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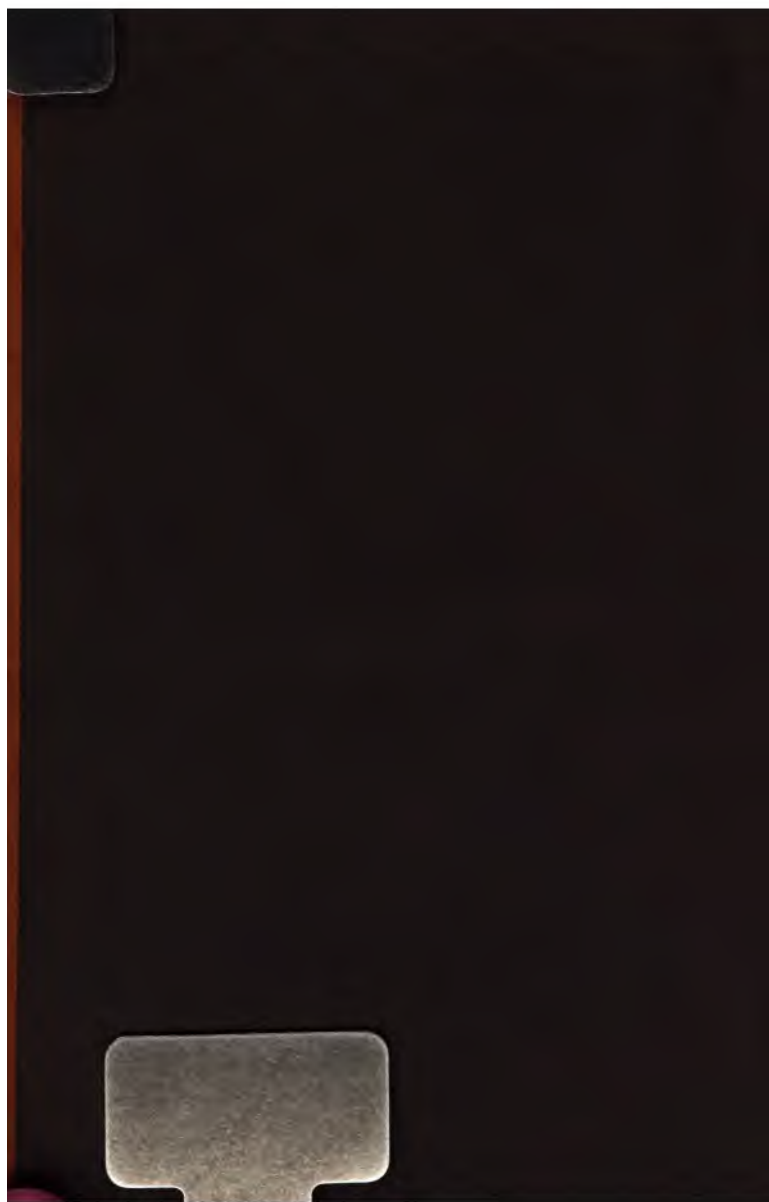
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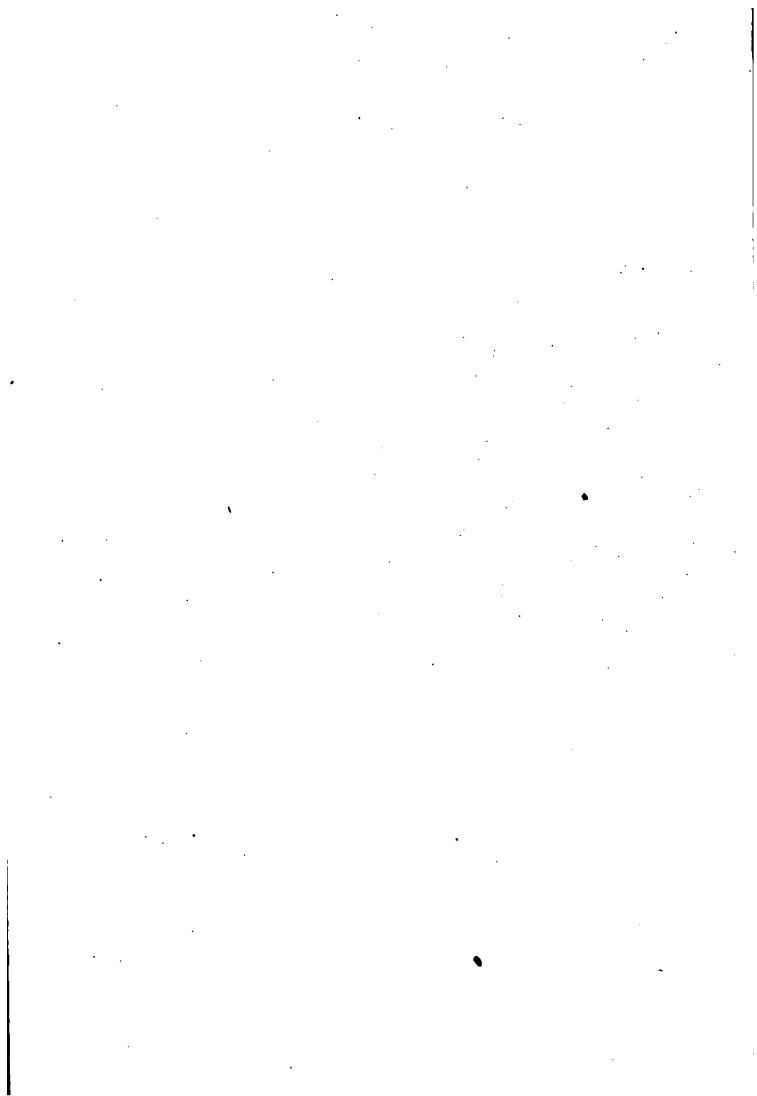
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LITERARY CHURCHMAN  
SERMONS









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*SERMONS.*

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LITERARY CHURCHMAN  
SERMONS.

