Have there not been in the experience of each of us, even when we were wandering furthest from the home of our Father, and following our own wills with the most reckless eagerness, intimations which we might have listened to that we were meant for better things? that the deeds of the flesh, which we were doing, were not the good works which God had prepared for us to walk in? Have we no remembrance of warnings from the wise, and protests from the good, of early friends turning into the strait and narrow path, while we continued in the broad way that leadeth to destruction? Are there no faces thronging the memories of the past, which were to us even then, and yet more as we recall them after the long lapse of years, as those

of angels, looking on us with the long-suffering and love which made them so like their Master? Are there no echoes even yet sounding in our ears of the voice which rose up to the throne of God, as we went on from bad to worse, heaping up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, with the one prevailing prayer, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge?'¹ It may be that these tokens of God's will for us have been followed by another and a fuller revelation. A time has come to us in which there passed before our minds the view of all that we might yet become—the pattern of the perfect man created after God in righteousness and true holiness, which might even yet be realized in us. If that experience, brethren, has come, or shall come hereafter to any of you, be sure that then the Son of God is revealing Himself in you, showing you what He is, in order that you may be like Him. If you hear of that experience from others in what they call the history of their conversion, do not treat it with doubt or indifference or scorn, lest haply ye too be found, though you know it not, even to fight against God. If you do *not* hear of it, and yet see, what you cannot refuse to recognise, the fruits of the Spirit, you may yet be sure that the change has come. It may do its work suddenly, in an instant; it may, especially

¹ Acts vii. 60.

where there has been no long resistance, be accomplished gradually, and in its several stages, all but imperceptibly. Do not deprive the Divine work of its reality and power by reducing it to a formula ; do not measure its infinite diversity by the standard of a technical definition ; but, above all, O friend and brother, remember when that Divine work comes, in any of its forms, within the range of thine own experience, that for thee too, for thee in thy youth, for thee in thy maturity, for thee in thy advancing age, it is 'hard to kick against the pricks.' Resistance is possible, but its result is terrible. No revelation of might or majesty, or even of love, is sufficient to prevent it. St. Paul himself, the very vessel of election, might have been 'disobedient to the heavenly vision,' might, after all, when he had preached to others, have been himself 'a castaway.' The apostles took their places among God's elect, chosen before the foundation of the world 'to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' yet one of them became 'the son of perdition,' and 'went unto his own place.'¹ It remains for us to make our calling and election sure, to yield our rebellious wills to that love wherewith the Father hath loved us before the foundation of the world. He is guiding us with His right hand. Warnings from

¹ John xvii. 12 ; Acts i. 25.

without and from within, the misery and shame that follow upon committed sin, yearning after lost opportunities of good, the restlessness of guilt, the thirst for tranquillity and peace, the deaths of the righteous, the preaching of prophets and apostles and evangelists,—these are the goads and spurs with which he impels us onwards. If we yield to them, He will after that receive us into His glory.

VI.

THE PROPHETS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.¹

'We have also a more sure word of prophecy.'—2 PET. I. 19.

WE are so familiar with these words, and with the corresponding passages in the First Epistle that bears the name of the same apostle, as applied to the prophetic writings of the Old Testament ; they offer, as it seems, so ready and powerful a weapon for the apologist who maintains the authority and inspiration of those writings, that one who has been led to take a different view is almost tempted to shrink back into silence. To declare the conviction that the words in both cases refer not to the written words of the older prophets, but to the spoken words of the prophets who were living and working when the apostle wrote, may seem to many so likely to disturb and unsettle an inherited belief, the conviction itself so much at variance with the *consensus*, almost unanimous, of interpreters, that it would be natural

¹ Preached before the University of Oxford, November 13, 1864.

enough to veil the conviction with a prudent reticence, and to avoid this as one would avoid any other occasion of offence.

Every truer and better feeling, however, enters its protest against such an unworthy and timorous wisdom. To seek safety rather than truth, to repeat old words as applicable to that to which we have ceased to think that they apply, to ignore and avoid a question because it is difficult and hazardous—this is not the way to enter into the secret treasure-chambers of the House of the Interpreter. It wellnigh vitiates all other gifts which help men to appropriate those treasures. Elaborate accuracy, vivid illustration, logical subtlety, an almost prophetic earnestness,—all these may be so marred and trammelled by the fear of forsaking the beaten track, and entering on a new path, that they may fail to bring us to the true life and meaning of the words, to the feelings and the thoughts of those who spoke them. Fatal as is the love of novelty for its own sake, the fascination of bold or sceptical speculation, this shrinking back from new forms of truth is hardly less so. The true interpreter unites reverence for those who have explored the mines of truth with the belief that the gold, and the silver, and the precious stones are still unexhausted and inexhaustible. ‘The scribe instructed to the kingdom of heaven,

brings forth out of his treasures things new and old.¹

I ask you then, brethren, as men in whom this spirit is or should be dominant, to follow me in this inquiry into the meaning of St. Peter's words, taking each step carefully, and with open eyes prepared to accept the conclusion, if the path really leads to it. That conclusion, so far from undermining our reverence for the Divine Word, will be found, I believe, to clothe it with a new authority and power. The Second Epistle of St. Peter will stand forth more clearly, as on the same level, and by the same writer as the First, one in thought and language, showing the same influences acting from without, the same Spirit teaching and guiding from within. Truth, for its own sake, would be worth having; clearer insight into the life of the apostolic Church, into the methods of God's working, would be its own reward. But here, as elsewhere, it may happen that those who seek safety first will find themselves in the end occupying positions that are unsafe and untenable; that those who follow truth fearlessly will find that, as she is 'strong next to the Almighty,' so is she also safe, as abiding in the tabernacle of God, sheltered under the everlasting arms.

(1.) The first step in our progress is simple and

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

easy enough, though it too requires the correction of language which we have used vaguely, and often wrongly. Most of us, it may be, can remember the time, when the chief or the only thought suggested to us by what we heard in Collects or Lessons, of the 'church built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,'¹ was that of the unity of the two great portions of God's revelation of Himself. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New, the 'goodly fellowship' and the 'glorious company,'—these made up, we thought, the foundation on which the Church of Christ was built, He himself being the chief corner-stone. Here, indeed, the true meaning is demonstrable at once. 'God hath set some in his Church, first apostles, secondarily *prophets*.'² The words of the Wisdom of God, speaking in the Incarnate Son, pointed to them both as future: 'I will send unto them *prophets* and apostles.'³ St. Paul spoke of them as both equally present: 'He gave some apostles, and some *prophets*, and some evangelists.'⁴ It is of these that he says⁵ that their labours in governing and teaching were the groundwork of that goodly superstructure. Upon them the Church was built. It is of these that he declares that 'the

¹ Eph. ii. 20; Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude's Day.

² 1 Cor. xii. 28.

⁴ Eph. iv. 11.

³ Luke xi. 49.

⁵ Eph. ii. 20.

mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, had been *revealed* to them, the apostles and *prophets*, by the Spirit.¹ Yes, we underrate at once the extent and the importance of that prophetic gift in the apostolic Church. We think of a liturgical order and of Church government, systematized, as it came to be in the second or third century, and forget that all along there was this power, exceptional, in one sense abnormal, but for that very reason mightier for good than any routine of discipline or worship could be. Outwardly, indeed, the most striking feature in the life of the Church of Christ was, that it was the revival of the prophetic order. More than four hundred years had passed since any one had risen up to speak the word of the Lord to Israel, and men had sighed as hopelessly for its revival as for the recovery of the Urim and Thummim of the high priest.² But at last the revival came, when the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and men counted him as 'a prophet.'³ When One greater than John came teaching as having authority, they looked to Him as the prophet, or 'one of the prophets.'⁴ When the day of Pentecost came the gifts took

¹ Eph. iii. 5.

² Neh. vii. 65.

³ Mark xi. 32.

⁴ Mark vi. 15.

a wider range. The Twelve, who had before been slow of heart and slow of speech, gained new powers of utterance. Side by side with the strange mysterious Tongues,¹ with their ecstatic doxologies and thrilling cries, and strange speech of other lands, there was the gift of prophecy. Not upon apostles only, but 'your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;' even 'upon my bond-slaves, and my bond-women will I pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.'² In every Church we find traces of their activity. Some are conspicuous among the human founders of the new society: Barnabas, the 'son of consolation,' the 'son of prophecy,'³ and Agabus, and Manaen, and

¹ For what seems to me the true conclusion from all the *data* that Scripture gives us as to the gift of Tongues, I must refer to the article on that subject (TONGUES, Gift of) in Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*. For the reasons there given, I find myself unable to follow the common traditional view that the purpose of the gift was to enable the apostles to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of other countries than their own, and equally unable to adopt the view of some later interpreters, that there was no miraculous power of speaking in languages not previously familiar. Mr. Kenrick's *Essay*, published since that article was written, has not led me to follow him in minimising or excluding the supernatural element.

² Acts ii. 17, 18.

³ The second half of the name given by the apostles to Joses of Cyprus, is, I need hardly say, identical with the root of the Hebrew words which we translate by 'prophet, prophecy, prophesying.' It is worth noting, however, that the choice by St. Luke of another word—*παράκλησις*, elsewhere rendered by 'comfort' (Rom. xv. 4), 'exhortation' (Acts xiii. 15)—instead of 'prophecy,' points to the very close connexion between the two, both in his own language and in that of the New Testament generally. We shall see further on how important that connexion is in its bearing upon two remarkable passages, Rom. xv. 4 and 2 Pet. i. 20.

Silvanus, and Judas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Timotheus, and the daughter of Philip, and St. Paul himself.¹ Yet more striking is the abounding proof of the wide diffusion of the gift in every Church of the Gentiles. At Thessalonica men are warned 'not to despise it.'² At Corinth its excess almost threatened disorder, and needed control.³ At Rome even its exercise is presupposed, and there also a limit assigned to it.⁴ At Ephesus it stands all but highest in the list of the gifts with which Christ endowed His Church.⁵ Strange as the thought may seem to us, there were in that age some hundreds, it may be, of men, as truly inspired as Isaiah or Ezekiel had been, as St. Paul or St. Peter then were, speaking words which were, as truly as any that were ever spoken, inspired words of God, and yet all record of them has vanished. Their voices smote the air, and did their work, and died away, and we hear but the faintest echo of them. Their words were written on the sands, and the advancing waves of time have washed away all traces, or nearly all, of what was once as awful as the handwriting on the wall.

The nature of the gift has of late been discussed more or less elaborately among us. We have learnt to see that the prophet was the man who

¹ Acts xiii. 1 ; xv. 32.

² 1 Thess. v. 20.

³ 1 Cor. xii. xiv.

⁴ Rom. xii. 6.

⁵ Eph. iv. 11.

delivered the message of the Lord, not merely one who foretold events in the near or remote future ; that his main work was ethical, proclaiming the eternal laws of God, and carrying them to the hearts of men. Some, it may be, have gone further. To them the ethical element has been everything. They have come to think of them as only eloquent and earnest preachers. They forget that even as preachers of righteousness the power of the prophets lay not in skill, or even in earnestness of speech, but in the insight which they possessed into the hearts and lives of men. Inspired by the Divine Word, before whom 'all things are naked and bare,' they too knew what was in man, and read the thoughts of their hearers. They could say to this one, 'Thou art the man,' and to another, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' They could say to yet another, as in the case of Timotheus, 'Thou art called to preach the gospel of thy Lord. Do the work of an evangelist.'¹ Through them the Spirit spoke, 'Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them.'² So it was that the secrets of men's hearts were manifested, and they fell down and worshipped God.³ Nor, again, was the predictive power absent, though apparently its exercise was less frequent ; and when it did come, it did its work

¹ 1 Tim. i. 18.² Acts xiii. 2.³ 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 25.

less as a mere prodigy, the divination of a seer, than as helping men to meet dangers and trials that would otherwise have come startlingly, and as a snare. Foresight of the famine that came upon the empire helped to knit together the bonds of brotherhood between the Jewish and the Gentile Churches.¹ Foresight of persecution directed against an individual teacher helped to test his courage and endurance.² By utterances of this kind it was, as St. Paul said to the elders at Miletus, that 'the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him,'³ that 'the Spirit spoke expressly that in the latter times some should depart from the faith.'⁴

But beyond all special predictions that had a historical fulfilment within the horizon of their own age, the teaching of the prophets of the New Testament was essentially apocalyptic. As in that which is pre-eminently the Apocalypse, their eyes were opened to see the things behind the veil, and they told of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus. Not fixing times and seasons, for the one thing which they knew concerning them was that they knew them not;⁵ beholding, as it were, the reflection of those heavenly things in the mirror of their own minds, for they saw 'as through

¹ Acts xi. 27-30.

² Acts xxi. 4, 10-14.

³ Acts xx. 23.

⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 1.

⁵ 1 Thess. v. 1, compared with Acts i. 7.

a glass darkly,' and 'prophesied in part ;'¹ using outward symbols that were figures of the true, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the paradise of God, they yet told in words of marvellous power of that glorious future. As the mystery of the brotherhood of mankind in Christ was revealed specially to them,² so also was this. 'Eye saw not, nor ear heard, neither entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, for God revealed them unto us by his Spirit.'³ The vision of this glory that lay in the far future was to sustain the Church through all the long weariness of persecution, suffering, and the sickness of a hope deferred.

Such, then, were the prophets, speaking in every church, at almost every meeting. Can we wonder that they should occupy all but the foremost position in it, second only to apostles, enduring the brunt of persecution, even as Stephen, the first of that goodly fellowship, had borne it? The words of Christ, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the *prophets*, and stonest them that are sent unto thee,'⁴ present in their form, were predictive as well as historical. Of some such fiery trial, the sequel of the persecution which he himself headed against Stephen, happening in his own time, and not of that

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12.

² Eph. iii. 5, 6; Rom. xvi. 25.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

⁴ Matt. xxiii. 37.

of a past age, did St. Paul speak (the very order of the words shows it), when he said of the Jews that they 'both killed the Lord Jesus and their own *prophets*.'¹ It was of these prophets that the apocalyptic angel declared himself 'the fellow-servant.'² Of their gifts it was said that 'the testimony of Jesus and the Spirit of prophecy' were co-extensive terms.³ The Lord was 'the God of their spirits.'⁴ Their steadfast endurance St. James held up to the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad as a pattern to be followed: 'Take, my brethren, the prophets who have *spoken in the name of the Lord*, as an example of suffering affliction and of patience.'⁵ Such, too, we may well believe, were those whom the seer saw in Patmos, 'The souls beneath the

¹ 1 Thess ii 15.

³ Rev. xix. 10.

² Rev xxii. 9.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 6.

⁵ James v. 10. These words have been so commonly referred to the prophets of the Old Testament, that it may be well to state briefly the grounds which have led me to adopt a different interpretation:—(1.) There had been a time of affliction and persecution calling for patience (Acts viii. 1-4; xii. 1), in which at least one prophet and one apostle had fallen. (2.) The reference to the example of these prophets in St. James is exactly parallel to that in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Remember those that had the rule over you, *who spake to you the word of God*; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation' (Heb. xiii. 7); and here there can be no doubt that the words point to teachers whom the Hebrew converts had known personally. (3.) Assuming the existence of a body of prophets in the Church, foremost in teaching and in suffering, it was natural that men should be told to look to them as an example. (4.) Even the reference to Job which follows, and seems to throw us back upon the Old Testament, is in close juxtaposition with words that belong to the history of the New. Those to whom St. James wrote had '*heard of the patience of Job*,' but they had '*seen the end of the Lord*.'

altar, that were *slain for the word of God* and for the testimony which they held.¹

Were these multitudinous utterances committed, any of them, to writing? On the one hand, in an age of ready penmanship and intellectual activity, it was probable enough, almost inevitable, that it should be so; on the other, the rank to which most of the first converts belonged, their intense absorption in the inner life, the view they took of the world and its duration, were against it. We need not wonder, however, that if so recorded, they should, most of them, have perished. So it was of old. In the canon of the Old Testament we have but scanty fragments out of a whole prophetic literature.² In that of the New we miss

¹ Rev. vi. 9, 10.

² It may be well to bring together the names of those that are actually mentioned in the extant books of the Old Testament. It does not follow that there were no others:—

- (1.) The Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. xxi. 14).
- (2.) The Book of Jasher (Joshua x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18).
- (3.) The Book of Nathan the Prophet (1 Chron. xxix. 29).
- (4.) The Book of Gad the Seer (*ibid.*)
- (5.) The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 41).
- (6.) The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chron. ix. 29).
- (7.) The Visions of Iddo the Seer (*ibid.*)
- (8.) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings xv. 29, and *passim*).
- (9.) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings xv. 31, and *passim*).
- (10.) The Prophecy of Jonah (*probably* written) (2 Kings xiv. 25).
- (11.) The Book of Shemaiah the Prophet (2 Chron. xii. 15).
- (12.) The Book of Iddo the Seer concerning Genealogies (*ibid.*)
- (13.) The Story of the Prophet Iddo (2 Chron. xiii. 22. Same writer, but title of book different).
- (14.) The Book of Jehu the son of Hanani (2 Chron. xx. 34).

altogether the writings of the many who, even before St. Luke, had undertaken 'to set in order' the history of the words and works of Christ.¹ Had all these works or words been told, the world itself (as St. John puts it) could not have contained the books that should be written.² Of St. Paul's thousand discourses we have but four or five. Beyond all the Epistles that are extant, there are traces of many others, such as we might have expected from that wide sympathy and un-resting energy. All through, it seems as if the law of God's education of mankind was to feed the multitude with the bread of life, and then to gather up the fragments that remain. We have but the gleaning of the grapes of God, but that gleaning is better than the vintage of the earth's wisdom. Some traces of such lost writings, or utterances, we have in the New Testament. The very words which tell us of the revelation of what 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' come to us from some lost Scripture.³ A like origin may probably be as-

(15.) The Acts of Uzziah by Isaiah the son of Amos (2 Chron. xxvi. 22).

(16.) The Lamentations of Jeremiah for Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 25.

Probably different from the Lamentations now extant, which are subsequent to the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans).

¹ Luke i. 1.

² John xxi. 24.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 9. The words may be a free paraphrase of Isaiah lxiv. 4, but they may also be an actual quotation from some prophetic writing, liturgical or hymnic in its character, known to the Churches as the work of some inspired writer. A conjecture which can appeal to the authority of Chrysostom is at least free from the charge of rashness.

igned for the words, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'¹ It was 'by prophetic writings' (prophetic Scriptures) that 'the mystery that had been hidden in silence was then made manifest,'² and his own Epistles were essentially prophetic, and were classed as Scriptures. The contrast in the Greek between '*the Holy Scriptures*' which were able to make Timothy wise unto salvation, and the words which speak of every Scripture, God-inspired, as also profitable for 'doctrine,'³

¹ Here also there are the same phenomena as before. The words seem to have a starting-point in Isaiah xxvi. 19, lx. 1, but differ far too widely to be considered as a quotation, and yet they are introduced as authoritative and Divine. The hypothesis that the words had been spoken by a Christian prophet, and put on record, perhaps embodied in some early hymn, is surely natural and legitimate.

² Rom. xvi. 26. Here again we meet with words which have been commonly referred exclusively to the prophets of the Old Testament. Yet surely the context leads us to think of St. Paul as speaking of a revelation subsequent to that of the older prophets, of a 'mystery' which they had not seen. The words of St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 16) show that the term 'Scriptures' was given to St. Paul's Epistles, and that they were thought of as having this prophetic, apocalyptic character. The passages just examined go far to prove the further extension of the term to other prophetic writings no longer extant.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. In the first verse the words are those (*τὰ ἱερὰ βιβλία*, the holy writings) which were habitually used by the Jewish scribes (the Greek word for *scribe* being itself formed from them) to denote the literature of the Old Testament. In the latter the word is one which, as we have seen, takes a wider range, and by referring it primarily to the writings of the Apostolic Church, we get a clearer connexion in the succession of the apostle's earnest entreaties than on any other interpretation. He warns Timothy against 'evil men and seducers,' 'deceiving and being deceived.' The holy Writings in which he was trained are to be, in their spiritual, eternal meaning, the standard of his teaching. He is not to be led away by any false prophets, or counterfeit inspiration. 'Every Scripture truly inspired of God, is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline in

suggests the thought that the latter may include writings of the Christian Church, and that the apostle gives his disciple a test to distinguish a true from a counterfeit inspiration. Outside the canon of the New Testament, the earliest apostolic Father, in closest contact with the Churches of Corinth and Rome, twice quotes as authoritative, words which, though an echo of our Lord's teaching, are not part of it, and cites them as 'the prophetic word.'¹

(1.) Among the facts then present to the eye and ear of St. Peter, must have been this intense prophetic and apocalyptic activity. He too recognises the prophetic order as standing in precisely the same position as St. Paul places them, and in which we may safely affirm a writer of the time of Clement and Ignatius would not have placed them. 'I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before of the holy *prophets*, and of the commandment of us the *apostles* of the Lord and Saviour.'² He places the two words in the same order in which his Lord had placed them. The teaching of the Epistles may therefore be looked upon as reproducing what those prophets

righteousness.' By that test, the test of moral excellence and fitness for spiritual education, was every writing claiming inspiration to be judged.

¹ Clem. Rom., 1 Cor. xxiii., 2 Cor. xi.

² 2 Pet. iii. 2.

had taught, the current uniform testimony of the prophetic words, identical in its tenor with what St. Paul had referred to as the 'express speaking' of the Spirit, with what the prophets of whom St. James had spoken proclaimed 'in the name of the Lord.' The existence of such a testimony, known, and, it may be, recorded, offers a far more satisfactory explanation of the parallelisms between St. Peter and St. Jude than any hypothesis that one copied from the other. The latter also, like the former, puts those to whom he writes 'in remembrance' of what they had already known.¹

(2.) Let us turn, then, to the well-known words of the First Epistle.² He has spoken of what was the very subject-matter of all apocalyptic utterances,—'a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time;' the personal 'revelation of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love.'³ Those who love and believe, 'rejoice,' he adds, 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.'⁴ 'Concerning which salvation prophets' (there is no generalizing or defining article) 'inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that is to you-ward' (the very phrase used by St. Paul of the mystery revealed to him as prophet and

¹ Jude 17.

² 1 Pet. i. 10-12.

³ 1 Pet. i. 5.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

apostle),¹ 'searching to what or which kind of season' (defined by exact dates, or by qualities and characteristics), 'the Spirit of Christ that was in them was pointing.' Does not this exactly answer to the teaching of the New Testament prophets, marking out the perilous, the grievous times which shall precede the end, leaving times and seasons in His hands who has set them? Does not the 'searching diligently' express precisely the temper and spirit, say, of St. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians? Do not the words, 'Spirit of Christ,' belong especially to those who had received the Spirit of prophecy as the special gift of their ascended and glorified Lord?

The words that follow may seem fatal to this interpretation: 'when they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.' 'Who,' we ask, 'can be referred to here but those who long centuries before spoke of Him, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—betrayed, scoffed at, spat on, wounded for our transgressions? Here, at least, David and Isaiah must be the prophets whom St. Peter has in view. The difficulty of any other explanation is absolutely insuperable.'

The difficulty is, however, apparent only, not real—in the English only, not the Greek. Our ver-

¹ Eph. iii. 2.

sion misleads us by giving the same translation for two essentially distinct phrases. Here we have, not as elsewhere, even in this same epistle, *παθήματα Χριστοῦ*, but *τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα*, and the grammatical meaning of this,¹ no less than the analogy of like words in St. Paul's Epistles, leads us to see in these the sufferings which are endured *as unto Christ*, running up towards Him, even as His sufferings run on and abound *towards us*,² the sufferings, *i.e.*, of His Church for Him, with which He, in His infinite sympathy, identifies Himself. Here again we have what exactly harmonizes with the character of the apocalyptic prophecies of the New Testament. First, a sharp persecution, evil days, a fiery trial, and then 'the glories after these things,'—the 'inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.' These two

¹ The common explanation of the peculiar form of expression makes it equivalent to 'the sufferings that were to come *on* Christ, destined and appointed for Him;' and this is adopted even by Winer (*Gram. of New Testament*, p. 221). On the other hand, it may be urged that—(1.) It thus becomes identical in meaning with the more common phrase, 'the sufferings *of* Christ,' and there seems no assignable reason for the apostle's use of it. (2.) In 1 Pet. iii. 13 he uses the common form, but in a context which explains his choice of the exceptional one here. Those to whom he wrote were 'partakers in the sufferings of Christ,' their sufferings, in some mysterious manner, running into, and becoming identified with His. (3.) Admitting, as I do, the great preponderance of authority against the interpretation I am supporting, I may yet claim the great name of Calvin: 'Non tractat Petrus quod Christo sit proprium, sed de universali Ecclesie disserit.' (4.) The meaning which I have assigned to the prepositions is recognised as at least tenable by Huther (*Meyer's Kommentar*).

² 2 Cor. i. 5 is exactly parallel: there the sufferings of Christ as extending to us; here our sufferings as extending to Him.

Epistles presuppose just such a persecution falling on the very name of Christian ; they speak of just such glories.

‘Unto whom it was revealed that not for themselves, but for *you*¹ did they minister these things, which were now reported to you by those that have preached the gospel to you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.’ To those prophets in the churches of Judæa whom St. Peter joins with the apostles,² whose teaching and death St. James points to, it was given to look beyond the narrow limits of their own church and country. What they saw and spoke of belonged to the wide-spread churches of the Gentiles and the Dispersion. No local persecution, no local triumph, no vision of an earthly Jerusalem and the kingdom restored to Israel, but a fiery trial wider in its range, a salvation far more glorious, the heavenly Jerusalem, the incorruptible inheritance,—this was what they had seen, and this had been reported as part of the glad tidings of great joy.

The Second Epistle of St. Peter³ offers as clear a testimony. Here also the dominant thought is

¹ I follow the reading adopted by Griesbach and Lachmann.

² ‘That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy *prophets*, and of the commandment of us the *apostles* of the Lord and Saviour’ (2 Pet. iii. 2). It is surely legitimate to attach the same meaning to this juxtaposition as to that of Eph. ii. 20 ; iv. 11.

³ 2 Pet. i. 13-21.

that of 'the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' The apostle knows that his own 'departure' is near at hand. He must 'put off his tabernacle,' and die the common death of all men. He has learnt, not to think, as he once did, that 'the kingdom of God must immediately appear,'¹ but rests in the belief that in God's sight 'one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.'² Had he then given up his hope? Did he confess that he had been living in a world of dreams? No; he has an answer to all such taunts and questions. 'We did not follow cunningly-devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming' (the *παρουσία*, the second coming, not the first³) 'of our Lord Jesus Christ, but had been eye-witnesses of

¹ Luke xix. 11.

² 2 Pet. iii. 8.

³ The usage both of the New Testament writers in general (Matt. xxiv. 3, 27; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19, iv. 15; James v. 7), and specially of the apostle himself, in this very Epistle (2 Pet. iii. 4), is decisive of this point. Still more decisive, if possible, is the inference from the general tenor of the Epistle. It was with regard to this, the second coming of the Lord, that he and his fellow-prophets had been exposed to taunts. It is in reference to it that he says, 'We did not follow cunningly-devised fables.' To discuss the questions that have been raised as to the authorship of this Epistle would be out of place here. I will only say, that many of the more perplexing phenomena, the differences in tone and thought, admit of an easy solution on the assumption, itself in the highest degree probable, that the persecutions referred to so often in the First Epistle had led in the interval to a great outburst of prophecy, speaking of the glories that were to follow, in language that inevitably suggested, by its very indefiniteness, the thought that the second coming was itself close at hand, because it was proclaimed as certain. Of such an outburst we hear the echoes in the parallel passages of the Second Epistle of St. Peter and that of St. Jude.

His majesty.' What he had seen in the vision of the excellent glory, what he had heard when he and James and John had been with their Master in the holy mount, was for him an unshaken ground of confidence, stamped upon his mind for ever, the *arrhabon*, the pledge and earnest of the future apocalypse of the eternal kingdom. But from its very nature it could not be to others all that it has been to him, and therefore he appeals, as St. Paul had appealed before him, to another testimony. As the apostle of the Gentiles had pointed to the demonstration of the Spirit, had seen in the gift of prophecy the great power for changing unbelief into confession, and in 'prophetic writings' the great instrument for diffusing the truth revealed to the prophets, so also does the apostle of the Circumcision. 'We have as yet more sure the prophetic word.'¹ That word, in its awfulness and power, revealing the secrets of each man's heart, unfolding, in part at least, the scroll of the future, was the surest of all proofs

¹ The Authorized Version, 'We have a more sure word of prophecy,' fails to give the force both of the position of the comparative, and the presence of the article. Taking the translation which the structure of the sentence forces upon us, it implies a comparison of 'the prophetic word' with something else, and that something can hardly be other than the 'voice of heaven,' which, certain as it was for him, was less 'sure,' more exposed to attack and cavil than the power of the 'prophetic word,' as it was seen and felt in all the Churches. The fact already mentioned, that Clement of Rome twice quotes apocalyptic statements from what he calls (using the self-same phrase) 'the prophetic word,' has to be remembered here.

that there was in the Church a supernatural and Divine energy. 'To this,' he adds, 'ye do well in giving heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark' (or squalid) 'place.' The world was foul and dreary. Clouds were gathering thick. The teachers of the Church were slain, or nigh unto death; the stars falling from their heaven, but this light still remained, burning and shining, as it had done in the Baptist, giving hope and guidance. Is not this 'do well to give heed' the very echo of St. Paul's 'Despise not prophesyings?' And as the one teacher had compared the present and the future knowledge, 'Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part,' so also does the other. There shall come a time when prophecy shall cease. The work of the 'prophetic word' has its limit,— 'until day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' It is not the Sun of Righteousness, the personal glorious presence of the Eternal Word, but the star that foreruns the day, the light-bringer, 'Lucifer, the son of the morning,'¹ the 'bright and morning star,' which He gives, as in the Apocalyptic message, to the faithful and the true.² And the scene on which the star rises is not the outer world, with its confusions and its discords, but 'in the hearts.' By giving heed to the 'prophetic word,' the message of God brought home to each man's personal consciousness,

¹ Isaiah xiv. 12.

² Rev. ii. 28.

spoken or written, they would pass on to a more serene and confident belief, when Truth should no longer come to them from without, through written records or spoken prophecy, or gleam dimly, like the lonely lamp in a dreary place, but shine upon them from within, illuming what had been dark and cleansing what had been foul, harbinger of the perfect day, Christ's presence in the soul, witnessing of His ultimate appearance in the glory of His kingdom.

He goes on yet further, 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.'¹ No prophecy contained in Scrip-

¹ It may be well to examine each part of this much-controverted verse separately:—

(1) 'Prophecy of Scripture.' Here the received interpretation limits 'Scripture' to the Old Testament, takes 'prophecy' in the sense of prediction, and assigns to the genitive a possessive force: 'No prophecy belonging to the Scripture.' We have, however, to remember—(a.) that the word for 'Scripture' is used in one place (2 Pet. iii. 16) certainly, and in another (Rom. xvi. 26) probably, so as to include the writings of prophets of the New Testament; (b.) That we have seen, in the name of Barnabas and elsewhere, as in 1 Cor. xiv. 31, the close connexion, amounting almost to identification, between 'prophecy,' and 'comfort,' or 'exhortation' (*παράκλησις*); that we may therefore reason from the combination of the latter word with 'Scripture' in Rom. xv. 4, to that of the former here; and that there the acknowledged meaning is, 'comfort or counsel proceeding from, originating in, the Scriptures;' and (d.) that 'the word of exhortation' (*λόγος παραλήσεως*) was, as in Acts xiii. 15, Heb. xiii. 22, the recognised expression for the spoken or written message of the preacher, resting on the exposition of Scripture. On the whole, then, the subject of the verse may be taken in its widest signification, 'No prophetic utterance that has its starting-point in an authoritative Scripture.'

(2.) The predicate of the sentence is far more difficult. Some conjectures we may set aside at once:—(a.) There is no ground for altering *ἐπιλύσεως* into *ἐπελεύσεως*, so as to get the meaning, 'No prophecy is of

ture, Old or New, or, as in the similar phrase, 'comfort of the Scriptures'—no prophecy starting from Scripture or resting on it—is given for men to handle or interpret, each for himself, according to his own carnal and earthly notions. No man may claim that power of interpreting as his own. To tie down the promise to the letter, to fix on times and seasons, to sensualize the symbols of spiritual things, to bring down the kingdom of heaven to the level of the kingdoms of the earth, this implies a want of insight into the true nature of inspiration. These things are spiritual, and must therefore be spiritually discerned.

any private origination,'—'Prophecy comes upon a man not from himself, but from God.' (b.) There is just as little ground for retaining the word, and thrusting that meaning upon it, as though it meant the 'loosing' of the lips, the 'sending forth' of the messenger. (c.) The usage of the Old Testament (Gen. xl. 8; xli. 12; LXX.) and of the New (Mark iv. 34), give, beyond all doubt, sufficient authority for the meaning 'interpretation.'

(3.) The question, What is meant by 'private interpretation?' is the difficulty of the whole passage. (a.) The word 'private' may be referred to the subject of the sentence. 'No prophecy interprets itself. We must wait for the event that fulfils it, before we can understand this or that prediction.' Against this view we may urge that it unduly narrows the sense of 'prophecy,' and that there is, on this hypothesis, no logical connexion between this verse and that which follows, such as the word 'for' implies. (b.) We may take the adjective in 'private interpretation' as having much the same force as in the common phrase, 'private judgment.' 'To interpret prophecy does not belong to any common man. It requires an inspiration analogous to that of the prophet who uttered it.' (c.) The word 'private' may be referred to the prophet himself: 'It is not given to the prophet to interpret his own predictions. The functions of prophet and interpreter are distinct.' Of these (b.) seems in every way most in harmony with the context. It is instructive to note how little bearing the verse has on the question on which perhaps it has been most often quoted—the right of private judgment as against synodical or patristic authority.

And then comes the great broad truth which was true of the prophetic gift in every age, and under every form. 'For prophecy never was borne (*ἐφέρετο*) at any time by man's will, but holy men of God spake, being borne on by the Holy Ghost.'¹ It was no product of human sagacity or foresight, but came from a far different source. It was not even the words of the prophecy that were dictated, but the men who were borne on, as with a rushing mighty wind, to speak them; and therefore to interpret their words aright required a mind one with theirs, the guidance and insight of the self-same Spirit. The law of prophetic utterance was the same at all times. It was as true of those of the New Covenant as it had been of those of the Old. It was hazardous alike to despise or tamper with either. Whatever reverence men felt for the older oracles of God, they were to feel also for the new.

¹ Here again the Authorized Version, by rendering *πρωτὸ* 'of old time,' interpolates a meaning which would have been expressed, if it had been wanted, by other phrases, as in Acts xv. 21; 2 Peter iii. 5. The words, like the *πάντα . . . οὐ* of the preceding verse, are purposely as wide as possible in their range: 'never at any time.' They were meant, we must believe, to assert the inspiration of the spoken or written prophecies of the apostolic age, as standing on the same footing, coming from the same source, as those of the Old Testament. In confirmation of this view we have to note (1.) that the epithet 'holy' is applied in this very Epistle (iii. 2) to the prophets of the apostolic Church, and (2.) that 'man of God' was applied by St. Paul, as it had been in the older days of Israel, to one who possessed a special prophetic gift (1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 22).

Such are the results of the inquiry as regards the actual meaning of the apostle's words ; such the insight which we get into the life of the apostolic Church. That alone, if the process has not been faulty, may be in itself worth having. It will have brought with it, perhaps, a clearer conviction than some of us had before of the unity of authorship of the two Epistles of St. Peter ; of the unity of spirit, teaching, time, between St. Peter and St. Paul. But other results also may yet be briefly noticed.

(1.) What we have seen is surely worth more even to the apologist than much that takes a high place among the evidences of Christianity. Here, in every page of the New Testament, implied, taken for granted, referred to without a shadow of doubt, we have traces of a power mysterious, wonderful, Divine. It came to men least prepared for it by birth or training, to no prophets or prophets' sons, but to fishermen, peasants, slaves. It gave them a power over the hearts of men which no sophist or orator had ever exercised. It was at once a sign for those that believed not, and built up those that did believe. This, more than physical signs and wonders, more even than the ties of Christian brotherhood and purity of life, was the secret of the Church's power to overcome the world. That victory is a broad and patent fact in

the world's history. This is the explanation given by those who were fighting the battle, sure of the victory which had not then been won. And if we admit this, is it not at the least a proof of a new force breaking through the succession of physical, and even of ethical causation—a force which, if we watch its tendencies, we cannot think of as other than Divine?

(2.) Does it not give us a fresh sense of the preciousness of the apostolic writings to think of them as relics of a time so full to overflowing in Divine gifts? They were inspired, because the men who wrote them were prophets. Even the historical work of the evangelists has its counterpart in the chronicles and histories that were written by the older prophets, and originated, as their work had done, in the impulse and guidance of the Spirit, making memory more truthful, and the imagination which the compiler needs more vivid.¹ It is something to have received as our inheritance what has come to us from an age when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and new floods of Divine truth rushed in upon the souls of men. If we are tempted sometimes,

¹ The list which has already been given of their lost writings will show how largely the work of the prophets of Israel was that of annalists and historians. In John xv. 26 we have a special promise of the work of the Divine Paraclete. The very name becomes almost identical in significance with the Spirit of Prophecy, as giving the power of remembering and reproducing truthfully.

as we well may be, to wonder and grieve that we have so little, we may also rejoice and give thanks that we have so much. If the Church, following its Lord's command, gathered up the fragments of that great feast so that nothing might be lost, they, like the fishes and the loaves in that great typical miracle, have shown themselves to possess a marvellous and creative power. Through all the centuries they have fed, through all the Church's life they will continue to feed, the souls that hunger, meeting all wants, conforming themselves, we might almost say, to all tastes—milk to the child in age or heart, strong meat to those that are of full age. They retain undiminished the old power of the 'prophetic word.' They reveal to men the secrets of their own hearts. They bring before the startled conscience the terrors of the coming judgment. They comfort the penitent and the mourner with the thought of the glory yet to be revealed.

(3.) There remains one lesson which we in this age and in this place need to learn. We know not fully why, but so it is, the gifts that were then given have not been given since in the same measure or in like form. Tongues and prophecy have alike failed. But not the less does it remain true that the Spirit divideth to every man severally as He will, not the less through the

long history of the Church, and around us now, are there traces of gifts, not identical indeed with the old *charismata*, yet analogous. The word of wisdom has its counterpart in the wide thoughts of Origen and Augustine, of Hooker or of Butler ; the word of knowledge in the labours of great interpreters ; 'governments' in all true pastoral rule, 'helps' in all forms of loving sympathy. And so too prophecy has its analogies among us. Not in formal decrees of synods, or elaborate teaching of dogmatists, but when the word of the Lord comes to the heart of man, and goes forth from it straight to the hearts of others, revealing them to themselves, proclaiming the kingdom of heaven, certain of the sufferings, and the judgment, and the glory, though the times and the seasons may be hid, then the prophet's work is, in its measure, renewed among us. And what was true of the original is true also of the analogue. With that also we are called on to overcome the world, and make men confess that God is with us of a truth. We are panic-stricken at the growth of unbelief around us. We snatch at weapons which we have not proved, or which the fatal experience of the past has shown will be cumbrous and useless. Here is the weapon which we need—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Not by cries of alarm or wailings of despondency,

or railing accusations, not by new tests or restless and reckless agitation, not by any or all of these, may we fight the good fight of faith. These are not from the armoury of heaven, and those who use them will one day mourn over their mistake in proportion to the nobleness of their nature and the holiness of their lives. Seeing others and themselves in the light of Christ, they will say of themselves what no others would wish or dare to say of them. There was a time when Saul of Tarsus, in a zeal which seemed to him righteous, doing well to be angry, charged Stephen with blaspheming God. Afterwards he was led to confess that he himself had not then known what manner of spirit he was of. Once he would have said that they did not worship the same God. Afterwards they were united in a brotherhood indivisible before the throne of the one Lord whom they both were seeking, who loved and called, pardoned and reconciled them both. No, once again; not by any, or by all of these may the doubters around us be won over and the gainsayers silenced. That power belongs to the 'prophetic word.' Speak that word of reproof, of comfort, and of hope, as it was spoken of old by the prophets and apostles, by the thousands who since their time have drunk of the same Spirit,—prophesy according to the proportion, the

accordant harmony of the faith, and it will not fail. In spite of errors, excesses, mutual antagonisms, it has done its work of old, and will do it yet again. Not the doctors of the schools, but St. Bernard and St. Francis; not the system-builders of Trent or Geneva, but Tindal and Luther and Xavier; not the Laudian divines, but Leighton and Baxter and Bunyan; not the Georgian bishops, but Wesley and Whitfield and Simeon,—these are the names to which we look as bright with the glory of the kingdom. So it will be now. Strive to look at the questions that are vexing us as we look on those that vexed our fathers. Amid the warfare of half truths and rash denials recognise the ‘prophetic word,’ wherever and by whomsoever it is spoken. Accept that word as limited and interpreted by the analogy of the faith. ‘Covet earnestly the best gifts. Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church; and yet I show unto you a more excellent way.’¹

NOTE.—It may be well to refer to yet another cluster of passages of which the facts that have been here brought together seem to offer by far the most satisfactory explanations. The ‘faithful sayings’ of the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. i. 15; iii. 1; iv. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 11; Tit. iii. 8) may well have been condensed expressions of truth, moral or spiritual, thus uttered in the Church by prophetic inspiration, which first gained currency and approval, and were then taken up and stamped, as it were, with the Apostle’s *imprimatur*, as ‘worthy of all acceptance.’ They are obviously quoted as sayings that were not the Apostle’s own, and are appealed to as authoritative. They are distinguished by the epithet ‘faithful,’ *i.e.* ‘trustworthy,’ from others that were less so.

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

VII.

MUSIC IN WORSHIP AND IN LIFE.

‘ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another ; in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.’—COL. III. 16.

I HAVE read these words in a somewhat different construction from that which our English version gives us, as believing that it brings out their true meaning better. The word of Christ, the word which came from Him and spoke of Him, His own Divine teaching recorded or transmitted orally, yet more perhaps the word which He speaks to every man in the secret chambers of his soul, this was to dwell in men richly. It was in their power to determine the measure of richness and abundance of that indwelling of that Divine word. By not closing their inward ear against its whisper when it came as with a still small voice, by listening for its calming melody in the midst of the loud din and stir of the world around them, they would acquire, as it were, a

new sense. They would hear it always. It would dwell in them richly.

And then they, too (the power of ear and voice, truth in receiving and capacity of uttering, unfolding side by side together), they too would be able to speak as they had heard. Their voices would be as the echoes of that Divine word, reproducing something of its might and harmony. As it had come to them illumining what was dark, revealing truth, guiding them in their perplexities, giving them just the counsel and teaching which they needed, so they too would be able (and being able were to strive after it) to 'teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,' unfolding from law, or prophecy, or gospel, the mystery that had been hid for ages, and was now revealed, speaking the words which would meet each man's wants, adapted to his special temptations.

And in like manner, as the presence of that Divine word had filled them with all joy and peace in believing, so that joy would find its natural and fit expression. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, these are not ordinarily, as our common way of reading these words implies, the instruments of teaching and admonition. That calls for calm, deliberate speech, for searching, probing questions, for gentle and subtle counsels. But these, in all their marvellous variety and

beauty,—the Psalms, which had come down as the inheritance of the Church of Christ from that of Israel, which had for centuries been uttered by the choirs of Levites, accompanied with psaltery and harp ; the hymns, Christian or Jewish, part of the original order of the liturgies of those early churches, or transferred from the synagogues, in which they had helped to give life to a worship that tended to stiffness and formality ; ‘ spiritual songs,’ the exulting utterance, perhaps unpremeditated, and with a wild harmony of their own, of the new thoughts and emotions which swept over the soul, the rushing mighty wind making wonderful music, till then all but unknown, from the chords of the regenerate heart,—these were to be the expression of the peace and joy within, and, like all true expression of what is itself true and good, would tend to strengthen and perpetuate them.¹ In them, as we gather from the parallel

¹ The words clearly imply a classification, then recognised and clear, which has since become obscure. In identifying the Psalms with those of the Old Testament there is but little risk of error. The distinctive adjective ‘spiritual’ may help us to distinguish between the other two. In the apostolic Church that word was not a mere synonyme for ‘religious,’ but implied the direct agency of the Spirit, the eager, almost unrestrainable utterance of melodious sounds and impassioned words. Such ‘singing in the Spirit’ St. Paul refers to in 1 Cor. xiv 15 ; and we may probably see in the ‘spiritual songs’ a kind of softened echo of the first mighty gift of tongues. The hymn with which Clement of Alexandria ends his treatise on the Divine Instructor, is probably, as I have said elsewhere, the nearest extant approximation to these ‘spiritual songs,’ just as the *Ter Sanctus* and the *Gloria in Excelsis* present fragments of ancient apostolic ‘hymns.’

passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians,¹ the convert from heathenism would find more than a compensation for the revelling and song, which, because it was tainted and impure, he was called on to renounce.

So much for the interpretation of the words themselves. They suggest thoughts that go somewhat further. They tell us something which we should not otherwise have known of the personal character of St. Paul. They set forth the meaning and true purpose of one large element of the Church's worship. We learn from them how we may profit by it or misuse it.

(1.) It is surely not without interest to know of any one, whose life has chiefly been that of a thinker or a worker, devoted to a noble cause, the preacher of a great truth, that there was in him, over and above all his special gifts and powers, a sensitiveness to the power of music. The history of the apostle's great namesake in the early history of Israel brings this characteristic before us as one of its most striking features, relieving as with a bright spot of light much that is dark and terrible. Of him it is told,² that when the prophets met him in the prime of his early manhood, and the wild strains of their chant, and the loud accompaniments of psaltery and harp

¹ Eph. v. 18, 19.

² 1 Sam. x. 10, 11.

swept over his ear, he also prophesied. That new, unfamiliar music woke in him a flood of new emotions that would find utterance. In that capacity for the minstrelsy of worship, in that marvellous change by which he became as another man, raised to a higher life, there was one sign among many of his capacity to the kingly office. Long years afterwards,¹ when another change had come over, and he sat moody, and sullen, and silent, tormented by the evil spirit of despair and wrath, his servants remembered the subtle power which music had to mitigate and soothe him, and the boy David, trained, as he may well have been, in that self-same school of the prophets, stood before him, and played and sang hymns, it may be, telling of the love of God, or songs of heroes of old arming for battle in the wars of the Lord, and the evil spirit departed from him, and he was refreshed and was well. Later yet,² when the clouds were still thick, and his life was closing in darkness, there were signs still lingering of that earlier nobleness of nature. Out of the passionate heat of revenge, out of the murderous thirst for blood, the song of the prophets still had power to raise him to a higher mood. They called him back to his truer and better self, and he prophesied with them, joined in their chants and hymns, till

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 14-23.

² 1 Sam. xix. 25, 24.

he fell, as the night waned, upon the hard earth, weary, exhausted, melted, and lay there until the morning.

Something of the same temperament, not darkening into gloom and midnight blackness, but brightening ever more and more unto the perfect day, we may trace in that second Saul of the tribe of Benjamin, whose words have come before us. Cast into the dungeon at Philippi,¹ his back yet lacerated and bleeding from the scourge, his feet set fast in the agonizing pressure of the stocks of a Roman prison, he and his companion are heard at midnight breaking the usual silence, singing praises unto God,—strange sounds, never heard before, we may be sure, within those walls, nor by the prisoners who woke up and listened to the unwonted music. Not the songs of the drunkard, nor the curse of the blasphemer, but one of the songs of Zion, some grand old hallelujah chant of Asaph's, some prayer like that of David's,² 'I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.' This was what they heard. This kept them in rapt and eager attention. The crash of the earthquake that followed was to them hardly less wonderful. Or, again, note with what readiness he turns, in his discussion of the gift of tongues, as to

¹ Acts xvi. 25.

² Ps. iv. 9.

something with which he is thoroughly familiar, to musical illustrations :¹ ' Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels' (speak, *i.e.*, words of bewitching sweetness and mightiest power), 'and have not charity, I am become like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,' — all true music is gone from me, and the coarsest, poorest instruments, dissonant and harsh, are more melodious. Or again, see how he notes² that more is needed for true music, in pipe or harp or trumpet, than the mere emission of their delicate sound. There must be a distinction, an interval, laws of harmony, subtle shades of character, a theme round which the variations cluster, or else all is jarring and unmeaning, and no man can know what is piped or harped, and the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, and no man can prepare himself for the battle. In that power to 'speak with tongues more than all,' whatever they may have been, we may at least recognise, as he teaches us, the gift of singing with the Spirit.³ In his wish to sing with the understanding also, we may recognise then his acceptance of the principle that all such music should be brought under the control of laws made accessible to the great mass of mankind,—become subservient to the edification of the Church.

In these two Epistles (Colossians and Ephe-

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 7, 8.

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

sians), which belong to the later period of his life, we find him not less, but more keenly alive than ever to the importance of maintaining this element of worship. He urges it earnestly and lovingly upon his converts. He is sure that without it their ritual will become cold and dead. Yes, in the apostle of the Gentiles, no less than in his predecessor, no less than in the greatest of his followers, in Augustine, in Luther, in the Wesleys, we may see a great example of the power of music, and may learn to acknowledge in that power a great gift of God.

(2.) And, therefore, his words give a sanction to all efforts which men have made to carry their skill in minstrelsy and song to its height of perfection, and to bring it into yet higher glory by dedicating it to the worship of the Most High, to the noblest employment of man's spirit. The old words of the Psalmist¹ are not a dead letter for the Christian Church: 'Praise God in the sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him with the sound of a trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.' The Hallelujah chorus which rose up, as with a surging flood of sound, from the choir of Levites in the temple, still rises fitly from among ourselves, and loses half its glory and its power when it is brought down to the

¹ Ps. cl. 1-3.

level of our common speech. Still there is the same wonderful variety of gift and form as that of which the apostle spoke. The simplest hymn which comes from the mouths of babes and sucklings may tell us, as did the voice of the children who cried Hosanna in the temple, that out of their lips God has perfected His praise.¹ Spiritual songs, hymns, wild, emotional, expressing and tending to stimulate warm, excited feeling, such as a severer art would control, or perhaps disown,—these too have their office. Over men of another race, or other modes of thought than our own, for those in whom passion predominates over thought, they may help to edify, to build up the religious life, by giving it the nourishment which it needs more than the masterpieces of a higher skill which *we* admire and delight in. And above all, first in order of importance now, as in St. Paul's language, there are the old Psalms of David and his followers, in their solemn grandeur, their plaintive melody, their prophetic awfulness, their jubilant exultation. They keep their places, the common inheritance of the Jewish and the Christian Church, opening to the latter depths of meaning which were hidden from the former, meeting all frames of temper or modes of feeling, comforting, assuaging, purifying, ennobling, worthy of all skill and

¹ Matt. xxi. 16.

power which men can dedicate to their worthy utterance.

Wisely, therefore, has it been thought fit here, and in schools and colleges where education has for its object not to impart knowledge only but to fashion character, to connect worship with what has always been its noblest accompaniment. Wisely do we seek to train those who are to be in the Church of Christ what priests and Levites were in the sanctuary of Israel, in the skill and knowledge which helped them to purify and raise a worship that might otherwise have been simply ceremonial, and may help now to carry a new life and power of gladness into that of some squalid suburb or remote village which would otherwise be cold and dull and heartless. We do well, leaving other forms of art to other places where they find a fitting place, to strive chiefly after the excellence which may be reproduced wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ. 'Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,' these do not belong to the stately services of our cathedrals only, nor depend for their beauty on the voices of a great multitude rising as the sound of many waters. The hymn sung in that upper chamber on the night of the last supper, ere the disciples and their Master went forth to the Mount of Olives,¹ went up with a

¹ Matt. xxvi. 30.

truer and diviner music to the throne of God even than the hallelujahs of the temple. Yes, it is well ever to remember, while we aim at excellence,—because whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well, because the rule holds good here also, ‘Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might,’—that the simplest utterance of praise from a true and loving heart may find acceptance where the highest skill may fail to find it ;

‘ Childlike though the voices be,
And untunable the parts,
Thou wilt own the minstrelsy,
If it come from childlike hearts.’

Wisely, then, did our forefathers devote time, labour, money, lands, to the foundation and maintenance of societies which should have, among other functions, that of carrying these gifts and praises to their highest excellence. Wisely have we, in the midst of many changes of things old, seen it to be right to perpetuate what they began. One who wishes the Church of England to be more and more the Church of the people, cannot wish that it should be otherwise. It would be an evil day when the stately cathedrals should cease to offer the daily sacrifice of praise, if any return of a colder, harder form of national religion should rob their services of their grace and beauty. That hour will be averted or hastened in proportion to

our use or neglect of the great opportunities which have been given. To welcome every opening for wider usefulness; to bring in multitudes of all classes within the influence of the noblest art and purest melody and burning words,—as has been done in this and in the sister Minster of the West; to go beyond the traditions of routine which confined the excellence aimed at to one form of sacred music, and to make the cathedral church what it ought to be, the pattern of excellence in all; to admit hymns which stir the hearts and are swelled by the voices of the multitude, side by side with the anthems which call for the culture that belongs but to a few;—this is the way to enlist the sympathies of the English people in support of the English Church; it is to help that Church some steps towards the true ideal of its calling.

(3.) But the words of St. Paul remind us of what we are, every one of us, in danger of forgetting. The beauty of the sanctuary, perfection in art, music, mighty as the voice of many waters, or soft as the whisper of the breeze,—all this should be the expression of an inward devotion, of an inward harmony, not the substitute for it. There is a music of the soul—all discords hushed, all that is base and impure excluded—without which all the rest is but as the jangling brass and the tinkling cymbal. Kindness, humbleness of mind, meek-

ness, long-suffering, charity, which is the bond of perfectness, love, which combines all other excellences with its own, and brings them thus united to the completeness of the perfect man, the peace of God, which calms and silences the harsh voices of hate, or greed, or jealousy, or over-anxiety,—these are the true anthems of the soul. When our life and heart are attuned to that heavenly music, then our worship is acceptable and true, and we are the better, not the worse for it. We carry through the week, in the streets of the city, in the noise of the mart, in the routine of the office, something of the elevation and serenity which we have known here. But if it should be otherwise ; if for any of us the work is a loveless and lifeless routine, done without zeal and without effort ; if lower thoughts, earth-born cares, lighter words, follow us even here into the house of God, and mingle with the songs of the sanctuary, then let us be sure that the Ear which is open to our prayers is open also, yea, is pained and grieved by these false notes, these unlovely discords of the soul's music ; and the gift or skill which men admire is to Him an abomination. He will not hear. They are a trouble unto Him. He is weary to bear them.

And for us, brethren, worshippers, to whom, it may be, gifts of knowledge or skill, or utterance, have been denied, but who listen with delight, and

with a wonder which our ignorance increases, let us too remember how fatally easy it is for us to turn that delight, which should help to build us up in purity and peace, into a merely sensual pleasure. And if so, like all such pleasure, however refined may be the art, however keen and exquisite our perception of its beauty, it is fatally evanescent. It leaves no melody in our hearts. It does not lull one angry passion or purify one earth-born lust. To the prophet of old murmuring over the apostasy of his people, this was made the very type and pattern of the disappointment of his hopes, the failure of his work, the inconstancy and hypocrisy of Israel.¹ 'Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument.' Yes, we shall do well to remember, awful as the thought is, that the Temple services continued in all the perfection of their beauty during the years of the ministry of Christ, while those who worshipped were hardening themselves in hypocrisy and bitterness. The voices of priests and Levites were raised in the noble chants of old, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in;'² but when the King of glory came they became His betrayers and murderers. They sang, 'The Lord said

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

² Ps. xxiv. 7, 8.

unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool ;¹ but they knew not how it was that David's son was also David's Lord. Their Hosannas resounded, their Hallelujahs were wonderful and mighty ; but it was reserved for the multitude in the streets, for the boys in the Temple, to speak those Hosannas to Him to whom they of right belonged, and their Hallelujahs, instead of being as the songs of angels, were but an idle rending of the air. The house was no longer a house of prayer ; they had made it a den of thieves.

So it has been, brethren, in many countries and many ages of the Christian Church. So it may be at any time among ourselves. So it will be with us, one by one, in that personal solitude in which the soul stands before God, the Judge, seeing its secret thoughts, and hearing its unuttered voice, if we are heedless of the conditions of all true worship. Shut out the world, conquer evil, let the peace of God reign supreme in your hearts, recognise his service as the end for which all gifts have been bestowed, let the word of Christ dwell in you, and then psalms and hymns and spiritual songs will take their place, and you will sing and make melody in your hearts, and not in your lips only, to the Lord, and not unto men.

¹ Ps. cx. i.

VIII.

OUR LIFE IN HEAVEN.

‘For our conversation is in heaven.’—PHIL. III. 20.

THERE is something almost startling in the boldness and simplicity of the language which precedes this assertion. None but one who was eminently truthful, true in the depth and ground of his life, no less than in the absence of conscious falsehood or hypocrisy, would have ventured on speaking in this way about himself to his disciples and children in the faith. The speech of a less faithful, a less simple-hearted man, would have been full of an humility more or less affected, deprecating any exaltation of himself, pointing only to a high standard of duty, and calling on other men to aim at that without looking at him, or thinking of his imperfect excellences. St. Paul does not shrink from calling on men to be his followers—to imitate him in their work and aim in life. They are to mark, to consider well, with a view obviously to reproduce

that pattern in themselves—all those who so walk, as they have him for their example. Just as a father who had lived a godly and righteous, and therefore a manly life, would not hesitate to encourage his children by the history of his example, by telling how he had resisted evil, how he had worked, and struggled, and succeeded; how he had attained to influence and honour, or had kept his ground in times of danger and disaster, cheering them on to do their part in the great battle of life manfully by his example; so the apostle, speaking out of the fulness of the heart to the children whom he has begotten in the gospel, can point to the history of his own life as setting forth the true law of their lives, an example of the degree in which that law may be realized on earth. And this he does in the true spirit of a father, frankly and openly, and yet without boasting, unconscious of any purpose but that of doing good to them, not thinking of himself, and therefore not afraid to speak about himself.

We shall see as we go on why St. Paul could do this, what that law was which he desired to see fulfilled in them. The opening words of that portion of the Epistle lead us, when we look at them attentively, into part at least of that which was at once the secret of his boldness and his righteousness. It matters little whether we trans-

late the words 'followers together of me,'¹ or 'followers together with me.' The sense is practically the same. 'Be sharers with me and with others in this work of reproducing on earth the likeness of that Lord who is in heaven.' Taken in this way and read, as they were meant to be read, in close connexion with what had gone before, the words gain their full strength and meaning. They bring out more clearly the light in which St. Paul looked on his own life, and in which we may look on it, as an example. For what is it that he has told the Philippians concerning it? Has he dwelt on his marvellous labours, his heroic endurance, his patient suffering, his wide-spreading love? Has he gone through the record of what he had done for the gospel's sake, as he elsewhere did, when it was necessary to vindicate his authority, or to refute the calum-

¹ Συμμητηταί μου.—There is obviously something in the word which is not in the *μητηταί μου* of 1 Cor. xi. 1; but, as with other like compounds, it is doubtful whether the word governed by it comes under the power of the preposition, or of the main element of the word. The question is, perhaps, hardly one to be decided by authority; but it is not uninteresting to compare the renderings of the word by different translators. The Vulgate makes no attempt at distinguishing the compound from the simple word, 'Imitatores mei estote.' Luther merges the noun into a verb, with a like disregard of what is distinguishing in it, 'Folget mir.' The English version, following Augustine, 'co-operators' (De Cult. Ag. Dom. c. 1., cited by Estius) gives the force of the original, leaving its application doubtful. Bengel, with his usual discernment, seizes on the truth which is implied, if not asserted, in the word; 'Ipse Paulus, *imitator Christi*, Philippenses ergo, *una imitatores*.' Cf. also his note on Phil. ii. 21, where he lays stress on the distinction between the compound and the simple forms.

nies of his opponents? No! that which he has been telling them is, that he is seeking to win Christ. He desires to be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith—to know Him and the power of His resurrection. Christ had laid hold on him, ‘apprehended’ him, with a purpose of infinite love, for the sake of bestowing on him an infinite blessedness; therefore he was striving that he also might apprehend and lay hold of that which Christ had purposed for him; and then, in words which one must not weaken by any change or abridgment, ‘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 that are before, I press forward to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ This is the true law for all who are perfect—growing or grown to the manhood of their Christian life. ‘Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect’ (mature and of full age,¹ as the word signifies) ‘be thus minded.’ He calls on others to share in this life of progress. In doing it they will not be following a mere human example, the poor glory of an earthly goodness, nor will they be straining after a vague ideal perfection. They are to be his companions in imitating and follow-

¹ *Τέλειοι*; cf. Heb. v. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

ing that Divine life. He says the self-same thing to them as he had said to the Corinthians, 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.'¹ He has precisely the same thought as to his own life as when he wrote to the Thessalonians, 'Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.'² And he adds, as in the text, that which made his life different from that living death, on the many forms of which, in all their foulness and corruption, he casts a half-pitying, half-indignant glance. It is as though he said to them, 'You have need to make the most of any living examples of the power of faith, and of the blessedness of holiness. You live in a world which is full of fearful evils. Bad examples surround you, and you breathe an atmosphere tainted with corruption. Join me in this pursuit of the perfection which is in Christ, in thus walking in the way of life; for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. The end of those men is absolute perdition. They worship all that is lowest and basest in their appetites with an absolute idolatry. They glory in that which ought to make them sink to the very dust with shame and confusion. Their minds, thoughts, purposes, are of the earth earthy. In all this they are utterly at variance with that

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 1.² 1 Thess. i. 6.

true law of life which we—you, and I, and God's people everywhere—are seeking to realize. "For our conversation is in heaven."

It will be necessary to look searchingly into the full meaning of the words which are thus translated. It was, doubtless, difficult to find any one word which would adequately represent, in the spoken language of the English people, the depth and strength of thought which are found in the original; and that which our translators did choose has unhappily lost much of the fitness which it once had, and become weaker and poorer in its associations. And so we are left to indicate that which the word was meant to express in longer and therefore weaker phrases: 'Be followers with me, followers of Christ. Press toward the mark of that calling from above. Shun the fellowship of those who are slaves of evil, and who mind earthly things; for we' (he speaks for them no less than for himself)—'we are citizens of a heavenly country.'¹ The constitution into which God has incorporated us, the society of which He has made

¹ Mr. Conybeare, in his recent translation, excludes the idea of citizenship, on the ground that the word for it would have been *πολιτεία* rather than *πολίτευμα*; and that *πολιτεύομαι* is used, as by St. Paul in Acts xxiii. 1, with the simple meaning of 'living.' If so, the English version, which follows the Vulgate 'conversatio,' and agrees in sense with Luther, 'wandel,' would be an adequate equivalent. It may be questioned, however—(1.) Whether it is a sound principle of interpretation to make the lowest sense in which a word is used in the common speech of men, the measure of its whole meaning; and (2.) Whether,

us members, is not of the earth but of heaven. And therefore (here the special force of the form of the word in the original comes in)—therefore our actual life as citizens is in heaven also. That is, brethren, the substance of what St. Paul says of his own life, of the life of those to whom he wrote, of your life. He is not describing any special greatness attaching to the apostolic office. His words do not paint a glory that has passed away, belonging to the first age of the Church, but not to us in these latter days. He affirms that which is true of all children of God, of all members of Christ, of all heirs of the kingdom: ‘Our conversation, our life, our citizenship is in heaven.’

It is of great importance to us, brethren, that we should understand those words rightly, that we should not rest satisfied with loose floating thoughts about them. There are, perhaps, few surer tests of the clearness of our spiritual vision, few more certain measurements of the growth of our spiritual life, than the thoughts which we associate with the words of God’s revelation that speak to us of

in St. Paul’s use of the verb as well as of the noun, there is not a more or less distinct reference to the idea of a society or constitution. The distinction between *πολιτεία* and *πολίτευμα* is of course worth attending to, and I have endeavoured to express it. Here the Romish and the Lutheran commentators agree: ‘Civitas nostra, in qua ut cives conversamur, in caelis est.’—ESTIUS. ‘Πολίτευμα—res communis, patria, civitas.’—BENGL.

heaven. As children, we have thought of it as a bright region far above the clouds, glorious with countless stars, glorious also with the presence of the angels of God, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. The wonderful imagery which shadows forth that uncreated glory leads us on a step further. We learn to picture to ourselves the rainbow round about the throne,¹ and the sea of glass like unto crystal, the seven lamps of fire that are before the throne, the river of the water of life, and the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. So far, our thoughts, however feeble and childlike they may be, are yet true. We are following God's way of educating us to discern those divine realities. But often, as we grow up, our thoughts of heaven lose their freshness and their glory, and dulness and confusion overshadow them. We put away those symbols as though they were childish things. We do not rise to the comprehension of that which the symbols represent to us. Heaven is at a greater distance from us, far off in the remote future, beyond the darkness of the grave. It is the happiness of the state after death, the reward which the servants of God are to receive when their labours are completed. And this partial, imperfect notion, colours all our thoughts about it,

¹ Rev. iv. 3, 5, 6: xxii. 1, 2.

and brings our common speech into a strange contrast with that which God's servants (take St. Paul for an example) have used in past ages. We say of one who has died, as we believe, in the peace of God, 'He is in heaven.' St. Paul says of himself, and of those who are living and working with him, 'Our conversation is in heaven.' We say with the half-believing Martha, when we mourn for the departed, 'We know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'¹ St. Paul says more truly, echoing the teaching of his divine Master, 'God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'² The heaven of which he speaks is not distant in space, is not remote in time. As the poet has said, in language which at least approximates to the truth, it 'lies about us in our infancy;' and those who continue to carry about with them the heart of a little child are encompassed with it all their life long. We are in it just so far as we are conscious of the nearness of God, who 'is not far from every one of us,'—of the presence of Christ, who is in us as the hope of glory. As the earth and earthly things take in the whole range of what is material and fleshly, the world that passeth away, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; so the heaven wherein lies

¹ John xi. 24.² Eph. ii. 6.

our citizenship is the world that is unseen and eternal, the world which we apprehend by faith, and not by sight, in which the truth and holiness and love of God, the redemption wrought by Christ, the power of the Spirit to sanctify, are seen to be as true (far more true, because eternal) as are the things that we see, and touch, and handle in this outer world. And this at once explains to us the nature of that life which St. Paul was leading, in which he calls on us to follow him. If our conversation is in heaven, a new world of thought and feeling is open to us, hypocrisy and formalism have passed away, and the life of God is at least begun in us. Our fear towards God is no longer taught by the precept of men; our knowledge is no longer traditional and outward: but there is the true childlike fear which is the beginning of wisdom. Truths that we have repeated with our lips are become, or at least becoming, mighty in forming and fashioning our lives. The earthly things on which our hearts have been set lose their hold on us. Instead of glorying in that which is indeed our shame, we turn from it with an infinite abhorrence. We see more of the nature of that struggle which we have to carry on, not with flesh and blood only, but¹ in that invisible

¹ Cf. the use of *τὰ ἐπουράνια* throughout the Epistle to the Ephesians (i. 3, 20; ii. 6; iii. 10; vi. 12). 'Heaven denotes here only the spiritual

world, in the heavenly places themselves, in the sanctuary in which our souls are in the presence of God ; and we learn, too, to see that they that be with us are more than they that be against us. If our citizenship is in heaven—if the city into which we are incorporated is that which has its foundation in eternity, whose builder and maker is God—then are we also fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. And there is one in that unseen world like unto us in all things, whose form is as the Son of Man. We see Him more clearly, in all the wonderful glory of His purity, meekness, truth, in the power of His risen life, in His ceaseless work of intercession at the right hand of God. The fellowship and sympathy of Christ abide with us continually, strengthening us for our commonest tasks, because they are to be done not with eye-service as to men, but with singleness of heart as unto the Lord, sustaining us in the hours of sharpest suffering, enabling us to overcome the most terrible temptations. Judge for yourselves, brethren, how far that picture of the heavenly life, which St. Paul claims for himself and for all Christians, tallies with your experience. Compare the clearness of that know-

world, in opposition to the material one.'—Olshausen, *in loc.* It is hardly worth while to notice here the other interpretation, resting on the authority of St. Jerome, which sees in τὰ ἐπουράνια, in this passage, the 'lower air,' as the abode of demons.

ledge with the poor, dark, confused thoughts of God with which you have been hitherto content. Bring your low aims, your half belief, your formal service, your weak submission to that which the Spirit in you ought to have brought into subjection, your slavery to the world's opinion, into the light of this heavenly life ; and so judge how feeble and dwarfed and sickly your life has as yet been, how far removed from the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. May not that scrutiny suggest another and more awful question ? Are you, in any degree whatever, living as those who have their conversation in heaven ? Are you not rather acting as citizens of another country, of that far country, far from God and the light of His countenance, into which selfishness and godlessness lead those who seek in life nothing but their own enjoyment, the gratification of their own will ? And if so, is there not in store for you that judgment which came upon the wilful and selfish son, who went into that far country, and wasted in riotous living the substance he had received from his father ? Must you not dread that mighty famine in which you will begin to be in want ? Ought you not to fear lest you too should be fain to appease that hunger with the husks which the swine are eating, trying to satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit with the gratifications of the

lowest lusts, and finding that they do but increase its misery, and more utterly exhaust its strength.

And if you ask what that work of self-scrutiny should lead us all to ask—How may we rise from the earthly to the heavenly life? how may we walk worthily of that calling from on high which we have all received?—St. Paul's words supply the answer. It is, of course, not an exclusive answer. It stands side by side with laws which enjoin a life of faith, earnest and habitual prayer, dependence on the law of God, as the light unto our feet, the lantern unto our path. And it works with them and completes them. Lest the holiness of Christ should seem a perfection unattainable, and therefore not to be aimed at—lest the lives of saints and apostles should appear to belong to a different age and to a separate region, with which we have very little in common, and which can therefore present but imperfect examples to us, God has provided, in His mercy, some nearer helps for us, some patterns of the life that is acceptable to Him, which we cannot refuse to imitate without being self-condemned. 'Mark them which walk,' the apostle said, 'so as ye have us for an example.' Among those who are your fellow-workers and your friends,—among the crowds with whom you mingle in your daily life,—among the kindreds who are bound to you by holier ties

than those of blood, there are some who are followers of St. Paul, in that wherein he was a follower of Christ, in living by faith, not by sight, to others, not to himself, fulfilling the law of love, not the desires of the flesh.

In some instances the power of that inner life, which is hid with Christ in God, shines forth conspicuously. It makes itself felt as a spell, putting all baseness and vileness to shame, calling all good and holy thoughts, all impulses to lead a true and manly life, into fresh activity. But, even in its lower and less perfect forms, it is easily distinguishable. You cannot choose but recognise its presence, if you seek for the marks that indicate it. Without sitting in judgment upon others, you cannot help discerning who, among those with whom you live, are most visibly serving God, and living with a conscience void of offence, walking as in the sight of God, and, therefore, approved by men. And these, as St. Paul says, you are to mark, looking at them steadfastly, studying the principles on which they act, following in their footsteps, avoiding what they avoid. Be followers together of such men as these—of Him rather whom they are following. Take them, as God shall give you opportunity, as guides, counsellors—if it may be, as friends and companions also. So will you escape from the fearful dangers of that companion-

ship in evil, wherein each man acts on his fellow with a corrupting influence, and is in his turn corrupted by him. So will you gain strength and unity of life through the blessed and divine influence of companionship in good. Wherever you know any man of whom you are sure that he hates falsehood, and loves the truth, that he works in singleness of heart, that he shrinks from all impurity, and strives to keep himself unspotted from the world, avoiding even all appearance of evil,—there is one whose conversation is in heaven, to whom that which is invisible has become, or is becoming, the most living of all realities. And for that reason he is worth knowing ; his life is worth studying even at a distance. The more intimately and deeply you examine it, the more you will see in it of the beauty and the power of holiness.

And there is now, as there was when St. Paul wrote, the same terrible necessity for thus choosing, as friends or companions, those who will lead us upward, and help us in the way of life. We are surrounded by manifold forms of evil. You need the conviction that this is the true pattern of man's life ; you need, also, the living proof that it is possible to attain to it, to preserve you from the deadening influence of the examples of hardened and persistent evil which you will hereafter meet with. You will enter before long into a world in which

there are sins as dark and as subtle as those which surrounded the first believers in the midst of that gross darkness of heathenism. You will be tempted, now in one way, now in another, to join in the idolatries that still exist in the midst of us, though no temple stands or altar smokes to them,—to become servants of Mammon, slaves of appetite, worshippers of the world's opinion ; and you will need the safeguard of the living, personal influence of God's servants to protect you from destruction.

Yes ; and that necessity may exist even now—we cannot know how widely. We dare not judge any man, except where overt acts make it manifest how deeply he has fallen ; but we know that the trials of the world, its struggles between good and evil, its temptations to fall, are anticipated in all societies like this. Even here, also, 'it must needs be that offences come ; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh !'¹ It avails little to set up laws, of which the design is to keep men from evil, and to make the portion of the Church committed to our charge that which the whole Church was meant to be, a land of uprightness. There is a terrible truth in the old words of the prophet, which tell us that even in 'the land of uprightness'—even in the Church of God—the wicked will

¹ Matt. xviii. 7.

not deal uprightly, and 'will not behold the majesty of the Lord.'¹ It may be necessary even here to give the same ground for the exhortation as St. Paul gave. Mark those who walk after the pattern of St. Paul's life—in the footsteps of all God's servants from the beginning of the world; 'for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are'—in their want of reverence, or their open scorn—'the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, minding earthly things,' and therefore counting themselves unworthy of the heavenly.

IX.

THE LIFE OF MOSES.

'He had respect unto the recompense of reward. . . . He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.'—HEB. XI 26, 27.

I TAKE these words, brethren, as giving us the key to the whole life of Moses in all its stages. Much there must be in that life, as in the lives of all the world's greatest men, of all God's holiest servants, into which we cannot enter. It lies above us. We cannot measure it. To be the vessel of God's truth, establishing a new worship, to be, humanly speaking, the founder of a religion, the giver of laws lasting through the long life of nations,—this is so different from anything that falls to our experience that we find it hard to understand the work, either in its blessedness or its temptations. It is something to have the insight into it which the writer of this Epistle gives us, to learn what it was that gave a unity to the life so marvellously great, so strangely diversified. Let us think (1.) of those forty years in which he grew up, to all outward semblance, as an Egyptian, nurtured as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, learned

in all their wisdom, mighty in words and deed. What an opening was there for the ambition of any one who loved greatness for its own sake! Life might have been pleasant and prosperous. Fame was within reach. To command the armies of Egypt, to be the chief counsellor of Pharaoh, that would have seemed the natural career for one who had such a starting-point. How easy and excusable would it have seemed to forget that he had anything to do with the poor oppressed tribe of the Hebrews, that fed their flocks in Goshen, or were dragged to build the king's treasure-cities, and eat the bread of slavery. It would not have been difficult to find pleas for such a policy. Joseph had lived the life of the Egyptians, had, as it were, been naturalized, had married the daughter of an Egyptian priest.¹ It might have seemed politic to follow in his footsteps, and then, when the height of power had been obtained, there might be time to do something to mitigate the sufferings of the people.

Let us for a moment picture to ourselves what might then have been the issue of his life. Greatness, praise, riches, these he might have had abundantly. The highest servant of one who was then highest among the kings of earth, a life perhaps not without good deeds, and some acts of kindness, a stately

¹ Gen. xli. 50.

burial, a solemn embalmment, and then a name forgotten under the dust of ages, till some seeker after the hidden past dragged it from oblivion, slowly deciphering and interpreting the long lost characters, and bringing it to the light of day;—that was what might have been. How great a contrast to what was! His choice was not that; was quite otherwise than that. He had learnt from that mother-nurse of his, even in his childhood, that to be a Hebrew, a son of Abraham, one of the children of Israel, was his greatest glory and his greatest blessing. Doubtless he had been told what hopes and auguries of good that infant beauty¹ of his had kindled in the hearts of his parents, what promises those hopes had rested on, with what a revelation of God's being and will these promises had been accompanied. And his heart was with his brethren, and to them he gave his life. Not in the hot impulse of youth, not without tasting greatness did he make that choice. But when made it was final, inexorable. He 'refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;' he went forth to succour his people,—if not, to bear their affliction with them. Everything, measured by man's judgment, was against him. He was casting away golden opportunities, present honour, future greatness, but he 'had respect unto the

¹ Exod. ii. 2; Acts vii. 20.

recompense of the reward.' The reward of knowing God, of doing His will, of rescuing the afflicted and oppressed ; this was what spurred him on. It was intangible, invisible, but his faith made it near, distinct, precious. For it he counted 'the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.'¹ Yes, the shame and ignominy of those wretched slaves in Pithom or Raamses was nothing less, though he knew it not, than the 'reproach of Christ.' Then, and evermore through the world's wide history, the truth was held good which He declared : 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'² And therefore he had the reward even then, the reward of the pure in heart, the true, the noble. The thought of God became mightier, clearer than before. Yes, it was no longer a thought, a human conception about God. The Divine Word was not far from him, was present to his inward eye. 'He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.'

(2.) Then came another forty years. We read so little of that second period of his life that we commonly think little of it. Yet, surely, they too were not only a time of training, discipline, preparation, but a time of trial. Think of the long, weary expectancy, the hope deferred, making the

¹ Heb. xi. 26.

² Matt. xxv. 40.

heart sick, the sense of failure and disappointment. Yes, he had made the attempt and had failed. That was the bitterest sorrow. He had stained his hand with blood for his people's sake, and they had taunted him with his guilt. They were lost to all sense of their life as a nation, wasted their strength in quarrels, would not be at one. And then year after year passed on, and age was creeping on him. Either he heard nothing at all of his brethren, or else he heard that their condition was getting worse and worse, their misery more horrible and heart-rending, their character more degraded. And another temptation was close at hand. He was with a priest of Midian, a man who represented the old patriarchal worship. The solitude of the desert, the awe of the everlasting hills, might well lead such a man as Moses was to deep thoughts of God, to self-knowledge, to strivings after holiness. He might have thought of himself as cut off from his people, of a great gulf dividing the present from the past ; he might have satisfied himself with proclaiming a religion, and giving laws there where he was ; he might have become a priest like Jethro, or a prophet like Balaam, or a hermit like the son of Rechab. But in that case, also, his name would have perished, his work been left undone ; there would have been no lasting blessedness. What was it which raised him out of this temptation, more subtle

than that of Egypt, connecting itself with the semblance of a holy life and of exalted thoughts of God, but still drawing him away from the task to which God called him, leading him to the selfishness of a spiritual ambition, as the former had led him to the selfishness of an earthly? What was it which gave unity to his life, and made it to the last what it had been from the outset? As before, sympathy with the sufferers, faith in the Unseen, these were the root of all nobleness in him, as they have been of all nobleness everywhere. He 'had respect unto the recompense of the reward,' and the reward was now near at hand. The cry that had gone up so long was heard; the time of deliverance was come. He 'endured as seeing Him who is invisible,' and that vision became in wonderful ways clearer and brighter. To see God as He is, that was not possible for any earthly eye, but the bush that burnt with fire was, as it were, the visible sign and sacrament of the Eternal Presence. It prepared the way for a fuller revelation, for the new name, the name Jehovah, the I AM, which led the worshipper to feel that he and all men had their true being in Him; that apart from Him there was no true life, no abiding blessedness.

(3.) He needed that preparation for the work to which God was sending him. Without it, the *very* agencies mighty, wonderful, above and be-

yond nature, which he was called on to employ, might have been a snare and perplexity. There was no need for him, then, to 'fear the wrath of the king.' Sign after sign, terror after terror followed, as it seemed, at his word, by the stretching forth of his rod. But how close was the peril of thinking that it was by his own word and by his own hand; that he was master of some secret agency; that the power was his to be used as he willed, and for his own ends; and if he conquered this temptation, how awful then must have been the feeling that he, weak and frail as he was, was chosen to this mighty work, wielded by the hands of the Most High, as the rod which he stretched forth over the land of Egypt was wielded by his own. How hard it must have been to avoid presumption, pride, self-exaltation, on the one hand; to maintain calmness, self-possession, on the other. If I dwell less on that trial, it is not because I believe the struggle to have been less, but because it lies more remote from anything within our experience. Then it was that the thought of God as a consuming fire must have been stamped upon his mind for ever; then also he learnt to think of God as long-suffering and of tender mercy, plenteous in goodness and truth; and so he passed through that ordeal unscathed, he 'endured as seeing Him who is invisible.'

(4.) There were yet forty years to be lived

through. What were they like? What trials did they bring with them? At first our thoughts are as his were, of a deliverance wonderful and unexpected, of mercies and loving-kindness. The people were free; their enemies had 'sunk like lead in the mighty waters.' To make them worthy of their freedom was now the task to which he gave his heart. For that end he was content to wear himself out before his time, setting right each individual wrong, hearing, with his own ears, each cause that any man of Israel brought before him. For that end he passed into 'the thick darkness,' and came forth the lawgiver of Israel, the founder of a system, the prophet of the Most High, the 'mediator of a covenant.' Might not he think, are not we almost tempted to think, that his work was over? Might he not have said, as Simeon said afterwards, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace'? Were not the 'twelve hours of the day' in which men ought to work almost over? Alas! no. Not success, but failure, disappointment, weariness; not the land flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands, but the waste howling wilderness; not the calm sunset of an untroubled age, but storm and tempest,—that was the lot assigned to the lawgiver of Israel, to the servant of the Lord, to the friend of God. To see the noblest work marred by the vilest passions, *paltry* jealousies and suspicions creeping into the

inner circles of companionship and kindred ; to find that the people for whom he had done so much, were still thankless, rebellious, cowardly, slaves in heart, though no longer in the house of bondage,—this, I imagine, must have been the hardest trial of all. And it was not the trial of a passing hour, or day, or year. To see those whom God had redeemed perish miserably in their sins, to witness year after year all whom he had known passing away, till the bones of all that mighty host of two millions were bleaching in the wilderness, to remain all but the last survivor in the midst of a younger generation,—this was a harder discipline than that of his youth or manhood, for then there had at least been hope, the thought of the freedom of his people, the vision of the hills of Canaan. Now he knows that he himself is shut out from that goodly land. The trial has been too great for him, and he has ‘spoken unadvisedly with his lips;’ he too has become a murmurer. For him there is nothing but that glance from Pisgah over a land which he may not enter.

I cannot doubt, brethren, that he was sustained through all this by the same faith. He ‘had respect unto the recompense of the reward.’ The reward to which he had once looked seemed to fade away in the distance ; the hopes which he had cherished in his youth, which had sustained him in his early conflicts with the world, were not fulfilled. So

much the more did he look to 'a better country, that is, an heavenly;' so much the more must his thoughts have turned to 'the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'¹ The more he saw the 'things that are shaken' totter and crumble and fall, the more would he learn to 'plant his feet beyond the waves of time' upon the eternal rock, among the 'things that cannot be shaken.'² Of such a spirit, calm, steadfast, full of awe, yet undismayed, the 90th Psalm—the prayer of Moses, the man of God—is surely the utterance: 'Thou turnest man to destruction; again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men. We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. We bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told.' But then also there is the sustaining thought of God's eternity, His completeness, the rest which is in Him: 'Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' The last words speak to us of a calm, clear hope: 'Satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us. The beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. Stablish thou the work of our hands.'

¹ Heb. xi. 16, 10.

Heb. xii. 27.

And then also we may be sure the other words were true as they had never been true before : ' He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.' The vision of God became clearer evermore. The thought, the presence of infinite holiness, of as infinite a love, this was what he lived. Each revelation, each judgment, each stage in the discipline of life, led him deeper into this. The highest height, the deepest depth was reached when he learnt how it is that God reveals Himself most fully. He had prayed, ' I beseech thee show me thy glory.' But the answer to the prayer was, that not the glory but the goodness of the Lord should pass before him : ' Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see my face and live.'¹ Man is lost, crushed, overwhelmed, when he attempts to grasp the infinitude of God, when the thought on which he dwells exclusively is the power, the glory, the sovereignty of God. But there is a knowledge of God possible, true, sustaining. We may see in the skirts of His presence a light that giveth life. There is a name by which He proclaims Himself as being what indeed He is : ' The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.'² In that thought

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20.

² Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

the spirit of man can rest. It enables it to endure in the midst of sorrow, anguish, weariness ; it checks the passionate impulse ; it restrains the hasty pride. Moses, in that old age, learnt the lesson in its fulness, and became 'meek above all men that were on earth.'¹

Do not let us leave this life without carrying away that lesson, at least, from it. It seems remote, lofty, inaccessible. What is there, we ask, in our lives like his ? How can his experience, the discipline through which he passed, have anything to teach us ? This there was, brethren, which makes the history a thing written for our learning : that he, too, was 'a man of like passions with ourselves.' The lowest life has something in common with the highest. Abraham and Moses, and David and Isaiah, and Peter and Paul and John,—these had all to struggle and to endure. They all had a calling and election, temptations to resist, a work to fulfil. The conditions of victory were the same. The weapons of the warfare were the same. That 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews was written that we might see, through all, the pervading unity of lives outwardly so different. All had that faith which from the beginning of the world has justified ; all 'had respect to the recompense of reward ;' all 'endured as seeing Him who is invisible.'

So in this life of Moses it is not difficult to find

¹ Numb. xii. 3.

analogies which may meet us in any life, however common and poor it may seem to us. Sooner or later there comes to every man a time when he has to choose whether he will claim his position as a child of God, and cast in his lot with God's servants, or 'be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,' living for the world, for fame, and popularity and applause. Then, when that choice has been made, there may be, there often are, periods of delay and waiting. The man does not see how to do the work on which his heart is fixed. He makes, perhaps, hasty attempts, blunders, mistakes; and they lead to no results, and he retires baffled and perplexed. He needs the discipline of patience. Solitude, weariness, seclusion,—these are the education by which he is to be formed and fashioned. At last the work comes. He is sustained in it, and through it. Fresh energies and powers are given him. It may be a very small thing in men's eyes, something which no historian chronicles, which has for its scene no wider stage than a man's own dwelling, or a man's own heart; but in the strength of his faith he wrestles against the Pharaoh who would keep him in bondage, and overcomes him, and goes forth victorious, and the work to which he has set his hand prospers. But then for him too there may be disappointments. The good work in a household, in a parish, in a

church, in a nation, may be marred by petty jealousies, human infirmities, rebellion, wilfulness. Those from whom he hoped much turn against him and thwart him. The age even of the truest servant of God is not always untroubled. Not always does he *see* the work of his hand prosper. If it be so, brethren ; if the trials of Moses are our trials, then let the faith of Moses be ours also. More clear and full for us is the vision of 'the recompense of the reward.' If he endured as seeing Him who is invisible, how much more should we endure, who have seen the fuller revelation of His presence in the only-begotten Son ! Not standing in the cleft of the rock, as for a moment's glance at a brightness terrible and ineffable ; but evermore may we look upon that presence of the Son of Man which remains with us, and with His Church. There we see all that man can see of the glory, all the goodness of the Eternal Father. The name of the Lord God is as of old, the same yesterday, to-day, for ever ; 'abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin ;' but in the name of Jesus Christ there abides that which other names revealed step by step, and part by part. Let us also endure. Let us also learn patience, hope, meekness, and the 'recompense of reward,' the fruit of peace, the crown of righteousness shall come.

X.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

‘When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment : when he appointed the foundations of the earth : then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.’—PROV. VIII. 29, 30.


THERE is a manifest and striking contrast in this part of the teaching of the Book of Proverbs to all that goes before or follows it. Elsewhere we meet with fatherly counsels, maxims of prudence, an almost worldly-wise sagacity, sharp satiric sketches of human weaknesses, but now, ‘that strain we hear is of a higher mood.’ The words rise above the prose-level of the other parts of the book into the noblest poetry. The morality which has been looked on hitherto from its human side culminates in the highest truths, in the highest mysteries of theology.

The mere fact of this union of two elements in the same book is significant enough. It bore its witness of old time *against* the notion that there could be a true human morality which did not

rest upon a theology, *for* the truth that man's thoughts of his relations to his brother man will depend upon his thoughts of the relation in which he stands to God. It told men that they needed in the commonest concerns of life—their buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage—a wisdom essentially the same, as calm, and passionless, and loving, as that which guides the stars in their courses, and preserves the 'ancient Heavens from wrong,' and lays the strong foundations of the earth. It teaches us that those Proverbs of the wise do not contain merely, as some have thought, an old-world wisdom, maxims merely prudential, almost selfish in their views of life, but are, in their range of thought and their grasp of truth, exceeding broad. The one great educational book of the Old Testament retains its value in education now. For us who, in our corporate life, pursue a wisdom wide and varied as was that of the teacher who wrote much, and has stamped his name upon the whole of it; who profess to connect that wisdom with a true theology; who trust that out of that union there will spring a knowledge free from pride and a faith emancipated from fear—it will, I believe, be well to trace the steps by which the teacher was led upwards to that supernal height. We may well ask what, for him, was the meaning of this vision of a Wisdom, the

first-born of every creature, whom the Lord possessed in the beginning of His way, before His works of old ; what light that vision threw upon the mysteries of his own life and upon the problems of the universe ; what light it receives from the fuller revelation of the Divine Word, which kings and prophets and sages desired to see, and saw not?

The first step in the progress of the teacher was not that of solitude and seclusion. To whatever cause we may ascribe it, Hebrew philosophy (I use the word in its strict etymological meaning) was preserved from the besetting temptation of the sages of other Eastern nations, that of seeking for truth in separation from their fellow-men, in morbid introspection, in spinning brain-cobwebs out of the tissues of their own thoughts. It may be that there was this special purpose among others, in the wisdom given to the son of David, that there might remain to all time a true pattern and ideal as of a man who loved wisdom with all his soul, and yet bore all the burden of kingly rule ; who spake of all trees, from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, and yet, so long as he was true to himself, never suffered that study of nature to divert him from sympathy with his fellow-men ; who wrote 'songs a thousand and five,' and yet lived in no poet's land of dreams, but in the statesman's and the ruler's world of commerce and



finance, of alliances and treaties. Certain it is, at any rate, that this is the path which the voice of Wisdom, as we hear it in this chapter, points to as the true one,—

‘She standeth in the top of high places,
By the way in the places of the paths.
She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the coming in at the doors.’¹

It is in the active service of life, in the work of the market-place, in the interchange of thought, and the collision of minds differently constituted, that Wisdom speaks to us. That is the true education of the Spirit. There the still small voice is heard in its thrilling, penetrating whisper. Yes! there also, in the penalties of evil-doing, in the crash of a presumptuous pride, in the Nemesis which falls on the slothful and the scorner, it speaks to us even in trumpet-tones,—

‘Doth not wisdom cry!
And understanding put forth her voice?’²

Here, through all the changes and seeming chances of our experience, there is the true ‘reproof of life,’ of which it is said that ‘whoso heareth it, shall abide among the wise.’³

Nor, again, does the Divine Wisdom communicate itself, as later thinkers dreamt, even among the chosen people, when they too had caught the infection of the pride of knowledge, to a few only,

¹ Prov. viii. 2, 3.

² Prov. viii. 1.

³ Prov. xv. 31.

the favoured ones of the earth. It was reserved for a teacher, wise indeed after his fashion, yet already beginning to tread the downward path, to proclaim, as the Son of Sirach proclaims, in a tone of self-complacency,—

‘The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure,
And he that hath little business shall become wise.
How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough or glieth in the goad,
That driveth oxen and is occupied in their labours?’¹

It was reserved for a yet lower stage in the self-glorifying arrogance of Rabbinism to speak of the great masses of mankind as the brute people of the earth, to declare in their hostility to the truth which those masses welcomed,

‘This people who knoweth not the law are cursed.’²

True Wisdom speaks in a different note, and to a far wider audience. She comes as with an evangel, which she proclaims to all, which shuts out none but those that shut it out, seeking, in her infinite compassion, the ignorant and the foolish :

‘Unto you, O men, I call;
And my voice is to the sons of men.
O ye simple, understand wisdom :
And, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.’³

And the path, of which this is the starting-point, so broad and plain that the wayfaring man cannot

¹ Ecclus. xxxviii. 24, 25.

² John vii. 49.

³ Prov. viii. 4, 5.

mistake it, leads, not first to high speculative knowledge and then to action, but first to action and then to the higher wisdom that rewards it. Truth, uprightness, self-control ; to resist the temptations of the harlot sense, to avoid the snare into which they fall who make haste to be rich, and in that haste disregard the rights, or the peace, or the lives of others ; to speak the truth, whether in so doing we win men's favour or lose it ; to govern thought and speech lest we run on into 'the multitude of words that wanteth not sin,' condemning, suspecting, judging ; the temper of unresting diligence, and serene calmness, and wide-spreading charity, and sympathy with all men, and scrupulous integrity, and reverence for the past, and hope for the future ; the very character which we should describe now, and describe truly, as abounding in all Christian graces,—this is what we find in this hand-book of Hebrew ethics, the catechism, we might almost call it, in which the boys of the schools of Judah learnt the first outlines of their duty towards God and their neighbour.

But the words 'duty towards God' remind us of yet another condition implied in all this, without which the development of such a character would be simply impossible. Re-echoing here, as in a hundred other less conspicuous instances, the noblest utterances of that wonderful poem which,

coming from the wisdom of the farther East, through the intercourse which the commerce of Solomon had opened,¹ at once impressed its stamp upon his thought and speech, and that of those who followed him, the Book of Proverbs proclaims, as the Book of Job had proclaimed before, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.' Yes, that, and nothing short of that, renders all excellence possible. 'The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil ;'¹ it 'prolongeth days ;'² in it is 'strong confidence' and 'a fountain of life.'³

It is perhaps hard for us, to whom the words have become a familiar phrase, to measure the fulness of meaning which they had when they first fell as an oracle from heaven, more wonderful and awful than the *γνωθι σεαυτον* of the Greek seeker after righteousness, into the heart of man, and were uttered by human lips, when, after all searching of the depth and height, the way which was 'hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the birds of heaven,' of which 'destruction and death,' the world of the unseen no less than that which met men's eyes, could only say, 'we have heard the fame thereof with our ears,' was made known by Him who saw it, and declared it even 'when he made a decree for the rain, and a

¹ See Appendix on the authorship of the Book of Job.

² Prov. viii. 13.

³ Prov. x. 27.

⁴ Prov. xiv. 26, 27.

way for the lightning of the thunder ; and unto men he said, The fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.¹ To revive, as far as is possible, the consciousness of that moment, may help us to enter into something of the height and depth of such a revelation. If we may not use the terms in which men of a different mould of thought have spoken, and say that what is meant here by the 'fear of the Lord' is the consciousness of the Infinite, the sense of the unfathomable that we cannot measure, and the *All* that we cannot grasp, whose 'presence is the light of setting suns ;' seeing that for us, at least, if not for them, such words tend to shut out what is the central thought of the whole, the personality of God, infinite not only or chiefly in extent or power, but chiefly in holiness and love, it is yet far more (and we need to remember this) than a mere reverence for religious institutions, or conformity with a religious ritual. What the words mean, we find, as we might expect, in the book which first contained them. It was easy to utter them even then without entering into their inner depth. Even the man who spoke them first did not then know, as he knew afterwards, the fulness of their power. They were noble words, true words, and he delighted in them ; but when he had been brought

¹ Job xxviii. 21-28.

face to face with the power and majesty of the Almighty One, he had to confess that his first knowledge had lain, as it were, on the surface of his mind. He had repeated them, as we repeat them, for the greatness of the thought and the nobleness of the language, but afterwards—

‘I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear :
But now mine eye seeth thee.
Wherefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes.’¹

This sense, not of nothingness but of vileness ; this consciousness of our own incompleteness before the All-complete ; this self-knowledge, which involves also self-loathing, and thus drives us from our former selves and our past lives, to take refuge in the Infinite Holiness of God ; which crushes us only in order that it may raise us to itself ; in other words, this ‘conviction of sin’ (I use the word to mark out the oneness of truth in the old and in the new, though it, too, has half lost its power in the formalism of a technical theology) ;—this, and nothing less than this, is ‘the fear of the Lord,’ which is ‘the beginning of wisdom.’ Isaiah had it when he cried out, ‘Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’² Peter had it when he fell at Jesus’ feet and cried, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’

¹ Job xlii. 5, 6.

² Isa. vi. 5.

That conviction was followed, as it ever is, by a new sense of peace, by a new vision of the truth. More and more did the seeker come to feel that there was something personal in that Divine Wisdom which was now revealing itself—herself—to him. Through her he came into a wonderful fellowship with the good and great of all ages. She to whom his soul was wedded was the source of all truth, and judgment, and righteous sovereignty :—

‘ By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.
By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.’

She was dowered with the ‘hate of hate,’ and the ‘scorn of scorn’ for whatever was base or evil :—

‘ Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way,
And the froward mouth do I hate ;’

dowered also with the ‘love of love’ for all the noble and true-hearted :—

‘ I love them that love me ;
And those that seek me early shall find me.’¹

But, more than all, there came before his soul the truth that this Wisdom, who thus spoke to him, was co-eternal with the Uncreated, Almighty, Everlasting One :—

‘ The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.

¹ Prov. viii. 14-17.

I was set up from everlasting,
From the beginning, or ever the earth was.
When there were no depths, I was brought forth ;
When there were no fountains abounding with water.¹

And yet, side by side with this consciousness of the infinite and eternal greatness of the Divine Wisdom, there was an ever clearer sense of fellowship and union between it and man. As it had been said of old to man, in his searching after God, that what he sought for was to be found, 'not in the heavens,' or 'far off,' or 'beyond the sea,' but 'very nigh unto him, in his mouth and in his heart,'² so Wisdom reveals herself as fashioning and ordering the universe : the clouds and the waters, the sea and the sky, the heavens and the earth, all testify of her work ; 'her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world,' and yet there is in her something essentially, wonderfully human. She yearns, as it were, for human sympathy, and the wide spaces of the universe would seem dark and cold to her if man were not there. She 'rejoices in the inhabited parts of the earth,' her 'delights are with the sons of men.'³ Therefore is it that she speaks to men, to all men, as her 'children ;' therefore 'blessed is the man that heareth her, watching daily at her gates ;' therefore 'whoso findeth her, findeth life.'⁴

¹ Prov. viii. 22, 24.

² Deut. xxx. 12-14.

³ Prov. viii. 31.

⁴ Prov. viii. 32-35.

I have sought not to engraft on these words a fuller meaning than they will rightly bear. Sufficient for the time and for the man were the measure and the form of truth from which the veil was actually withdrawn. We have no right to suppose that there was given to the writer of the Proverbs a revelation which was only possible after 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.' But it is, at any rate, clear that we have here the opening of a path of thought, of which the 'prologue' of St. John's Gospel is the natural conclusion, and it has been given to us to be able to trace some at least of the intermediate stages. The writer of the so-called Wisdom of Solomon, using (as others, it may be, had used before him) a legitimate personation, not inconsistent with our belief that he was truthful and taught of God, speaks of Wisdom in words that echo and yet expand the teaching of the oldest sage :—

'She is the brightness of the everlasting Light,
The unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image
of his goodness.
And, being but one, she can do all things.
And remaining in herself she maketh all things new,
And in all ages entering into holy souls
She maketh them friends of God, and prophets.'¹

Here there was, then, the discovery of a new identity. Wisdom was one with that 'Word of the Lord' which came to Abraham in a vision,

¹ Wisd. vii. 26, 27.

and made him 'the friend of God,' which came to Isaiah and Ezekiel, and all the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, of which it was said, and not of any mere precept or commandment, that it 'endured for ever in heaven;'¹ that 'it is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.'² Philo of Alexandria (seizing, like his great Christian follower, Origen, on great thoughts, however fantastic in special interpretations) carried the truth yet one step further. The Word was to him eternal, creative, all-powerful, all-wise, One with God, yet in closest fellowship with man, a second Personality in the Godhead, yet keeping the Divine Unity unbroken; the Guide, Teacher, Educator of all men, of Israel as the first-born among the nations, the first-fruits of humanity. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, himself 'mighty in the Scriptures,' and familiar with Alexandrian thought, speaks in like manner of the Word of God, in terms which forbid our applying them to the written word, exclusively or chiefly: 'Quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' This goes beyond the power and function of any book. 'Neither is there any creature that is not

¹ Ps. cxix. 89.

² Ps. cxix. 105.

manifest in his sight.’¹ This carries us to the personal revelation of the Eternal Son.

Such were the yearnings, glimpses, foreshadowings of the Truth, which found their completion in the teaching of the beloved disciple. He could point to One whom he had known and loved, as Brother, Teacher, Friend, and say, ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life’—this is none other than the man Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of God.² All that was said of Wisdom is true, with the highest truth, of Him. Was Wisdom divine and co-eternal, present with the Almighty, as one brought up with Him? Behold—

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’

Was Wisdom active, living, ministerial, in the creative work, mighty in all the marvels and mysteries of the material universe? Behold again—

‘All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.’

Did Wisdom speak to all men, claiming them as her children, having her delights with the sons of men? Behold yet once more—

‘That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’³

¹ Heb. iv. 12, 13.

² 1 John i. 1.

³ John i. 1-9.

Brethren, we have reached the mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Wisdom and the Eternal Word are one. We have been led through 'the great world's altar-stairs' that 'slope,' no longer in their 'darkness,' 'up to God.' Christ, who is made unto us sanctification and redemption, is also made unto us Wisdom.¹ In Him 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'² It is well that we should pause. It is not our work now to present a complete theology. What has been said is but a part of the Divine Truth of which the Church is the witness and keeper, and ever beyond all that is revealed, there lies a region over which the clouds and darkness hang, and the most part of His works are hid. Other truths at other times—the work of Redemption, Atonement, Sanctification, the mystical Presence of Christ in His Church, over and above that Universal Presence which the Church shares with the heathen and the outcast: these have their place, and may not be forgotten. But for us, in this place, and on this day, the truth on which I have dwelt seems to be the fittest and most edifying. It suggests counsels, warnings, hopes, encouragements, which will, I am sure, present themselves to the thoughts of those who seek the Truth with greater clearness and power than any words of mine can give them,

¹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

² Col. ii. 3.

but which even feeble words may help to originate for some.

(1.) To many among us who, here or elsewhere, make it their work to be observers of the facts, and students of the laws of nature, the Truth which is thus revealed gives a new ground for thankfulness and hope. The place whereon they stand is holy ground. They too are treading the outer courts of God's great temple. All traces of design, order, development, the unfolding of the higher from the lower,—what are these but marks of the Eternal Wisdom manifesting itself according to its own determinate counsel and foreknowledge? What else is this broad and glorious creation but a Book in which He has written the will that has been from everlasting? Laws of Nature! What are they but words of God, by which the Eternal Son creates, sustains, and rules; and so here, as in the mystery of redemption, works out the will of the Everlasting Father? There may be errors in our interpretation of the one Book, as there are in our interpretation of the other; we may import our own hypotheses, hasty generalizations, inherited prepossessions into either; but, in either case, we are or should be followers of the Truth; and if we follow it in both, the Truth shall make us free, free from slavish fear, free from yet more slave-like scorn. Do not dream that the work

to which you devote your lives is common or unclean, to be labelled as profane, while other studies monopolize the name of sacred. Do not *make* it common or unclean by want of faith or want of reverence. The temper of the student of Science should be the same as the temper of the student of Theology. A position of antagonism between the two is false and fatal. We may work on in faith that there will be found a deeper analogy pervading both the natural and spiritual order than even Butler dreamt of. We do not need any mere armistice or miserable compromise. Each searcher after Truth needs the same gifts—patience, self-distrust, acquiescence even in uncertainty, till God shall reveal this also that you seek for to you, sympathy with other seekers, courtesy, forbearance, the spirit of a wide and searching induction ; these are, or ought to be, characteristic of both of them. Of both also it has been written: ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.’¹

(2.) But it must not be forgotten that that Eternal Word reveals Himself as one whose ‘delights are with the sons of men.’ It is an evil and hateful thing in His sight when Truth is divorced from Love, when the dreamer, or the theorist, or the observer lives in his own lordly pleasure-house

¹ James i. 5.

of knowledge or of beauty, and shuts out all sympathy with human suffering and human weakness. Blessed, thrice blessed, are ye if ye know the greatness of your calling, whose work makes it impossible that you should forget that suffering, for whom every discovery of a new truth in that organization so fearfully and wonderfully made, is but a step in the relief of some pain before irremediable, the cure of some disease which before seemed desperate. Happy are you, too, whose lives bring you into contact even with the world's rougher work, who take your place, it may be conspicuous or it may be humble, in that great machinery by which the order of society is maintained, and the nation of which we are members carried on to its appointed task. Through the experience of life, through intercourse with many men, through noting the evil that follows on sloth, fraud, cowardice, dishonesty, you too may learn from that Wisdom who lifts up her voice in the gates, in the high places of the city. Listening to that, the way is open to you to the yet higher teaching of the Eternal Word. You too may do your work in life, and see it prosper in your hands, and yet live with minds fashioned after the mind of Christ. Even in the midst of all the work of the statesman, or the merchant, or the soldier, you need not, if that mind be in you, be careful or

troubled about many things ; but, remembering that one thing is needful, may seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness : and then the work itself, whether it be that of those who handle the pen of the writer, or bring the stone, and the wood, and the iron to an excellent work, will be done all the better and more truly.

(3.) Others there are who have been called to be students of a yet nobler Wisdom, doers of a yet nobler work. To be seekers after the will of the Eternal Word precisely where He has revealed Himself in the fulness of His Love ; to trace the workings of that Love, not merely in the order of material things or the bounty shown in lower forms of life, but in the spirit and the heart of man ; to be brought into contact not with the things that are seen and are temporal, but with those that are not seen and are eternal,—this would in itself be wonderful and glorious. But to be more than this ; to go forth with healing, not for the diseases of the body, but for the deeper, seemingly ineradicable diseases of the soul ; to bring others, poor, ignorant, wanderers, to that Wisdom by *whom* (I cannot now say by *which*) you have yourselves been taught ;—this is the stewardship with which many of you have been intrusted. Take heed to that trust. Having the higher work, do not sink below the level of the

lower. Do not let the student of science or the man of secular activity surpass you in honesty of purpose, or diligence in working, or calmness of judgment, or sympathy with all men, or patience under difficulties, or courtesy and forbearance. To shine as lights in the world,—that is the calling of Christians in the world at large, of the clergy among other Christians. How fatal will it be for any church or nation if the Light itself should become darkness, if men should look for the spirit that seeks for Wisdom, and find only that which cleaves to the traditions of the elders; if they should look for steadfastness to the Truth once delivered to the saints, and find only panic, bitterness, agitation on the one side, doubt, denial, indifference on the other!

(4.) The identity of the Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs with the Word made flesh, tells us of yet another path to win that treasure which is far above rubies. *Via crucis, via lucis*. Not by keenness of eye and power of thought, and high-soaring intellect and wide experience, but in solitude and suffering, in weariness and distress, stretched on the bed of pain, lying hopeless and helpless in the wards of an hospital, men and women and little children may be making their way onwards to that Eternal Truth. The words mean something more than that suffering shall meet with its reward, first

the cross, and then the crown of glory ; they tell us that those who follow the footsteps of their Master on that *via dolorosa*, treading the flinty pathway with bleeding feet, are really, though the darkness gathers thickly round them as it gathered around Him, on a way of light. Old truths become clearer, errors fall away, tested by that experience which is (in another sense than the familiar one) in very deed crucial ; things indifferent, about which men wrangle and debate, take their proper place, and the soul comes into ever closer communion with Him who, tempted as we are tempted, suffering as we suffer, can save to the uttermost those who bear the cross which once He bore.

(5.) But the old familiar words have yet another aspect. They are not less true when we transpose the order. *Via lucis, via crucis*. The path that leads to Light and Truth and Wisdom is no path of pleasantness and ease. For it too there may be shame and ignominy and reproach. Of those who tread it men may say, as they did of Him who was at once the Truth and the Way, 'We hid, as it were, our faces from them ; they were despised, and we esteemed them not.'¹ Steadfastness in maintaining old truths may incur the reproach of bigotry and narrowness. New

¹ Isa. liii. 3.

insight into the relations of truth, new interpretations of the facts of science, or of the words of Scripture, may lead to suspicion and distrust. Well, be it so! 'The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.' Those who follow Him as witnesses to the Truth, may well be contented to bear His reproach. In the end they may be sure that Wisdom shall be justified of all her children; of those who stand upon the old paths in meekness and in faith; of those who press on whither those paths have always pointed, to 'fresh fields, and pastures new;' of those whose hope and aspiration it is to bring 'forth out of their treasures things new and old.'¹

I may not end, brethren, without one word on the occasion of our meeting. What I have said has been, I trust, in harmony with the thoughts which this goodly structure and new beauty of proportion are fitted to produce, with the memories of the past and the hopes for the future which inevitably gather round it. It is well for us at least to remember that the great teacher of Wisdom was also the encourager of Art; that he consecrated both, in his yet unfallen days, to the honour and glory of his God. The Wisdom of Solomon would have been one-sided and inconsistent with itself if the Temple of Solomon had not risen, with

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

its goodly stones and cunning work of the graver, and golden sanctuary, to win the wonder of the nations; if the timbrel and the psalter, the cymbals and the harp, the voices of priests and Levites, had not filled its courts with their songs and hallelujahs. Our wisdom was stinted and incomplete, our work partial and inconsistent, so long as we were content to have no worthy fabric as the outward symbol of our reverence and love, and neglected the power of beauty and melody in the education of men's spirits. You, brethren, by your presence here to-day, attest that you rejoice in the work which leads us nearer to completeness. It is yours to give proof of your thankfulness for a not unfruitful past, to contribute, under God's blessing, to the harvest of a more abundant future.

XI.

THE SOCIAL ETHICS OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

'The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel : to know wisdom and instruction ; to perceive the words of understanding ; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity ; to give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.'—PROV. I. 1-4.

IT has sometimes been said, in disparagement of the book which opens with these words, that it stands on a lower level than that of inspired wisdom, that its counsels are such as might grow out of a merely human experience. Its morality is prudential only, we are told, pointing to success and failure as the object respectively of our hopes and fears. It weighs human actions, not in the balances of the sanctuary, but in those of the market-place. It depicts human foibles, the incidents of social life, in vivid colours, sometimes with the sharp irony of the satirist. Its precepts remind us of the maxims of other moralists of other nations. We find echoes of them in Theognis, or Seneca, or Chesterfield, or Rochefoucauld.

How false this is as a representation of the teaching of the book as a whole, I need hardly, I think, point out to you. The very words which stand as the motto on its title-page—

‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,’¹

tell us that the foundations of its ethics are laid deep and strong. The revelation of the personal Wisdom as ‘one brought up with Jehovah,’ yet claiming closest fellowship with man,² shows that it mounts up to the highest heaven of Theology. But our answer to the taunt need not be confined to this denial. We may rejoice and give thanks that prudence and counsel, no less than prophecy and psalm, come from the inspiration of the Most High ; that the things of common life, no less than the great truths of the Life Eternal, are brought into the revelation of His will. Very various is that wisdom,³ varied as are the hues of the bow in the cloud, or the gems that shone upon the high priest’s breastplate, but the Divine Light is manifested as the same throughout. ‘There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.’⁴ To the writers of the Books of the Bible also, to prophet, psalmist, historian, moralist, He ‘divideth to every man severally as He will,’⁵ and each spake or wrote

¹ Prov. i. 7.

² Prov. viii. 30.

³ The *πολυποίκιλος σοφία* of the apostle.—Eph. iii. 10.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 4.

⁵ 1 Cor. xii. 17.

according to the measure of the gifts within him, and the truth which God revealed to him. It is good for us to remember that practical sagacity and common sense, the study of human nature, the facts of human society, enter into the education which God appoints for us. The books which bring them before us have, as it were, their representative in Holy Scripture. If the Book of Proverbs was meant to be, as there seems reason to believe, pre-eminently an educational book for the youth of Israel, it bears witness that a like teaching ought not to be excluded now. Not science, or history, or literature alone, not theology as controversial, speculative, devotional alone, but guidance for daily life, 'a right judgment in all things,' a chart for those who are starting on the voyage of life, noting the rocks, shoals, quicksands, whirlpools, where others have made shipwreck ; this is what we want, and this the Book of Proverbs gives us.

It might seem, at first, as if no precepts of this kind drawn from the experience of a social state most unlike our own could be of much service to us. We are tempted to turn from 'the proverbs of the ancients' to the counsels, prudent and far-seeing, of those who have known the modern world as it actually is. Yet here, also, the objection, uttered or unuttered, is not hard to answer.

Much that is true of man at any time is true at all times. Passions and appetites, powers to think and act, the conscience that rebukes, the selfishness that drags down,—these are the same everywhere. Everywhere, also, the broad outlines of society are the same. There are rich and poor, rulers and their subjects, the idle and the diligent, the cowardly and the brave, some striving to rise, some struggling in vain against a fall. The drama of life may vary in its scenery and equipments; but the characters and the issues, the passions and the actions, are the same in every stage. Even in what is special in the book, there are more points of contact than might be at first imagined. It gives us not merely the older sayings, the ‘words of the wise,’ which might have embodied the experience of a nomadic or agricultural people, but those of a more advanced civilisation. The social progress under David and Solomon had made men acquainted with commerce, art, luxury, and was exposing them, therefore, to new temptations. The counsels of the Teacher look forwards rather than backwards. With but little change of outward circumstance, they are true even now. Their inner, substantial truth can never become obsolete. You will judge, brothers and friends, by your own experience, whether it be so:

I. Take (1.) even that which seems the strongest

fact on the other side. The first great danger against which the young man is warned, on his entrance upon life, is that of wild, lawless robbery. The band of brigands, such as gathered round Jephthah in Gilead, or David in Adullam, such as exulted in their piracy in the early days of Greece, such as became the heroes of our ballads under Robin Hood, invite the rash, adventurous boy to join them. They appeal to his love of companionship, and offer him a common peril and a common profit :—

‘ We shall find all precious substance,
We shall fill our houses with spoil ;
Cast in thy lot among us,
Let us all have one purse.’¹

They invite him to join them in lurking privily against the man whom they tauntingly describe as ‘ the innocent without cause,’ one (we might render the words) who is ‘ *righteous for nothing,*’ whose innocence is a bad bargain.² That special form of danger may have passed away ; but we know that the whisper of the Tempter has hardly changed even by a single note. Still he leads men captive, at once by their covetousness and their weakness. They make haste to be rich, and companions point out the way, quicker as it seems, and easier than that of honest industry. The

¹ Prov. i. 13, 14.

² Prov. i. 11.

fraudulent account, the till tampered with, the cheque forged, the schemes which the more initiated suggest for enticing one who is fresh, raw, inexperienced, into games in which he is sure to be cheated, and bets which he is sure to lose ;— these have entrapped hundreds who once stood as open-hearted and well-meaning as you stand now ; and what are they but reproductions of that one pervading selfishness which is ‘ a root,’ though not *the* root ‘ of all evil ’?¹ Now, as of old, ‘ the net is spread in vain in the eyes of any bird ’²—now, as of old, the great net of God’s righteous order will take the evil-doers in their own snare.

(2.) And so, also, of that which we have come to speak of as pre-eminently the sin of great cities, the evil which spreads over and corrupts every form of civilized society. Vivid as the picture was of what was seen in Jerusalem, ‘ in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night,’³ it might almost seem to have been photographed from the streets of London. Still the ‘ young man, void of understanding,’⁴ tempted to forbidden scenes, or led by a wandering imagination, idle, unoccupied, unguarded, finds himself entrapped, deceived, victimized. His heart and conscience are defiled. The sweet sleep of a soul that rests in purity and

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 10.

² Prov. i. 17.

³ Prov. vii. 9.

⁴ Prov. vii. 7.

trusts in God is gone, and no poppies or mandragora can restore it. Still, as of old, the harlot's house, and all other chambers of unclean imagery,¹ are as '*the way to Hades*.'² 'The dead are there ;'³ for they have wasted, and vilely cast away, the true

¹ These words are familiar enough as applied to the thoughts, tainted and impure, that defile the sanctuary of the heart. I have had in view a more open and conspicuous evil, and, revolting as the subject is, it is time, I believe, to speak of it.

During the last seven or eight years, exhibitions of a peculiar kind have thrust themselves with a new prominence upon our great thoroughfares, under the title of Museums of Anatomy, and lectures are given in them. They are connected with no medical schools, and are in the hands of private speculators in vice. Under the thin disguise of science, handbills, lectures, and catalogues supply whatever can minister to puerility, or induce depravity of mind. Touters stand at the door inviting boys and young men to enter, sometimes on payment of a shilling, sometimes free.

I may not speak here of the further stages of the evil, how weakness passes into baseness, and baseness into fear, how that fear makes him who is under it the slave of the unscrupulous tormentor who has him in his power. Those who have had much to do with the education of young men know how fatal it is to all excellence.

Difficult as it is to legislate against vice as distinct from crime, there are limits which it ought not to pass with impunity ; and the limits are passed when it forces itself into undue publicity, and becomes an offence against public decency, as well as against good morals. That point has been more than reached in this instance, and the magnitude of the evil calls for some repression. Existing laws seem powerless to touch it. Is a new restraint impossible ?

One such restraint seems feasible enough. Might not *all* exhibitions be brought, as music and dancing-rooms are now, under a licensing system, subject to the control either of Magistrates or the Home Office ? Under such a *régime*, evidence of the demoralizing character of the exhibition itself, or the lectures or printed matter connected with it, might lead to the refusal of the license.

I have thought it right to say thus much to call attention to the evil. I leave it to others who have the power to deal with it. There are not wanting men in either House of Parliament who have shown that they do not flinch from duty, however repulsive may be the task to which it calls them.

² Prov. vii. 27.

³ Prov. ix. 18.

life of their souls. 'Her guests' are in the depths of that hell, the torment of inward fears and conscious baseness, which is prepared even now for the impure in heart.

(3.) Or take another fault, which you all know to be common enough—so common that we hardly think of it as a vice, though your presence here to-night bears witness that you have striven to overcome it. Indolence, procrastination, the temper which shrinks from exertion, and makes excuses for minimizing its work, which cannot 'rise early' or 'late take rest,' or 'eat the bread of carefulness'—where can we find that portrayed, in all its lineaments, as with the pencil of a master artist, in more vivid colours than here?—

'I went by the field of the slothful,
And by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;
And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
And nettles had covered the face thereof,
And the stone wall thereof was broken down.
Then I saw and considered it well:
I looked upon it, and received instruction.
Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the
hands to sleep:
So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth (as the
prowling, wandering robber);
And thy want as an armed man' (as the cruel, ruthless
invader).¹

The picture is true and living enough in its

¹ Prov. xxiv. 30-34.

literal meaning. But it is also a parable, and the interpretation thereof lies near at hand. The Teacher speaks of another field and another vineyard than that which men's eyes behold. Of the soul of the slothful, which the Lord God has given him to dress it and to keep it, it is all too true that—

‘ ’Tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.’

(4.) Other characteristics of the same temper are not passed over. Indolence leads, strange as it may seem—a very paradox of psychology—to self-sufficiency. The man, with startling self-deception, wraps himself round in the fancied genius which can succeed without the slow routine of industry, or the imaginary knowledge of the world which sets its own judgment against reason, thought, experience. ‘We don’t want theorists and *doctrinaires*. What good will science or Greek do in the counting-house? Why should we educate women above their household functions, or the working classes above their daily toil, or make knowledge and capacity a condition of employment? Why should we give up the ways of our fathers, and enter on new courses, and adopt new inventions?’ Such are the questions in which we hear, till we are weary, the iterations of a

self-satisfied prejudice that has indolence for its root :—

‘The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit
Than seven men that can render a reason.’¹

Or, again, indolence is twin-brother to cowardice. It evades pressing duties on the plea of imaginary or remote dangers ; will not go forth to encounter actual evils because it is easier to leave things as they are ; raises evermore, in home-life, or business-life, in the study of science or its application, in policy of State or Church, the cry of a timid, distrustful, *laissez-faire* policy :—

‘The slothful man saith, There is a lion without,’

in the ‘wide open country,’ and therefore he is afraid lest he should be slain even in the ‘streets’ of the city.²

(5.) Not the less, however, does the Teacher warn us, on the other side, against the danger of the restlessness which sometimes takes the place of a true activity ; against the haste in innovation, which is the worst enemy of a true progress. If the words which warn us not to ‘meddle with those who are given to change’³ were true, in the first instance, of rebellions like those of Absalom, conspiracies which are simply dynastic, usurpations (like those of which the history of the Ten

¹ Prov. xxvi. 16.

² Prov. xxii. 13.

³ Prov. xxiv. 21.

Tribes presents so many instances), by a successful general of the throne of a feeble ruler, the words are still applicable to all who forsake the broad open way of political reformation for the bypaths of conspiracy and intrigue.

But the Teacher, even from his own point of view, lends no countenance to those who would find in his words a plea for the maintenance of an unrighteous and oppressive rule. The strongest and most vehement words in the whole book are against the tendency of a dominant class to make themselves richer and more powerful at the cost of others, 'adding house to house and field to field,' regardless of right or mercy. We lose sight of the meaning of a divine counsel when we quote the words about 'removing the ancient landmarks,' as a trite apology for 'the retention of a froward custom,' simply on the ground of its antiquity. Wherever the precept occurs, or the thing is spoken of,¹ the context shows that what is aimed at is the spirit of a grasping monopoly, whether feudal or commercial, trampling on the rights, the inheritance, the wellbeing of the poor :

'Remove not the ancient landmarks ;
And enter not into the fields of the fatherless :
For their Redeemer is mighty :
He shall plead their cause with thee.'²

¹ Deut. xix. 4, 7 ; xxvii. ; Job xxiv. 2. ² Prov. xxiii. 10, 11.

As against political or social change as such, it is simply irrelevant to quote it. Where it is set up as an apology for a long-standing abuse of right, we absolutely pervert it, and build up the things which it destroys.

(6.) Commerce, again, as the book shows throughout, was bringing men into contact with new facilities of intercourse, and therefore with new dangers. New modes of reckoning, new measurements of quantity and size, came in from foreign nations, as perplexing as a decimal coinage or a metric notation would be to our own people, and were therefore easily abused to purposes of fraud. The young disciple in the school of Wisdom had to be impressed with the truth that

‘Divers weights and divers measures,—
Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.’¹

Then, too, as in later times, there rose side by side with a system of credit that was natural and legitimate, one that was faulty and destructive. Luxury tempted men to extravagance, and extravagance to borrowing; and men needed, as they started in life, to be reminded of the ceaseless humiliation which the habit brought with it.

‘The borrower is servant to the lender.’²

Still more fatal then, as now, was the thought-

¹ Prov. xx. 10.

² Prov. xxii. 7.

less acceptance of another man's indebtedness. The system of 'suretiship' which the Phœnicians apparently were the first to introduce, and which has left its traces in most European languages, both ancient and modern,¹ had its good side as an enlargement of the principle of credit, without which commerce is impossible ; but it also tempted men, especially young men, to recklessness by its fatal facility. It was but to say the word, or to give the hand, and the hasty imprudence, or the mere weakness which shrinks from refusing, might saddle the unwary with a life-long embarrassment.

'Be not thou one of them that strike hands,
Or of those that are sureties for debts.'²
'My son, if thou be surety for thy friend,
If thou hast stricken hands with a stranger,
Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth,
Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

¹ The history of the word is interesting enough. The 'pledge' which Judah gives to Tamar (Gen. xxxviii. 17), which David takes from his brethren (1 Sam. xvii. 18) is the *Arrhabôn*, or *Arrhoobbak*, that which is given or mortgaged as security. The 'surety' and 'suretiship' of the Proverbs give us the same root. Carried by the Phœnicians to the countries visited by their western commerce, it passed into the language of Greek orators. The apostle of the Gentiles, familiar with the speech of great commercial cities like Corinth and Ephesus, uses it to express the truth that all spiritual gifts are but the 'earnest' of a future glory, not the glory itself (2 Cor. i. 22 ; v. 5 ; Eph. i. 14). Passing westward, we find it, as we might expect, in Carthage, and passing from Carthage into Italy, in the comedies of Plautus. Like many other words, it became clipped and curtailed in use, and appeared in Roman law as the '*arra*,' the pledge of a betrothal, the ratification of a contract. From this the descent was easy. The '*arrhes*' which the postmaster in France or Switzerland demands or gives, on engaging to supply a carriage or a horse, are a lineal representative of the *Arrhabôn* of the commerce of the patriarchs.

² Prov. xxii. 6.

Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,
When thou hast come into the power of thy friend,
Go, *bestir thyself, press hotly on thy friend,*
Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids ;
Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter,
And as a bird from the hand of the fowler.¹

In some way or other, by persuasion, entreaty, remonstrance, he is to seek to be released if possible from his perilous engagement.

II. Such are some of the points of contact which the teaching of this book presents with the facts of our daily experience. You who hear me will judge whether they belong altogether to a different form of society from our own, whether they reflect the morality and the manners of an age from which we are divided as by an impassable gulf. Having seen that the perils of life were essentially the same, you will be able, I believe, to recognise also the identity of the excellence presented to the youth of Israel and the youth of Christendom for their admiration. That ideal is at once noble and attainable. It does not soar to heights which none can reach. It does not crush the natural impulses of life by the rigour of an overstrained asceticism. It meets men in their homes and in their work, in the market-place and in the council-chamber, and bids them be wise and righteous and blessed there.

¹ Prov. vi. 1-5.

(1.) It is easy enough, for example, to declaim against riches, to point out that they are transient, unsatisfying, delusive. None can assert this more forcibly than the Teacher. 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.'¹ 'Riches certainly make unto themselves wings and fly away.'² Behind the outward show of state and magnificence there may lurk the most miserable disquietude :

'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is
Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.'³

In the absence of the large heart and the open hand, the vulgarity of the *nouveau riche* crops out in a grudging ungenerous spirit even in his costliest banquets :

'Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye,
Neither desire thou his dainty meats :
For as he *reckoneth* in his heart, so is he,
[Counting, *i.e.*, the cost of every morsel],
Eat and drink, saith he to thee ; but his heart is not
with thee.'⁴

But not the less does the Teacher remind us that poverty as such has its dangers also. For the poor who have never known any other lot, for those to whom it has come as an inheritance, he, like all other men who have been taught of God, has nothing but sympathy and courtesy. But the

¹ Prov. xxviii. 20.

² Prov. xxiii. 5.

³ Prov. xv. 17.

⁴ Prov. xxiii. 6, 7.

poverty which is self-caused, into which a man falls by some great transgression, or slides by the slow process of neglect, by the want of common energy or common foresight, this is simply evil. It tempts almost irresistibly to mendacity and mendacity :

‘ All the brethren of the poor do hate him :
How much more do his friends go far from him ?
He pursueth them with words,
And yet they are wanting to him.’ ¹

Rightly and fitly, therefore, does the prayer of the wise of heart go up for the safer, happier lot which lies between the two extremes :

‘ Give me neither poverty nor riches ;
Feed me with food convenient for me ;
Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ?
Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God
in vain.’ ²

(2.) A like healthiness of tone is found in reference to another prevailing form of selfishness, another wide-spreading root of all evil. No words can be stronger, as we have seen, than those with which the writers of this book condemn the sins of lust and license. But here also there is an entire freedom from the falsehood of extremes. The Counsels of the Wise avoid the Manicheism which condemns God’s creatures and God’s ordinances as evil, the false ideal of holiness, which

¹ Prov. xix. 7.

² Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

over one half of Christendom has turned the Christian priesthood into a temptation and a snare. Wine is to many fatal in its fascinations. It 'biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder,'¹ and yet it has its work, remedial and restorative, when mind and body are weary, and labour and sorrow are bewildering brain and spirit with real or imaginary fears :

'Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
And wine unto those that be of heavy heart.'²

So, in like manner, the safeguard of purity of heart is found in the life of home. *There* are to be found fountains that will not fail, rivers of water that will gladden and refresh, a treasure far above riches. In that striking poem with which the book ends,³ and which, alphabetic as its structure is, we might almost call the A B C of wifely excellence, we have the portraiture which the young seeker after a true and noble life was to realize in his own home. Not outward grace alone, for

'Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain :'⁴

Not wealth alone, for

'Many daughters *have gotten riches*, but thou excellest them all :'⁵

¹ Prov. xxiii. 32.

² Prov. xxxi. 6.

³ Prov. xxxi. 10-31.

⁴ Prov. xxxi. 30.

⁵ Prov. xxxi. 29.

but companionship in joy and sorrow, activity and calmness, tact and courtesy, wisdom and the law of kindness—this fills up the picture of a perfect womanhood, just as manhood reaches its perfection in one who has conquered greed and lust and sloth ; who is equable in temper, and upright in heart, and reticent in speech, and firm of purpose, and deliberate in act ; who in buying and selling, giving and receiving, judging of men and things, hates the ‘divers weights’ and the ‘false balance’ which are an abomination to the Lord ; who is not afraid when he stands before mighty men, nor haughty when he comes in contact with the poorest ; who wins the good name which is better than riches, and in due time sits among the elders in the gate.

III. And through all these excellences in man or woman there runs that which is the source and condition of them all, even the fear of the Lord. Not in the pursuit of an ideal excellence, not in climbing to the heights of a self-exalting wisdom, still less in striving after comfort, respectability, happiness, as such, is to be laid the foundation of the perfect life which we are called on to admire. The seekers after such things are not always the finders. The law which bids us to ‘seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,’ is ‘no

new commandment, but that which we have heard from the beginning.' Reverence and awe, when we look out upon the marvels and mysteries of creation, when God 'answers us out of the whirlwind,' and bids us look at the glory of the light, or 'the treasure of the snow,' or 'the sweet influences of Pleiades,' or the wonders of 'Behemoth' and 'Leviathan :' reverence and awe when we look within, and find there, in the innermost sanctuary of our hearts, a darkness that needs to be illumined, a sin that needs to be forgiven ; when we stand as weak before the Almighty, ignorant before the All-wise, polluted before the All-holy ; —this is the beginning of wisdom, this is the condition of excellence, without this man sinks below himself, and that which is base and bestial triumphs over that which is spiritual and noble. Rightly, therefore, does the sharpest condemnation of the Teacher fall, not on the slothful, or the simple, or the covetous, or the impure, but on the 'scorner,' on him who, by his own act, has lost that which is essential to all human excellence, and is, therefore, measured by human possibilities, 'without hope and without God in the world.' The scorn which shows itself in mocking at sin instead of warring with it, in want of reverence for the word of God, written in the scroll of creation, or the tablets of the heart, or the Book of all books ;

in cynicism and contempt for our fellow-men—this is, if any, the root of all evils. Is it, brethren, in our age, in the crisis through which we are passing, with the temptations that encompass us, a distant or imaginary evil? Flee from that as from the fiery dart of the destroyer. In reverence to God find the ground of all self-reverence. By the prayer, which is more than a formal utterance of the lips, which craves for fellowship with the Light, Truth, Righteousness of God, by the praise which finds in hymns, and psalms, and chants, and melodies, not substitutes that beguile the sense, but helps that sustain and purify the spirit, by submission, which is not the resignation of the Moslem to a supreme and sovereign will, but the trust of a child in the love and wisdom of a father ; by these you may cleanse your way. This is the path of the just, which, like the golden dawn of an Eastern summer, 'brightens more and more unto the perfect day.'

IV. Such a life, having this root, bearing such fruits, is noble and honourable at all times. The Wisdom of the Old Testament presented it as the true pattern for man to aim at. The Wisdom of the New Testament does not reject it. I cannot blame you if you set that before your minds as an ideal, if your labours here or elsewhere are directed

to attain it. But we should fall short of the whole counsel of God if we were to stop here. Wisdom manifested in the flesh, the Son of God, who was also the Son of man, has in word and act, by precept and example, disclosed a height and a depth beyond even this excellence. If the wise man asked of old for neither poverty nor riches, He who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, has pronounced, with no reserve or limitation, 'Blessed are the poor.' If a good name is more to be desired than riches, there may be a yet higher glory when, on account of our faithfulness to the Son of man, men 'cast out our name as evil,' and 'say all manner of evil of us falsely.'¹ If 'marriage is honourable in all things,'² yet there be that have renounced even this 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake.'³ The lives of many men seem to be, and perhaps are, exempt from such special tests. They are prosperous and religious, growing in favour with God and man. But if so, it is because even they, good as they are, fall short of 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' If we may not anticipate His call by the will-worship of self-chosen acts of self-denial, we must at least be ready for it when it comes. If we are content to stand on the level of the old law, we must be prepared to follow our Master to the

¹ Matt. v. 11.² Heb. xiii. 4.³ Matt. xix. 12.

greater suffering and greater glory of the new. The words of the Wise must find their completion in the words of the apostle, 'From henceforth it remaineth that they that weep be 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 *using it to the full*: for the fashion of this world passeth away.'¹ Diligence, success, reputation, earthly wisdom, human sorrows and human joys, these pass away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. The things that are seen are temporal—bright and lovely, it may be, to look upon; but we enter within the veil, and are brought face to face with the things that are not seen and are eternal, the Holiness, the Peace, the Righteousness, the Love of God.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.

XII.

DANGERS PAST AND PRESENT.¹

‘ And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?’—
LUKE XXIV. 17.

EASTER words are words of joy, and Easter thoughts should be thoughts of calmness. If that of which Easter bears its witness be a truth, if it have not lost its power to bless, it should bring to us, as it did to those two travellers on the way to Emmaus, a peace and a serenity which the world cannot destroy or take away. They ‘ communed together and reasoned’ of many things; they were weighed down with perplexity and disappointment; they had been disciples of a prophet, servants of a king; they trusted that this had been He that should have redeemed Israel; they had hailed with their exulting Hosannas the approach and the triumph of His kingdom. And now their hopes were dashed to the ground. ‘ The harvest was over, the summer was ended,’ and the redemption had not come. The Teacher who spake as ‘ never man spake,’ who had loved them as

¹ Preached before the University of Oxford on Easter Tuesday, 1862.

never man loved, had died as other prophets had done : should they ever look on Him again ? To whom now could they turn for guidance, comfort, deliverance ?

Those perplexities were removed, the dismay and despondency passed away like the morning cloud, when ' their eyes were opened and they knew Him.' Some stirrings of hope there had been, their ' hearts had burned within' them when, as from a ' stranger,' knowing less and yet more than themselves, they had heard that the sufferings and the death were essential, if the prophets had borne a true witness, to the character and office of the Christ ; but when He was ' known to them in breaking of bread,' when they felt that their communion with Him was truer, deeper, more lasting than it had ever been before, then they knew that He had indeed entered into His glory. The old timidity, waywardness, and sorrow were seen no more. Outward dangers, persecution, suffering, death were no longer terrible, for He had conquered them. They were no longer anxious and desponding about the issues of the work to which He had called them, no longer fearful lest it should perish, even though the powers of earth and of hell were leagued against it. Christ had risen, and in that belief they stood firm. In His hand were the ' keys of Hades and

of death.' In the great earthquakes which were coming on the earth, convulsions physical, spiritual, political, though all things else were shaken, the kingdom which He had received, into which He had called them, was 'a kingdom that could not be moved.'

So it was then. Ought it not to be so now? If that Death on which we have dwelt during the past week were other than the 'common death of all men,'—if that Resurrection in which we are now rejoicing were verily and indeed an actual fact in the world's history, and not the phantom-shadow in which men embodied their hopes of a victory over the grave and death, should not the thought of them raise us too out of dark forebodings, and vexing thoughts, and haunting fears? Is it not a time to rise, year by year, to 'newness of life,' out of the worldliness, or the bitterness, or the agitation, or the sloth which may have characterized us as the months came and went? Does not even nature itself teach us, with no discordant voice, a wisdom of the same kind? The 'lessons sweet of spring returning,'—the witness of an order ever fulfilling itself after many seeming delays and disappointments, life springing out of decay and dreariness, the bleak skies and the thick clouds yielding to the bright sun and the breath of the warm west,—all these are, in God's

natural order, blessings we may not ignore, influences which we should not slight. We do well to pass out of the din and stir of cities, out of the strife and bitterness of debate, out of the hot thoughts that throng the solitary chamber, and to yield ourselves, if it may be so, to the wisdom of which the stars in their courses and the birds of heaven and the lilies of the field are the interpreters. The idols of the tribe and the den will not seldom cease to haunt us when the pure 'dry light' of day breaks in upon them.

It would, however, be of little use to ignore what has been harassing and disturbing us. There would be no comfort, no safety, in that self-chosen blindness. What we need is to look at it, if so it may be, with other thoughts, from another point of view. The effort to anticipate that Easter calmness has not been without its fruit for myself. If I venture, at the risk of going once again over a twice-told tale, to speak of the fears, and the divisions, and the perils by which this place, and wellnigh the whole English Church, have been beset during the last six months, it is in the hope that it possibly may not be without its fruit to some who hear now.

I cannot bring myself to deny the reality of the danger. Even if we were disposed to say, as has been said, that men have sometimes looked at it

through the microscope of their fears—that but for the fear it might have passed away as a nine days' wonder, and been forgotten, it must be remembered that these fears have a power which belongs to no optic tube. They give a real increment to the dimensions of the evil which men look at through them. The danger expands not apparently only, but in reality. It becomes great in proportion as men think it great.

What then is the danger? If we are to meet it calmly and wisely, we must look at it steadily, tracing it to its causes, looking on to its results. We must ask not only what course gives most satisfaction to our own feelings, but what is really just, and wise, and safe. We must not let our first impulses exercise an undue power over us, or blind us to our true position. It is right we should guard against the danger which now is nearest. There may be other dangers which men see less clearly, and which for that very reason are, it may be, in spite of their seeming remoteness, the more threatening and portentous.

It forms no part of my present purpose to discuss the opinions of individual writers. It may be proper, in another place and at another time, to dwell on passages which fix on this or that writer the charge of unsoundness in the faith, or of a distinct denial of it. It would, I believe, be alto-

gether unprofitable and unbecoming here. But just as it would have been possible twenty years ago to deal with what was then a real and pressing danger, without fixing on any individual writer in the 'Tracts for the Times,' or on the whole body of writers collectively, the stigma of deliberately Romanizing, so it is possible, I believe, now to ask what have been the influences at work among us of which the volume that has perplexed us all with fear of change has been the fruit and the representative? In what way are those influences likely to work, for evil or for good, upon ourselves or upon the minds of the generation that is to succeed us?

It will be remembered that some at least among us predicted at that time that there would be, sooner or later, a terrible reaction against the system of religious thought which was then in the ascendant. It had in it wellnigh every sign of a premature decay. It was supercilious in its scorn of its immediate predecessors, thankless for the good work which had been accomplished by them. It drew men away from the earnest, searching study of the Divine Word, and led them to the least satisfying school of Commentaries and Catenæ. It gave birth to a ritualism which often became simply æsthetic, which at all times tended to be effeminate. It gave men a rule of faith

which broke down under the test of history. It led them to form an ideal of Church government, and of its relations to a people's life, which was foreign at once to the teaching of the English Church and the feelings of the English nation. Step by step, the keenest, noblest, most earnest among its supporters felt that they were in a false position. They made desperate efforts, not intentionally dishonest or disloyal ones, to prove that the false position was a true one. Then, when all was unavailing, they took their flight. The place thereof knew them no more. We mourned for them as men mourn for a brother or a friend.

Happily—let us thank God for it!—the good as well as the evil which they did lived after them. The seeds were sown which have ripened all over the country into earnest and faithful work. Reverence for the remoter past of the Church's life, the sense of a communion and fellowship with the saints of God in all ages, the belief that the history of the Church of God is a surer witness of a divine purpose than any Apologies for the Bible, that the creeds and prayers of the Church are not older only, but better, than the formularies of modern systems of theology,—all this we owe, in no small measure, to writers, some of whom have left us,—to those perhaps who have left rather than

to those that have remained. Let us hope, seeing that in this also that saying is true, 'One soweth and another reapeth,' that the time may come when, far as they have wandered from us, grievously as they have fallen, it may yet be true that 'he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.'

But so it was that the movement, as men called it, collapsed, and ceased to wield the spell it had once exercised over the minds of the young, the thoughtful, and the bold. Men were weary of a merely patristic theology, weary of rubrical controversies, weary of the endless subtleties which gathered round the two great divinely appointed witnesses of a truth which subtleties can never measure, and which they always tend to intercept. Was there no guidance to be found elsewhere? To what quarter were they to look for it? Some, not a few perhaps, at that crisis were content to look nowhere. Simple scepticism, with or without conformity, the tasks of public life, or of a literature merely secular, were enough for them. Others—let us acknowledge that the course they took, if it were more perilous, was at least nobler—could not find this sufficient. 'We must know the truth,' they said, 'and the truth shall make us free.' They found those who offered themselves as guides at once to truth and freedom. Their first intercourse with writers whose names they had

been taught to look on with suspicion and dismay was as if they had entered on a new region full of light. They found, for the most part, a profound reverence for the ideas of Christianity, and a bold unshrinking hand in dealing with its records. The controversies of past ages, those which had so recently engrossed their own thoughts and those of their companions, seemed to lie far below them, and they looked down on them as men look on the warrings and fightings of an ant-hill, while yet they could still feel the fullest recognition of the work which the Church had done as the civilizer and educator of the nations. All this brought with it a serenity and calmness to which they had before been strangers. Soon there came in an element of disturbance. They found themselves in the midst of jarring and discordant theories as to the records of Christian truth, as to the facts recorded. No two voices were pitched in the same key. It was a hard task to balance the conflicting evidence, a poor thing to be satisfied with a probable result. Was it not a shorter road to ascend one step higher in the world of thought? Might they not live in a region of ideas, apart from facts, independent of any records? Would it not be as well for them, and for other men, to think of that which professed to bear witness of Divine Acts as simply the embodiment of Divine

Thoughts? Did not this process promise to relieve them of other difficulties also which collateral studies brought home with more or less force to the minds of some among them? Physical science led them to think of the exclusion of all arbitrary will from the world of nature, of laws fixed and immutable, binding the stars in their courses, governing the caprices, the acts, the sufferings of mankind. History led them to think of an order stretching through the ages of which it was the exponent. Was it not pleasant to look back from their vantage-ground upon the wide expanse of time, and to assign to each period and to each nation its appointed work, its place in the divine drama? Did not the system which they had adopted help them over difficulties which had seemed before to stand for ever in their way? They need no longer recognise in signs and wonders suspensions of natural laws. They need no longer attribute to the 'Spirit that spake by the prophets' any knowledge of the future above that of human sagacity and discernment. They need no longer think of the history of one people as in any sense special and exceptional. They were able to reconcile the ideas of Christian truth, in which they still found their peace and hope, with the claims of criticism and of science. They had at last found out the formula for bridging over the

great chasm which threatened to divide for ever Theology and Reason. Was it not right that they should give others the benefit of their discovery?

In some such way as this men may have persuaded themselves that what seems to most men so startling and offensive was an act of wisdom and of charity. We need suppose no hostile *animus*, no deliberate conspiracy, no intentional irreverence. We are free to recognise whatever is noble, kindly, genial in their lives or in their writings. Even that which we can least reconcile to our English standard of honesty and truthfulness need not lead us to impute deliberate sophistry. Just as we may see in 'Tract 90' the last utterance of a loyal attachment, endeavouring to reconcile the teaching of the English Church with that which had been assumed as the standard of Christian truth, to prove that her Articles, 'though the offspring of an uncatholic age, were themselves not uncatholic,' so in the most earnest advocate of Ideology we may see a like endeavour to stretch the Articles and the Prayer-book till they at least let in the teaching of Hegel or of Comte; to show that though the offspring of an unphilosophic age, they were themselves not unphilosophical.

But not the less is the attempt at once hazardous and unsuccessful. The arch which spans

the great gulf is like the Al-Sirat bridge which leads to the Paradise of Islam, 'finer than a hair, sharper than the edge of the sword, beset with briars and thorns.' Some few, let us hope, may keep their footing with undizzied brain. Purity of life, the fervent prayer of the righteous, the love which wearies not in well-doing, may sustain them till they find themselves once more, by God's great mercy, on a firmer ground than that which they have chosen for themselves. But for others the journey is full of dangers. The lights are fitful and wavering. Wild gusts sweep round them. Slumber overcomes them. Passion blinds them. Underneath them is the abyss, the darkness of despair and doubt; and if they fall, it may be never to rise again, or to begin their journey once more anew, maimed and bruised, with 'feeble knees' and with weary footsteps. It is surely a fearful thing to stand upon that bridge and to beckon to others, we know not to whom, prepared or unprepared, to follow in our footsteps.

There is, I believe, a two-fold danger here. The attempt may, for a time, succeed. Men may be persuaded that some new formula, at once *καινοφωνία* and *κενοφωνία*, will justify their saying that which they do not and cannot believe. They may pledge themselves to an 'unfeigned' recognition of facts which, for them, are no longer

facts at all. Just as others were, once persuaded that they might, as English clergymen, hold 'all Romish doctrine,' all but the all of Tetzels, so they may convince themselves that they too may teach words to 'palter with a double sense,' and hold all negative theology, all but the all of Strauss. And then there will follow inevitably that which has been *the* evil of the worst ages of the Church. The denial which, spoken out or left to itself, might have been overpowered by the majesty of truth, is intensified and aggravated by concealment. 'The priest turns atheist.' There is in very deed, as in the Latin Church before the Reformation, in the Gallican before the Revolution, a 'godless orthodoxy.' Men go on repeating their creeds and liturgies under Constantine, waiting for the advent of a Julian to set them free; and then when Julian comes, when some great political or spiritual convulsion shakes the strong foundations of the earth, the rotten *simulacrum* of a Church will have no power to maintain itself; it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof.

With a greater number probably, certainly with the nobler and the more generous, the effect will be just the opposite. They will be repelled from the ministry, possibly also from the communion of the Church. They will say, 'If this is the only reconciliation of faith and science, we, for our

parts, do not care to reconcile them. We will not barter our privilege of open speech for any mess of pottage. We will go our own way, and do our own work.' It is, I imagine, notorious enough that this is the thought, uttered or unuttered, of hundreds of our most gifted students. It shows itself in the diminished number of those who give themselves to the Church's ministerial work, in the scantier knowledge, the less developed intellect, the lower social status, of many of those who do appear as candidates. If the alternative be such as that which is set before them, I cannot blame their choice. There is a truer faith in that 'honest doubt' of theirs, than in 'half' or in all the creeds, if the creed is no longer a belief.

But for them too, for the large masses who in age or in knowledge are as they are, there is a trial which they might have been well spared. Consciously or unconsciously, with or without design, those who dreamt that they were leading wandering stragglers to a place of safety have brought the gravest problems of life, the most vexed questions of criticism, before multitudes unprepared to deal with them by any training of the intellect or any discipline of the heart. Doubts which the student meets, grapples with, overcomes, are brought before those who are not

students. They take their place in the gossip of the hour. The arrows are shot at a venture. Who knows what weak brother for whom Christ died may go heavily all his days, with the open wound which there is no balm to heal, and the weapon bearing death still rankling in his heart?

These, brethren, I believe to be pressing and immediate dangers. Do not let us imagine that they are the only ones. These tempests in the spiritual world are like those in the natural. There is here also a law of storms, and there are strange windings and circlings in their course. It does not follow that the quarter from which the wind now blows with greatest violence is that which will be most fatal to the ship. It is not wise to steer as if that wind would last. Just as those who were not engrossed altogether by the passing controversies of the time, foresaw twenty years ago that unbelief was a more real and pressing danger than Romanism, so, it may be, the danger against which we have to guard is not only, or chiefly, that of any rationalistic school of criticism, but something altogether different. The pendulum may have come to the extreme point of its arc of oscillation, and may swing back again with a rapidity that will surprise us. The strange, mysterious power of the Latin Church may once again re-assert its sway over the hearts of men, all

the more because it may be at last disentangled from that which has identified it with tyranny and wrong. Some startling form of wild, frenzied, orgiastic mysticism may present itself to men as the revival of all that has been dead, decayed, corrupt in themselves and in the Church. In any case, there is the hazard, inseparable from all controversies of this kind, that truths may lose well-nigh all their power to bless, because we come to think of them as dogmas that are attacked and must be defended. They become Shibboleths by which we test whether men belong to Ephraim or Manasseh. Men make them the rallying-cry of parties. The ambitious or the vain are tempted to use them as stepping-stones to fame, or power, or popularity. The old alliance of Jehu and Jehonadab, of worldliness half-religious, and fanaticism half-worldly, is reproduced, and men say one to another, 'Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.' And so the truth suffers, and its life dies out. Who does not feel, in spite of all his efforts, that the words 'Inspiration' and 'Atonement' have come to be associated, not with the thoughts of a divine guidance and a divine deliverance, but with views and theories, with suspicions and insinuations?

If these are the perils that beset us, or some at least of the more prominent among them, in what

way are we to meet them? What course of action will be most fruitful in good, least productive of evil, will tend most to raise up the fallen, and to reclaim the wanderers? What will stay the plague, and restore the life of the Church to a normal and healthy activity?

The answer to this question, brethren, affects many different classes of men, and will be different for each one of them. For all we must find, as far as we can find it, our guidance for the future in the experience of the past, in the lessons which God has given to His Church, at once by the teaching of prophets and apostles, and by that history which, to the eye that is opened to see it, presents His wisdom teaching by examples.


1. I cannot doubt that the fathers and rulers of our Church are looking anxiously for that guidance. Upon them, at such a time as this, there lies a responsibility which can lie on no one else, and we may well believe they feel it. Their desire must be, and is, to hand down unimpaired to others the treasure of divine truth which they have themselves received, of which they are the stewards and trustees. How that end may be best attained is of course a very serious question. Shall the errors which seem so dangerous be brought before a constitutional tribunal? Shall there be a solemn trial to decide whether they are compatible or not

with office and administration in the Church? Is there a satisfactory tribunal? Is it likely that the language of Articles and formularies framed with a view to one set of errors will be found applicable to another, which were not then within the horizon of men's vision? If the attempt should be formally a successful one, would it be a real success? Might not this mode of action enlist the sympathies of the young, or of laymen generally, on the side of those they would look on as oppressed, and so multiply the evil! Might it not be better to trust to the moral influence of a judgment re-affirming the truths that are denied, repudiating the theories that would give us phantoms and shadows in their place, asserting, as far as they can assert it, the *animus imponentis* of the Church in the covenant into which she enters with her ministers?

Each of these questions has its own difficulty. We in the lower offices of the Church may well be thankful that it is not our task to answer them. They need all gifts of wisdom, patience, zeal, illumination. Our work should be to pray that those gifts may be bestowed abundantly. We do ill when we thrust ourselves into a province not our own; and, as though our rulers were forgetful or indifferent, urge upon them this course or that, interfering with the calmness of their counsels, impelling them to hasty decisions, or to premature

expressions of opinion, on measures that are not yet decided.

One duty seems, at any rate, clear. It is the special task of those who are over us in the Lord, to see, so far as man can see, that those whom they solemnly ordain to the ministry of the Church are free from unbelief or heresy. They have a right to ascertain whether men will be the preachers of a gospel resting on the revelation of God in Christ, or of a set of notions which they have discovered for themselves ; whether they accept the teaching of the Church as representing that gospel, or are straining every nerve to emancipate themselves, honestly or dishonestly, from its bondage. This may be done : it will be wise and right to do it manfully and without fear. But here also there is the risk of aggravating instead of diminishing the evil. It may be necessary to put questions which will bring out whether a man holds fast the form of sound words, words healthy and simple in their truthfulness, or substitutes for them some morbid imaginations of his own ; but the scrutiny itself may become a morbid and not a healthy process. Questions may be multiplied with an undue keenness for the least savour of the error which we dread, suggesting it to minds that would otherwise have barely dreamt of it, putting the spirit of the man, in the most solemn moments of



his life, into an attitude of antagonism, transforming what should be the inquiry of a father into the subtle questioning of a prosecutor. It may be hoped, however dangerous may be the opinions which now disturb us, that we shall have no such interrogations as those which, in the memory of our fathers, were directed by Bishop Marsh of Peterborough against Calvinism, or those which in our own originated the Gorham controversy.

2. For us who are in the humbler offices of the Church the task may seem a simpler one. Our path, we may say, is clear. It is beyond all question our duty to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.' It is as undoubtedly our duty 'to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word.' I do not believe that we can too often meditate on those words, or too earnestly act on them. If we thought more of what they really mean, we might perhaps come to take a fuller measure of the task which they impose on us. To 'banish and drive away ;'—that perhaps may require something else than the cry of indignation or alarm which leaves the evil, *unbanished* and *undriven*, still present in the midst of us. We have not fulfilled our duty, or freed our souls, when we have attached our signatures to a protest. The work requires patience, and calmness, and faith. Deliberately

to look round us on those over whose souls we are set to watch, and for whom we must render an account ; to see how we may best protect *them* against ignorance and unbelief, how best build *them* up, teaching them to 'add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge ;' to do that work as God shall give us strength, and, if the danger show itself there, to be true still to our priestly character, sympathizing, interceding, pleading, standing between the living and the dead till the plague be stayed ;—this, and much more than this, is what we must aim at and accomplish, if we would be faithful to our ordination vows. We want, for the good of the souls committed to us, individual rather than multitudinous action. We need to judge each case by itself, 'having compassion' on some, 'saving others with fear,' considering ourselves also, lest we too should be tempted and should fall. If we would escape the guilt of the hireling shepherd, we must not only stand at our post when we see the wolf coming, but must watch over the few sheep in the wilderness, and go forth to reclaim those who wander on the dark mountains.

But there is another risk to which we are, I believe, at this time exposed. We are 'impatient, and for precipitating things.' The normal action of the Church seems to us slow and unsatisfying,

and we seek to hasten it by measures which, in civil cases, statesmen and laymen, and we ourselves, should condemn as revolutionary, and therefore hazardous. Our multiplied facilities of communication tempt us to modes of action which are combined without being corporate. We tend more and more to set aside the old order for the new, and to give an undue preponderance to the influence of associations, alliances, committees. We invite men to join in a condemnation on the insufficient evidence of extracts, and so tempt them, through eager zeal, or indolent conformity, or fear of suspicion, to that which, however true the sentence may be in itself, is for them nothing less than an act of judicial dishonesty. We accustom them to put their names with a perilous facility to documents so carelessly or ambiguously worded that their real meaning is now, or may become hereafter, matter of dispute. We urge, in a cause still pending, upon those who may have to judge it, the duty of condemnation. We seek to elicit beforehand from the judge what manner of sentence he is prepared to give. It may well be questioned whether the evil of this procedure is not greater than the good. Sooner or later we shall find that we have been setting a very fatal precedent. At present the danger may seem to warrant any steps that are likely to counteract it.

The evil may seem but small — only a slight departure from what is constitutional and just ; there may be the sanction of a great multitude of names that we honour and revere to defend us, but the true sons of the English Church, faithful at once to her teaching, her spirit, and her constitution, will have felt, I believe, that they must hold aloof, that they may not follow a multitude to do even that evil.

There is, I believe, yet another danger. All times of controversy tempt us to give an undue value to the polemical side of Christian teaching. We substitute the negation of a denial for the assertion of a truth. We think that the further we go from any form of error the nearer we approach to the truth we are seeking to defend. We lose our power of appreciating the truths which a false system has corrupted or overlaid. As men erred in the warfare against Rome by forsaking the 'middle way' in which they would have found their safety, so it is possible they may err here. The danger which we apprehend comes from a teaching which exalts, or seems to exalt, man's reason and conscience to a throne in the heavenly places, to trust to their illuminations and intuitions as though men needed no other revelation. Men claim, or seem to claim, for the eye of the individual soul, which may be weakened or diseased, the


right to make its own perceptions the measure by which to judge of the Divine government of the universe. We may be tempted to seek safety in denying that there is any eye at all, that there is any light for it to look upon. We may plunge, even in Butler's name, into a scepticism at which Butler would have shuddered, trusting only that our scepticism will prove conservative and not destructive. We meet with haziness and indistinctness, and we may seek to counteract it by a logical precision for which neither Scripture nor the teaching of the Church gives any sanction. We are startled at the bold language of a boastful criticism, wanting in reverence, exulting in attack, making havoc of what men hold sacred with an eagerness approaching to ferocity, and we may fall back upon modes of study which keep us ever on the outside of Scripture, or hinder us from gaining any true perception of the unity of each separate book, of the deeper and wider unity which binds all the books together and makes them *the* divine instrument for the education of mankind. It is no slight evil, even if it be a necessary one, that we should be driven back once more upon a time of evidences, and answers, and apologies, and abandon that work of interpretation for which this age of ours has received special gifts, and which appeared to be its appointed task. It is an evil

thing to interrupt the progress of that true development of Christian doctrine which unites 'things new and old,' not forsaking the old, not despising the new, carried on, as the great master-mind among the defenders of our faith has taught us, 'by the progress of learning and of liberty,' by our 'comparing and pursuing intimations scattered up and down' the Divine Word, which others for the most part disregard, 'tracing out thoughts which come into our minds by chance.' Let us hope that the experience of the last century will guard us against a mistake so fatal. Let us seek, each one of us, to be more diligent, truthful students of the letter ; more earnest in our prayers for illumination, that we may feel to our inmost souls the pervading presence of the Spirit and the Life. In that study also, while we welcome all true guidance, let us call no man master, and let the cry of our hearts ever be to the true Master, Teacher, Rabbi, that He will lead us on, that His Spirit may guide us into all the truth. Let us remember that to set forth the truth in all its richness and variety, to manifest its power in all sympathy, patience, holiness, is to counteract error in the best and noblest way. Other weapons may fail us. Subtlety, and eloquence, and zeal may be like broken reeds that go into the hand and pierce it ; but with these we need not fear, for they belong to the armory of light.

3. I cannot speak of that work without thinking of that large class to whom, here or elsewhere, it belongs as their special calling. It is for them, for the young minds full of eagerness and hope, of rapid questionings, of high endeavours, brought into contact with new doubts and difficulties, tempted to speak them out more boldly than their teachers, to push them more logically to conclusions, that we must feel at once most sympathy and most fear. One who takes part on either side in any great controversy, without bearing them and their wants in mind, is *ipso facto* unfitted for his work. It is on them, above all, that all we say or do tells for evil or good. In them are being fashioned the thoughts and purposes which will determine the character of their own lives, in no small measure the character of the Church and nation in the age that lies before us. I know nothing more really awful in its solemnity (common and familiar as use may make it) than to look out upon any large gathering of young men, to scan the fresh, pliant features on which the characters of good and evil are already beginning to be marked, feeling that in those whom we see before us are they that shall enter into our labours, to complete them or to destroy them,—minds that may press forward into truth or wander in the labyrinths of error,—souls for whom Christ died,

—heirs of the eternal kingdom, who may yet count themselves unworthy of that great deliverance, and make shipwreck of their hopes and of their faith. At such a time the words come across us with a new power: 'It must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh.' Not only for the darker forms of evil that stain the bright promise of the morning of their lives with lawlessness, or impurity, or falsehood, or greed of gain, but for those also which expose them to the assaults of these by stripping them of the safeguards which they need, is that warning given us. 'It is not the will of our Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.' It is against His will that they should be sent forth to the great warfare of life with weapons which they have not proved, with the trumpet giving them an uncertain sound.

To protect them, to give them the counsels which they need, is among the noblest tasks to which any man, however high his office in the Church, can possibly devote himself. Its chief pastors are never more true to their fatherly character, never more worthy of all reverence and sympathy, than when they give themselves to that high enterprise. Those of us who are brought into contact with minds that are thus every day growing into something new, called to be their



teachers, may well tremble at the greatness of the charge committed to us. There is no greater joy to such an one than to see that 'his children walk in truth.' There is no greater sorrow than to see the young soldier of Christ falter in his duty, ashamed of the cross, no longer fighting manfully; no greater bitterness than to remember one who began well and who then failed, to trace in the cynicism or scorn of his manhood the marred and distorted likeness of his open and trustful youth, and to think that the failure was due to any words or acts of ours. It would be natural that we should seek to screen such as these from all attacks, to shelter them so that not even the winds of heaven should visit them too keenly, to implant in them an instinctive hatred and abhorrence of every form of unbelief or doubt. It might seem to us the safest and truest counsel to say to the young questioners, 'Put away the questions from you. Crush them as you would crush the brood of the viper or the eggs of the cockatrice. Deal with them as simply sinful. Banish the doubt or the difficulty as you would banish an impure or a murderous thought.'


Most of us, I imagine, have known times when we should have been disposed to use this language. Many of us have, perhaps, learned by experience how ill an education based upon the principle it

implies is likely to succeed. How much better, even for those whose wellbeing is dear to us as that of a brother or a son, would it be to speak with more faith, and therefore with greater courage. The counsel which we thus give for the most part fails of its purpose. It stimulates rather than checks the bold questioning spirit, the honest conviction, which is the gift and the strength of opening manhood, that it is its business to follow after truth. If it succeeds, the remedy proves, not unfrequently, to be almost worse than the disease. It leads to the formation of a character in which the love of truth and the spirit that seeks to know it are utterly extinguished ; accepting opinions on authority, defending them with zeal ; safe, perhaps, from some of the world's dangers, aiming at personal holiness, but impotent to guide the minds of others, lagging behind the age, taking refuge ultimately in the traditions of a remoter past and an authority with more boastful claims. Much rather, I believe, the true counsel to give to those who are growing up in the midst of these disputes and doubts is, that they should deal with things as they are, fighting with all their strength against moral evils, looking on intellectual difficulties as simply intellectual. One might say, with no accent even of the voice of an alien system, with no abandonment of what belongs to us as Protestants and as

Englishmen, to one who was contending with these difficulties,—If your work as a student has taught you anything, it must have taught you this, that you cannot grasp all subjects and solve all problems at once. Questions present themselves at every stage which you reserve for a later examination. The orderly course of education is, that you should begin by taking much on trust, in the earlier stages of your life with a simple and unquestioning trust. It is well when that course is not prematurely interrupted ; when the mind gains strength, and wisdom, and experience, before the problems of its own life and of the universe, the great questions of theology and ethics, are brought before it. But if the interruption has come, it is at least wise to keep your judgment in suspense. If the subject be one in which the hope and faith of thousands are involved, which affects your own highest life, which is surrounded with all your most sacred and cherished associations, the suspense should at least be one of reverential silence. You cannot enter on wide, far-reaching questions without detriment to your proper work, without abandoning your true position. It is unscientific and unscholarlike to enter on them hastily and superficially. It is immoral (as all hasty and superficial judgments are immoral) to pass a judgment and to take a side on imperfect and one-sided evidence ;

to imagine that you are asserting your freedom when you are simply substituting one authority for another, being alike incompetent to measure the claims of either. There is a yet worse immorality in approaching the inquiry with a mind already biased, welcoming objections, impatient of the restraints of a Divine order, 'kicking against the pricks' of conscience, speculating flippantly on questions on which hang the issues of life, reckless, and prayerless, and faithless. Darker and drearier still, if that be possible, is their state who, because their deeds are evil, choose the blackness of darkness rather than the light that maketh manifest, at once profligate and sceptical, unbelieving because they are impure. Of such men it is fearfully true that if saved at all they are 'saved so as by fire.'

But for you who have chosen the better part, whose heart is yet pure and whose life unstained, who press on eagerly in the hope of larger thoughts and wider knowledge, there is, I believe, good ground for hope in the midst even of our anxiety and fears. A straight and even pathway lies before you. All teachers who have any claim on your reverence and affection would, on one point, give you the same counsel. There are words to which they all bow as the divinest, holiest, wisest which were ever spoken. There is a life which manifested, as no other life ever manifested, the will



and character of God. There is a death which was at once the noblest martyrdom and the most perfect sacrifice, the life given as a 'ransom for many,' the satisfaction of the Divine love, craving for a love and holiness in man answering to its own. The records of that life are at once the grounds of all your faith, the pattern of all holiness, the starting-point of all theology. To read them with the heart of a little child, even though it be with the thoughts of advancing manhood; thus to retire each day for a while from the stir and business, the fever and frivolity of life, into the presence of the Holiest; thus to be His disciples now, and to feel that His words have a power to educate now, as they had a power to educate of old, this cannot but be right, cannot but be full of blessing. The more deeply, truly, thoroughly you give yourselves to that study, the more, I am persuaded, will the conviction force itself upon you that it brings you into contact, not with ideas only, however noble, but with living men and with divine acts. You will feel that the resurrection was the true, the necessary completion of that life. Your hearts, also, like those of the two who journeyed to Emmaus, will 'burn within you,' and the fire that is kindled there will burn up what is false and base in you, and purify what is noble and precious. If there are times when

you too are 'slow of heart to believe,' when, as you commune one with another, you 'walk and are sad,' because doubt, sorrow, disappointment press heavily upon you, doubt not, but earnestly believe that even then He, the Divine Friend, is with you also as He was with them. He will open your understandings also that you may 'understand the Scriptures.' To you, also, if you continue His disciples, and love Him, and keep His great commandment, He will make Himself known in 'breaking of bread.'

XIII.

THE EDUCATION OF THE CLERGY.

‘The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.’

MAL. II. 7.

THE words of Malachi have in one respect a special interest and significance, shared by no other words, not even by those of the greatest of prophets. He was the last of that goodly company. The age of scribes was succeeding to the age of prophets. The work which had gone on for centuries, the Divine work of educating men by special revelations of the Divine will, was for a time suspended, never again to be resumed in the same form and under the same conditions. Sorrowfully and sadly, we may believe, the men of the Great Synagogue, the guiding teachers and doctors of the age that followed him, must have added his prophecy to the number of the sacred books, feeling that the vision had departed, that there was no prophet more, looking forward, as their successors did afterwards in the time of the

Maccabees,¹ to the time when a prophet of the Lord should again appear among them as to a day far distant, resting that yearning hope, it may be, on the last words of Malachi himself.

We recognise this character of the prophet in some of the references which we commonly make to the message he delivered. We think of him as standing at the close of one great period, and watching in the distance the dawning of a brighter day. He sees that the work to be done needs the revival of that highest type of the prophet's character, which acts, speaks, lives, as the servant of the Lord, though it leaves no written oracles. 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'² He sees that that work will be but the preparation for a yet greater advent. 'Behold, I will send my messenger who shall prepare the way before me. The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple.'³

We do well to point to these words as to prophecies that have received a true and wonderful fulfilment, to which, it may be, there is yet reserved, in the future of the Divine order, another fulfilment yet more marvellous and mysterious. But the other parts of the prophet's message, to which we commonly give less heed, are not, I

¹ 1 Macc. iv. 47; ix. 27; xiv. 41.


² Mal. iv. 5.

³ Mal. iii. 1.

believe, less significant, nor have we exhausted the meaning and interest of his position as the last of the prophets, when we have thought of it only in relation to his Messianic hopes, his visions of the kingdom of the Christ. To be the last of the Prophets,—what did that involve, not only for the age in which he lived, but for the man himself? What bearing had it upon the words spoken by him? What ought it to have upon the lessons which those words convey to later generations?

Much of this, it may be, we can but dimly guess. The inner life of those older prophets lies too far remote from us to be seen clearly; it is too high and deep for us to gauge and fathom. All that we can hope to do is to ascend to it from those lower analogies that lie closer to the range of our experience. The deep and earnest thinker, the large-hearted lover of his country falling upon evil days, witnessing evils that he cannot cure, may perhaps help us to understand it. To feel that he stands alone, that there is no one like-minded, to see all around him meanness and selfishness and intrigue, to look towards inevitable ruin, the world out of joint, and no one as yet born to set it right, to see a whole nation perversely going the wrong way, cowardly when it should be brave, frantic when it should be calm and self-controlled,—that has been the lot of

some of the greatest men in the world's history. Who does not feel that that life-long martyrdom of theirs claims a special reverence and sympathy? Who does not own that all words of theirs come with a more solemn power, sounding through the length of ages, as with the voice of a trumpet, their notes of warning and rebuke? Like that, but higher in its mission, more awful in its solitude, sharper in its sufferings, must have been the position of him who was the last of the prophets. To him it was given to know more clearly the purposes of God, to see the calling of the people in all its wonderful glory, and therefore to measure the depth of the evil to which in their blindness they had yielded. Hypocrisy, formalism, self-righteousness, unbelief, all the germs of the sectarianism of the Pharisee and the Sadducee, these were growing up in rank profusion. The Temple was polluted, the sacrifices unclean. Priests and people were alike forgetful of their true calling. The prophet was sent to bear witness against these evils, to speak sharp words, and utter terrible threats. Yet he did so with the feeling that for all immediate results his work would be utterly fruitless. The people were blind and deaf, and met all rebukes with the same obstinate hardness, with the same monotonous questions of self-deceit and wilful ignorance :—' Wherein have we



despised Thy name ? Wherein have we polluted Thine altar ? Wherein have we wearied Thee ?' Surely, the words of such a man, words which, if his own in one sense, determined by his character and position, were yet, in another sense, not his own, but the message from the Lord of Hosts, the utterance of the Eternal Spirit, ought to win our reverence. Surely they too come across the wide tracks of time, belonging not to the history of the past, but to all ages. If they unfold, as they do, more fully than any historian could trace them, the true causes of the decline and fall of Judaism, if they show how a people called to be the chosen of the Lord, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, might become 'contemptible and base,' even 'cursed with a curse,' we must believe that this was not written for them only, but for us also. It tells us how a Christian Church and a Christian people may, in like manner, lose its calling and election, and fail to do the work to which God has called it. It proclaims to us that just in proportion as either priests or people approximate to the state which the prophet's words bring before us with so terrible a clearness, in that proportion they are in danger of falling under the same curse ; all the more in danger in proportion as they think they stand. We shall do well to examine ourselves to see whether the

danger which was so fatal to others is in any way impending over us.

Of the many evils of which the prophet speaks I purpose now to dwell on one only. It was, we may infer from the prominence he gives to it, the root-evil of all. The old rule held good, 'like people, like priest;' and that over which he mourned most bitterly was that the priests were no longer true to their calling, that they were exercising an influence for evil only and not for good. He saw, with a painful clearness, all that they might have been; the holiness of their calling, the nobleness of their work; 'My covenant was with him'—the true priest—'of life and peace. . . . The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.' This was what they were meant to be. Fatally different was that which he actually saw. A priesthood at once selfish and ignorant, pauperized and dishonoured, with no power to teach, winning no respect, contemptible and base; it was to this that the sons of Aaron had fallen. And this, as the later history shows, was the secret of that long, slow decay of the life

of the Jewish Church. The men who were the representatives of the people in their worship were no longer their guides and teachers. They were ignorant themselves, content to leave others in ignorance. Men had put asunder what God had joined,—the worship and the education of the people; and so the worship stiffened into formalism, and the education had no influence on the heart. The rabbis of Jerusalem, poor substitutes for the prophets whom they succeeded, usurped also the place and functions of the priesthood as teachers of the nation. On the strength of their higher knowledge, their larger leisure, they looked down on the great mass of the priesthood with a feeling of unutterable scorn. They were the intellectual leaders of the people; at their mouth the people, and even the priests themselves, were to seek the law. The result was, as we know, the substitution of their own traditions, of the subtleties of a dishonest casuistry, for the Divine commandments. The evil was aggravated, in part perhaps caused, by the poverty of the priesthood. The nation had been slow and grudging even in the work of building the second Temple. It had ‘robbed the Lord even in tithes and offerings.’ Every struggle and revolution through which the nation passed must have tended to diminish the maintenance, already

scanty. For the few who occupied high places, who attached themselves to sects and parties, there might be honours and emoluments. The priests as a body were at once ignorant and poor, the mere functionaries of a ritual, not the shepherds of the flock. Their lips were not keeping knowledge. If men sought the law at their mouth, they would seek it altogether in vain.


There have been times and countries in the history of the Christian Church when these evils have reappeared. In many portions of the Mediæval Western, through wellnigh the whole extent of the Eastern, Church, in the history of our own Church, both before and after its emancipation from that of Rome, their influence has been conspicuous. There has, perhaps, been no age, no country, altogether free from them. The temptation is one common to all times. There is always the risk of the people being hard, selfish, grudging, in all they do for the priesthood, of the priesthood falling into a contented ignorance, sinking to the level of a low social position, ceasing to be teachers. Whatever other differences there may be, the calling of the clergy of the Christian Church has been, in this respect, like that of the sons of Levi. Their lips, too, should keep knowledge. When they have failed to do so, they too have become 'contemptible and base.'

The real education of the people falls into other hands, less worthy even than those of the rabbis of Jerusalem,—schoolmen, men of letters, men of science, writers in newspapers. The clergy are behind the age, not in advance of it, acquiescing in, if they do not stimulate, the superstition of the people; powerless to oppose errors or denials of the faith; poor witnesses of the unity of the Church in the midst of a bewildering multitude of sects and schisms; going through the routine of worship, so that the worship itself, stript of its high attributes, becomes poor, and naked, and unlovely. All history shows that for such a state of things there is hardly any remedy but one. The Lord comes near to judgment; there is yet again a day of the Lord at hand. Suffering and danger, the uprising of the people in their madness, the convulsions that shake the strong foundations of the earth, revolutions, and wars, and rumours of wars; these are the 'refiner's fire' wherewith He who 'sits as a purifier of silver shall purify the sons of Levi.'

Our own country, brethren, has not been exempted from the evil, is not now free from the danger; we may, as men who rejoice with trembling, give thanks that the evil has not been dominant, that there has been a safeguard against the danger. From the time of the Reformation on-


wards there has been a goodly succession of men whose lips have kept knowledge, at whose mouth men have sought the law, and not sought it in vain. The memories of some of these still live among us as familiar names. Many more there were, whose names are forgotten, who were not the less famous in their day, serving their generation by the will of God, lights shining in the darkness. The time would fail me to tell of those who, seeking no fame, made it the labour of their lives to give an English Bible to the English people, in the truest and the noblest form ; who, out of the chaos and confusion of the Service-books of the Mediæval Church, framed the Prayer-book which has sustained and strengthened the religious life of thousands and tens of thousands ; of others who have shown that the polity and worship of the Church rest on other grounds than those of tradition and authority, or enabled men to ' give a reason for the hope that is in them,' or borne witness of a Divine harmony pervading the universe, or laboured to restore the text of the Divine Word to its purity, or to set forth the meaning of that Word in its fulness. We may rejoice even when the knowledge which the priest's lips have kept has been other in kind than that which connects itself directly with their office. Doubtless it is an evil, only a less evil than ignorance

itself, when the ministers of Christ, instead of giving their whole mind and strength to their high calling, abandon it for some secular pursuit, are prominent only as men of science or of letters. But, subject to this limitation, it is a gain and not a loss that they should be thus prominent. Scholarship, science, history, these are necessary as a preparation for the higher knowledge, conditions of excelling in it, or they are refreshments for the spirit, which, in the midst of arduous labours, needs some rest, and finds in them a truer recreation than in mere inactivity and the frivolities of common life, or they enable the teachers of the truth to keep their position, and to win the respect of the advancing intellect of the age. It has been the distinguishing excellence of our English universities, as compared with the institutions of other religious bodies, that they have laid this broad foundation for the study of theology. We may rejoice that it is so still; that, at the present moment; in the great gatherings of men of science, some at least of the foremost names should be those of clergy. Even in the cases at which the popular satirist directs the shafts of a cheap wit, the sneer is usually as pointless as it is common. Experience does not show that a bishop is a worse pastor, or a less profound theologian, because in the early days of his activity he has




composed a mathematical treatise, or edited a Greek play, or written a Greek history. Much more, I believe, might we look forward with sorrow and dismay to the future of the Church of England if there were ever to be a succession of bishops who had never shown either the will or the capacity for these or for like tasks. We need this wider training to give clearness to our thoughts, breadth as well as strength to our convictions. Those who are only theologians have, for the most part, but a poor and stunted theology. Narrow in their sympathies, prejudiced in their opinions, setting their faces like a flint against all that does not bear the stamp of a party or a school, their lips cannot keep the knowledge which they have never gained. Taking up all interpretations of Scripture, all exposition of the Church's teaching, at second-hand, dependent often upon the single guidance of some feeble thinker, they are really living upon the poorest traditions of the elders. They reproduce, not the simple inspired earnestness of the first preachers of the gospel, but the degeneracy of the priesthood of the dark days of Judaism. To such as these 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed.' They have no power to reach the intellect, little to stir the heart.

In another place, and before other hearers, it might be well to enter upon the wider aspects of



this question. It might be right to press upon the laity of the Church, if it were possible, upon such of our statesmen as are still faithful to her, how fatally the miserable scantiness of all new endowments, the paring-down and breaking-up of many of the old, is tending to increase the evil ; how surely the disregard of the truth, that 'the labourer is worthy of his hire,' leaves the work to unskilled hands ; how disastrous all this must be in the long run, not to the religious life of the nation only, but to its morality and wellbeing in all senses of the word. It might be well to urge upon the rulers and pastors of the Church the necessity of taking some steps, by greater union and organization, to check the evil, of not letting the existing sources from which the ministry of the Church has been supplied with fit and worthy labourers, dwindle and dry up without opening new ones ; of breaking through, if need be, the restrictions of an old machinery, in order to guard against the far greater danger of drifting we know not how, without plan or purpose, into that fatal stage of national decay when, not the first-born of a people's youth, vigorous, and full of power, and without blemish, but the blind, and the sick, and the lame, are offered at the altar.

Here we have to deal rather with those aspects of the truth which concern our own work.



(1.) Teachers and taught, let us alike remember that this is what we are to aim at, that in proportion as through any fault of ours the end is missed, there lies on him whose fault it is a very fearful responsibility. The wasted hours, the desultory thought, the frittered energies, which seem now such small things to the careless student, these, so far as they hinder his obtaining the knowledge he is meant to gain, are making him less fit for the priestly office which belongs to the ministers of Christ. They are helping to render him hereafter, even if they do not render him now, contemptible and base. No personal zeal, no devotional feeling, however deep and true—and how seldom is it true in the absence of the spirit which longs to dig deeper and deeper into the treasures of the Divine Word!—can compensate for the deficiency.

(2.) Notice also what a direct bearing the words have, not only on the nature, and, as it were, the quantity of our work, but on the purpose with which we labour, the fruit which we are ultimately to reap. It is that men 'may seek the law,' the Divine commandment, God's rule of life for us, at our lips. All portions of a true theology converge to that. Our knowledge is not to be as a heaped-up treasure for our own enjoyment, still less for our own fame or the advancement of our own in-

terests, but as the store of one who is ready to give and glad to distribute. Every truth more clearly seen, every difficulty and stumbling-block removed, the dark sayings of the oracles of God that are now seen to be radiant with a Divine light, the hard sayings that are now seen to be in harmony with the Divine love, the fresh meanings that flash upon us out of familiar words, the new interest which clothes the forms of patriarchs, apostles, prophets, when we learn to think of them not as names only, but as living persons, men of like passions with ourselves, the deeper insight into the Divine education of the souls of individual men, of God's Church and people, of mankind,—these, in proportion as they are given to us, bind us to make known to others what we have found so precious to ourselves. Freely we have received—the more we toil and strive, and live laborious days, the more shall we be conscious how freely—freely therefore should we give. If the course of our studies has helped to build up our own faith, be it ours to build up, so far as in us lies, the faith of others. It is a fatal misuse of knowledge when it leads us to destroy or weaken the loving trust of the little ones of Christ; when we ransack the armoury of the past for the fiery darts, the doubts or sneers, which leave the venom of unbelief in the wounded and enfeebled soul; when we take

up the stones of offence over which we ourselves have fallen, to place them in the way of our brethren that they too may fall.

(3.) The words supply a test by which we may judge ourselves and our own purposes in working. They help us also to determine something as to the range of our studies; the subjects they may legitimately include. It may seem to some,—the thought has, I doubt not, often come across the mind of many a student in this place,—that it condemns much which he is called on to learn, that it excludes yet more distinctly that wider general knowledge which I have laboured to defend. What have I to do, such an one may have asked himself,—what have I to do, as a preacher of the gospel, with the niceties of criticism, with the refinements of exegesis? Why need I give heed to the force of this tense, the meaning of that preposition? Will it not be enough to take the English Bible and from that proclaim the gospel? Do I want other teaching than that which brings together the texts of that Bible, and classifies them under different heads, as proving doctrines, or confuting heresies? Of what other use will Church history be than that it may enable me to vindicate, if need be, the principles of the Reformation, to expose the corruptions of the Church of Rome, to detect and condemn those who may have fallen

into some ancient heresy? The history of the Bible itself, why need that be studied, as men study other histories, carefully, laboriously, accurately—names in their right order, dates attached to the right facts, places connected with the facts of which they were the scenes? Is it not enough to know the few great cases which point a moral, or suggest a type, or furnish spiritual meditation?

The course of reasoning may seem natural and plausible enough. Experience will teach every student who is wise enough to accept the guidance which here and elsewhere is offered to him who walks in faith in the paths which have been deliberately traced for him, how fatal an evil, how terrible a temptation to a selfish, self-satisfied indolence lies under that plausibility. Prior to that experience, or meeting it in its earlier stages, he may be told that he has taken a wrong measure altogether of the nature of his work, of the means for faithfully discharging it, of the relation of his studies to each other. Languages are studied not as ends but as means; partly because they discipline and train the mind, giving it a clearer vision and a firmer grasp; partly because with the Bible, as with other books, no existing translation is absolutely free from error, and no translation, if it were free, could convey the entire meaning of the original. Every rendering of a word or phrase is,

or may be, an interpretation, and the interpretation may be merely traditional and inadequate. To connect words in their developed and derived forms with the roots from which they grow, to know when the original has one word for the many, or many words for the one, of the translation ; this, to take only an example, will often give a freshness to our thoughts, a living interest to words that have before been barren, which cannot fail, unless we are shamefully negligent, to reproduce itself in our teaching. Often the very rhythm and sound of words in another tongue than our own will, in some strange and wonderful way, fix them in our minds as they have never been fixed before, and Divine seeds of truth, which might else have floated by us, are thus carried to the good soil of the heart, and take root and bring forth fruit abundantly.

Church history too, let him be well assured, is meant to be something else to him than a record of bygone heresies, or a manual for present controversies. In its full significance and extent, including as it does the history of the Bible, it is, as its name implies, the history of the *Ecclesia*—of the tribe, the nation, the universal family called out of mankind to be a peculiar people, to receive a special gift, and to do a special work. It tells us how that *Ecclesia* has fulfilled its calling, and

been a blessing to all the families of the earth, or failed to fulfil it, and so become a hissing, and a byword, and a reproach. It shows us how the Divine work has been carried on, the witness of God's truth borne, under the most contrasted forms and in the least favourable conditions. The life of every true saint and father of the Church is that of a man whom God was teaching, and who submitted himself to that education. The life of every heretic and false teacher is that of one who, to his own loss and to the peril of the Church, resisted it, choosing to follow rather the thoughts of his own heart, the devices of his own understanding. The decrees of Councils and Synods show us what were the pressing dangers of each age, at what ideal of the Church's life men were aiming, what that life actually was. Every step in the history of God's ancient people, not less than the stupendous facts of the Exodus, takes its place among the things written for our learning. And if it has been the will of God that we should be taught by the method of history, then surely the conditions of all historical study cannot be neglected here. The sequence of events tells us more than half their meaning. The opinions of men cannot be separated from their lives. The worship of the Church is the reflex of its theology. The decisions of Councils were in part determined by

the personal and local conditions of their assemblage.

The same law holds good of other studies which you find connected with Theology. I cannot now enter upon these. But the question, a serious and practical one, presents itself, how far is this true of those studies which we do not find connected with it? How far, to be precise and definite, may the student here aim at that wider knowledge of history, science, literature, which, in proportion as a man possesses it, places him within the circle of cultivated, in the true sense of the word, educated minds? On the one side there is the pressing danger of which I have before spoken, of narrowness, feebleness, poverty of thought; on the other, the yet greater evil of a surface-knowledge of many things, a grounded knowledge of none, of a distraction all the more perilous because it draws you away from the one thing needful. Here also art is long, and life is short. The vast fields of theology, history, doctrine, interpretation, are thrown open to you, and in two short years you have to gather what first-fruits you can, the pledge, let us hope, of a more abundant harvest hereafter. You cannot *work* in another field; you have no right to give serious labour to other things; you may not let the *ἔργον* of your life here be encroached upon by anything which is essentially a *πάρρηγον*.

Now, as you will be hereafter by your ordination vows, you are bound to 'forsake all other studies' which in any way come into collision with the one supreme study to which you devote your lives. But, subject to this limitation, the wide field, with all its fair flowers and pleasant fruits, is still open to you, and you do well to walk in it and to gather them. Heart and brain alike demand intervals of rest. There are hours when you cannot work, and these also may be wasted or made fruitful. They are not to be merely filled up with the light reading of the day, the journal, secular or religious, the feeble commonplaces of inferior books—travels, or sermons, or biographies, or fictions—which have nothing but their harmlessness to recommend them. Carry the principle of selection into those leisure hours; make it your purpose to learn something of the best works of the best writers; rise out of the pettiness of newspaper correspondents or sectarian controversies into fellowship with the great masters of those who know. The works of true poets, the lives of great and good men, the writings of true observers of nature or of art—these strengthen while they refresh; they make you the better, not the worse, fitted for your higher work.

What I have said of that higher work has been, I feel it painfully, meagre and unworthy. Let one

word, before I end, bring it before you in something of its true and wonderful greatness. The difference of the work to which you are called, and that of the sons of Aaron against whom Malachi bore his protest, may be measured by a single word. Their lips were to keep knowledge ; they were to be studious, thoughtful, devout, that men might seek the *law* at their mouth. They were to proclaim the will of God as a righteous will, a rule of life requiring righteousness in man. Their covenant with God was, indeed, of life and peace ; but they were to tell also of the misery and death which followed when the covenant is broken. At *your* lips men are to seek not the law only, in its fulness, its severity, but the gospel. You are messengers of the Lord of Hosts—bearing the same name as the priests of old, as the last of the prophets, as the forerunners of the Lord, yea, even as the Lord himself—that you may beseech men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. All gifts and powers are to be devoted to the one end of setting forth the glad tidings that Christ has redeemed men from the curse of the Law ; that God is calling them to repentance, adopting them as His children. That is the 'good thing committed to your trust,' which you are to guard against attacks; to free from misconceptions ; *that* the truth which you are to proclaim in its fulness. See that

it is really a gospel to yourselves, that you know how blessed a thing it is to find deliverance, pardon, holiness in Christ, or else you will be powerless to make others feel that it is a gospel—a message of good news, for them. This is what you are to labour for ; to this end strive, by study, meditation, prayer, not for skill in controversy, or subtle interpretations, or ritualistic refinements, but to make men know and feel that ‘God is Love,’ and that he who ‘dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God ;’ ‘that God is light,’ and that ‘in Him is no darkness at all.’

XIV.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE DEPENDENT ON OBEDIENCE.

'If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass : for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.'—JAMES I. 23, 24.

IF we would measure the force of these words and the comparison they contain, we must go back to the impressions and feelings of uncivilized men. Our familiarity with the works of art that come into our daily life, makes us forget what novelties they must once have been, what a new world of thought they must have opened to those who for the first time witnessed them. Place a native of some wild island in the Pacific, the wanderer through some African waste, before a mirror ; watch its effect even on the opening consciousness of a child, and you will see what will give a new life to the words that have become so trite. There will be wonder at that which has brought about so strange and startling a result ; an eager curiosity to exhaust all the stores of knowledge which the new discovery has

unfolded. There will be also the recognition of his own identity in a way altogether new. Now, for the first time, he will feel that he knows what he looks like ; what he is. The new knowledge may be flattering, may be disappointing. He may discover blemishes, deformities of which he was before unconscious,— may be startled, as children often are, to see the impress which passion, or care, or fear, has left upon his features, — may be stirred to the resolve that, if only for that reason, that his own image may be more pleasing to himself, he will strive to conquer that passion for the future. We, with our habits of life, and appliances of art around us, have that knowledge perpetuated from day to day, from hour to hour. If we can never enter into the keen sensation of the freshness of such an experience, we are at least free from the danger of forgetting what the experience has taught us. But let that be the only time that the bright surface gleams before the wild wondering eye ; think of the savage as going back to his old life, plunging once again into his former barbarism ; and how much of that knowledge do you think he would retain ? How long would he who had beheld his natural face in a glass remember what manner of man he was, or find in that remembrance anything to curb his rage or raise him out of brutal negligence ? As a mere

fact in the history of outward material civilisation, it is in the absence of all means for perpetuating these impressions that we are to find the secret of the squalid hideousness, the strange apathy to all sense of beauty or of fitness, that marks the savage life in all its manifold varieties. With that picture before our minds, let us turn to that which St. James tells us it resembles. We have seen the parable ; let us look at the interpretation. We shall not, perhaps, have far to seek, in what we know of others, in what has happened to ourselves. ' If any be a hearer of the word and not a doer.' That contrast, we may believe, had fixed itself very deeply in the mind of the fisherman of Galilee, who afterwards became bishop of Jerusalem, at a very early period. Whatever bold and over-hasty men may have said of this Epistle, comparing the phase of truth which it presents with that which they found in the teaching of St. Paul or of St. John, one thing at least is certain, that nowhere through the whole cycle of apostolic writings is there so distinct an echo of that Divine voice which gave utterance to the Sermon on the Mount. The resemblance is striking on our first impression of it. As we compare the two more closely, the parallelism is seen to be more and more pervading, extending to subjects, phrases, words. And this, we may believe, was not the

result of any conscious reproduction. He had drunk in deeply of the wisdom which came from the lips of Him who spoke as man never spoke before. He had listened—it is no bold assumption to say this much—to the words of grace that proceeded out of His lips, and they had entered into his heart, and become incorporated with his inmost life. He had lived in them and they had become a new source of life to him. He had heard then, for the first time, it may be, of a Father in heaven who ‘made His sun to rise upon the evil and the good,’ who gave ‘good gifts to all those that asked Him,’ and now, in his old age, he urges the truth, which had become more and more precious to him, that ‘every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom (as with the sun that is His witness) there is no variableness neither shadow of turning.’¹ He remembered those stirrings of a new life within him, how there had grown up a new man in him of which before he was but dimly conscious; and the source of that new creation was none other than the Divine Word, that had been spoken to him and was working in him, and he could say, looking upon the change, ‘Of his own will hath God begotten us with the word of truth.’ But he recollected also (not

¹ Comp. Matt. v. 45, vii. 11, with James i. 17.

to dwell upon the many other coincidences which will present themselves to any thoughtful reader) with what solemn words that Sermon on the Mount had ended; that awful parable which likened every one who heard those sayings of His and did them not, to the 'foolish man that built his house upon the sands, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.'¹ And remembering this, he, the true disciple of his Lord, realizing in his life the pattern of holiness which had then been put before him, seeks to guard against that danger. Like the scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, he brings forth out of his treasure things new and old,—the old, abiding truths, the new, fresh, living illustrations, 'If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.'

You remember, brethren, most of you, I imagine, if not all, something like that in your own personal experience. Once at least the Word of God, the written Word, has been to you as a bright and crystal mirror, in which you saw imaged, with a wonderful distinctness, your own likeness. Your reading of the Bible, your listening to the Lessons, ceased for once to be a task-work or a routine.

¹ Matt. vii. 24-27.

The veil was taken away ; taken from your hearts, taken from the inward eye ; and you saw in that mirror the secrets of your own hearts, lying naked and bare before the eye of the All-searching. The guilt of past years, the sins that were lying hid in the secret chambers of imagery, the idolatries of heart and act, the hidden things of darkness, these were made manifest, brought to light—to the Light that lighteth every man ; and in that moment there flashed upon you the consciousness of what you had been, and what you were, and it filled you, as it well might do, with shame and confusion of face. But the mirror of God's Word is true and faithful, distorting nothing, obscuring nothing ; and therefore with that revelation of sinfulness, of depths of evil of which before you were not conscious, there came also the knowledge (clearer, more living than you had had before) of your capacity for a higher life, of your calling to something better. Then it came across you that there was some truth in the old words which told you that you had been made 'a child of God, a member of Christ, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ;' that earth and its treasures were not all that you were meant for ; that righteousness, and peace, and joy were the inheritance to which you had been chosen ; that your great guilt had been that, being so chosen, you had counted yourselves

unworthy of eternal life. It may be that, as you gazed upon that reflected image of your own being, there grew more clear, gleaming through the lineaments of that natural face, the traces of one more truly human, more truly Divine—the faint dawns of that new man, which is ‘after the image of God, created unto righteousness, unto the holiness of truth.’¹ That new life had already begun, and was even then beginning in you. You looked with reverence and love at the beauty of holiness manifested in the true humanity of Christ; you desired that you might grow daily more and more into the likeness of His glory.

If you have any recollection of such a moment in your lives, brethren, you will remember also that at the time it seemed as if that new knowledge could never be blotted out, as if it would preserve you from the contagion of a thousand evils, from faults which had hitherto been secret, hardly recognised as such even by yourselves, from presumptuous sins, which were bringing you under the guilt and condemnation of the great offence. From that moment it seemed as if old things would pass away and all things become new. Remembering the form and features of that face of the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—the hatefulness of its pride, or anger, or impurity, or un-

¹ Eph. iv. 24.

belief, or covetousness—it seemed as though you could never again be drawn into fellowship with what was so base and hateful. Looking upon the beauty and the blessedness of the sinlessness of Christ—upon that Divine tranquillity, that meekness, gentleness, boldness, sympathy, truth, purity—it was as if that, and nothing less than that, could satisfy the longing of your own souls.

And now, what do you see when you look back, and look within—when, as the Word of God is once more brought before you, you look again into its clear, bright depths, and again discover your own likeness? The old root-evils are still there, not uprooted. The besetting sin still besets you, not conquered,—hardly, perhaps, resisted by you. There is the monotonous succession of the thoughts and purposes of a simply worldly life ; there are great lapses, things that you look back upon with bitterness and shame,—unloving acts, selfish thoughts, a life practically atheistic, the vain religion of one who goes through the routine of worship, and yet all the while ‘bridleth not his tongue,’ but ‘deceiveth his own heart.’ You have not remembered what you actually were ; what you were called to be ; what, if you forget that, you might eventually sink into. Faults of tremendous magnitude have been growing in you unperceived, while you have fancied yourselves clear-sighted

and discerning as to the faults of others. In the true sense of the word, you have been as hypocrites, acting a part, personating a character which had no reality in it, seeing the mote that is in your brother's eye, and not perceiving the beam that is in your own. That self-knowledge has been transient as the shadow that departeth. You have seen your natural face in the mirror of God's Word, and have gone your way, and straightway have forgotten what manner of men you then knew yourselves to be.

All seekers of wisdom, all preachers of righteousness, in all ages and countries, have seen that in that self-knowledge was the secret of all holiness, the condition of all true wisdom. That *γνωθι σεαυτον* had indeed come to man as an oracle from the true heaven. To see ourselves not merely 'as others see us' (that would be but a poor and partial knowledge, helping us only to overcome the grosser sins, the startling eccentricities, that force themselves upon the eyes of men), but as we are seen by the eye of God, the Holy and the True ; to recognise all our likeness and unlikeness to that image of God after which we were created ; all our capacities for evil and for good ; all that is in harmony or at variance with the Divine will ; to understand rightly the mystery of our own being,—that is what we want to guide us safely through all its intricacies and contradictions, through all the

snare and temptations that beset our course through life. But how to gain that, or to keep it when it has been gained; how to prevent that clear image from fading utterly from our memory; how to keep ourselves from falling back into the old times of ignorance, all the more perilous because there once had been the light of knowledge: what was the secret of that strange forgetfulness and ignorance of self, which, in one form or another, had become one of the commonplaces of all observers of mankind,—this they only partially explained, giving slow and imperfect guesses at it. The words of St. James show the origin of that oblivion, the condition upon which self-knowledge depends for its vitality and permanence. ‘If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer.’ To know, and not to do—to have the notions, theories, doctrines, ritual of religion, but not the single heart and the ready obedience—to yield in small things to the besetting infirmities of our stations, temperament, circumstances—to live on with no active participation in the ministry of love,—this is the cause of the rapid evanescence of that knowledge which once seemed so clear, so likely to be lasting. You know, brethren, that this was so with you, that, in proportion as you have forgotten, it is to this that you can trace your forgetfulness. You have not *done* that which the Word

of God—written, spoken, revealed to the inner man—has told you that you ought to do. You have not taken that Word, day by day and hour by hour, as ‘a light unto your feet and a lamp unto your path.’ You have not sought that He, the living Word, would guide you on; you have refused to follow in His steps. And so the eye has grown dim, and the veil has fallen upon your hearts, and, loving darkness rather than light, the shadows of that great darkness have fallen thick upon you. Obedience—constant, ready obedience—to whatever we recognise as the law of God, is the condition of all self-knowledge. There must be the desire, the effort, the act to fulfil, in its completeness, that law of which not one jot or one tittle shall pass away, or else all the evils of ignorance return upon us, and we become deceivers of ourselves, hypocrites, unreal. Each single act of disobedience, each sin wilfully committed, each preference of the law of the flesh to the law of God, of the judgment of men before His judgment, weakens our power to discern what we are, and what He wishes us to be. Take this as the law which governs all your spiritual life, test it by all your past experience, live by it in the time of trial that yet lies before you. Listen to the word of truth preached to you, engrafted in you; DO what the voice within you tells you, and then the path is

clearer, brightening more and more unto the perfect day.

Here is the condition of true self-knowledge, and without it there comes the inevitable forgetfulness. And, happily, that is possible in the interpretation of the parable, which is not possible in the parable itself. A man cannot go on gazing for ever, 'beholding his natural face in a glass.' The necessities of life, the pressure of other impulses, would soon break in upon the wonder even of the untutored savage, and the clear perception that he had had before would fade away. But here the mirror of that Word of God, the light by which it reflects clearly and distinctly, are ever close at hand, not far from every one of us. It is at all times possible to compare what we are with that which the law of God tells us that we are called to be. We may keep those great laws of Christ, written in His Word, spoken in our hearts, ever before our eyes. All that is wanted here is the will to see, the will and the power to act. They, and they only, are heirs of the blessedness of the kingdom, who have that law of God written in their hearts, who bring all they do to that test, who feel that though they are not under the law but under grace, Christ came 'not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil.' Some might have said then, as others have said since, that

this was to go back to the old yoke of bondage ; that it was inconsistent with the glorious liberty of the sons of God, of whom such great things were spoken. Such were they, for example, who ‘turned the grace of God into lasciviousness’—‘speaking great swelling words of vanity,’ promising liberty to others, while they themselves were the ‘servants of corruption.’ But the feeling against which St. James’s words are directed is a very universal one. We need not look back to the heresies of the first century, and ask which of them they fit best. They speak to us. They tell us what we ourselves are conscious of. We are all conscious of times when we have felt that it was irksome to live under restraint, subject to the yoke of obedience, surrounded by rules which it was not lawful for us to break through. We have tried to persuade ourselves, perhaps, that what we found vexing and annoying was that we were under the restraints of human laws ; that the wills of other men, parents, teachers, friends, society, were keeping us in check, and hindering the assertion of the freedom to which we had a right. But when the time comes for the removal of these restraints, when we are, as we say, our own masters, free to choose and free to act, then we begin to learn that what we kick against is the thought of being subject to a law at all ; that the higher, more univer-

sal, more divine the law, the more burdensome it seems to us, so long as we feel that we break it, and that it accuses us. And then, it may be, we try to persuade ourselves that to live by a law is a poor and slavish thing, troubling us with needless scruples, fettering our free actions, bringing us again to bondage. We disguise this rebellion under high-sounding phrases, or we stand up simply and boldly in the pride of our resistance.

It is to that state of feeling that St. James addresses himself in the words to which we have now come : 'The perfect law of liberty.' Here again we may think of him as speaking out of the fulness of his heart, out of the abundance of his personal experience. He remembered, it may be, the kind of teaching that he had had from elders and Pharisees in the synagogues ; the rules, traditions, precepts that looked only to the outside of life, that left the passions that were within uncurbed, wild, eager, exacting. He remembered the time when the law had seemed to him a thing external to him, written in a book, interpreted by doctors, and that had been a time of bondage, for his obedience had been constrained and unwilling, through the fear of punishment, not through the love of one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He remembered, too, the moment when he came in contact with Him who spake

‘not as the scribes, but as one having authority’—the new Teacher, who, in fulfilling the law, converted it into a gospel, who showed it to be higher, holier, more searching than men had before thought of. Then he learned to see that the law was within him, that the living Word of God was teaching him evermore, that the eye of that Word was ever on him. Did he feel that those new laws—new and yet old—which made the commandments of the law so far-reaching, took away his freedom, reduced him to a mere slavish submission? No! his whole heart rose in its strength against that notion. That Sermon on the Mount had first helped him to comprehend what true freedom was. He had learned to see that it was a ‘perfect law of liberty.’ As he looked into it, continuing therein, being ‘not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word,’ he felt that the blessedness of that liberty was above all other blessedness. To be free from the sharp reproach of the thoughts that accuse each other; free from the stains and defilements that are in the world through lust and hate and covetousness; free from over-anxious care and the tyranny of the evil world; free in the power to do and to say that which is right and true,—there was indeed, not that counterfeit of those who mean by liberty the license which owns no law, but the true freedom which is the inheritance of the poor in

spirit, the meek, the pure in heart, the peacemaker, the merciful.

Brethren, that law of liberty stands before you. You have that royal law which bids you love your neighbour as yourself, and to love God with all your heart and might, and soul and strength. You have in the Sermon on the Mount that full unfolding of the code of Christ which had brought to St. James such wonderful enlargement, such a blessed emancipation. Look on it, into it. Continue in it. Take that as the guide of your life, see yourselves in it, and then that experience may be yours also, and you will enter, no more as a servant, but as a son, into the joy of your Lord. Emancipate yourselves from the double yoke of those who seek to serve God and mammon. Let the 'eye be single, and then the whole body shall be full of light;' and the more you feel that God's law is within you, ruling you, surrounding you, the more you will be conscious that it surrounds only to protect, and that in His service there is perfect freedom.

XV.

THE ORDINARY AND THE MARVELLOUS IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

And he charged them straitly that no man should know it ; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.'—MARK V. 43.

THERE is something almost startling in what meets us here, as the close of a very wonderful history. We descend all at once, abruptly, instantaneously, from what is supernatural, divine, to the region of ordinary life. We are tempted almost to think that this breaks in upon the greatness of the Gospel narrative with what is trivial and commonplace, and so we pass it over without thinking any more about it—without asking what it meant, or what it has to teach us.

For consider, brethren, what a history that had been to which this comes as the conclusion. Bring before your minds, one by one, all the stages of its course, vividly and distinctly, and then, I believe, you will feel that the command must have been as unexpected, and have seemed as strange

to those who actually heard it as it can possibly do to you.

Think, for example, of that which the narrative starts from. The ruler of the synagogues—apparently in Capernaum—is made to feel that a great sorrow is overhanging him, is on the point of actually falling. The little daughter whom he loved so tenderly is at the point of death. The brightness and loveliness of youth have passed away; there is no longer any power to welcome him with gentle words or a loving smile. She hovers between life and death, and those who cling most eagerly to the last faint hope cannot say more than that all is not yet over. She is not yet dead, though she is too surely ‘at the point to die.’ Then there comes across the father’s mind the recollection that there has been One preaching in the synagogues of Galilee—whom he himself may have heard there—who has both the power and the will to heal, who has manifested Himself as gentle, sympathizing, loving. He will go to Him. There may be some chance in that. When the case is acknowledged to be desperate, when all other remedies have failed, he will try this. He goes out, it would appear, not with a clear discerning faith, like that of the centurion, not with an eager impetuous faith like that which we find in the woman with an issue of blood, but in that troubled

and confused heaviness of heart, that 'dimness of anguish,' which belongs to the first overwhelming consciousness of a great bereavement. He leaves the chamber, which is already filled with the shadow of death, and he goes forth to see if there is any help. He finds the Deliverer whom he sought (as we gather from Matt. ix.) sitting in the house of him who had been called from the receipt of customs, surrounded by a mingled crowd of disciples, and publicans and sinners. At another time that might have shocked and offended him. He would have turned away from those whose touch he regarded as polluting. He would have refused to look on any teacher as a prophet who was so unmindful of the dignity and holiness of his office. Sorrow, however, is a great leveller. It brings men in contact with the stern realities of life. It breaks down the artificial barriers of prejudice. A man who is under its teaching learns to cast aside the pride that separates him from his fellows. He craves for sympathy from them ; and so Jairus makes his way through that mingled crowd, and he falls on his knees before Jesus, and, in broken accents, he tells him why he had thus dared to come to him : ' My daughter is dying ; even now there is not a step between her and death. All other help is fruitless. But I come to Thee. Thou canst still help.

Come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.' The Lord, who manifested through the whole tenor of His life His sympathy with all human sorrow, was not unmoved by this. He met the man's faith according to its strength. He 'rose and followed him, and so did the disciples,' and with them, it would seem, a multitude of others, drawn by an eager curiosity, thronging and pressing to see in what manner the power and the love of the prophet of Nazareth would show themselves. As they went, he had a wonderful proof given to him of the power of the mighty Healer. That history of the woman with the issue of blood has a distinct interest and teaching of its own, but I dwell on it now only in its relation to the eager, impetuous sorrow of that father who was hastening to bring the presence of the Lifegiver into the house of death. And I say that it must have served at once as a trial and a confirmation of that weak, struggling faith of his. It would teach him, more than all rumours and reports could teach, what power there was in that Son of Man to heal and to save; but it would also present itself as a delay and an impediment. What right had she, who had borne her disease for the full twelve years of his daughter's life, to thrust herself between him and his fond hopes, when one hour, one minute even, might

make an unspeakable difference? If sorrow humbles the pride of men, it sometimes—must we not say often?—makes them selfish and exacting.

But think what a keenness must have been given to all these feelings when he saw those messengers running, probably with the outward signs of woe, telling him that it was too late. ‘Why troublest thou the Master any further?’ All was over: the spirit had passed into that other world from which there was no return. Was it not hard that he should hear those words of comfort—‘Depart in peace: thy faith hath made thee whole’—spoken to another, while for him there was no hope, and his faith was altogether vain? The Lord Jesus, who knew what was in man, and read their thoughts, and had compassion on their infirmities, seems to have discerned that this was the danger to which the sorrow-stricken, heart-broken father was now exposed. He turns to him with kind and loving words—we may be assured too, with accents of gentle sympathy and looks of a Divine mercy—‘Be not afraid: only believe.’ ‘Believe that you have a Father in heaven who loves you, and can save you, and has power to quicken whom He will. Believe that I am manifesting the will and the power of that Father, that my works are His, my power confined within no narrower limits than that of the Almighty.’ This assurance at least calms

him. Then succeeds to the despair of grief the expectancy of a trembling faith ; then comes the answer to the prayer, the putting forth of the full power of the Lord of Life. The parade of a Jewish funeral has already begun ; the minstrels and wailers are there with their loud cries of lamentation. There is a tumult in that dwelling, which was so lately filled with the hush that precedes the last struggle of the faint life. We notice, looking at what is recorded here, a memorable instance of the reverence for sorrow, the discerning sympathy, which we find in the Son of Man. He will not add to that tumult ; He will not bring the crowd that has followed Him into that house to gaze on the down-stricken mourners, to intrude upon that bitterness with which ' a stranger does not intermeddle.' ' He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter and James, and John, the brother of James.' Those He could trust : they were nearest to Him, had drunk most eagerly of His spirit, were called by Him to a special work like His own. As He enters He declares that for Him and for His power all is not over : ' The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.' Then there comes the crowning marvel and glory of the whole history. He enters into the room where the body lay lifeless and senseless ; He takes the damsel by the hand, and that touch brings death into con-

tact with a life which can overcome it. He speaks the wonderful words, that 'Talitha-cumi,' which those who heard never afterwards forgot, and 'the damsel arose and walked.' 'And they were astonished with a great astonishment.'

After all this, brethren, does not that verse which comes at the close of the narrative seem more wonderful than ever? Why should there be this sudden return to the region of ordinary life—to the rules which seem to imply that there is no Divine healer or sustainer near, that men must have recourse to means, trivial and commonplace, if they would attain and secure the end for which they are striving? We who believe that there was nothing trivial or commonplace in any word or act of the Lord Jesus, may well feel sure that there was something in this act of His needful for those to whom the command was at first addressed, not without meaning for us, and for all men. For—

(1.) As to the parents of the girl who had thus been rescued from the grave, were not they in danger of being carried away by the excitement of that mighty work? Were they not likely to forget the care, discipline, watchfulness, without which the restored gift might even yet slip once more out of their hands? They were to be taught that their responsibility had not ceased because the mercy of the Lifegiver had intervened. They

had to be recalled from the dizziness and forgetfulness of mere astonishment to the duties of their natural relationship. Christ had done for them what they were utterly unable to do for themselves. What they could do they were not in any degree to overlook. That was what they were taught by the words in which He 'commanded that something should be given her to eat.' Was there not something as significant, as necessary, in its bearing upon the spiritual condition of their hearts, in that other command: 'He charged them straitly that no man should know it'? The risk in all such cases was, that the man for whom a mighty work had been accomplished should lose his deep thankfulness, his consciousness of the abiding love of his Father in heaven, in the mere morbid craving after a wider notoriety. The man would suddenly find himself and his child famous. He might become the object of an eager curiosity—might be pointed at by the finger of fame. And so the quiet and the strength of his inner life would pass away from him, and there would be a feverish excitement, not satisfied with the reality of the priceless gift which had been received from God, unless there were bystanders to hear the wondrous tale, and look with reverence on him who was at once the narrator and the hero of it. Nothing can be more destructive of the true life of the soul

than the restlessness of such a state ; and it is, I believe, for this reason that we find again and again in the gospel history such repeated commands enjoining silence. Only here and there, where some peculiar necessity in a man's character or life required an opposite treatment, do we find the command reversed.


It is something, brethren, to have got thus far. We have a firm standing-ground in the faith that the Lord Jesus came among men as their healer and their teacher—their teacher by acts as well as by words ; above all, by discipline and education as well as by doctrines and precepts. And this, while it gives us a fresh insight into the Gospel history, and clothes it with a new interest, helps us also, I believe, to that permanent lesson which we are sure we ought to find there. And here the work of which we are reading presents itself in a twofold aspect :—It is (1.) an example ; and, (2.) strange as it may seem, a parable of something other and higher than itself.

Is there not something for us to learn from it in those works of mercy in which we endeavour to follow, at whatever distance, in the footsteps of the Lord ? We find a man who needs our help in sickness, or poverty, or danger. We interpose, not indeed with a power in itself miraculous or supernatural, but with assistance as much beyond

his reach, to him almost as extraordinary as if it actually were so. The resources of our wealth, the appliances of medical skill, the counsel and sagacity of a wide experience,—these raise him out of his perplexities and sufferings, and place him once more in a position in which he can fight the battle of life on an even footing, and start on his course again without being shackled and impeded. But here too there is the danger (who that has had any dealings with the poor has not come across it ?) of so interfering as to destroy the man's activity and self-reliance, and to make him depend upon the continuous stream of external assistance. He sinks into the condition of a pauper. He forgets the duties and responsibilities of his station, ceases to do that which he is quite able to do for himself, because some one else has done for him that which he was unable to do. Here, then, the example of Him who went about doing good indicates the limits within which we are to act. We are to help, to the full extent of our power, those who are helpless, but we are to teach them also how to help themselves. The laws of life, physical, moral, prudential, remain as they were before, and we are to remind the man who is in danger of forgetting them that he continues subject to them. There ought to be, indeed, thankfulness for the help, special, extra-

ordinary, which has been given him, but there ought not to be a perpetual dependence on it. That is fatal to all manliness and strength of character.

(2.) But there is something more than this. We may see in this mighty work an acted, though not a spoken parable. The miracles of Christ are parables. When He healed the leper with a touch He showed what power there lay in communion with His Divine humanity to heal the pollutions of the diseased and the defiled soul. When He gave sight to the blind, that was a sign and token that He could open the eye of the soul to see the things that are not temporal but eternal. When He gave hearing to the deaf and speech to the dumb, there was a proof of His power to bring to the sealed ears and the closed lips of men the new capacity for holding communion with their Father in heaven, for hearing His voice within them, and lifting up their souls to Him in the utterance of praise and prayer. And so here, and in the like works of mercy and of might on the widow's son at Nain and on Lazarus, he showed Himself the Lord of life—having power in Himself, power to quicken whom He will—rescuing the souls of men from the death of sin to the life of righteousness—quickenng those who were dead in tres-



passes and sins. Now, brethren, take that key to the interpretation of this parable as a whole, and in particular of this portion of it, and see whether it does not teach us lessons which we need at all times, and which we may any day be tempted to forget. That work of quickening the soul, that imparting of a new power of life, which some speak of as *regeneration*, and others (more correctly, more in harmony with the language of Scripture and the Prayer-book) as *conversion*, is a divine act—the work of Christ Himself. It is when He takes the soul as it were by the hand, and says to it ‘Talitha-cumi,’—‘I say to thee, Arise’—that the torpor of death is broken and the consciousness of a newly imparted strength shows itself in act. Let us recognise this for ourselves, and rejoice when others recognise it too. With this there may be, there often will be, imperfection, incompleteness, narrowness; but without this there can be nothing but indifference, formalism, self-righteousness, unbelief. But there comes the possibility of a danger precisely analogous to that against which the parents of the maiden were thus practically warned. Men trust to the perpetuation of the glow of their first conversion, of the divine gift of peace and strength of which they were then conscious. They forget that their spiritual life, no less than their natural

life, is subject to laws. It requires its food—the ‘daily bread’ which is to sustain it lest it wax faint and feeble. Men are not to lose sight of the necessity of deeds of love, and habits of self-control, and fixed times of worship, and appointed ordinances, and the sacraments of Christ’s gospel, and to trust in the perpetual recurrence of new stimulants to their flagging zeal—in the reproduction of the agony and the assurance of the first travail-pangs of their religious life. This, brethren, seemed to many wise and thoughtful men the danger of that Revival Movement which, some years ago, attracted so much notice, and from which some hoped so much. We cannot look on some of the results by which it was then followed with any feelings but those of respect and sympathy. The sneer of the scorner, the indifference of unbelief, are as far as possible removed from the temper with which a Christian man should look upon these efforts of his fellow-Christians. I cannot believe that the promise of Christ has come utterly to an end for evermore, and that He is not present where ‘two or three are gathered together in His name.’ If I attach any truth to the words, ‘Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened,’ I must believe that wherever there is an earnest seeking

there will be a proportionate finding. I am not deterred, even by strange stories of wild cries and unwonted states of mind or body, from recognising in meekness, and purity, and temperance, and faith, and love, the fruits of the Spirit of Holiness working in men mightily, and bringing forth that which the dead soil of their hearts could never have produced of itself. We cannot expect men or women to retain at all times, when the deep fountains of their life are broken up, the tranquillity and order of routine. Now, as of old, it may be true that 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,' and that 'violent men'—men of strong, impetuous, impulsive nature—take it, not as we receive it, for the most part, calmly, because listlessly, but 'by force,' as when men seize with a convulsive grasp the treasure which they have sought for years and have at last found.

But there is, I say, this danger. Men forget that the beginning is not the end; that the turning into the way of life is not the walking in it. They act for themselves as the father and the mother of the damsel in this history would have acted, if they had allowed the fresh-imparted life to exhaust itself; and then, when the swoon of death had once again fallen on her, had trusted to the renewed interposition of that reviving hand. And so it comes that men think they can only maintain

their spiritual life by the same process, the same machinery, the same excitement as that to which they owed its first beginning. The ordinary channels of religious feeling, the ordinary sustenance of the spiritual life, the ordinary duties of the daily tasks of home,—these come to be thought little of as compared with the special and the extraordinary. Men cease to feel that this gathering of rich and poor within the Church of Christ is really a ‘meeting for united prayer.’ The sacraments of Christ’s Church,—the Baptism which is the sign and witness and pledge of our new birth, the Supper of the Lord, which is the appointed means of our fellowship with Him and with each other,—these lose their true place in the Christian life, and men substitute for them a machinery of their own devising.

See here, then, brethren, the highest application of those words of the text : ‘ He commanded that something should be given her to eat.’ The ordinary is not superseded by the marvellous. The common laws of the Christian life retain their full force. You must make provision for them accordingly. What those who are most anxious to do God’s work, to build up His Church, to help others on in the way of eternal life, should do, is not only, or chiefly, to throw themselves and their energies and their offerings into that which is new, excep-

tional, exciting, but to sustain that which is established, to expand the agencies which are already at work. They have to see in what way they can make the worship of the Church of God, its means of grace, its services of praise, its ministries of preaching, accessible to the greatest number. We have to do what we can do, each of us in our own neighbourhood, and according to our means, to make that worship a reality and a blessing. Those who will be as faithful and wise servants, good stewards of the manifold grace of God, manifold in its nature and mode of working and effects, must remember that they have to give to every man 'his portion of meat in due season.'

It is our wisdom, in the guidance of our own spiritual life, to use what we find. If we let the soul go without its food, without that 'flesh which is meat indeed,' and that 'blood which is drink indeed,' without the 'daily bread' of prayers and meditation and the Word of God, and the effort to do His will, its powers will wax feeble, and its life will be sickly, and its faith will be unfruitful. We may then be driven to supply the absence of the true food by that which stimulates and excites; and this will be followed by another reaction of indifference, or will drive us into wild excesses. And it is our duty to do for others as we ought to do for ourselves. The things near at hand, the

work done at our doors, the schools, and the visiting societies, and the other ministries of help which do their work quietly and calmly,—these are the agencies by which we can do for the souls of our brethren, whom Christ has quickened with His wonder-working power, that which He has thus commanded.

You see then, brethren, that these words have a very close connexion with our inner life. That which most startled us in them is that without which the work of spiritual discipline, spiritual education, would have been incomplete. They have beyond this a lesson for Christian men and women in all ages, which none of us can disregard with impunity. But they have also, I believe, a special bearing on that work in which I have to call on you to join to-day. I have not thought it right to make that work the chief subject of what I had to say. It is better that the preacher should aim at setting forth some truth of God, and trust to its power to work upon the hearts of men, rather than at dilating, however skilfully and eloquently, upon the merits of this or that work, this or that scheme and organization. Where the work is new, where the organization is unknown, where the duty is unrecognised, where the subject is little understood, it may be well to adopt a different course; but here there seemed to me no need, no justifica-

tion for it. The work is close at hand, even at your doors.¹ The duty forces itself even now, as you listen to me, on your conscience ; the organization is the old established one, which has been in this land of ours so fruitful for good throughout many generations. You are called on to take part in that work, to provide the means of the continuous, regular sustenance of the Christian life. It ought to add some force to all the other grounds on which those who labour faithfully among you may urge their appeal, to remember that, in supplying to the souls whom Christ hath quickened the daily nurture which they need, you are obeying, in its full width and depth of meaning, that law of life which He disclosed when He turned to the wondering parents of the maiden into whose cheeks the hue of life was once more returning, and commanded that 'something should be given her to eat.'

¹ The maintenance of additional services in a parish church.

XVI.

THE DANGERS OF THE RELIGIOUS TEMPERAMENT.

'And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel : for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.'—GEN. xxxii. 28.

IN the life and character of Jacob, as in those of Abraham, we find in close union elements of feeling which elsewhere are met with, for the most part, separately and in contrast. The great father of the faithful—the friend of God—the man in whom, as in the great pattern instance of the world, was set forth the truth that man is justified by faith, was also the chieftain of a tribe, the first conspicuous example of that nomadic, patriarchal life which has been perpetuated among one portion at least of his descendants. Abraham stands at the fountainhead of the great Jewish and Arab races ; and the features of both are distinctly traceable in him. With Jacob the case is different. He is the father of the Jews only. No other race than that of Israel bears

his name, or traces its descent from him. But, for this very reason, the strange combination of seemingly incompatible characteristics which we recognise in him, is all the more remarkable. It is precisely in this that he too has a prophetic, representative character. For it is that very combination which saddens and perplexes us in looking at the history and character of the Jews as a people, which made them so great a mystery and wonder to the other nations of the world. On the one side, they have all along been the priest-nation, the prophet-nation of the world, chosen as special witnesses of the oneness and the eternity of God. They have felt the power of the Divine presence with a more intense consciousness than others ; have risen above the degradations of idol-worship ; have had hopes stretching out far and wide on to the remote future, to the establishment of a divine kingdom. If historians of the human race, who generalize widely, give to the Greeks the glory of being chief in wisdom and in art, and to the Romans that of being the great rulers and legislators of the ancient world, they no less distinctly recognise as with one voice, that the Jews were the religious people of the world, that without them, as those who were intrusted with a divine truth, there would have been throughout the world, in things pertaining unto God, an

almost total darkness. But on the other hand, it is no less plain, that all along there have been harsher and more repulsive features. Not in the period of their exile or dispersion only; not merely as the consequence of long centuries of oppression, but from the first the spirit of covetousness and greed has been dominant in them. They have been givers of usury, and takers of usury, drivers of hard bargains, full of extortion and excess, wanting in truthfulness and honour. Thus they have become a byword among the heathen; and the name of God has been blasphemed for their sake; and they have been looked on as hated by the human race. The whole history of Israel is the record of the conflict of one of these tendencies with the other. Prophets and righteous men live and die in the struggle against the selfishness, pride, and avarice which surround them.

Now notice, brethren, how wonderfully both these aspects of character are found in the history of the one man of whom we are now speaking. That very twofold name of Jacob and of Israel is but the symbol of this blending of contradictions in him. Like those *fissures* of the loom, which, seen from one point of view, are all bright with colours and radiant with gold, while, if you change your position, they appear dark and sombre,

the life of Jacob comes before us as a strange paradox, *shot* with the most marvellous diversities. He is the hero of faith, and the quick, sharp-witted schemer. To him the heavens are opened, and his wisdom passes into the cunning which is of the earth earthy. Yes; there are in that character of his the germs of the two forms of evil and good in their extremest growths which meet us in the gospel history. You may see in him, lying close together, the beginnings of all that we reverence in St. John, of all that we tremble at in Judas. If with the disciple whom Jesus loved, he sees the vision of angels, and finds himself at the gate of heaven, he is, on the other hand, like the traitor, crafty, subtle, ungenerous, lifting up his heel against the brother that had trusted him.

And in this, as in all other cases, the facts have a meaning. These things also are written for our learning. We may be sure that we shall find here also some tokens of the laws by which God governs us; an example of the discipline by which he educates the spirits of men now. For, mark *this*, brethren, the character of Jacob is not merely a typical or pattern character, as presenting the two aspects that meet us in the history of his descendants. It is a form which is to be found among the Gentiles no less than among the Jews. If there are contradictions which make the


whole life a paradox, the contradictions and the paradox belong not to Jewish but to human nature. The characteristics of Jacob are no less widespread, to be discovered in no fewer times and countries than those of Esau.

It remains for us to see whether there are not among us those who have the Jacob-stamp upon them, to ask by what process, under the guidance of God's loving discipline, they may reach the stage when that nature shall be changed. 'Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed.' In this age, it may be, there is even greater danger on this side than on the other. The life of the wild, rough hunter of the Syrian hills is more remote from ours than that of the 'plain man dwelling in tents.' The life of cities, the habits of civilisation, though they do not exclude the recklessness of Esau, tend more naturally to produce the craft and subtlety of Jacob. It is well to warn men against the dangers of the Esau-temperament, the reckless disregard of religious duties and religious privileges, the vices of the passionate and the profane. But we cannot, and ought not, to forget that there are faults of another character, *prudential vices*, compatible with orderly and reputable lives, marring what would otherwise be worthy of

all praise. And that which makes them most formidable is that they are the cleaving, besetting temptations of the religious temperament. They connect themselves, not with a formal and deliberate hypocrisy, but with the character of one who has been trained to serve and worship God, whose religion, so far as it goes, is sincere and genuine. One who stands in that position is kept from the grosser evils that are as 'sins going before to judgment.' He thinks, it may be, of the future world, of the heaven which is to reward him for his obedience, to compensate him for his sufferings. He is encompassed at home, at school, in society, by rules, habits, a tone of feeling, which prevent him, free as he is from all bold and strong impulses, from going far astray. But if, all this time, he is looking at the blessedness of God's kingdom as a prize to be won by efforts for himself, as a prize secured without effort to himself, the result will be, before long, that he will rest content with that thought, will come, as Jacob came, to care very little whether others have it or not ; and so there will come out of that root of bitterness loss of sympathy and loss of brotherhood.

There will be the risk of another fault following on this. The very thought that he has a higher hope than others, that beyond all lower, earthly aims he is thinking of a reward in heaven, will

tend to make him forgetful of rules, principles, obligations, which other men acknowledge. The religious man who begins to look on 'worldlings' with the feeling of one who gives God thanks that he is not like them, is in the way to fall short even of their excellences. Those who trust only to the impulses of an unregenerate nature, whose law is in the code of honour, not in the words of Christ, will be found to have a quicker sense of shame, a keener perception of honesty and truth, a more instinctive sense of shrinking from what is false and base, than many whose aims are higher, and who live as in the odour of sanctity. Untruthfulness, the want of perfect sincerity and frankness, is, it must be owned with shame and sorrow, almost the besetting sin of the religious temperament. It was so, we see, with Jacob. Can you not fancy his looking down on that wild, reckless brother of his, coming to the conclusion that it would be monstrous that he, who cared so little for his birth-right, should appropriate his father's blessing, going on to persuade himself that it was right to have recourse to any means to gain for himself the blessing which he really valued? And so he was guilty of a sin which Esau would have scorned. He came near to his father's bed with a lie in his right hand. And in all this, as well as in other points, he represents a class of characters. The



history of all religions, even that of the Church of God, has witnessed a large infusion of a failing like that of Jacob. When his descendants according to the flesh held it lawful to speak falsely and to act unjustly towards the stranger and the heathen ; when Christian teachers asserted, in act or word, that the end justified the means ; when pious frauds took their place as a recognised instrument of Christian education or Christian policy ; when controversialists assailed each other with garbled quotations and consciously perverted texts ; when religious men, honoured and of high repute, proved unfaithful in their dealings with the unrighteous mammon,—in all these instances the Jacob-character was showing itself on its darker side. We have no right to assume that in every such case there has been from the beginning a conscious and deliberate hypocrisy, that religion has only been a cloak for covetous and selfish ends. It shows a poor knowledge of man's nature to think that there is no other alternative. For the most part, religious feelings, religious convictions were really there, the seed had been sown, but it had fallen among thorns, and 'the thorns sprang up and choked it.' The first step in that downward path of falsehood and of fraud is to despise the Esaus of the world. The last lies (if the man is not rescued, and led upward by the spirit

of truth) in that region of wailing and of darkness, outside the gates of that heavenly Jerusalem, into which there shall enter none that 'loveth or maketh a lie.'

It is part of the same form of character, that it thinks much of ease and comfort, and shrinks from hardship and from danger. Cowardice and untruthfulness are near of kin, and commonly go together; and that which makes the union so perilous is that they mask themselves as virtues. Jacob was 'a plain man dwelling in tents.' The quiet life of home had more charms for him than the dangers and successes of one who was as 'a mighty hunter before the Lord.' While the bolder brother went out to the field, to the open wilderness country, with his quiver and his bow, that he might bring in to his father the antelopes of the hills of Canaan, he went to the flocks and fetched thence two good kids of the goats; and so, running like a thread that links together all that is poor, false, unworthy in his life, there is this constitutional timidity, this fear of danger, as the consequence of sin, rather than of sin itself. Throughout the whole history of Joseph, he is anxious, easily depressed, ever foreboding evil—led by that foreboding to keep back the truth, or to present a falsehood in its place.¹

¹ See Blunt's *Scriptural Coincidences*, i. 8.

This also, brethren, in an age of softness, which calls itself civilisation, in the life of great cities, in the habits of those whose prudence or religion keeps them from many forms of danger, is likely to be a common fault. I speak to many to whom the sins of Esau—that impetuous recklessness, that profaneness and want of reverence, that nature strong in its emotions of love or hatred—are as a far-off danger. You listen complacently to warnings which do not touch you. You find nothing in your past lives on which the accuser can lay his finger. Well, if it be so, rejoice and give thanks, for it is something to have been kept out of that temptation. But it will be well for you to rejoice with trembling. So far as your freedom from that class of faults is the result, not of the work of God's Spirit leading your spirit to be true and brave and pure, not of steadfast self-control and perseverance in doing right, but of temperament, circumstances, education, be sure that the sins of Jacob are near at hand, and that you will need discernment and vigilance to avoid them. If we look with fear on the recklessness which seems to us the augury of a wasted life and a forfeited inheritance, may we not look with some anxiety on those—the majority, perhaps—who break no rules, and give no trouble, and respect the ordinances of religion, and walk steadily in the path which parents

and teachers have marked out for them? May not all this, good and right as it is in itself, be simply the result of want of energy, want of independence, feebleness and poverty of character? Is it among such as these that we are to look for recruits for the great army of God? Are these the soldiers to fight manfully under the banner of their master, Christ? Is that freedom from the grosser vices more than the fear of consequences? Is there not along with it some want of openness and truth, some over-sensitiveness to the blame or the praise of men, some undue sharpness as to their own comfort and aggrandizement? Can such as these do God's work on earth, or take their place among His princes and His saints? or must we count them among those for whom holiness and truth are efforts too painful to be made, 'content to dwell in decencies for ever?'

We may be tempted, brethren, to think that no change is possible, that there is no escape from that lamentable mediocrity. When the question is asked, 'Is there any hope? Can these things be?' our hearts misgive us, and answer that there is none. But the history of Jacob teaches us a different lesson. I meet that question with the answer, 'Yes, there is hope. Even these things are possible,' and I appeal to that history as a proof. There came a time when, after long

struggles and a painful discipline, the old characteristic evils were subdued and overcome. We may turn from the beginning to the end ; we may look on this picture and then on that ; we may pass from the youth eager for his brother's birth-right, as that on which his heart is set, to the old man standing undismayed before Pharaoh and his servants, and confessing that he is ' a stranger and pilgrim upon earth.' There we see the dissembler crouching by the dim-eyed Isaac, trembling at the thought of discovery and danger ; here the old man, whose own eyes had grown dim with age, speaks as the Spirit of God prompts him, and owns that all his life long there has been a higher wisdom than his own, and a mightier hand guiding and protecting him. It is God who has fed him all his life long ; it is the Angel of the Divine presence that has 'redeemed him from all evil.' The eye which is closing to the world of sense, to the outward and the present, is opening to the future and the unseen. The spell which had bound those timid lips so long melts away under the transforming power of God's Spirit, and he rebukes sin as it ought to be rebuked, blesses with the fullest of all blessings him who, in his purity, and truth, and sufferings, came nearest in all that ancient story to the blessedness of Christ's kingdom.¹

¹ Comp. Gen. xlvii. 9 ; xlviii. 16.

Yes, brethren, there is the pledge that it is possible for us to rise to higher things, to do a nobler work. Our feebleness, coldness, timidity, insincerity, can be overcome by the grace of God, that works in us mightily. The religious temperament, with all its faults, may pass into the matured holiness of him who is not religious only, but godly. This is possible, if only there be some reality to start with, some measure of faith and earnestness. God can disentangle that from the mesh of lower motives with which it may be interwoven ; He can root out the thorns which choke the word of life. Ask that it may be so with you, and then, at the close of your lives, you also, like Jacob, will recognise what God has done for you as a teacher and a guide. How the work is to be done in thee 'thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,' when thou too hast wrestled with the Angel, and hast become a prince with God.


XVII.

THE CONFESSIONS OF KING SOLOMON.

'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.'—ECCLES. XII. 13.

ONE who reads the Book of Ecclesiastes carefully, must be struck, I believe, by the comparative absence of anything that would indicate that he was reading the confessions of a repentant *Israelite*. Acknowledgments of the vanity of all the works and sorrows of men, no less than of their delights and joys; the recognition of an eternal law of duty abiding for ever, while all things else change, or seem to change; warnings to the young to profit by the experience of one who has struggled out of the 'evil nets' into which they are rushing blindly,—this we have abundantly. But this might come, we are tempted to say, from a heathen moralist. This is not the language of one who is conscious that he belongs to a peculiar people, who rests his hopes upon the covenant which God has made with his fathers. We look

for the belief in the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in one who was called to be the ruler of Israel, for some sign that the sure mercies of David were not forgotten by his son,—that he, the Preacher, remembered that he was the heir of the glorious and wonderful promises that were made to his father. We are compelled to confess that we can discover nothing of the kind. The sadness with which we read those confessions of a wasted life is mingled with wonder when we reflect that this was he whose youth must have been passed amid the minstrelsy of the Temple, and to whom the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel must have been familiar things. There is a strange contrast between the language of the father and the son. The shepherd-boy, whose early years were spent in hardship, and war, and danger ; who had no certain dwelling-place, and encountered hunger and nakedness, and perils of water and of robbers—perils of his own countrymen, and of false brethren ; who wandered as an outlaw in the wilderness of Judah, and sought refuge in dens and caves of the earth ; to whom a crown brought nothing but a heavier burden and a deeper sorrow ; whose old age was darker than his youth, and whose grey hairs were brought down with sorrow to the grave by the evil life and miserable death of the son whom he most loved ;—he never



lost, even for a moment, his trust in the perpetual loving presence of the God in whom he had believed. The Lord was still his shepherd, his shield and defence, his strong tower and his rock. 'Goodness and mercy,' he said, 'had followed him all the days of his life.' He felt sure that the same 'rod and staff' would be with him in the 'valley of the shadow of death.' The last utterance of his failing strength is full of the recollections of his youth, speaks of the same power of perceiving and enjoying the Divine beauty of nature, its wonderful loveliness or terror, as that of which the Psalms are full. The old man, whose life is fast passing away, feeble and cold and dying, has a vision of 'the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.'¹ Whether this glory is to be realized in his own house and his own kingdom he knows not, yet he can depart in peace, believing that it is no deceitful dream, no mocking, transient brightness. There is an 'everlasting covenant,' that is 'all his salvation and all his desire.'

What the life of the son was, how it led him to scepticism and scorn, we have in part already seen. The child of peace, the beloved of the Lord, living in security, triumphing almost without an effort over his rivals, crowned with all gifts of

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

mind and spirit, living in the midst of a more than kingly magnificence, says nothing of the everlasting covenant, makes no acknowledgment of, utters hardly a prayer to, his Father in the heavens. The highest truths do not go beyond the recognition that there is, in spite of all appearances that contradict it, a righteous and Divine order, or the belief that it is the *duty* of men to 'fear God and keep His commandments.'

It seems almost a truism to infer from this contrast the blessedness of a life of trial and suffering, the danger of one of unbroken prosperity and ease. And yet here, as in so many other instances, a truism is only a disregarded truth, one which does not cease to be true, but which we do not choose to acknowledge as we ought to do. This is the great lesson of all experience. 'It is good for men that they should be afflicted,' for thus 'they learn the statutes of God.'¹ It is because this is the tendency of suffering, that it comes so largely into the discipline by which the children of God are perfected, so that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.'² There are no times so likely to lead men to trust in the Everlasting Arms as those in which the arm of flesh fails them utterly; none in which they can learn so truly that their strength is in 'quietness

¹ Ps. cxix. 71.

² Heb. xii. 6.

and confidence,' as those in which they find that the reed on which they have leant has broken beneath their hand, and pierced it. And we, who live in easy circumstances, and to whom, in the common course of things, our daily life brings no hardships or dangers, have great need to remember how very close an utter godlessness may lie to that outward regularity. If we set our hearts on the treasures of earth, or its joys, or put our trust in princes, or in any child of men, we shall discover, sooner or later, that these idols of our souls come between us and God. Our perceptions of the truths which we profess will become ever fainter and dimmer. What wonder, if our lives are so utterly unlike what Christ's life was, that we should cease to understand His gospel, and have therefore but a formal and shallow belief in it?

But the history of the Preacher has a more definite and a deeper meaning in it. It shows us that the special tendency of the life which he had led, a life, be it remembered, of intellectual activity, as well as one full of the pride of life and the pleasures of gratified desires, is to tear up by the roots a man's hereditary faith, and all the hope and confidence that are bound up with it. Those hopes, the clear, undoubting trust, the unclouded apprehension of the truths which he has been taught in childhood, are treasures which it is easy

to cast aside—difficult, almost impossible, to regain. The man who, by scorning the image of God in himself, or in his brethren, has lost the power of perceiving the brightness of that image manifested in the Only-begotten of the Father, will find that all the words and phrases which expressed his faith in the Incarnation become empty technicalities to him. They will seem the dreariest fragments that could be gathered by men who had no human hearts in them, out of the *débris* of bygone controversies. And so, again, with other truths. The practical living denial of a Father in heaven, who wills that we should be pure as He is pure, and perfect as He is perfect, will be sure to end in a mist and darkness of vision through which the whole faith in the possibility of a regenerate life will seem the most unreal of all chimeras. Lose the clue of the desire to do the will of God, and you are lost in the labyrinth of human systems. The ‘double-minded man,’ the man whose life is a contradiction and a lie against his knowledge, is ‘unstable in all his ways.’¹

And yet it may be that, even here, there is a remedy for the evil. In God’s storehouse there are many remedies. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us how one, over whom the disease had gained the greatest power, was delivered from its thralldom. The cure was not rapid. It could

¹ James i. 8.

hardly be *that*, when the corruption was so deeply seated. It might not seem so complete as that which those who minister to a soul diseased expect to see following all at once from the application of their infallible panaceas ; but it was God's work of healing, and therefore the true one, and there was hope. Of the discipline by which it was accomplished the book tells us clearly. We see, even early in the course, signs that life is struggling with death, even where at first we discerned nothing but hatred and scorn. The thought that 'wisdom excelleth folly,'¹ that there is a Divine light, alternates strangely enough with the accents of hopelessness. It was something to recognise that the calm enjoyment which at one time seemed to him the highest end of life, must come from God ; better still, to acknowledge that 'God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.'² Even the vanity of human purposes, the vexation of all human spirits, led his mind, at last, beyond the thought of an unchangeable Nature to that of an unchangeable God. 'I know this,' he said, 'that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever ; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it ; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him.'³

We may be quite sure that one who had lived

¹ Eccles. ii. 13.

² Eccles. ii. 24-26.

³ Eccles. iii. 14.

the life that Solomon had, who had been hailed as the builder of a Temple, and the protector of a Faith ; whom priests and Levites served and flattered, but had not the courage to reprove, would hear from them many excellent words on the duties of religion, the importance of the worship of the sanctuary. It may be that these thoughts of God that were rising in his mind after his long wanderings in the mire of sensuality, and his enlarged experience of all that the religious consciousness of mankind could devise for its own alleviation, led him of his own accord to think of the solemn services in which he had once taken so prominent a part. Might he not once again become as one of those humble worshippers, and behold God's power and glory as he had seen them in the sanctuary ? What *did* he see there ? What did he learn from the established worship of his country ? Alas, there also he found a hollowness from which his whole heart revolted, which was more intolerable than his own indulgence in luxury or pursuit of wisdom. 'The sacrifices of fools' who 'considered not that they did evil,' men who were 'rash with their mouths' and 'hasty with their lips ;' a 'multitude of words' which were not the overflowing of a full heart, but the utterance of a fool's voice, proclaiming the emptiness of his soul ; vows which men need not have made, and

which, when made, they did not keep, dreams and vanities ;—this was what he saw in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of the holy city.¹ There was no strength or comfort in this. It was far better to remember that God was in heaven, and His worshipper on earth, and so to let his words be few.

It is impossible, I think, to look on the connexion of the parts of the fifth chapter as accidental. The thought of the 'oppressions that were done under the sun' recurs again, and follows immediately on the words of indignation with which he had spoken of the hypocrites and formalists. They, we must believe, those self-same boastful worshippers, were the men from whom proceeded the 'violent perverting of judgment and justice.' They went from the sacrifice of fools to judge unrighteous judgment—to receive gifts, and to drive wise men mad. They sought to grasp for themselves the 'profit of the earth, which was for all,' and loved silver and abundance. All this was wretched enough ; but as he looked deeper, he saw something that seemed like a law of compensation, some faint signs at least of a Divine retribution : the rich oppressor was clearly not one whit better for all his riches,—gained nothing by his treasures but the 'beholding of them with his eyes.'² The

¹ Eccles. v. 1-6.

² Eccles. v. 11, 12.

labouring man did not suffer so much as might at first appear. He might have more freedom, more tranquillity and health and enjoyment, than the ruler who trampled on him. Yet, after all, this was an unsatisfactory solution of the problem. Unless it led the way to something better than itself, it could not prevent the recurrence of the old feeling, that all society was corrupt, 'that vanity and an evil disease' pervaded it altogether, that an equal darkness covered the beginning and the end of life.¹ What it did teach him was to feel with and for the sufferers, to know that 'sorrow was better than laughter,' that it was 'better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting' and of mirth, to admire the patient in spirit, while he owned the power of the wrongs of society to cause madness in the heart even of the wise.² That was, we may well imagine, a wonderful step in the life of this king, who had gathered 'silver and gold, and men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men ;' who dwelt in his kingly palaces, with gardens and orchards and pools of water to minister to his enjoyment. Yet such a change is not singular in the spiritual history of men. The history of the monastic orders brings before us many examples of it. There may be that now in the hearts of men which is

¹ Eccles. vi. 1-5.

² Eccles. vii. 2-7.

more analogous to it than we imagine. Men, after wasted years and riotous living, come to themselves again, and with their faith all unsettled and doubts unremoved, are content to work for and among the sufferers from the world's wrong, or from the evils that seem to come on men from time and chance. They are tempted at first, as the Preacher was, to ask many questions. They seek to know 'why the former days were better than the latter.' Then they remember that to ask this is to inquire unwisely.¹ It is better to go on in their work and labour of love; not to 'withdraw their hand' from *that*, however they may despair of solving the problem of the universe. One thing they are learning to believe; the house of suffering, and the patient in spirit teach them this: that 'he that feareth God cometh forth of them all.'² We may hope (this is the blessing which the Preacher's confessions leave with us) that they will go further. It may be that truth will yet dawn on them more brightly, and that they will walk in its light. It may be that they will one day hear the words, which to them will come with the fulness of a surprise that they cannot have for him whose faith has been clear and unshaken, who has consciously been serving Christ in ministering to His poor: 'Forasmuch as ye did it

¹ Eccles. vii. 10.

² Eccles. vii. 18.

unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'

We have seen that the work of healing is advancing rapidly ; there is life struggling against death, hope against despair. But there are (how untrue the book would be to all human experience, if there were not !) relapses into the old state. Once again the answer he is in search of seems far off, and exceeding deep, so that he cannot find it. He is compelled to renew that analysis of the reason of things, and of the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, in which he had so often been baffled.¹

And there is a terrible significance in that which now forms the hindrance. He is thrown back by the dark visions of remembered sins. What had been once is acted over again in the chambers of memory, and he thinks of one 'more bitter than death,' whose heart was as a snare and net ; and her, and those like her, who rise up before him, it may be, from the darkness of the grave, he remembers, not with infinite shame and infinite compassion, but only with scorn and railing, with bitter words, which remind us of all that is most hateful in the sensualist poets of Greece or Rome ;² and therefore he treads the old circle once again, and the mists become thicker, and the blackness gathers. One truth, indeed, he bears away with him. The

¹ Eccles. vii. 11-25.

² Eccles. vii. 26.

evil was his own choice, not God's creation. 'God made men upright,' but they have sought out many inventions ;¹ but as regards his hope and steadfastness he has gone back. That thought of scorn, that bitterness, in which there is a loathing of evil, but no true repentance, has undone the effect of the works of sympathy and help. Doubts once again rush in on him. Their course is stemmed for a time by the thought that it shall be well with them that fear God, not well with them who fear Him not. Experience shows him how true this is in the long-run in life. In spite of all anomalies there is a Divine government ; the evil-doer is not happy,—the sufferer may be ; the calm and contented life of one who fears God and loves man presents the picture of a perfect blessedness. But then death comes, with its cold crushing equality—the great leveller, and therefore, as it seemed to him, the greatest of all anomalies. All things alike to all, 'one event to the righteous and the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not'—this was an evil that went through all things. This put 'madness in their heart.' Their love, and their hatred, and their envy perish with them. 'There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither all men go.'¹

¹ Eccles. vii. 29.

² Eccles. viii. 12 ; ix. 6.

It would be untrue to say that these doubts represent the permanent faith either of Solomon, or of any other Israelite. It would be equally untrue to assert that the life and immortality which were brought to life through the gospel, came before his mind with the same unclouded brightness as that in which they are seen by one who believes in Christ, and knows that he is a child of God. But he did rise out of the doubts and the deadness and coldness in which they had plunged him. The faith in a Divine order, in a righteous retribution, grew stronger and stronger. Nothing was wasted, nothing lost sight of in the book of God's remembrance. No evil deed went unpunished. That he had found out long ago the ways of the young man's heart, which seemed so full of delight, led him to the days of darkness. The old age of the king, who had lived in the selfishness of the pleasure-seeker (the old age, Solomon must have said to himself, which is in store for *me*), was in itself a judgment, an augury he could not ignore, of one which lay beyond it. The evil days had come, the years were drawing nigh in which he must say, 'I have no pleasure in them.' The power to perceive, and the power to enjoy, depart with the gathering of the years. 'The keepers of the house tremble, the strong men bow themselves, and the daughters of music are brought low, and fears are in

the way.' And then comes the end : the loosing of the 'silver cord' of life, the breaking of the 'golden bowl' of sense, the drying up of the 'fountain' and the 'cistern' from which it had been so often filled, and then 'the dust returned to the earth, as it was, and the spirit returned to God who gave it.'¹

But then there was a Divine recompense also. No righteous or loving deed, done with a righteous and loving heart, should be without its fruit. His mercy to the poor and afflicted had taught him that. The bread might be 'cast upon the waters,' but after many days it should be found. It was idle, and therefore sinful, to wait for special occasions of doing good, to watch for some great calamities before making any effort to relieve the sufferers. It was idle to waste a life in observing the clouds and regarding the wind. The clouds would 'empty themselves when they were full of rain.' The tree would 'fall to the south or the north,' as the wind should blow it. It was the work and the blessedness of a man to be doing good perpetually, and trusting the issue of it to God ; in the morning to 'sow his seed,' and in the evening not to 'withhold his hand'—and then in due season he should reap. That was true, whatever else might be deceitful. His spirit also returned to God.² There, in that presence, stripped of all disguises, receiving each of them a righteous

¹ Eccles. xii. 1-7.

² Eccles. xi. 1-4.

judgment, should every work and every secret thing, whether it were good or evil, be brought to light. The Divine order was not confined within the time-limits of a human life. Death did not destroy it, was not the great anomaly. How or in what way he knew not, but all that he had felt and known of the blessedness of God's servants, of the curse in which they involve themselves who turn aside from Him, acquired an infinite depth and power for him. He had dug deep, had gone through all the crusts of sensuality, doubt, perplexity, misery, despondency, but he had come at last to a rock, and out of that rock flowed the water of life. He was content not to answer the questions which had haunted him. He turned in utter weariness from the many books and the much study in which he had expected to find an answer. Now he was following a Divine light; it was a Divine voice that he heard proclaiming to him and to all men, 'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.'¹

This may seem to us, as I said, a very inadequate result, unworthy of a devout Israelite. It falls far short of the faith of David. It is still further distant from that of a believer in the gospel. We should be tempted to look on one who declared solemnly that the experience of a long life had taught him to acknowledge the

¹ Eccles. xii 12-14.

sovereignty of God and the eternal law of duty as speaking the language of a heathen. For such an one we should have little hope, it may be, a harsh condemnation.

I give thanks, brethren, that the record of this book teaches us to suspend, if not to reverse, our judgment. I believe that the old man who, when his strength and his wisdom were failing him, took refuge in this hope, and rested on this truth, was better, stronger, wiser, safer,—if you like to introduce the idea of safety,—than he whom the Queen of Sheba came to visit; who poured forth that wonderful prayer at the dedication of the Temple. For great as the truths were which he proclaimed, and marvellously as he rose to the perception of their harmony with each other, there was a subtle danger in all that eloquence and skill of speech. The very act of worship might soon pass into a display of his own wisdom, not the acknowledgment of an infinite wisdom, by which he was seeking to be taught. The intellect analyses truth, and may come to look on the truths as its own creations, or they may seem unable to bear the search, and vanish like the cloud-wreaths of the morning. And so that which seemed firmly grasped will slip away from us. Because we never knew the truths in their power, because they were things for us to talk

about and boast of, we suffer the due reward of our transgressions when we find even our acts of worship full of vanities and dreams. It is a gain and blessing unspeakable when we are able once again to hold one truth firmly, and to feel that that is real, divine, eternal. Better to know that in its power than to profess a whole creed with the carelessness of a pleasure-seeker, or the keenness of a controversialist.

And the blessedness of thus apprehending any one article of faith is, that it must needs lead on to others. The words, 'Fear God, and keep his commandments,' were the simplest of all precepts, and yet one who fixed his heart on them, and strove to live in them, would find himself led perpetually into new regions of truth, new convictions of sin, new forms of holiness. To fear God, not at stated times and in solemn worship only, but evermore ; at morning and at noonday and in the evening ; speaking or acting ; in secret thoughts and unrevealed desires ; not with the false fear of a slave or hireling, but with the true loving fear of children ; to feel that His commandments are 'exceeding broad ;' that no man is free from them ; that they give freedom, and set a man's heart at liberty,—what might not these thoughts teach to the humbled and contrite heart ? Would they in the end leave him so far behind ? Would there

not be growth, from faith to faith, and grace to grace ; a perpetual increase of light, shining more and more brightly unto the perfect day? May we not hope that it was so for the Preacher? May we not hope that it is so for those who, as he did, have turned from the true wisdom that is of God to the harlotry of sense and selfishness, and then find themselves in doubt and perplexity, and then turn with true sympathy to works of love and mercy, and then seize on one great truth, and live on it and in it? May we not hope that it will be so for ourselves, so far as our temptations of the sense or of the intellect have been like his?

Certain, at any rate, we may be, that this is the Divine method of recovery. The simplest words which we were taught in childhood, the acknowledgment that we have a Father in heaven, that we are justified by faith, that we are reconciled by the blood of Christ,—any one of these, if we grasp it firmly, will sustain us safely, and by it we may escape from the abyss of doubt in which we have wandered—from the destruction which lies beyond it.

[*Note.*—I may be permitted to refer to the articles ECCLESIASTES and SOLOMON, in Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, for a fuller examination of the character and the book which form the subject-matter of this sermon.]

XVIII.

THINGS NEW AND OLD.¹

'Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.'—**MATT.** XIII. 52.

YOU will readily divine, brethren, why I have chosen these words as the starting-point for what I have to say to you at this our annual gathering. It is obvious that they have much to do with that work in which we are all of us engaged; obvious, too, that they contain a distinct lesson for both the earlier and later stages of it. They speak of the discipline by which men are made true Scribes, 'instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.' They speak also of that which comes afterwards, the work of the householder, 'who brings forth out of his treasure,' as they are wanted, the new and the old things which he has stored up there. The man who has just begun to feel conscious that he is a student, entering on his work with high purposes

¹ Preached at the Annual Gathering of Theological Associates and Students, King's College, London, in 1853.

and hopes, yet also with fear and trembling ; those to whom the duties of the pastoral office are just becoming familiar ; those again who can look back on many years of labour,—all may learn here that which each of them needs. The words have much to teach us as to the meaning of a Theological Education,—as to the work of the Christian Ministry.

I must call to your remembrance, brethren, the position which these words occupy in the Lord's teaching,—the occasion which called them forth. That will, at all events, be our best beginning. We shall best understand His words by striving to know how they must have been understood by those to whom He spoke them.

We find, then, that His disciples had been listening to Him as He unfolded to them, one by one, the mysteries of His kingdom. At first, as He set them forth in parables, even they were slow to understand Him. They came to ask Him to interpret that which they felt had an inner meaning, but which they were unable to interpret for themselves. They were met by the question, ' Know ye not this parable ? and how then will ye know all parables ?'¹ There was a slowness of apprehension in them which called for this reproof, which it was meant to stir up and quicken. But the Teacher continued to instruct them in the same way, and

¹ Mark iv. 45.

they showed that His words had not fallen to the ground. Before long they had learnt a new lesson,—learnt to know Him better than they had done,—to be quicker in apprehending the wisdom He imparted. And thus, when other parables had been spoken, in part, one might almost say, as tests of their progress, they could answer His question, ‘Have ye understood all these things?’¹ with no doubt or hesitation. Their ‘Yea, Lord,’ bore witness at once of a fuller measure of light, and a stronger power of vision to see the things that God revealed to them. And they were told accordingly that now they were becoming what He desired to see them,—learning at last to be Scribes, instructed unto His kingdom.

It must surely have been very strange to them to hear their own work spoken of as having any connexion with the office of a Scribe. They could understand being the disciples of a Prophet, the messengers whom the Lord should send to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. They had not been startled when they had heard that they were to be ‘fishers of men.’ But their associations with the name of Scribe must have been connected almost exclusively with thoughts of what was base and evil. The Scribes had shown themselves their Lord’s bitterest enemies. He had uttered the strongest condemnations and

¹ Matt. xiii. 51.

woes against their hypocrisy, and pride, and formalism. Their name had become a byword for the corruption of Divine truth by human systems. They professed to be expounders of the Sacred Books, and yet they 'made the Word of God of none effect by their traditions.' What were the disciples of Christ to understand when He told them that He was training them to be Scribes? Yet the work of a Scribe was a necessary, and therefore an honourable work. It was right that those to whom God had given knowledge, and leisure, and freedom from the lower cares of life, should devote themselves to the task of studying, more profoundly than others could do, the words which had been spoken by holy men of old, moved by the Holy Ghost. It was right also that they should not keep their knowledge to themselves; that they should seek to be guides to the blind and a light to them that were in darkness. The apostles of Christ, therefore, were to be called to this also. To go through cities and villages preaching the baptism of repentance was but the beginning of their work. They were not to be merely the preachers of a new doctrine. The Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms were to be as dear to them as to the most honoured Rabbi in Jerusalem; infinitely dearer, because speaking to them of truths of which the Rabbi had not the

faintest apprehension. They also were to be Scribes and interpreters. They were to have their understandings opened that they might understand the Scriptures. Out of the Scriptures they were to persuade, exhort, rebuke.

But if the disciples of Christ were reconciled to this view of their future work, they must still have been startled at the way in which they found they were to be trained for it. Even those fishermen of Galilee must have had some notion what the education of a Scribe was like. They must have seen or heard in their visits to Jerusalem, in part, perhaps, in their native towns, how it was thought that men became fitted for that high vocation. To sit at the feet of some doctor of the law held in reputation among all the people ; to collect the sayings of learned men ; to store their memory with the precepts of the elders ; to be able to defend the traditions of their teacher's party against those of all rival sects ; to hold themselves aloof from common things and common men ; to anticipate, as far as might be, the strictness and exclusiveness of the sacred office itself ;—this was what they had seen, and themselves perhaps regarded as the true preparation. They were now taught that the training which was required was something very different from this. Their teacher, their Rabbi, was leading them by another

path than this. To know the truths of God's kingdom, not the opinions of men, was the one thing needful. And He had put them in the way of learning those truths by another method than that with which they were familiar. He had taught them in parables and proverbs. The labours of the husbandman ; the common cares of household life ; the merchant's pursuit of wealth ; the sower sowing his seed ; the fisherman casting his net into the sea ;—all these were henceforth to have a higher meaning than before. Men were to see that the laws of God's kingdom were set forth in them no less clearly than in the Scriptures, which were, from first to last, histories, prophecies, foreshadowings of that kingdom ; that the commonest scenes and occupations were, to one who saw them rightly, the patterns of things in the heavens. They were to learn everywhere and from everything. His words of wisdom while He was with them ; the Spirit leading them into all truth after His departure ; the Scriptures which He taught them to understand ; the things they saw in the woods and fields, and in the dwellings and labours of men ; the experience of their own hearts ;—all these were to be used by them : all these were parts of the discipline by which the *ἀγράμματοι καὶ ἰδιῶται* were to become *γραμματεῖς μαθητευθέντες τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν*.


And out of this storehouse they were to bring forth, as He told them, things new and old : the new perhaps, first and chiefly—the things that had been hidden—the words that had declared to them truths which they had not known before, and which flesh and blood could never have revealed to them. But these were not to supersede the old. No one truth that had ever been uttered, on which holy or brave men of old had rested, was to be forgotten. The new were to be set forth as harmonizing with the old, and completing them. It was still necessary to declare the old, lest men should only half-understand or half-embrace the new.

We shall best arrive at the full meaning of these words by seeing how the disciples of Christ acted on them. The first impression made on the minds of men by their preaching was doubtless this, that they were proclaimers of a new doctrine. They preached Jesus as the Christ, and Christ as crucified. They bore their witness that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in His name to all nations ; that God had raised Him from the dead, and made Him King, and Lord, and Judge ; that all men should rise again with their bodies and stand before His throne, and give account of their own works. All this was very strange and wonderful. They might seem at

first simply innovators,—men who were ‘turning the world upside down’ with new unheard-of doctrines. But as their hearers became more familiar with their teaching, they found that there were old things as well as new in their treasure. The devout Jew was not required to give up one jot or one tittle of any truth or practice which he had found strengthening and helpful to his soul. The necessity of holiness ; obedience to God’s commandments ; reverence for the name of God ; hatred of idolatry ; purity of personal and social life ; fixed hours and forms of prayer ; mortification of the body ; the use of psalms and hymns ;—all these he found taught and enforced in the Church of Christ not less zealously than they had been by Jewish teachers, connected with higher truths, and resting on a firmer ground. And the Greek and the Barbarian, though to them the truth that they had a Father in heaven who had sent His Son to deliver them, and who ruled the world in righteousness, was more entirely new, were yet able to recognise in what they heard things which had been from the beginning. The witness of their own thoughts, accusing or excusing ; the law written in their hearts ; the true inner man that was in them warring against their false and corrupted nature ; the testimony of the order of the world, of the gifts of God, of the rain

from heaven and the fruitful seasons, of wise and prophetic teachers among themselves,—were all appealed to as signs of God's purposes of love, evidences of His righteous kingdom. The new commandment was also the oldest of all commandments. The newest of all truths was made known by removing the veil by which it had hitherto been concealed, but through which men had, from time to time, caught glimpses of it.

But this command was obeyed by the apostles of Christ in yet another aspect of it ; and here also they are our examples. Each man had *his own* treasure of which he was the appointed steward, which he had been gathering all his life long, to which he was constantly to be adding. There was the treasure of the truths which God had taught him, of the thoughts, experiences, analogies which had thrown light on them, and guided him, often through dark and difficult paths, to the pure gold and goodly pearls which he was seeking. And from this also each true Scribe brought forth things new and old. No thoughtful reader of the Epistles or the Sermons of the New Testament can fail to see how wonderfully this law of a true progress is set forth in the teaching of the apostles. They were not like 'children carried about' by the changing 'blasts' of new doctrines. There was with them no passing from phase to



phase of belief or unbelief. They did not appear as builders-up of the things they had destroyed, or destroyers of that which they had built; but, 'having proved all things, they held fast that which was good.' Each man kept a 'firm hold' on the things that he had heard, lest at any time he should 'let them slip.' The acts and words of the Divine Teacher were brought to his remembrance. His own life, with all its struggles, temptations, blessings, was spread out before him as an open scroll. There he learnt how to deal with men of like passions with himself. Having been tempted himself, he knew how to succour them that were tempted, and to comfort others with the same comfort with which he himself had been comforted of God.

The history of the Church of Christ, brethren, is a continual witness to the truth of the same law. It is full of the blessings which have followed from obedience to it, of the evil which has been the inevitable result when it has been neglected or set aside. The darkest periods of Church History, as some of you remember, as others will soon find, were those in **which** men became idolaters of the old things, and the teachers of the Church were not like Scribes 'instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,' but, like those of Jerusalem, cleaving to traditional dogmas and the worn-out forms of

superstition. And this almost of necessity led the way to a violent reaction. Men wished to be Reformers, and thought that they must begin with destroying. They acted as if there had been no treasure accumulating,—no Temple of the living God built up and adorned in the course of many ages,—as if their only work was to clear the ground and lay the foundation once again. The desire to tell or to hear of some new thing became the parent of countless heresies, of that form of unbelief which we significantly call Neology. Sometimes, too, there was an attempt to combine old things and new, in which men mistook the counterfeit for the reality. They aimed at a false union of the most heterogeneous elements, and brought into the treasury of God things which were fit only for the idol's temple. Their Lord had warned them against this danger also. The parables of the new wine poured into old bottles, of the new cloth sewed on the old garment, were as distinct a witness against this combination of things essentially opposed, as this which we are now considering was against a one-sided exclusiveness. The law of Christ was not fulfilled when heathen thoughts and customs received Christian names, and were adopted by the Christian Church. It was not fulfilled when Christian truths were presented to heathens as being simply modifications

of their own forms of faith. It was not fulfilled when the language of logical speculation and the systems of human thought were received as of equal worth with the truths which God has revealed to us.

But it has been fulfilled, brethren, in great measure actually,—still more, we may believe, in desire and purpose,—by the Church, to whose ministry some of us have been already called, to whose service we have all, in profession, and, I trust in heart, devoted ourselves. Those who were the most active in the great work of the Reformation of the Church of England declared, almost in so many words, that this was their aim in all that they did, in leaving much undone. They might have escaped much obloquy, and have strengthened their cause politically, had they taken a different course. They were content to hear it said that their measures were feeble and incomplete, to bear the reproach of belonging to a Church that rested on a compromise. They brought out of their treasure the old things, the prayers, the creeds, the organization, the order of worship, the devout practices which had been gathered there during fifteen hundred years, many of which were necessary as witnesses of the truth, others endeared to the heart of the nation by long usage, and the prescriptive right of things which, being indifferent,

are found established. But they did not disdain new things. The doctrinal statements of the Reformers of Germany,¹ the liturgical books of those of Cologne and Strasburg,² the writings of earnest men among themselves anxious to meet the wants of the age fully,—these were no less made to contribute their share to the great work on which they were engaged. And some things there were here also, at once new and old, truths which had been the Church's inheritance from the beginning, but long obscured and hidden from men's eyes, which they sought to bring out once again into the light of day, and to set forth with such a power and clearness that they should appear to men as a newly-acquired possession, to be defended manfully against all who would attempt to deprive them of it.

The spirit in which these men acted was then emphatically, for evil report or good report, the spirit characteristic of the Church of England. By it she was distinguished from those who forget that 'time alters all things for the worse,' and that there is consequently need of a constant reformation of that which has been not developed only, but corrupted, not less from those who are slaves


¹ See Archbishop Laurence's Bampton Lectures.

² See Bulley's *Variations of the Communion and Baptismal Offices*, pp. 149, 174, 237.

to that which is as dangerous to Churches as it is to nations,—the fanaticism of devising new theories of government, and planning schemes for carrying them into effect. In proportion as those who followed them have been true to their example, she has done her work effectually, and has become more and more the guide of her children, the Church of the whole nation. And here, as in the history of the Church at large, failure is as instructive as success. If there are times on which we cannot look back without regret and shame—if there are facts which we cannot ignore in her present relation to the people of this country, calculated to fill us with almost as much fear as hope,—we shall find, I believe, that the evil is in no slight measure traceable to the neglect of that lesson which she might have learnt from her Lord's teaching, and from the experience of former ages. Her sons have not been true Scribes, but false ones, at one time going back to the old things with a blind, exclusive admiration; at another, pressing on to something, they cared not what, so long as it had the charm of novelty; sometimes, and this was the most fatal symptom for Churches, as it is for individual men, seeking for no treasure at all, and therefore finding none, dispensing none, living in the routine of an indolent formalism, or a merely secular activity.

But these words have something more for us, brethren, than any general views about the history of other Churches or our own. We must not be judges of other men, unless we judge ourselves first, and more rigidly than we judge them. We may be sure that there is a lesson here for all of us. None of us are advanced beyond the work of gathering. All of you, brethren, are called, from your first entrance into the College, to the work of distributing. I believe it to be right that there should be this union of the two, because it holds good in this, as in other regions of knowledge, that the act of giving makes you not poorer but richer, because your labour as students will be a truer discipleship, if, even in that stage of preparation, you take part, as disciples though not as Scribes, in making known the glad tidings of God's kingdom. Yet there is also, we must not forget, a natural and obvious boundary line, separating the time of education from that of actual work in teaching, the life of the Christian student from that of the Christian minister.

Such of you, then, as are still in that earlier stage, must remember that your time here is meant to be essentially a time for gathering. Your work is marked out for you, a fixed plan and method placed before you, in order that you may gather rightly, that when you enter on the more solemn



duties to which you have devoted yourselves, you may be well-instructed Scribes. And you must take good heed, therefore, that you do not waste the time which the providence of God has thus given you ; that you do not deprive yourselves, as you easily may do, by your own act and deed, of the good treasure which you might else accumulate. You are called to be among the true disciples of your Lord, to whom He makes known the secrets of His kingdom. Do not take your place among them that are without, who see, yet perceive not, and hear, but do not understand.

There is the danger, first, of simple indolence,—a danger which has many disguises, into which you may easily fall, when you think that you are fighting against it. The wish to get through your work within a given time, and pass the appointed examinations, is not a sufficient safeguard for you ; rather will you thus prepare the way for its most insidious and perilous attacks. You must work with higher aims than these, if you are to work well. The words, ‘ not with eye-service, as men-pleasers,’ are applicable to other men than the slaves who had to work with their hands under the commands of a master. They are especially true of the work of students—of all who are, in any sense, under tutors and governors. And therefore there must be a singleness of heart and a fear of

God even in the common tasks which each day brings to you. You must strive, when you set about them, to work manfully. You have reached the age when it is time to put away childish things. You fall far short of your high calling as Christian students, if you let listlessness, or the love of amusement, or the fear of laborious days, or a weak will, or the light thoughts of a wandering fancy, transform that which should be the life of a man,—in a special sense, the life of the New Man,—into a poor copy of your childhood.

And you must also, brethren, be on your guard against wilfulness in this season of training. You have, it may be, each of you, your own tastes for one part of study rather than another. You will be tempted to exercise your own judgment as to their comparative importance, and to neglect those which are, more or less, distasteful to you. And you may do this to an extent which will very sensibly interfere with the good you might else gain from your work here, even though it does not bring on you the shame of entire failure. You may arrive at the close of your time of working, with a fair knowledge of the subjects of your choice, and a half-knowledge only, or a very discreditable ignorance, of others. And sometimes this will rise out of a temper distinctly opposed to that which our Lord and Master sets before us as

that of a true disciple. Men are tempted to prefer old things to new, or new to old. They desire to give their whole time and labour to modern criticism and the stirring controversies of the day, on the one hand ; or to older traditions and the archæology of rubrics and liturgies, on the other. I must warn you, brethren, against giving way to this temptation. I know none more likely to change an earnest, laborious student into a narrow self-willed follower of a party,—to end, it may be, if it run its full course, in an unbounded scepticism, or a fathomless superstition. Remember that your present calling is to be learners, not teachers ; doers, not judges of that law which for the time being is the law of your life. The method and course of work on which you have entered, or are entering, were not struck out hastily. They were deliberately planned to include old things and new ; to omit nothing essential ; to retain nothing superfluous. I am sure that some of those who are among us on this day could bear their witness, that in proportion as they adhered faithfully to them, they profited at the time, and have profited ever since. Those who acted on the faith that what they were told to do was worth doing, and that, if worth doing at all, it was worth doing well, have found the blessing of having acted on the old rule, the truest rule for all workers, ‘What-

soever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.¹ Because they were true disciples, they are, we believe and hope, well-instructed Scribes.

This word, brethren, leads us to the thought of another danger, from which no place of theological education can be free, to which you will be exposed almost in exact proportion as you are earnest, persevering, diligent, and obedient students. Here, as elsewhere, we overcome difficulties only to meet with new ones ; and the higher we rise above what we think common and baser temptations, the more are we taught that we have to wrestle, not against 'flesh and blood' only, but against a 'spiritual wickedness' which attacks us in newer and more subtle forms. We may become like the Scribes of Jerusalem, not like those of God's kingdom. We may gain much knowledge, we may be mighty in the Scriptures even, and know the opinions of many commentators, and the traditions of many fathers ; the doctrinal teaching of our own Church, and the decrees of ancient Councils, may be familiar things to us ; we may be prepared to confute heresies on the right hand or the left, to take our side and defend our party in the controversies of the day : we may know and be all this, and yet fail. The words, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven,'²

¹ Eccles. ix. 20.

² Matt. v. 20.

may have a very awful significance for us. For this is precisely the counterpart of that false training against which the Lord warned His disciples, and from which He sought to deliver them. An education of the intellect, not of the heart ; in books, not in men ; in human systems, not in Divine truths ; the absence of a recognition of a Divine Teacher, and a consequent idolatry of the forms of human teaching ; zeal without knowledge, knowledge without love ; this was their sin, and it may be ours. The common speech of men, the contempt, sometimes expressed, and yet more often felt, for the opinions of divines, groundless as it frequently is, may be accepted thankfully as a warning of our danger. If we give way to the temptation we shall become, as they became, followers of a sect, even while we boast of our fellowship with the Church ; blind, though we flatter ourselves that we see ; having no sympathy with men, and therefore no influence over them ; the Scribes of a city or a village, not the preachers of the glad tidings of God's kingdom.

How are we to meet these dangers, brethren, but by remembering that we are, in the full sense of the words, Christ's disciples, and not those of any human master, learning of Him, guided by His Spirit ? If our presence here is not a mockery, we believe that He has called us to be His mini-

sters, interpreters of His word, scribes of His kingdom. Will He not instruct us for that work? Does He not seek to waken in us the power to learn the things which to those that are without are done in parables, to 'open our hearts' that we may 'understand the Scriptures'? We want to realize this truth, brethren, as ministers of the Word, and not less as students of it. If we honestly and earnestly seek to do so; if we strive to think of Him as the Twelve must have thought, who daily witnessed His works, and heard His gracious words; if we make what He said and did so fully our possession, that we seem to see with our own eyes, and hear with our own ears, then we shall find, as they did, a sure increase of knowledge and of power. Those to whom the mysteries of the kingdom were once obscure and hard sayings, will be able to answer, 'Yea, Lord,' to the question, 'Have ye understood all these things?' which He still asks of His disciples.

And then, brethren, will come the time when you will go forth to dispense what you have gathered, to 'bring forth from your treasures the things new and old' which you have stored up there. I am sure that you will find, that some of you have found already, how wonderful a depth of wisdom there is in these words which have engaged our thoughts to-day, how precisely they define the office of a

Christian teacher. The old things which the Church has held from the beginning, 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' the new things into which the Spirit of God is leading His Church now, and which are needed for the evils or the wants of this present age ; the old things, again, of the earliest stage of your own growth in knowledge, the simple words which you learned, as children, in the Catechism and Creeds, and the new things which have grown out of wider studies and enlarged thoughts ; or, looking to a more inward and spiritual experience, the old things that were among your earliest religious convictions, truths which then seemed to you enough to live and die by, tests and standards by which all other truths were to be measured, and the new things which God has opened your eyes to see since, and which you have learned to recognise as being, no less truly, parts of a Divine order ;— all these must be stored up and brought out as the wants of men require. None of them may be slighted or cast aside. Each of them has had its worth for you, and will have for others. He who would be a true Scribe must gather, and not waste : having gathered, he must be a good steward of that manifold and abundant treasure.

XIX.

THE SHEPHERDS WHO FEED THEMSELVES.¹

‘And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?’—EZEK. XXXIV. 1, 2.

THE prophet by whom these words were spoken was sent with many sharp and stern messages to a people of whom he says that they were ‘a rebellious house.’ This was the sharpest and sternest of them all. It went to the root of the evils which were eating the life out of the nation. If the prophet was unto them nothing more than as ‘a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well upon an instrument;’² if they heard his words, but did them not; if, while their mouth ‘showed much love,’ their ‘heart went after covetousness;’—all this was but the natural consequence of the hard, ungodly selfishness of the priests and rulers who forgot their

¹ Preached at the Annual Meeting of Theological Associates and Students of King’s College, London, 1851.

² Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

calling or denied it. It was with the people as with the priest. There is a strange and terrible significance in the union of the two warnings. 'They,' the people, who 'lift up their eyes to the idols, and commit abomination,' 'shall know that there hath been a prophet among them;'¹ and then, following close on this, the message, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves!'

We, brethren, who are met together this day, are bound, some of us by the most solemn words we ever uttered in our lives, some by solemn hopes and resolutions which fall little short of vows, to the pastoral office. Some of you have already, it may be, had no small experience of its dangers and difficulties; I trust also, of its many blessings. No one, we must hope, for his sake, as well as for our own and for that of the Church of God, has entered on his life here without thinking what that office is, what work God has attached to it, what He requires in those whom He has called to it. We who have entered or purpose entering on the work of the ministry of Christ, declare our belief that God is calling us to be shepherds of the true Israel, to feed that flock which He has purchased with His own blood. It is of great moment to us

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 33.

that we should understand what this our calling is. We cannot spare any word of instruction or reproof which may help us to see it clearly.

It has often, I believe, been a great comfort and encouragement to those who enter on this work, with a true and earnest desire that they may be found faithful in it, to remember that in this office, as its very name implies, they are fellow-workers with Him who, in this as in all things else, has left us an example. The pastoral office—does not that bear witness to us of ONE who was and is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls ; who, when He desired to teach His disciples something of the height and length, and breadth and depth, of His exceeding love for them, chose to speak of Himself as the Good Shepherd, ‘ knowing His own sheep by name,’ ‘ leading them in and out that they may find pasture ;’ gathering together those that had been scattered ; ‘ laying down His life for the sheep ?’¹ I believe also, brethren, that no true pastoral work was ever done by any one who had not realized this work of the Great Shepherd. The ‘ love of Christ’—not our love for Him, but His for us—is that which ‘ constrains’ men now, as it constrained St. Paul, to do and to suffer all things.² Without a belief in that love as wider, deeper, fuller than any love which we may feel to

¹ St. John x. 1-15.

² 2 Cor. v. 14.

those to whom we minister, we cannot work with any energy or any hope.

That tenth chapter of St. John is, therefore, the true pattern of the pastor's work, the manual of the pastor's office. It tells us how we may be followers of the True Shepherd, neither thieves, nor robbers, nor hirelings, nor intruders. In proportion as men have lived by it, they have taken heed to that flock 'over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers.' It has enabled men, in dark times and in the midst of much error, to work upward to the light. The fervent desire to follow Christ in this work of His, and to work with Him in it, has made true pastors out of men who, without it, might have been dogmatists or dreamers. But I am persuaded also, brethren, that this prophecy of Ezekiel is a very necessary complement to the record of the Evangelist. We cannot spare one of its terrible denunciations. Unless we know how to avoid the evils which they condemn, we may fall under their sentence. We may deny or forget our calling. We may be in danger of hearing the message which the Lord God sent by the prophet, 'Behold, I am against the shepherds.'

The opening words of the prophecy point, as I said, to the root of the evil. They unfold the whole secret of an unfaithful ministry. 'Woe be

to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves.' That which was true of all whom God called to the possession of authority and power, which wise and true-hearted men in all ages had affirmed as the idea and law of all government whatever, so that everything which was at variance with it, however it might seem to strengthen, tended to destroy society, this God asserted by His prophet to be the law of the priests and teachers whom He set over His people. If they did not keep it, they contradicted His purpose in appointing them. Nor for their own pleasure, or ease, or fame, or power, were they placed in that high position, but that they might feed the flock, defend it from danger, nourish it and guide it. The priests and rulers of Israel in Ezekiel's days had denied this law. God sent sore and sharp judgments, yet they would not learn. The calamities of their nation did but render their selfishness more intense than ever. They caught eagerly at the prospect of making some profit for themselves out of the misery of their brethren. They trampled under foot those over whom they were bound to watch. It is not unlikely that this selfishness of theirs showed itself in its vilest and coarsest forms. Their negligence and tyranny were but the outgrowths of a measureless rapacity. They 'ate the fat and clothed them with the wool, and killed

them that were fed ;' and therefore it was that ' they had not strengthened the diseased, nor healed that which was sick, nor bound up that which was broken, nor sought that which was lost.' ¹

It is surely a wonderful and horrible thing that the words which describe the guilt of such men as these can ever have been applicable to pastors in the Church of Christ. Was this to be the fruit of that perfect pattern of the Shepherd's work? Were the crimes of the Old Jerusalem thus to re-appear in the New? We know, brethren, that it has been so. As we follow the history of the Church, we meet, not with scattered instances only, but with a long succession of men, forgetting from whom they received their title to be shepherds of Israel, denying God's calling, setting themselves up as supreme shepherds over the whole flock, and this that they might feed themselves. You will read, or have read, of a secularization which found its way into the very heart of the Church, and organized itself into a system ; of the struggles between the false shepherds and those whom God sent to gather the scattered sheep in the dark and cloudy day ; of the tyranny which the oppressors of the flock have exercised over those whom God had caused to lie down in a quiet fold and in a

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4.

good pasture. The question which was asked of old, might often have been asked since, may be asked still : ' Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?'¹

Nor are these evils, brethren, to be looked on as lying far distant from us, and confined to those whom we are accustomed to look on as our enemies. The danger lies very near us. It does not depend on any outward circumstances. Whatever these circumstances may be, this guilt—yes, this special form of it,—is one which we need to guard against with a very watchful care. To feed ourselves, and not the flock ; to make the work to which Christ has called us subservient to our own interests ; to value the income or the position in society which that work brings with it as the reward to which we look,—this is a secularity which will not pass away as long as the world is what it is, which will find its way even into the holiest offices of the Church of Christ. This is *the* secularity which we have most to dread, which has done more to weaken and shackle the free action of the Church's life than any State interference, than any opposition or lukewarmness on

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 18.

the part of the power which we call secular. And it is very needful, brethren, to resist this at the beginning. If we do not, we may end in being the slaves of a love of money which now seems to us utterly vile and sordid. If we begin in the spirit of a hireling, we shall be sure to do a hireling's work.

But we are not to imagine that we are untouched by the prophet's rebuke, because we are free (if we are indeed free) from the guilt of this mercenary service. We may have conquered the appetite for 'filthy lucre,' and yet be among those who feed themselves and not the flock. The temptation, like all other temptations, takes a subtler form with those who resist and overcome it in its coarser and more tangible shapes. And there is a danger, brethren, in this matter which affects both us and you in our work as teachers and students of Theology. We may enter upon that crown of sciences with no higher purpose than to please ourselves with subtle speculations. There is the same fascination in it as in all studies involving much laborious and continued thought. To construct or maintain a system; to be furnished with all the arguments which have been accumulated by the disputes of many generations; to fight old battles over again, and to be eager combatants in the skirmishes of the present,—this

is what the study of Theology may lead us to, if we do not remember that its end is identical with the great end of all our work both here and elsewhere. It is to fit us for the pastoral office. We are to learn that we may feed the flock.

I do not desire, brethren, that any of you who are now entering on your work here, or are continuing that which has been already begun, should think lightly of that study, or of the labours connected with it. There is a science of Theology, and, like other sciences, it requires to be studied patiently and earnestly, not by self-chosen methods, or with a scanty amount of time and thought, but reverently, and in submission to those who have mounted to greater heights and can see further and more clearly than we can. I am anxious to guard you against the evil which may corrupt that which is in itself most excellent ; to remind you that a selfish dogmatism is quite as possible as a selfish negligence. And I am sure also that the remedy for both evils is the same. To believe in the reality of our calling ; to remember that we are called to feed the flock ; to pray that the Great Shepherd will teach us how to feed it,—these are the conditions of our work being profitable to ourselves and to those who hear us.

It is easy, again, for men who naturally are imaginative and warm-hearted, to forget the end of

their work in the means which they use to gain it. The restoration or adornment of the building in which the Church of God assembles, and to which it gives its name ; the introduction of a more correct or a more gorgeous ritual ; the revival of an ancient pageantry,—these, when they are done, not to meet the wants of men, and win them to the service of God, but because they suit our tastes, and fall in with our perception of ecclesiastical propriety, are surely nothing more than acts of self-indulgence. The taste which we indulge may be very refined and pure ; there may be very much of the beauty of holiness in what we introduce ; but if this take the place (thank God, it has not often done that among us) of the true work of the ministry of souls ; if it become a stumbling-block to them that are weak ; then, to devote our time and our labour to it is to feed ourselves, and not to feed the flock.

It may seem startling, but it is nevertheless true, that even the course of one who is active and laborious, engaged constantly in the special tasks of the pastoral office, may lead him to the same self-seeking. The quietness, and ease, and refinement which we are sometimes apt to associate with the ministerial life ; the happiness which is found in the constant interchange of sympathy ; the praise which comes from men who are thank-

ful for words of peace and health which we have spoken : these may become the end of our labours. We may rest in them. The esteem of men, popularity, reputation, may engross our hearts, and turn them from that special personal care for the spirits of those over whom we are set to watch, without which (were it not that the strength of God is mightier than our weakness) our work would be utterly unprofitable.

You know, brethren, what the sentence is which is passed upon all self-seekers. ' Behold, saith the Lord God, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more.'¹ God's work may still be done. The sheep that are scattered abroad may be gathered into His fold, but the unfaithful shepherd will have no share in the gathering. Sooner or later the false shows of good, for which he has given up the work to which God called him, will cease to satisfy. Wealth, station, ease, popularity, ritualism, dogmatism, will appear, as they are, when separated from the love of God and of the children of God, utterly worthless. His heart will feel, at last, that it would have been better to have spoken a word in season to them that were weary ; to have healed the sick, and

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 10.

bound up that which was broken ; to have led the spirits of men to acknowledge God as their Father, Christ as their Redeemer, the Spirit as their Sanctifier, than to have won the highest esteem of men, to have lived pleasant days, or refuted gainsayers, or decorated churches.

I do not wish you to forget, brethren, that you are entering, or are purposing to enter, upon this office at a time when it will require much exertion, when it will be very full of difficulties, and, it may be, of dangers also. The extent of the work which lies before you is, of itself, something disheartening. The sheep are many, and are 'scattered upon all the face of the earth,' and the shepherds are but few. Often you will have to work where hitherto there has been no one to seek and search them out. It matters very little where you may be. Among the men who work in fields, or the men who work in towns, you will find the same evils, varying but slightly even in their outward forms. Dark and gross ignorance of that which would be light and life to them ; poverty and disease pressing hard alike on their bodily and spiritual life ; incessant toil varied only by paroxysms of sensuality ; social evils leading to personal crimes, and in their turn increased by them,—all this you will have to encounter, and to take it almost as a part of your daily life. I do

not know what can support you under it, but the belief that your calling is a divine one ; that you are sent, each according to his ability, to be fellow-workers with God ; that He is saying to every one of us, ' I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. ' ¹

And it may be also that the time which is opening on us will be as ' a cloudy and dark day. ' No man, I believe, can see his way through all the difficulties and perplexities which now surround us. No man can say what, at the end of twenty years, may be our state, or the state of the people. There are signs, on every side, of a renewed conflict ; of a struggle between opposite opinions. On the one side we have seen those who followed after holiness making an idol out of holiness itself, worshipping it rather than the Giver of holiness, and so deceived by counterfeit images of it ; attracted, as by a spell which they cannot resist, to a system which promises them more help in gaining it than any other ; fearing to ask questions and investigate claims, lest the answer they receive should turn them back from it ; sacrificing truth even, in the hope that, by the sacrifice, they may become holier than they were. Others again (and when I speak of others, I speak also of dangers which affect ourselves) may be tempted to make truth their

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 11.

idol. They may ask questions boldly, study many systems, enter on the profoundest mysteries of man's life and of God's dealing with him, with a mind utterly undisciplined, with no desire to live by the truth they know, to walk in the light which they profess to be seeking and rejoicing in. They also have divorced holiness from truth, and so the truth will slip away from them. They will lose their hold on it. They will become incapable of apprehending it. The light that is in them will become darkness. They will end in negation and unbelief.

Such, I believe, brethren, is the history of the Rationalistic and the Romanizing tendencies by which our age is characterized,—tendencies, as I said, in opposite directions, yet springing from the same root, from the separation of what God has joined ; only to be met by believing that in Him truth and holiness are at one ; that nothing can be holy which obscures our perceptions of the truth ; that nothing can be true which renders us less holy than we were before.

There are, indeed, many grounds for hope and thankfulness in the midst of these dangers. But there is one comfort which we are apt to administer to ourselves, to which I would beseech you not to trust. We say to ourselves or to others, ' One good, at least, will come out of the evil.

The pressing danger, the bold or the subtle attacks of our enemies, will, at least, unite us. We shall merge minor points of difference, and combine to present a firm and even front. We shall see at last that, notwithstanding all our divisions, we have a common interest! As far as this statement asserts a belief that God is dealing with His Church, and making Himself known to it even in the storm and whirlwind, it contains, no one will deny, a great and precious truth. But there is, I am quite sure, great danger of our mistaking the means for the end. The peril was intended to cure our divisions, by leading us to Him who is the ground of all unity and peace. If we trust to our sense of common interests, it will lead us from Him. We shall be placing our trust in each other, not in Him. Of all the broken reeds in which men have put their trust, that which soonest gives way and pierces the hand of him who leans on it, is the unity which rests on opposition to a common enemy; the substitution of a widespread panic or indignation for the peace and righteousness of God.

Yes, brethren, there is a surer ground, a better hope, a more excellent way of working. To believe that the sheep which are scattered are the sheep of God, and that the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep loves them and seeks

them, and is sending us to seek them ; that He knows them all by name, sees their sorrows, sins, and wants, and hears their groanings and complaints ; to feel sure that His will is that we also, whom He has made shepherds under Him, should also know them ; to look on our work, as bringing us into connexion not with systems or masses, but with persons ; to feel a distinct individual interest in the spiritual life and wellbeing of all who are in any portion of the flock,—this, and nothing less than this, is the secret of all true pastoral work, the ground of the confidence and hope of all true shepherds.

Many of you who are gathered here to-day are as yet only preparing for that work. Some are but just entering on the first stage of preparation. I would fain help you, according to my power, to see your way clearly from the beginning. You will do well, I believe, to remember, at the very outset, that your labours here are a preparation for the pastoral office. It will be as necessary to remember that you are not yet called to the pastoral office itself. There will be great confusion and many hindrances if you forget either of these truths. If you do not remember the first, if you think that your studies here, of whatever kind they are, have no other end than to enable you to attain an average standard of theological knowledge, and

pass the necessary examinations, your work will prove altogether unprofitable to you. You may gain that end ; you may receive your reward ; but the labour will have brought no blessing with it ; it will have been a self-seeking labour, and therefore it will not qualify you to enter on your labour of love. If you would find in the years you spend with us the health-giving discipline of mind and heart which they are intended to provide for you, you must be looking forward, believing that no part of the work which has been marked out for you is without its purpose, and that that end will not be accomplished unless it contributes to make you able and effective workers through your whole life.

But while you are to regard each portion of your work as tending to nothing short of this, you will need to remember that second law of which I spoke. You must not be impatient to enter at once on the full work of the pastoral calling. It is natural that men whose minds are set on that work should be eager to begin it ; should be inclined to think lightly of all that does not seem to them directly connected with it. To teach in schools, and to visit the sick and poor, will be very attractive to such men, and they will find a real pleasure in it. The accurate study of a language, or of a history, will appear very hard and wearisome.

some. It has not seldom happened that men, for whom one could not but feel much respect, have, by giving way to this feeling, fallen into great confusion, and incurred the risk of nearly total failure. They have impaired their future usefulness by attempting to anticipate it. They could not believe that the discipline which lay before them was really connected with the office to which they were to be called, and so they failed in both. Zeal became self-will ; self-will led to ignorance and narrowness. The student who would avoid failure must begin with trust, with the belief that those who teach him have considered well what he wants, with the purpose of throwing himself, with his whole heart and soul, into the work which he is told to do.

It is a solemn thing for us who are engaged in the work of teaching those who are themselves very shortly to be teachers of others, to watch the acts and words of those whom we have to train. Indications of character have here a wonderful, often a very awful significance. If a child is, as has been said, a prophecy of the man, most truly can we say that here the student of theology is a prophecy of the future pastor. If we see a man indolent, desultory, purposeless in his work with us, we cannot but fear that such an one, if he pass through the ordeals which are meant to check him,

will prove indolent, desultory, purposeless in his future work. His teaching in schools, his visits to the sick, his sermons and exhortations, will be gone through as a routine, with the least amount of labour, without earnestness, and therefore without a blessing. If we observe in another, even in small things, zeal without judgment, a rash and intrusive assertion of opinions hastily taken up and blindly defended, capricious singularities of manner or practice, do not these prophesy of one who will disturb the peace of a parish by wilful, unauthorized innovations? Are they not auguries of one whose work will not be that of the shepherds of Israel, but rather of those who devour the pasture, and disturb the still waters—of the correspondent of religious newspapers—the follower or the leader in a religious agitation? And all other failings, in like manner, are big with future evil. Hardness, flippancy, frivolity, irritability, want of clearness, want of method, an over-fondness for society, or a morbid shrinking from it, a will too yielding or too obstinate, all these which work evil in the life of the student, speak to us of the evil which, unless checked by God's help and favour, they will work in the life of the pastor.

Thanks be to God, brethren, we can say, as St. Paul did of those whom he taught, that 'we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus

speak.' It is cheering and encouraging to us to see, in what you now are, prophecies not of evil only or chiefly, but of good. Zeal, earnestness, obedience, affection, sympathy, gratitude, these we have been allowed to see already, and these we trust God will allow us to witness, ripened and developed, in you more and more. This day is one on which we are bound to give thanks for what has been, for the work in which we have been sharers. We see those round us of whom we believe and hope that they are true shepherds, who feed the flock of Christ, and are taking good heed to that awful charge, living with the abiding sense that they are servants of the Great Shepherd of the souls of men. We can begin with a good hope, for we believe that God is calling you to do His work. We are sure that if you hear and obey that call, He, the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, will lead you in and out where you may find pasture. We believe that He is inviting you and us now to His table, that His cup of blessing is filled for us, that those who trust in Him shall find goodness and mercy following them all the days of their life.

XX.

OTHER MÈN'S LABOURS.¹

'Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.'

JOHN IV. 37.

THESE words contain, I believe, a lesson especially adapted for this opening service of ours. They declare a truth which no man can lose sight of with impunity, and yet one which, if we may judge from our own experience and the common language of men who write about the ministerial office, we are constantly in danger of forgetting, and practically denying. We may be quite sure, at all events, that all words spoken by Him who was our Teacher and Guide in this ministerial work, bearing, as these evidently do bear, upon it, must contain some living and life-giving truths. They must needs add to what we learn from other truths. Any neglect of them must be attended with some falling away from the completeness to which He has called us, and cause

¹ Preached at the Annual Meeting of Theological Associates and Students, King's College, London, 1849.

us to see our work less clearly and do it less perfectly. The very words, too, call to our mind at once all those illustrations from the outward life of nature, and the labours of men connected with it, by which the Lord was wont to set forth the laws of His kingdom. Nowhere do we find that analogy of the sower and the seed, without its leading us, if we follow its guidance, to depths and heights of truth, of which before we had hardly even dreamt. It cannot be but that these words also contain a wisdom which will be very precious to those who seek, and, by seeking, find it. And yet how little, compared with other illustrations from like objects, has this become familiar to men's minds, and incorporated with their daily speech. The few labourers for the plenteous harvest; the intermingling of the wheat and the tares; the highway, and the stony places, and the thorns, and the good ground; the seed springing up till it becomes the greatest of herbs, and the birds of heaven lodge in the branches of it,—all these have become proverbial. We can scarcely write or speak of the life of the Church without using them. Whenever we think of the work of missions, or of distributing Bibles, or of teaching in schools, they occur to us immediately. If we had to speak on such subjects, they would probably be among the first words we should utter. And it is right and

good, whenever they are used with a recognition of their life and power, not merely as conventional ornaments to round off a sentence, that they should be so uttered. The thought that what we are doing, the work to which some of us are called, and to which others are looking forward, is to be done by us as God's labourers, in His husbandry, that He has summoned us to gather in His harvest, that the seed springs up and grows, we know not how, is a helpful and encouraging thought to the missionary, the teacher, or the minister of a parish. But then it is also right and good that we should remember all that our Lord has taught us about this work of ours, all, especially, connected with what one might almost call the favourite analogy by which He instructed His disciples in the constitution of His kingdom. It will be no less helpful and encouraging to be reminded of those other words, 'Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.'

And they are remarkable too for another reason. They were, as far as we can gather, the first recorded words in which He directed those who followed Him to see in the natural world, and their work in it, types and symbols of the spiritual. Whenever in their after-intercourse, or in their work with Him, the same image was brought to their recollection, it can hardly have failed to

bring before them the associations which these words suggest. By them it was that they were first taught that, while in the world of nature there were set times and seasons—'Say ye not, There are yet four months and then cometh harvest!'¹—there were at all times, in God's world of the spirits and souls of men, 'fields white already to harvest,'—fields which they had not sown, in which they had not laboured, but into which God was now sending them as reapers. The truth which their Lord thus taught them, of which He told them that they were then actually witnessing an instance, must needs have been one with which all their work was to be connected. It was made known to them when as yet they were but just called to their work, hardly conscious of its purpose, knowing nothing of the dangers and hardships to which it would expose them, that they might not turn back and shrink in fear from what seemed so difficult and so hopeless.

And surely, when we read what is recorded of the labours and sufferings of these disciples, and of others who followed them in their work, we cannot help owning both that they needed such an encouragement as this, and that all their life long they were continually receiving it, and verifying the law which had been thus declared to

¹ John iv. 35.

them. When they addressed themselves to their brethren of the stock of Israel, and saw that people uncircumcised in heart and ears, absorbed in low and sordid vices, yet blending with them strange visions of a restored kingdom, and a stubborn attachment to the outward ritual that was to pass away, listening with implicit faith to the subtle casuistry and unrighteous traditions of their Scribes and Pharisees, proud, haughty, ungenerous, resentful ; when they thought that these were the very men, or were like the very men, who had hated, slandered, crucified their Lord and Master, they must have needed some such thought as this to enable them to look on their work with anything like hope. They must have needed the belief that there was a harvest even here, plenteous and abundant, which other hands than theirs had sown, and which was now ready for them—that the field was not full only or chiefly of the tares which the enemy had sown, but contained also the wheat which was to be gathered into God's garner. And this they found. There had been sowers who had passed away and had not reaped the fruits. Others had laboured, and they were entering on their labours. The Law of Moses had in this way brought men to Christ. It had sown the seeds of a deep conviction of sin as a violation of God's righteous order, and from this sprang up

the fruits of repentance towards God, and in due time also of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Prophets and wise men had spoken of a blessing higher than any that they had ever witnessed, of a fuller manifestation of God's righteous kingdom ; and so, pointing to promises which they did not receive, they had awakening yearnings for the consolation of Israel, which the apostles were sent to satisfy. Thus, among their own countrymen, they were not entering on a barren and desert land, but on one in which there had been other labourers, who had lived and died in faith, who had spent their strength and their life in defence of that portion of the truth of God which He had revealed to them.

And when the barrier which had first seemed to confine their work was broken down, and they went forth among the Gentiles, there also these words were fulfilled for them ; there also they needed this belief. To the outward eye all was dreary and waste enough. Men with living souls bowing down to idols of silver and gold which had no help in them, wrangling with each other in vain disputes, or plunging into the deep mire and filth of the most monstrous sensuality ; a worship which was nothing less than a communion and sacrament of evil,—what was there in all this but utter hopelessness ? What motive had they for continuing

a struggle in which they seemed so sure of failure? What but this, that here also they were sent by God, and not sent in vain, to reap a harvest which had been sown for them by others? And in this we know they were not deceived. They did find that there had been a preparation for their work; that there had been a witness of God, in the law written in the hearts and consciences of men as well as in the outward gifts of the rain from heaven and the fruitful seasons; that some at least had received the witness and had testified to others that they were indeed God's offspring, and were called to be followers of His righteousness. Here also there had been men 'seeking after God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him,' groping, as men walking in the dark, after any glimmerings of light that came down to them, that they might be led to the source of light. And so hopes and yearnings were awakened in them which they could not satisfy. Something at least was done towards destroying the false and preparing the way for the entrance of the truth. Here accordingly the Apostles and early teachers of the Church found that the seed had been scattered, and that there was a harvest ready for them.

But these men who thus reaped where they did not sow were themselves also sowers of the

Divine seed—sowers such as the world has never since witnessed, labouring night and day, spending and being spent, in dangers, and troubles, and deaths, that they might scatter that word of God which was the true seed of life. Their work was never to pass away. They were to utter and write words which should go on, bearing abundant fruit, year after year, for ever. It was not given them to see what those fruits would be. They beheld but a small portion even of its immediate produce. They preached and they wrote, and passed on to other countries, to prison or to death, in order that all mankind might enter into their labours and reap what they had sown.

And so, brethren, it has ever been. This is the law of the Church's life. When we look back upon the long line of ages which have passed since those first days of its history, and think, as students, of the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge, and holiness, which have come down to us; when we survey the accumulated stores which men have gathered, in the sweat of their brow, in the worlds of thought and action, does not all that we have to do appear to us as the work of men who are sent to reap that whereon they bestowed no labour? If there is any one truth more precious to your souls than others, think of the toil and struggles, and sufferings of mind and

body, through which men have passed, that they might win it and transmit it to us. Think, for example, of Athanasius, of the strange changes of his outward fortune, of the calumnies of which his whole life was a contradiction, and which were yet believed and sanctioned, of his battle against the world. All this he endured that he might bear witness of the truth, that the foundation on which the Church was built was not the message of an angel, or of a created being above angels and archangels, but the revelation of the Son of God manifest in the flesh. Think of Augustine, led through dark and devious ways, now drawn aside by the claims of a false system to superior knowledge; now finding, as men ever find with such systems, that, though mighty to destroy, it was powerless to build up, and could not even solve the problems which it had itself created; passing through a dreary and hopeless scepticism like that which, in these latter days, is springing up in the hearts of men on every side; and all this in order that, out of this darkness and shadow of death, there might emerge the truth, that all righteousness is of God, and comes to men from God, and that he who seeks it from other men, or hopes to find it in himself, is putting his trust in lies. Once more, to take this time an example more closely connected with ourselves as members

of the English Church, think of the labour of those who, in a time of confusion and disorder, when corruptions that had been accidents were crystalizing into laws, and the hands that removed the corruptions seemed likely to destroy the temple, were guided to steer their course between these two dangers, with constant temptations to fall into one or other of them, with constant obloquy and revilings from the parties on either side, who, notwithstanding all this, went on in the work they had begun, finding strength in their very weaknesses, and so preserved for us that distinctive character of the English Church, which, according as we adhere to it or abandon it, is our glory or our shame.

And that which is seen conspicuously in these more illustrious instances, may be found elsewhere. There are, as you must feel, others, in number numberless, both among the dead and the living, on whose labours you have entered. What is your work here as students of theology, but a daily and hourly example of the law which the text tells us of? Every step you take in the knowledge of Scripture, or in acquiring the methods and instruments for understanding it, or in tracing the history of the Church of Christ and its relations to the world, every fresh aspect of old familiar truths that is brought before you, every new thought

which may help and guide you in your future work, what are these but examples, every one of them, of the old words, 'Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.?' Look at the great volumes which fill the shelves of our libraries, and think what a tale they tell of hard thought and laborious lives; what trophies they are of victories, or at least of conflicts, in which the heart and spirit often fainted in utter weariness, but by which fresh regions of truths were laid open to us, or the old truths defended against invaders.

Were the workings of this law of God's kingdom to stop here, it might seem hardly to answer to what I said of it as a law, which we ought to know, in order that we might do our work faithfully and well. We might rejoice and give thanks, indeed, that we were made the reapers of so glorious a harvest. When we thought how it had been obtained for us, our sympathy with those who have gone before us might be enlarged and deepened. But it would hardly seem to help us in that work to which we are called, in which we are not to be students only or chiefly, but ministers of Christ, ambassadors of God, beseeching men, as in His stead, to be reconciled to Him. We want something more than a parallel to the world's law, that knowledge becomes wider with the progress of the

years ; that one generation receives the light from another, and again passes it on when its own course is run ; that we who live are therefore the heirs of all the ages. We need some refuge from the terrible thoughts which such a law suggests to us. We want a happier faith than that which believes in a progress for the world and for the race, but gives no hope of permanence for the individual man ; the law of which is, that a man labours and passes away, and perishes ; that there is no place in the whole world of being where his works can follow him. That refuge we may find, I believe, in this true law of the kingdom of God. We shall do well, at all events, to test it, to apply it to the circumstances in which we are, and among which we shall have to work, to see whether it explains them, and enables us to see our way through them ; whether it does not give us the same grounds for hope and energy as we have seen that it did to the Apostles.

At present, it is true, I suppose, of most of you, that you do not yet know where you will have to work, or what kind of work will be committed to you. You know only that you hope to do God's work in this Church of England. This is the field you will have to labour in. What special portion of it will fall to your lot, as yet you do not see. Looking then on the state of the Church and

country in which God has placed you, as a whole, I would ask you, brethren, whether in it, and in your work in connexion with it, you do not find manifold instances of the operation of this law? Have there not been seeds sown, are they not now springing up, which will one day bear fruit unto holiness? Has there not been a perpetual work going on, not only in ancient times, but in the years, the memory and the immediate effects of which are not yet vanished? Will you not, every day of your lives, in your work in parishes and schools, be entering on the labours of other men? If you do not find, wherever you go, a general apathy and deadness; if you have not to begin again with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ as opposed to a cold lifeless morality; if the name of Christ be honoured, and the promises of His gospel received and proclaimed widely; if it no longer exposes a man to contempt and derision to confess himself a servant of God, a disciple of His blessed Son; is it not because you are following in the steps of men who, within the memory of many yet-living, were God's instruments in preaching His Word as the gospel of salvation, in testifying that a man is justified by faith, and that we are not under the Law, but under Grace? If, again, this awakened belief has been saved from the danger of losing itself in a hollow phrase-

ology ; if the tendency to rest in an individual religion and states of feeling has been checked, and men have been called on to acknowledge that they were members of a divine society, with divine ordinances ; if the sense of oneness with the Church of Christ in all ages and all countries has been revived, and is active in all good works ; have we not to thank for this change those who rescued these truths from the oblivion into which they had fallen, and made them actual elements of the religious life of England ? Are not all these as seeds which have been scattered far and wide, and have sprung up, men knew not how, 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear' ? May we not, if we work diligently, and keep them from interfering with each other's growth, and free them from the evil weeds which threaten to choke and strangle them, bring in a glorious harvest, meet for the garner of the Lord ? Is there no encouragement in the thought, that the soil has been prepared, and that the germs of truth and holiness are already there ?

But if this general prospect be encouraging ; if, when you are not close enough to discern the large extent of barren ground, and the noxious weeds which are making it yet more barren than before, the words of your Lord and Saviour appear true and precious to you, you will not, I believe, find

them less true when you come to encounter, each of you in his own work, the difficulties which are sure to lie in the path of every faithful servant. I do not wish to underrate any of these difficulties. You may find many and great discouragements. You may think, sometimes perhaps with reason, that the doctrinal teaching of those who have preceded you has been defective. You may find erroneous views very prevalent. There may be large masses of startling and portentous vice, monstrous forms of sin and of the wages of sin, of which you had hardly a conception till you were brought directly face to face with them. The means for meeting these giant evils may seem scanty and ineffective. Still you are not to despair. You are sent to reap a harvest. Work diligently and you will not fail to find it. In the hardest ground there are germs of truth and goodness which God Himself has planted. You may be surprised by signs of a deep loathing of evil in those whom you thought utterly abandoned to it; yearnings after forgiveness and peace even in the dark places of the earth; a life of faithful obedience which you had not known, because, in its deep humility, it feared to manifest itself in the open day. Let it be your work, when you enter on your office, to set yourselves to discover these. Follow any indications of them with a gladness

like that of those in whose presence 'there is joy over one sinner that repenteth.' Seek eagerly for the faintest signs of them. Whether the corn be in the blade or the ear, recognise it for what it is, and, when you have discerned it, watch over it and tend it that it may bring forth fruit to perfection. I am sure, brethren, that this way of looking on your work is not only more hopeful and sustaining, but that it will be also a better guide to your doing it rightly than any other which you may take to the exclusion of this. If you begin your work with the feeling that you must undo what has been done by others, that you are to fight against errors, that you must tear up the evil which is round you by the roots; if you start even with thinking that you must begin afresh, as though nothing had been done before, and the name of Christ had not been preached, nor His Spirit working in men's hearts, your teaching will be in great danger of becoming simply negative. You will be pulling down, not building up and completing. The seeds which you scatter may indeed, such is the power of God's Word, be received into good ground, but those which have been sown by others, which contain the germs of a divine life, you may be leaving to perish utterly, to wither before they be plucked up, to be devoured by the fowls of the air, or withered by the

scorching sun, or strangled by the thorns. Of all duties belonging to the minister of Christ there is none more awful, none more essential than this of recognising and respecting all holy and true and righteous thoughts, however elementary and isolated they may seem, which he finds in the hearts of his hearers. To do otherwise is to reject God's gifts, and to frustrate, as far as in us lies, His marvellous grace. It is to waste and scatter the good treasures which God has committed to him, instead of bringing forth from it, like a wise householder, things new and old, according as every man hath need.

And he who thus begins faithfully and humbly will in his after-life find that these words have yet another meaning for him. It will be one which he may need yet more than this as a remedy against weariness and despair. He begins by reaping that which has been sown by others. He will find, as he goes on, that he himself is sowing what others will reap, labouring that others may enter into his labours. Sooner or later, according to the vicissitudes of health and hope and circumstance, there comes a time in the life of every teacher of the truth when the result of all that he has done appears unsatisfying and disheartening. He looks back on his labours. They seem poor, inefficient, scanty, compared with the purposes

with which he started ; yet the fruit of his labours appears poorer and scantier still. His best hopes seem destined never to be fulfilled. He has lost sight of those whom he has taught at the very time when they gave the fairest promise. He does not know whether that promise has ever come to anything. The brightness of the morning sky may seem to have ended in a cloudy and dark day. The scorching wind may have withered even the plants which his Heavenly Father planted. He has moved, it may be, from place to place, striving zealously, wherever he may have been, to scatter the seeds of life, and yet nowhere beholding the harvest. Many whom he has taught may become followers of some new teacher whose words seem to them full of a higher wisdom, and to enter more deeply into their thoughts than his did. At such times the natural feeling is one of disappointment, it may be, even of jealousy. That spirit of murmuring shadowed forth in the complaint of those who had borne the burden and heat of the day may become habitual to him. He may receive the new labourers not with the hearty welcome which a man should give to those who help him in his work, but as rivals, encroachers, innovators. He may fail to see that they are raised up to meet the pressing wants of a new generation as he has been to meet the wants of his. These feelings, and all

the evils which grow out of them, filling our hearts with bitterness, and weakening our power to serve God faithfully, can only, I believe, be counteracted by our receiving honestly and thoroughly this law of Christ's kingdom. The law that one man labours for another, and one generation for that which is to follow it, which is true in the progress of the world, is in the kingdom of heaven not merely true, but true in its highest form, not *ἀληθής* merely, but *ὁ ἀληθινός*. But it is relieved from the hopelessness which such a law standing by itself would cause,—a hopelessness not to be met by vague thoughts of the progress of the race and visions of a bright future for the world—by the promise which is here united with it. The declared end of the law is this, 'that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.'¹ It is God's purpose to bind His servants together, not only by the feeling that they have a common work and the same Master, but by the belief that there is also a common joy into which all who have been true and faithful to the knowledge given them shall enter. Without this, without the belief which accompanies it that our work is not in vain ; that it will bear fruit, though we pass away and see it not ; that some one else, though not we ourselves, shall gather it unto life eternal, the heart of

¹ John iv. 36.


Christ's ministers might fail them now, as the prophet's heart failed him when he made his prayer, 'O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.'¹ We might think that our faith was vain and our hope vain also. With it, we are taught that we are members of a divine and universal society, for which, and not for ourselves, we are to labour. And this society is something very different from the great world-machine, rolling on for ever, and existing by the destruction of its individual members, of which men have sometimes dreamt. We are, each one of us, living members of it, and, so long as we continue to derive our life from Him who is its head, we shall be so for ever. If we have sought this life, death, which, according to the world's counterfeit of this law, removes us from all participation in the fruits of our labours, does but enable us to rejoice more fully with all those who have laboured before and shall labour after us. We may look forward, as prophets and wise men did in the ancient days, in full assurance of faith to the work of those who complete what we began, as believing that we 'without them should not be made perfect.'² We may look back on our meagre labours 'and ceaseless short-comings' and wastings of our strength on things that profited not, in the hope that they will

¹ 1 Kings xix. 4.

² Heb. xi. 40.

not be allowed to interfere with the harvest which others are to reap, nor with our share in the joy of the harvest.

Lastly, brethren, suffer me to remind myself in reminding you, what an awful thing it is thus to be intrusted as sowers with so Divine a seed ; what a solemn character it gives to acts and words which so easily become to us matter of routine, in which we so often engage, without entering into their power and life. We speak in familiar conversation, we teach in schools, we preach sermons, we catechise, we visit the sick and poor. Each of these is, or may be, if we will but use it, an occasion for sowing the seed on ground on which it has not fallen, or for fostering the growth of that which has been already planted. If, instead of the living seed, we give a dry and barren chaff, the husks and shells of a hollow, lifeless phraseology, or act as if we were servants of the enemy, sowing tares in the field of God's husbandry, we sin against our Divine calling. The ministerial office is very different from what we, with our narrow views and lukewarm hearts, often take it to be. The work to which we are called is that of men who sow the spiritual seed, and gather the spiritual harvest. Very fatal will it be for us, if we withhold our hand from the sowing or the gathering. Very fatal will it be, if we forsake this



work for others of our own devising, if we think that we are doing it when we are repeating the phrases of a school without caring to adapt them to the minds and hearts of those who hear us, speaking smooth things and prophesying deceit, while we claim to be messengers of Christ, and think that we are declaring the whole counsel of God. Very fatal will it be if, instead of thus working in love, we sacrifice both our love and our labour to contentions about things that profit not, if for doubtful or forgotten ceremonies we set a snare for the consciences of men, and destroy those for whom Christ died. Yet more fatal, if we become the slaves of party, and join in its bitterness and falsehoods, and value truths not as truths, nor for their power to quicken and to heal, but because they belong to us and are our watch-words,—if, by so perverting truth, we lose all power to discern it in others, and disregard it for ourselves. Most fatal and terrible of all, because a sin against greater knowledge, which they only can commit who have been protected from the other dangers, if, while we discern the evils of extremes, and despise the dishonesty and violence of party, and the hollowness of a false profession, we remain cold and inactive, speculating but not acting, ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of that truth which must be won by

obedience to it, doing less good and working less earnestly than any of those whose weaknesses and inconsistencies seem so glaring to us.

But if this law of God's kingdom has its warnings and its fears, it has also hopes and blessings for us. 'Blessed are they who sow beside all waters.'¹ Blessed are they who do their work constantly and calmly, and possess their souls in patience, who commit themselves and their labours to God, and seek His help to strengthen them. Blessed are they, whether they are called to plant, or to water, or to reap ; for God will give the increase ; and both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together. In the 'morning' they 'will sow their seed,' and in the 'evening' they will not 'withhold their hand.'² Though they know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, they will not slacken in their work ; for they will sow in hope even though they sow in tears, and in the end they shall reap in joy.

¹ Isa. xxxii. 20.

² Eccles. xi. 6.

XXI.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND ITS FIRST PREACHER.¹


'The just shall live by his faith.'—HABAK. II. 4.

IN this instance, as in a thousand others in which a great truth has been embodied in a few simple words, there is a profound interest in tracing the progress of its birth, watching its expanding influence, seeing how from age to age it has varied in its form or application. We stand at the fountainhead, and behold the clear, bright spring which the Word of the Lord has brought forth from the flinty rock ; and lo ! the trickling stream becomes a brook, and the brook becomes a river, and the river flows on, fertilizing and blessing, making glad the city of our God. At times it may be troubled and discoloured, at times roughened by the storm, but it sweeps on in its strength, and we wonder whether he whose fevered thirst first hailed the freshening music of the bubbling spring, whose parched lips first drank eagerly of the

¹ Preached before the University of Oxford, October 29, 1865.

clear waters of life, ever dreamt of all that it would grow to, what tributaries it would receive, what far-off nations it would bless with its mighty waters.

Not otherwise may we think of the moment when the truth that the 'just by faith shall live' was first brought home to the mind of the prophet. It came to him as the solution of many dark and difficult problems; it gave him strength for the battle of his life, and was to him, as the 'prophetic word' has ever been, as a light shining in the darkness; but, unless we ascribe to him a foresight differing in kind as well as degree from anything that Scripture warrants us in connecting with a prophet's work, we cannot think of him as seeing far into its future history. Not for him was the vision of all the wondrous destiny of those wondrous words,—how they were to be the starting-point of a new stage in the spiritual life of mankind, the glad tidings of great joy to myriads of penitent and contrite hearts,—kindling in the heart of St. Paul the fire which was never to be extinguished,—stirring the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to his long muster-roll of the heroes of a faith which overcomes the world,—casting a ray of brightness even across the dreariness of the Talmud,—starting ever and anon, in Augustine and Luther, and a thousand lesser prophets, as on a fresh career of victory, conquering and to conquer,



—the trumpet-call of the Church's warfare, the watchword of mighty controversies, the *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesie*. Yes, in the very van of that goodly fellowship of preachers was that prophet of whom we now know so little, whom we have almost lost out of our sight in the great procession of his followers. The first preacher of the truth of Justification by Faith was not Luther, or Augustine, or Paul, but the prophet Habakkuk.

Short as are the extant writings of that prophet, they unfold, like most other inspired books, not only the truth itself, but the process of its conception, the discipline by which the prophet was led to perceive and to embrace it. To follow that process we must picture to ourselves what were the surroundings of his life, how they affected his inner spiritual being. Living, as Habakkuk did, at a time when the Assyrian monarchy was tottering to its fall, and the Chaldeans, under Nabopolassar or his son, were raising Babylon to its proud position as 'the lady of kingdoms,' it was given to him to see that, at no distant day, that 'bitter and hasty nation' should be to his own people as the scourge of God, smiting and laying waste. He saw them as in vision 'terrible and dreadful,' their 'horses swifter than leopards' and 'more fierce than the evening wolves,' 'deriding every stronghold and gathering their captives as

the sand,' 'flying as the eagle that hasteth to eat.'¹ As the prophet saw the coming darkness, and felt the first pulses of the storm, his mind was torn by many conflicting feelings. The sins of his own people, their 'spoiling, violence, and contention,' might deserve this chastisement.² The 'everlasting mercy' of the Holy One might be a pledge that it should not be utterly destructive. The prophet could utter his hope—'Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.' But were the instruments of the chastisement, who exulted in conquest, one whit better or more godly than those whom they chastised? Were they not infinitely worse, 'imputing their power unto their god,' 'devouring those that were more righteous than themselves,' 'sacrificing unto their net, and burning incense unto their drag'?³ The cry of the prophet went up in his perplexity with the question, so often asked before and since, 'O Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear?' 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously?'⁴

¹ Hab. i. 8, 10.

² Hab. i. 3.

³ Hab. i. 14, 17.

⁴ Hab. i. 2, 13.

He had spoken out his doubt and his distress, and therefore he had not to wait long for the answer. As one who stands upon a watch-tower, straining his eyes for the first gleam of the spears and helmets of a hostile or a friendly army, so he watched, as from the fenced place whence the vision of the truth was seen, to see what the Lord would say unto him, what answer he should give when men mocked and taunted him. Then, as the sunlight rises upon the watchman who all night long has looked out through the darkness, the Lord answered him and said, 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.' Not on the papyrus roll, but on tables of wood or stone; not in the cursive hand of scribes, but in the large characters employed by the sculptor of a graven monument, legible by the distant traveller as he passed at full speed, he was to make known, as Isaiah had done before him,¹ the words that were to be the stay and comfort of his own soul, and of the souls of his people. He was assured, by that word of the Lord that came to his inward spirit, that the vision of a Divine order in the midst of the world's confusions would come at the appointed time in the

¹ 'Take thee a *great* roll, and write in it with a man's pen.'—Isa. viii. 1. 'Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book.'—Isa. xxx. 8.

fulness of its truth. 'At the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it.' The attitude of patient, trustful expectation was the truest and the best to him. That expectation should not always be disappointed. 'It will surely come; it will not tarry.'

So prefaced and so proclaimed, the words were soon on the wide fields of the world's history. 'Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just by his faith shall live.'¹

¹ It may be well to note a few facts as to the words themselves and their interpretation, especially as our English version, both here and in the New Testament, tends to obscure their meaning:—

(1.) The word translated 'faith' (אֱמוּנָה *emoonah*) occurs forty-nine times in the Old Testament, and this is the solitary passage in which that equivalent is given. Elsewhere the words chosen are, for the most part, 'faithfulness' and 'truth.' Sometimes, when the context seemed to require another meaning, we have 'set office,' 'trust' (as a marginal reading), 'stability.' For the most part it is used of faithfulness and truth as Divine attributes, and in this sense is the key-note of Ps. lxxxix. In Prov. xii. 17, 22; xxviii. 20, it is applied to truthfulness as a human excellence. It is obvious from these facts, as well as from its etymology, that the 'faith' of which Habakkuk spoke must have been something more than an assent of the intellect on evidence, sufficient or insufficient, something more than a strong assurance of personal forgiveness. It had from the very first an ethical element in it.

(2.) The position of the word in the Hebrew leaves it an open question whether it belongs to the subject or the predicate of the sentence; whether we should translate 'the just by his faith shall live,' or, with the authorized version, 'the just shall live by his faith.' The Masoretic accentuation determines in favour of the former, and there is hardly room for doubt that this was the way in which St. Paul accepted it. It may reasonably be inferred, from the agreement of authorities so opposed to each other, that this was the received interpretation in the schools of Jerusalem when the great controversy as to justification was debated between St. Paul and the Judaizers. The Septuagint and Vulgate leave the matter open. Of later translations, Seb. Schmid decides, without any ambiguity, in favour of the subject, Luther and Ewald in favour of the predicate.

In the haughtiness and pride of the Chaldean conqueror there was the surest presage of a fall. His soul was 'not upright,' and the order of God's government, though it might manifest itself slowly, was against all unrighteousness. But for the righteous, for him whose righteousness springs from faithfulness and 'truth in the inward parts,' crushed and overpowered though he might be, there was the assurance that he should live. In the crash of empires, in the storm of doubts, his trust in God would raise him to a life which they had no power to destroy. The one condition of that life was that he must be spiritually and truly just, and the justice must have its source, not in hope of reward or fear of punishment, but in the spirit of loyalty and faithfulness.

Such, in briefest outline, was the process by which the great forerunners of Apostles, Fathers, and Reformers was led to know and proclaim the truth, such the form in which the doctrine of Justification by Faith was explicitly asserted in words, as it had been asserted implicitly in acts in the lives of Abraham and David. The faith which from the beginning of the world has justified is trust,—full, true, loyal trust in the righteousness of God. The special form of that faith of which Habakkuk spoke was that which makes men confident in the final overthrow and punishment of

evil, and the ultimate victory of good, faith (as we should put it in our poorer forms of speech) in the moral government of God.

The truth which was thus revealed came to the heart of St. Paul with a yet wider and deeper meaning, and was received by him with a greater intensity of joy. How far there had been any preparation for it in his earlier training we do not know. The remarkable saying of the later Rabbis, that all the 613 precepts of the law were embodied in this verse of Habakkuk,¹ reflects, as seems probable, the teaching of an earlier time. There was no school so likely to have attained and expressed such a conviction as that of Hillel and Gamaliel, contemporary with the teaching of our Lord. It is possible, then, that the mind of the Apostle of the Gentiles may, even before the mighty change in his belief, have been led to dwell on the prophet's words; but even if this were so, it must have been with dim and vague thoughts, with little or no practical result. It left

¹ Maccoth, fol. 23, col. 2, p. 280, quoted by Nork, *Rabbinische Quellen und Parallelen*, p. 281. The passage is a striking one in many ways. After giving 613 as the number of precepts (365 to correspond to the days of the year, and 248 answering to some received anatomical classification of the parts of the human body), it goes on to say that David in the 15th Psalm had reduced them all to eleven. Isaiah (xxxiii. 15) had compressed them into six. Micah went a step further (vi. 8) and embodied them in three great commandments. It was reserved for Habakkuk to sum them all up in the words, 'The just by his faith shall live.'

him still seeking to establish the righteousness which is by the law, as touching that righteousness without blame, and yet conscious of a craving which it could not satisfy, of a sinfulness which it could not reach. It gave him as the object of his faith only a Sovereign Judge, ruling, condemning, punishing; not One in whom the righteousness of the Almighty King was blended with the mercy and the truth of the All-loving Father.

When the great change came, and 'the Son of God was revealed in him,'¹ and he had learnt to think of God as 'in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,' the old words acquired a new power, new in their relation to his own inward life, new in their bearing upon the great controversies of his time. In what way, and by what degrees their meaning was disclosed, we shall best see by looking at the passages in which he dwells on them in the order of their time :—

(1.) The first meets us in the great controversy with the Judaizers in the Epistle to the Galatians (iii. 11). In vain, among those foolish Galatians, fascinated and spell-bound by falsehood, had 'Jesus Christ been evidently set forth, crucified among them.'² In vain had they had an actual experience of the Spirit's power, as coming not through any ritual acts of theirs, but by the hear-

¹ Gal. i. 16.

² Gal. iii. 1.

ing of faith. In vain had they suffered for the gospel, and by suffering learnt something of its life and power, and seen that the teacher through whom they had received the Spirit, and who had wrought signs and wonders, was one who had preached the righteousness of faith.¹ The subtle craft of the Judaizers had been too strong for them. The apostle has to lay once again the very foundations of the truth. In doing so, he has to deal partly with the prepossessions of his readers, partly with the arguments of his opponents ; partly also to lay bare the secrets of his own personal experience. Abraham, to whom the Judaizers turned as the great father of the faithful, was an example as such of this very righteousness which comes from faith. Those who shared that faith should be sharers also in its blessedness. But from the law as such, whether ceremonial or moral, no such blessedness could come. Commanding, judging, threatening, it did but rouse the conscience of man into the full activity of accusation. The apostle had known all the terrors of that accusation in the midst of his seeming righteousness. The voice had rung in his ears, as the knell of all hope and life, 'Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'² How was he

¹ Gal. iii. 2-5.

² Gal. iii. 10 ; Deut. xxvii. 26.

to escape that curse? How attain to the blessedness which the law promised to obedience only, when that obedience, in its fulness, became every day more and more impossible? In this doubt and perplexity, in this vision of darkness brooding over his heart, as terrible for him as had been to Habakkuk that vision of the darkness of the world, he too stood on his watch-tower; the prophet's words came to him as a truth to be once more made plain on tables, 'The righteous by faith shall live.'¹ There was another, truer source of righteousness, and therefore of life, than the rigid observance of rites and precepts, or than the life-long accumulation of deeds of an outward ethical obedience: to believe in God and in His righteousness, in His will to give what He demands, in His justice and His love; to trust that will in all the chances of life, in all the convulsions of the spirit, was to find peace and life. But the words which follow show the new object of faith which was present to his mind. It was no longer simply the moral government of God. With an abruptness more impressive than any logical precision,

¹ The whole force of St. Paul's argument requires this construction. He opposes them that are 'of faith' to those that are 'of the works of the law' (iii. 7, 10),—'the man that doeth' to the 'just by faith' (iii. 11, 12.) His formula is not that men '*live*,' but that they are '*justified* by faith' (iii. 24). He speaks not of the 'life,' but 'of the hope of a *righteousness* which is of *faith*.' So in the Epistle to the Romans the recurrence of the abstract (ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη) implies that the concrete present to his mind must have been ὁ ἐκ πίστεως δίκαιος.

he shows what his own mind was dwelling on, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us : for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree.'¹ It was to that he turned as the source of all hope and peace. The Son of the Eternal Father had come to share man's sorrows, to identify himself with man's sins, to know and bear even the curse which follows upon sin. The very form and manner of His death had upon it the brand of such a curse ; and therefore that death had been mighty in its power to redeem men from the curse. The law required obedience, and here was an obedience perfect even unto death. It demanded nothing less than life, and here the life was offered as a sacrifice, precious, without spot, acceptable. By trusting Him, trusting God manifested in Christ and reconciling the world unto Himself, as the prophet had trusted Him when He made bare His arm in the crash of armies and the fall of empires, the apostle might hope to find the righteousness and life which on the other track were ever slipping from his grasp. The teaching of the Epistle of the Romans is in this, as in other things, an expansion of that of the Epistle to the Galatians. What had before come to him out of the depths of his own experience, swift as an arrow,

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

sharp as a two-edged sword, in the controversy which he was then waging, was now seen in its bearing upon the wider questions of the religious history of mankind. Writing to the city which was for him the representative of the whole heathen world, dwelling on the strange, dark history of that world, on the history, hardly less dark and strange, of his own people Israel, he sought, and seeking found, what threw light upon the whole, and helped him to vindicate the ways of God. In the wide sympathy of his Christlike heart he yearned not only over those whose wisdom had led them nearer to the truth, the poets, sages, prophets, who had borne their witness, more or less clearly, of that truth, but over the sternest and wildest, over the most lawless and depraved. 'He was debtor both to the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise.'¹ He had a gospel for all, and he was not ashamed of it. That gospel was nothing less than 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek ;' and that which made it what it was, a message of glad tidings for all who would receive it, was precisely this, that it was an apocalypse to all of the truth which had been unveiled to his own spirit—'Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it

¹ Rom. i. 14.

is written, The righteous by faith shall live.¹ The righteousness which is God's especial attribute is revealed as that which He imparts, which in every human soul that receives it has its starting-point and its goal in trust. The prophet's words are pregnant for him with a new and more wonderful meaning. Out of them, as the text of that great discourse on the righteousness of God, grows the apostle's Theodicæa. The history of the Gentile world showed that the witness of the eternal power and Godhead in the things that are seen was not enough, that even the law written in their hearts was not enough to save them from a fathomless degradation.² The history of Israel showed that even the oracles of God, and the covenants and the promises, even the voice on Sinai and the word that spake by the prophets, were not enough to raise men from hypocrisy, formalism, selfishness.³ For both something more was needed, and that something was found in the revelation of the Divine character as seen in the humanity of Christ. So it was that the thoughts of the apostle rose to the height of that great argument. Among the marvellous fruits of the seed sown by Habakkuk, cast like seed-corn upon the waters, to be found again after many days, we may place the Epistle to the Romans.

¹ Rom. i. 17. ² Rom. i. 20; ii. 16. ³ Rom. ii. 17; iii. 20.

Words so prominent in St. Paul's thoughts may probably have occurred a hundred times in the written teaching which is no longer extant, a thousand times in the oral teaching which was never reduced to writing. In all outward changes and chances, in all inward conflicts with doubts and fears, in all distress and sorrow about churches or individual Christians, the words would still be ringing in his ears and living in his heart, 'The just by faith shall live.' They meet us once again in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and their presence there may be noted as among the proofs, if not of direct Pauline authorship, yet of the strongest Pauline influence. But there is a difference to be noted as well as an agreement. The words are viewed under a different aspect, less dogmatic and controversial, less immediately connected, it might seem, with the atoning sacrifice of Christ, more in harmony with their first historical meaning. The Hebrew Christians to whom the Epistle is addressed were suffering, as Israel had done in the days of Habakkuk, from violence and wrong. They had 'reproaches and afflictions, and the spoiling of their goods.'¹ And they had received all this joyfully, because they had ceased to measure their true wealth by the abundance of the things that they possessed. They knew that

¹ Heb. x. 33, 34.

they had in heaven a 'better and more enduring substance.' Their pastor and teacher entreats them to persevere in so living by faith and not by sight. 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' True, they had need of patience. Obedience, doing the will of God, must come first, and the promised reward afterwards, and the reward might seem to tarry. But then the prophet's words come once again to his mind, 'Yet a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry ;' a little while, it might be, as measured by man's standard,—a little while, even if it were twice ten thousand years, in the immensity of the ages,—and then the unseen Lord and King should manifest Himself again, judging the world in righteousness. They needed to continue steadfast in that belief, though all appearances were against it. Still, it was true, as it had ever been, that 'the just by faith shall live,' and faith has no meaning unless it be that it is trust in what men do not and can not see,—trust in the righteousness and truth of God,—trust in the word of God speaking to their hearts, or written by prophets and apostles. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'¹ That was the apostle's explanation of the prophet's words. He tests his


¹ Heb. xi. 1.

definition by that long induction from the great muster-roll of the heroes of the faith which from the beginning of the world has justified, and finds that it holds good of all who through it had received a good report, under all varieties of knowledge, character, circumstance. Abel, who offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain ; Enoch, who walked with God ; Abraham, the father of the faithful ; Moses, the lawgiver and prophet,—these were examples of its power ; but so also were the rough courage and wild patriotism of Samson, Barak's acceptance of Deborah's guidance, Jephthah's noble though rash and untaught devotion. So far as man can judge, that eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews would never have been written, if it had not had the words of Habakkuk as its starting-point.

To trace their further influence would be to write the history of all great movements and all great lives in the Church of Christ. The whole influence of Augustine in his own time, and throughout the middle ages, as preserving the Church from the coldness of Pelagian heresy or the deadness of scholasticism ; the witness borne by those who, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were the great lights and teachers of this our University, St. Edmund, Bredwardine and Wycliffe—the power with which Luther and Calvin,

and those of our Reformers who sympathized most with them, Tyndale, Rogers, Cranmer, laboured not in vain to shake off the corruptions of centuries, and revive the life of faith ; the lives of the truest workers and thinkers, even in the Church which could not bring itself to renounce those corruptions, Jansen, Pascal, and the Arnaulds,— of thousands of those who have been, in our own country, within or without the limits of the Established Church, as lights shining in the darkness, battling for the right, trusting in God, clinging to their faith in Christ : all these are so many proofs, ever accumulating, of the truth of the prophet's words, of their power to verify themselves by working out their own fulfilment, as a new spring of life for the solitary thinker, or for the multitudes of churches and of nations.

That power, brethren, is in them still. The truth of justification by faith is something more than the watchword of an extinct controversy emblazoned on the banners of the conquerors, but no longer able to wake echoes in the hearts of men. 'The just by faith shall live.' That is still the law of life for all of us, and it will not fail. Still those who stand upon their watchtower and watch the signs of the heavens, will see the vision of that truth gleaming through the darkness, and will 'write it on tables so that he that



runs may read it.' Still without that faith there is no true righteousness, and without the righteousness there is no true life. We need it in all its width and power, in all its variety of applications, in its bearing upon our personal salvation, upon our growth in holiness, upon our hopes for others, upon the mysteries of the world's evil. We must go back from the faith which, in the teaching of the Lutheran Reformers, assumed, in the very heat of their warfare against scholasticism, something of a scholastic character, to the wider teaching of St. Paul. We must unite with the experience and the faith of the apostle the experience and faith of the prophet who was his forerunner.

What is passing around us in the great drama of the world's history assuredly needs the one no less than the other. What was true within the horizon of Habakkuk's vision is true within our own. Spoiling and violence are still before us. The old evils of the world are still uncured. Measured by its effects upon that history, Christianity itself might seem a failure, for the evil of man has been mighty enough to thwart the good purpose of God, and that which promised to remedy the old evils has hardly touched them, and has, in appearance at least, introduced new evils of its own. Still men make their way to an imperial throne by violence and falsehood, and those who have

proved themselves fishers of men in every sense but that of the gospel, 'sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag.' Still kings and princes wage wars of shameless wrong, and march through the breadth of the land to 'possess the dwelling-places that were not theirs.' We have looked at four years of perverted chivalry and fratricidal strife for the maintenance of a monstrous evil. The aims and efforts of the noblest statesmen are baffled by the falsehood of extremes or the distrust of the timid, or by some seeming casualty which cuts short their life at the very moment when they seemed to be nearing the fulfilment of their hopes. The life of the Christian Church has passed here into a dead formalism, there into an energetic corruption. Where it has been more pure and more active, its unity has been lost among the multitude of sects and schisms, and the power of the National Church among ourselves to make itself commensurate with the national life has been fearfully impeded. In such perplexities (and who can escape them as he looks upon the actual condition of the world or traces its past history?) we need once more to stand upon the watch, to set ourselves upon the tower. In proportion as we enter into the prophet's complaint, the answer also will come to us. The woes which he uttered had more than a local,

temporary application to the 'bitter and hasty nation' on the banks of the Euphrates. Of all successful guilt, of all selfish ambition, mighty though it be in its armies and skilful in its diplomacy, it is still written, 'His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just by his faith shall live.' Still the law of retribution will fulfil itself, however slowly, in the time to come, as it has fulfilled itself in time past. 'Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!' 'Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee.' 'Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness. . . . The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.' 'Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity.'¹ In the life of nations though not in that of individual men, the world's history does indeed show itself as the world's judgment; and the lessons which it reads, however men may disregard them, are tokens not of a world without God, but of a Divine and righteous sovereignty. To one who himself strives after righteousness, and has the faith which endures as seeing Him who is invisible, the kingdom of God is seen, not only when men welcome the glad tidings, but when the people 'labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for

¹ Hab. ii. 5-17.

very vanity;’ and in the far-off future the righteousness which is working even now shall be manifested, and men shall recognise it. ‘The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’¹ To that faith the prophet clung, and we may yet cling, with a hope which is as an anchor sure and steadfast, within the veil of the unseen eternal world, though all around us may be dark and dreary. ‘Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine;’ though ‘the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;’ though ‘the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:’ ‘yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’²

There are many among us, it may be, to whom that joy is far more intimately connected with their own personal deliverance from sin and the penalty of sin than with any thoughts of the history of the nations round them. I cannot wonder at, and dare not blame, that intensity of feeling, even though it is clear that such a limitation is not after the pattern of the temper of prophet and apostle, and that there is something morbid in that concentration of all religious feeling upon a man’s own hopes and fears for the future. Better, a thousand

¹ Hab. ii. 14.

² Hab. ii. 17, 18.

times better, that concentration as the first step upward, than the indifference and recklessness which lead only downward. We may well rejoice in proportion as any experience of our own or of those we care for is like the experience of St. Paul, of Augustine, or of Luther. Yes, brothers and friends, in youth, manhood, age, we need that truth which has brought peace to the hearts of the saints of God in all ages, and under every variety of conditions as to knowledge, culture, temperament. You look within, and you find a scene as terrible as that which met the prophet's gaze. Violence and wrong are reigning there. There too has been an evil covetousness, the soul lifted up, the incense of self-worship. Old thoughts of evil recur with appalling power. We look back upon resolves but half fulfilled, broken vows, formal worship, loveless routine, zeal without knowledge, or knowledge without zeal, the bitterness of controversy, the waywardness of will, evil imaginations harboured, envy and vindictiveness arising in our hearts with a terrible and strange power, or, at the best, a life the goodness and openness of which have been simply the product of youth and health and natural elasticity, pleasant and fair in themselves, but without root or strength or permanence. How shall we pass from that which is natural to that which is spiritual?

How shall those whose minds and consciences have been defiled, who are made to possess the fearful inheritance of the evil they once chose, recover the lost purity, and rise out of bondage into freedom? If past attempts have been failures, strivings after good repute, or obedience to laws of duty, or conformity to a ritual, what shall turn them into success? The answer is still as before, 'The righteous by faith shall live,' by the faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'—faith in the love of God, faith in the atoning sacrifice, faith in the power of the Eternal Spirit to purify and quicken. Probabilities may seem infinitely against us. The law of continuity of character may threaten a perpetuation of our evil. Habits may appear stereotyped beyond all power of change; but in that confidence that it is not the will of God that 'any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,' in that trust that He in Christ has reconciled the world unto Himself, there is a new spring of energy and life, a supernatural power working greater wonders even than the mightiest changes in external nature. In that faith there lies the source of all true righteousness, and through it Christ imparts a righteousness like His own, the righteousness of filial obedience and filial love. And 'the just by faith shall live,' live in the highest

sense of life, live the eternal life which standeth in the knowledge of the Eternal God.

Such briefly, and in outline, has been the history and the power of the truth that we are justified by faith. Can we wonder that it should have been made the article of a standing or a falling Church? Can we think it strange that it should have been the spring of new energy to churches, nations, and individual men? It may be turned into a dry and hard dogma. It may be used even to make sad the heart of the righteous whom God hath not made sad, but its life is in it yet, as in the substance of a tree which has cast its leaves and seems decayed and withered, and by it, and by it alone, can we win the victory that overcomes the world. Turn, brothers and friends, to that truth, ever old and ever new, and test its power by a living personal experience. If the mists of evil thoughts gather thickly round you, cling to the Hand which is stretched out to you through the darkness. If the doubts and questionings which many count the great evils of our time have obscured your vision of the unseen; if the far greater evils of its cynical selfishness and absorbing Mammon-worship have so tied you to the things temporal that the things eternal seem infinitely distant; if even theology itself has helped to undermine your faith by its companionship with

insincerity and worldliness,—turn yet once again to Him who has said all things are possible to him that believeth, and fall on your knees as in His mighty and peaceful Presence, crying out, as one in like case cried of old, ‘Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.’¹

¹ Mark ix. 23, 24.

APPENDIX.



THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF JOB.

THIS is not the place for a full inquiry into the origin and character of the Book of Job, but I am unwilling to let slip an opportunity for stating briefly the grounds on which I have been led to the conclusion that that wonderful poem came into the literature of Israel through the intercourse with the people of Southern Arabia, of which the visit of the Queen of Sheba was the great representative instance.

(1.) Part of the work I may fairly assume to be already done. The theories which assign the book in question to a comparatively late period, to the time of the Babylonian captivity, or to that of the Persian sovereignty, have been satisfactorily met by Canon Cook (*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. JOB), and M. Renan (*Livre de Job*, p. xlii.) The allusion to his name in Ezek. xiv. 14,¹ the manifest reproduction of what

¹ 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.'

has the stamp of originality in the poem in the writings of Isaiah (comp. Job xiv. 11, Isaiah xix. 5) and Jeremiah (comp. Job iii. 1-10 and Jeremiah xx. 14-18),¹ the archaic character of thought and language, these are more than sufficient, in M. Renan's judgment, to counterbalance the arguments drawn by Gesenius and others from the presence of real or supposed Chaldaisms, and lead him to fix on a period not later than the reign of Hezekiah as its probable date. Mr. Cook rightly, as I believe, sees in these and other phenomena evidence of a yet more remote antiquity.

(2.) That antiquity has been carried up in a Jewish conjecture (it does not deserve the name of a tradition), which has almost become current among inferior commentators, to a definite point.

¹ It will be well to subjoin the parallel passages referred to:—

Job xiv. 11.—'As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up'

Job iii. 3-6.—'Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months.'

Job iii. 11.—'Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?'

Isaiah xix. 5.—'And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up.'

Jeremiah xx. 14, 15.—'Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee, making him very glad.'


Jer. xx. 18.—'Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?'

'The book,' it has been said, 'was written by Moses during the forty years in which he sojourned with Jethro in the wilderness. It was prior to the Exodus, and so the absence of any reference to the work and law of Moses is accounted for. It represents the patriarchal worship of which Jethro was a priest. It shows a knowledge of Egypt such as Moses must have acquired.' Admitting that so far there is nothing self-contradictory in the hypothesis, it must yet be said that it is purely conjectural, and in the highest degree improbable. Differences of language, thought, character are all against it. There is not the slightest approximation to a tradition of any value in its favour. There is no trace of the influence of the book in any portion of the Old Testament earlier than the Psalms and Proverbs. It is all but incredible that such a fact would have been passed over, if known, in a life related so fully as that of Moses.

(3.) We cannot, however, ignore the phenomena which were the starting-point of this hypothesis. There is an entire absence of any local Israelite character in the poem. The name of Moses, those even of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are as though they were not. There is no recognition of any distinctively Mosaic institutions, no knowledge of a law written on tables of stone by which God had revealed to man His will, or to any hereditary priesthood to which the power of offering sacrifice exclusively belonged. Of the three possible theories for explaining these facts—

(1.) that of Israelite authorship prior in time to the Exodus ; (2.) that of the book having come from the literature of some other nation into that of Israel ; (3.) that of an Israelite writer at some period subsequent to the Exodus having divested himself of all that was distinctive in the faith and life of his people, and thrown himself into what was common to Israel and other Semitic races, —the first and third must, it is believed, yield in likelihood to the second. There is an almost infinite improbability in supposing such a book to have existed among the sons of Jacob, either on their settlement in Egypt, or when they were crushed under its bondage. It is hardly less improbable that any Israelite, after the faith of Israel had been defined by the Law of Moses, would have had either the power or the will to throw his mind (unless under conditions like those discussed hereafter) into a different stage of belief and life.

(4.) Before passing on to the inquiry where we may look for the birthplace of this great poem, we have yet to note one other condition of the problem. If the book does not bear the stamp of Israelite religion, it is still essentially Semitic, we might almost say, essentially Hebrew. It reproduces in great things and small the religion and the life of the patriarchal period, as that comes before us in the book of Genesis. The Divine Name throughout the whole poem (with the exception of the prologue and the epilogue, and the words (xxviii. 28) which come as the oracle that is to



relieve the mind of the sufferer from its perplexity and silence his rebellion) is God, the Almighty, the name (El-Shaddai) by which Moses was told that He had revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹ Job offers burnt-offerings for his children,² as Abraham had offered. The friends of Job sacrifice seven bullocks and seven rams, as Balaam had taught Balak to sacrifice.³ Divine knowledge was spoken of as communicated in 'thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men,' just as the great revelation to Abraham was made when a 'deep sleep' and 'horror of great darkness fell upon him.'⁴ The spirit of the purest Monotheism reigns throughout, protesting not so much against the later and lower forms of idolatry, as against that adoration of the sun in his strength and the moon in her brightness,⁵ which was the first downward step, even as Abraham, in the Jewish legends, was said to have turned in succession from sun and moon and stars to worship their unseen Maker. It may fairly be inferred from these points of agreement that we must look for the origin of the book of Job to some branch of the Semitic family, connected more or less closely with Israel, and that there is a far greater probability of its being found within the circle of the descendants of Abraham than outside it.

(5.) It remains to be seen what light is thrown

¹ Exod. vi. 3; Job xv. 25, xxii. 26, xxiii. 16, and *passim*.

² Job i. 5.

⁴ Job iv. 13; Gen. xv. 12.

³ Job xlii. 8; Num. xxiii. 1.

⁵ Job xxxi. 26.

upon the question by the names of persons and places in the book itself. Some of these might at first sight seem to suggest an Edomite origin. Teman, to which Eliphaz belongs, is in the genealogy of the descendants of Esau the name of one of his grandsons, Eliphaz itself that of his eldest son.¹ Teman was famed of old for its 'wisdom' and its counsel; Edom, the whole which included Teman as a part, for its 'wise men' and its 'understanding.'² There may well have been in Edom, as it was before David conquered it, a knowledge and a culture capable of producing such a book as this. But the very fact that it was so conquered, the natural hate and antipathy which grew out of the conquest, waxing stronger and stronger as the years passed on,³ would make the reception of a poem belonging to the vanquished people into the literature of their conquerors all but incredible. The very name Teman, distinguished as it is from Seir, brought into close connexion, in one case, with Arabia and Dedanim,⁴ and in the book of Job itself with Sheba, points further to the south-east, to some part of the wider country occupied by the descendants of Esau, the district probably between the Nejd and the eastern shore of the Red Sea.

(6.) Other names point in the same direction.

(a.) That of Uz appears, obviously with an ethnological rather than a personal significance, in the list of the sons of Shem, in company with Asshur

¹ Job ii. 11; Gen. xxxvi. 10, 11.

² Jer. xlix. 7; Obad. 8.

³ Compare the language of Ps. lx 8, 9; lxxxiii. 6; Amos i. 11; and Obadiah throughout.

⁴ Isa. xxi. 11-14; Job vi. 19.

and Aram.¹ With a slight variation we find it, still in connexion with Aram, and Haran the city of Nahor, in the branch of the Semitic family, from which the migration of Abraham was an offshoot,² and again among the descendants of Esau.³ (b.) Bildad the Shuhite stands probably in the same relation to Shuah that Eliphaz does to Teman, and Shuah appears in the list of the sons of Abraham by Keturah,⁴ along with Midian, Sheba, Dedan, names essentially Arabian, and somewhat more strangely with Asshurim. (c.) Job is said to have been the greatest of all the *Beni-Kedem*, the men or children of the East,⁵ and these children of the East (the name is in its very nature somewhat wide in range and vague in meaning) seem also to be connected, though less closely, with Abraham.⁶ They too were as famous for their wisdom as the men of Teman or of Egypt.⁷ (d.) The names that appear incidentally point to the region lying between the lower Euphrates and the Persian Gulf, on the one side, and the Red Sea on the other. The Chaldeans and Sabæans attack the country, as if it were exposed to hostile raids both from north and south.⁸ The troops of Teman and Sheba are the representatives of all great armies.⁹ When the range of vision becomes wider, the thoughts of the writer pass, not to Tarshish, or Hermon, or Lebanon, but to Ophir and Ethiopia.¹⁰ The con-

¹ 1 Chron. i. 17.⁵ Job i. 3.⁸ Job i. 15, 17.² Gen. xxii. 21.⁶ Gen. xxv. 6.⁹ Job vi. 19.³ 1 Chron. i. 42.⁷ 1 Kings iv. 30.¹⁰ Job xxii. 24, xxviii. 19.⁴ Gen. xxv. 2.

clusion to which all these facts converge, is that the scene and characters of the poem belong to some region in which the tribes known as the descendants of Keturah and those of Esau were neighbours; and the presence of the name of Sheba among the former,¹ no less than the mention of it in Job, at least warrants the supposition that the poem, if it had an Edomite, *i.e.*, Temanite origin, was at any rate known also in the land from which the Queen of the South,² the Queen of Sheba came.

(7.) Many other phenomena of the book fall in with this conclusion. (*a.*) Assuming it to have been written in a region in which tribes claiming a descent from Abraham through Keturah were mingled with those who traced it through Esau, we have what explains the close affinity between the phase of religious life which it exhibits and that which we find in the book of Genesis,—the strict Monotheism, the name El-Shaddai, the mention of the Sons of God as intermediate between God and man. It adds some force to the interpretation which sees in ch. xxxi. 33³ a reference to the history of the Fall, and in ch. xxii. 16 to that of the Deluge.⁴ (*b.*) The forms of false religion which Job disclaims are not those of the Canaanite nations, the worship of Baal, Ashtaroah, Moloch,

¹ Gen. xxv. 3.

² Matt. xii. 42.

³ 'If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.'

⁴ 'Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood.'

but the first downward step, the substitution of the visible for the invisible, the Sabæan adoration of sun, moon, and stars.¹ (c.) Bold as are the questionings of this book, we must remember that they too had a parallel in the life of Abraham. He also had set himself to face the question whether the world were governed righteously, had recoiled from the thought of an indiscriminate punishment, and had dared to ask the question, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'² (d.) The noble description of the war-horse in ch. xxxix. 19-25 is far more natural in the mouth of an Arabian than it would have been in the early history of a people whose chieftains and judges rode on white asses, who used no horses, even in battle, till the time of the monarchy, by whom the employment of cavalry was looked upon as a necessary evil, almost as a sin.³ The language of the Hebrew poet on this subject is not in the tone of glory and exultation, but 'a horse is counted but a vain thing.' 'He hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse.'⁴ So, in like manner, the mention of the ostrich, native in South Arabia, but not found in Palestine, of the peacock, never seen by Israelites till Solomon explored the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean,⁵ of the mines which the writer might have seen in the Sinaitic peninsula,⁶ probably also that of the 'wild ass' and the 'unicorn,' all indicate that region as the point

¹ Job xxxi. 26, 28.

² Gen. xviii. 23-25.

³ Judg. v. 10; 1 Sam. viii. 11; Deut. xvii. 16.

⁴ Ps. xxxiii. 17; cxlvii. 10.

⁵ Job xxxix. 13; 1 Kings x. 23.

⁶ Job xxxviii. 1-10.

of view from which the writer looked out upon the world of nature.¹ Here he portrays what he was familiar with at home. In the descriptions of the crocodile (leviathan) and the hippopotamus (behemoth),² which he must have seen probably in the upper valley of the Nile, there is more the tone of wonder and amazement, as of one on whom the strange forms of animal life in another country had made an ineffaceable impression. (e.) What is true of the passages that bear upon the zoology of the country in which the writer lived, is true also of the knowledge of astronomy which appears in it.³ The names of the constellations, Aisch, Cesil, Cimah, Mazzaroth, are not Hebrew, and are, probably at least, Arabic. (f.) When the Israelites take possession of their inheritance they find no nations there but the seven that are enumerated as belonging to Canaan. The Philistines occupy the sea-coast. A remnant of the Anakim are found in Hebron. But the book of Job describes fully a people of inferior race and more brutal habits, a troglodyte tribe, living a wretched life in caves, and subsisting on plunder,⁴ the remnant probably of the old races, Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, Horim, which had once dwelt in and around Seir.⁵ Attacked on all sides, crushed by the northern hordes of Shinar, and by the Edomites, they seem to have found refuge in the less acces-

¹ Job xxxix. 5-12.

² Job xl. 15-24; xli. 1-34.

³ Job ix. 9, xxxviii. 31, 32.

⁴ Job xxiv. 1-12.

⁵ Gen. xiv. 5, 6; Deut. ii. 10-12. We may note in connexion with this the mention of Rephaim in the Hebrew of Job xxvi. 5.

sible southern border country of Edom, on the confines of Sheba, and to have been looked upon with scorn and loathing by the nobler Semitic tribes to which Job and his friends belonged. (*g.*) Less decisive, but not to be passed over, is the possible reference to the Pyramids of Egypt in ch. iii. 13, 14.¹ One who had seen the crocodile and the hippopotamus might well have seen them also.

(8.) With this approximation to the birthplace of the poem we may enter on the inquiry as to the time and manner of its admission into the sacred literature (to use the word Canon would be an anachronism) of the Israelites. And here there is, it is believed, but little room for doubt. (*a.*) Before the time of Solomon, the Jews had but scanty knowledge of any Edomites beyond the range of Seir. The conquests of David carried them to the Gulf of Akaba, the commerce of his son to the southern shores of the Red Sea. When the Queen of the South came as from 'the uttermost part of the earth,' it is as one who had heard in a far country of Solomon's wisdom.² The 'spices and the gold and the precious stones' which she brought (the pearls and the coral of the Red Sea, the topaz and sapphire of Ethiopia, the gold of Ophir, the spices of Arabia) were as things new and startling. Then it was that Israelites began to compare the wisdom of Solomon

¹ 'Then had I been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves.'

² 1 Kings x. 10.

with that of 'all the children of the east country.'¹ The very dedication prayer of the Temple supposes the presence of strangers coming out of a far land for the sake of the name of Jehovah,² proselytes to a worship with which they were previously in sympathy, presumably therefore of the Semitic family of nations, descendants of Esau, or Keturah, or Ishmael. It was the conspicuous glory of that reign that west and east should both bring their gifts, the 'kings of Tarshish and the isles,' the kings of Sheba and Saba and the others. The gold of Sheba is to be 'given to him continually.'³ (b.) After the reign of Solomon, on the other hand, the intercourse was soon interrupted. Even during its later years the strength of Edom revived under Hadad, and when the monarchy had been crippled by the disruption, the Kings of Judah were not able to secure the approaches to the Red Sea. Jehoshaphat made an unsuccessful attempt to revive it, and the attempt was never repeated. The visit of the Queen of Sheba continued to stand alone, with nothing parallel to it in the later history. At no period before or after Solomon was there any intercourse between the wisdom and culture of Israel and those of Arabia. (c.) It may be noted that the pilgrimage of the Queen of the South was far more than the visit of the ruler of a half-barbarous people to gaze on the magnificence of a higher civilisation. She came 'because she heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the

¹ 1 Kings iv. 30.

² 1 Kings viii. 41.

³ Ps. lxxii. 10, 15.

name of Jehovah ;' to 'prove him with hard questions,' and she 'communed with him of all that was in her heart.'¹ To suppose that these questions were such as the base imagination of later Judaism invented for her is to lose sight of the whole meaning of her history.² To believe that questions like those which occupy the speaker in the book of Job were then hotly debated among the wise men of the children of the East, and that her own mind was full of them, is simply to rest in the conclusion to which every fact converges.

(9.) We have yet to add indirect evidence of another kind. It is precisely from this period that we begin to find traces of the influence of this poem on the thoughts and language of other sacred writers. (a.) The questions and perplexities portrayed in Ps. lxxiii. are precisely such as the book of Job might at once have suggested and answered. Ps. xci. is an echo, verse by verse almost, of the words in which Eliphaz the Temanite describes the good man's life.³ (b.) The book of Proverbs presents yet more striking parallelisms. The central truth of the whole book, 'the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom,' is but the reproduction, in the form of a received maxim, of what meets us in Job with all the freshness and power of an oracle from heaven.⁴

¹ 1 Kings x. 1-3.

² See Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. SOLOMON.

³ Job v. 17-23.

⁴ Job xxviii. 28; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10. Another echo of it is found in Ps. cxi. 10.

Here, as in Job, wisdom is compared with rubies.¹ The use of the numerals 'six, yea, seven,' to express indefinite multitude, is common to both.² The wonderful speech of Wisdom in her creative energy in Prov. viii. is too closely parallel to that of Jehovah in Job xxxviii. for the resemblance to be accidental. The expression of interest and wonder at the marvels of brute life appears, though in different forms and with different applications, in Job xxxix. and Prov. xxx. It has been thought probable by many critics that in the words of Agur, in Prov. xxx., and those of King Lemuel in ch. xxxi., we have direct importations from the gnomic literature of Arabia. (*d.*) It would be unwise to lay much stress on a point so questionable as the date and authorship of Ecclesiastes, but here also, under all varieties of form, the questions discussed are substantially the same as those debated between Job and his friends,—the real or apparent disorders of life, the unequal distribution of its joys and sorrows; and the answer is also the same: as the 'fear of Jehovah' is the 'beginning of wisdom,' so is it the whole duty or work of man.³ (*e.*) Later echoes of the book, in Hezekiah's hymn,⁴ in Isaiah's prophecy,⁵ in Jeremiah's imprecation,⁶ may be noticed as interesting, but do not add much to the evidence already adduced, except as showing that a book to which men went as to a fountain of

¹ Prov. viii. 11; Job xxviii. 18.

² Prov. vi. 16; Job v. 19.

³ Job xxviii. 28; Eccles. xii. 13.

⁴ Job vii. 4-10; Isa xxxviii. 10-15.

⁵ Job xiv. 11; Isa. xix. 5.

⁶ Job iii. 1-10; Jer. xx. 14-18.

noble thought and imagery must have been well known and recognised.

(10.) The evidence is, it is believed, sufficiently strong to justify the conclusion that in the book of Job we have the result of that short contact between the religion and culture of the Hebrew and the Arabian branches of the Semitic family which took place during the reign of Solomon. Further than this it is hardly possible to go. Whether it were translated, with or without additions, from a poem previously extant, or was the work of one of the 'strangers from a far country,' after he had settled in Israel as a proselyte, bringing forth out of his treasures things new and old, the old thoughts and questions and life, and the new faith, or was written by a poet of Israel coming in contact with these strangers and their literature, and capable of incorporating what he thus heard into his own mind, and fusing them by the fire of genius into a crystalline whole, this we must leave uncertain. In either case we have what explains phenomena that are otherwise inexplicable,—the prevalence of the name Jehovah in some parts of the book, of El and Shaddai in others, its harmony with the earlier faith of Israel, and the numerous indications of an entirely different region from Palestine as that which the writer was familiar with. In either case we may watch with interest the welcome given, it may be, by Solomon himself, it may be by the thinkers and poets of his time, to a wisdom which was not their own, but which they recognised as having

come from God to their brethren, the impulse which it gave to thought and imagination, the support which it supplied to faith.

(11.) It remains for us to notice briefly some points which seem, at first sight, inconsistent with this theory, and may probably be urged as objections to it.¹ (a.) M. Renan sees in the mention of the Chaldæans in ch. i. 17, a proof that the antiquity of the book cannot be carried further back than the reign of Hezekiah, when that people first came to be formidable to Israel and Judah. The answer is that it does not follow that they were also unknown to the inhabitants of central and southern Arabia. The name of the Kasdim meets us at a remote period,² and raids like that of Gen. xiv. were possible at any period after they had made their appearance on the plain of the Euphrates. (b.) The appearance of Satan has been thought by many commentators to indicate a later date than the captivity, as having grown out of close contact with Persian dualism. Here, however, it is plain, as M. Renan maintains,³ that the accusing angel of Job is as different as possible from the Ahriman of the Avesta, and, it may be added, that the name Sheitan has, as far as we can trace, been widely spread for ages throughout Arabia, and that it is quite conceivable that if it first came into use outside the limits of Israel it may have originated there.

¹ *Livre de Job*, S. 1. p. xl.

² Gen. 11. 28; xv. 7.

³ *Livre de Job*, S. 1. p. xxxix.

(c.) The mention of the river Jordan in the description of behemoth,¹ may seem to indicate familiarity with the scenery of Palestine. But here the hypothesis in question precisely explains the phenomenon. Nothing could be more natural than that a stranger writing or translating in Palestine should select a river with which his hearers were familiar in order to help them to a true conception of the strange beast (hippopotamus or elephant), which they had not seen. (d.) References to facts or ideas which we find in the book of Genesis are in like manner so far from being difficulties in the way of receiving the theory, that they take their place in the induction which led to it. So received, they bring with them, in addition to the interest of this re-appearance, whatever force may attach to a remote tradition coming down from a given point of divergence, through an independent channel.

Note.—Dean Stanley's second volume of *Lectures on the Jewish Church* has come into my hands as these sheets are passing through the press. It will be seen that he (p. 244), indicating with his usual force the points of contact between the book of Job and the Proverbs of Solomon, follows M. Renan in regarding the former as derived 'years or centuries afterwards' from the latter. I own that there still seems to me an immense preponderance of evidence on the other side. At what period after Solomon would an Israelite have been likely to

¹ Job xl. 23, 'He trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth;' or, as Renan translates it, 'Il serait sans crainte, si le Jourdain montait à sa gueule.' The mention of the unicorn (Job xxxix. 12), probably identical with *Bos primigenius*, *Bison priscus*, or some extinct gigantic species of Urus, points in the same direction. (See Tristram's *Palestine*, p. 11.)

throw himself so entirely into the spirit of an earlier period and a distant country, or an Idumæan to have turned to the Proverbs of Solomon as a text-book of wisdom? Would the Jews of the captivity, with the intense hatred of Edom shown in Ps. cxxxvii. 7, have been likely then to receive an Idumæan poem into their sacred books? Apart too from these historical difficulties, I must add that it seems to me almost inconceivable that the overflowing grandeur of the poem should have grown out of the calm precision of the proverb. I could almost as soon accept the theory that the Gospel of St. John was an echo of the teaching of the Apostolic Fathers and the Gnostics of the second century.

THE END.

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