A SELECTION OF PLAIN SERMONS

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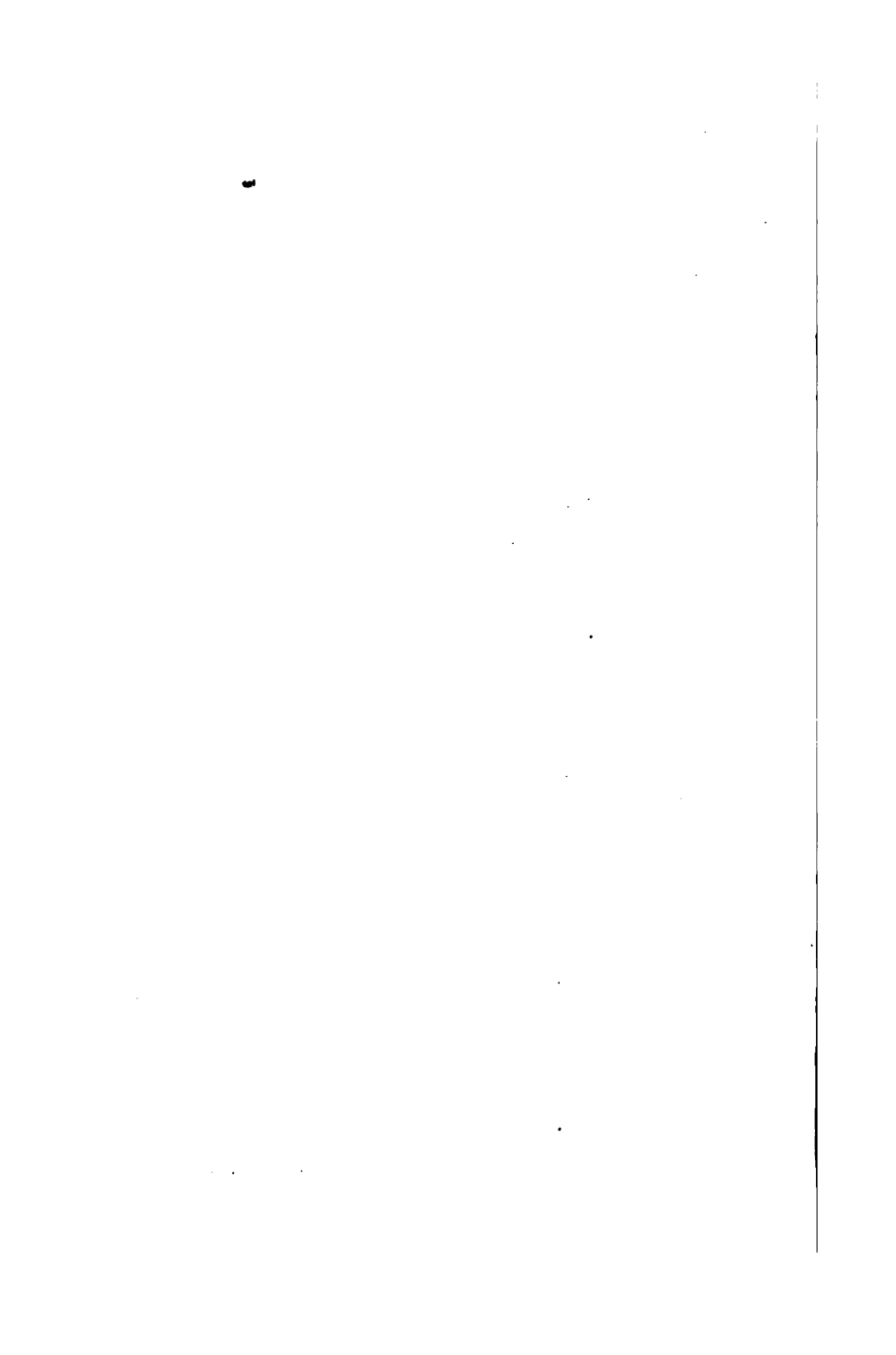


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The numerous and earnest requests, for the re-issue of some of the Sermons which have appeared in the "Literary Churchman" during the last eight years, have induced the publication of the present volume, which includes some few of the sermons which have been most highly appreciated and most generally useful. Many of the Sermons are, by request of their Authors, re-published anonymously, but the Publishers are permitted publicly to acknowledge with sincere thanks, the valuable contributions they have received from the Rev. Canon Ashwell and the Rev. H. J. Wilmot Buxton.

Sermons 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15, 17,  
18 and 28 are by Canon Ashwell.



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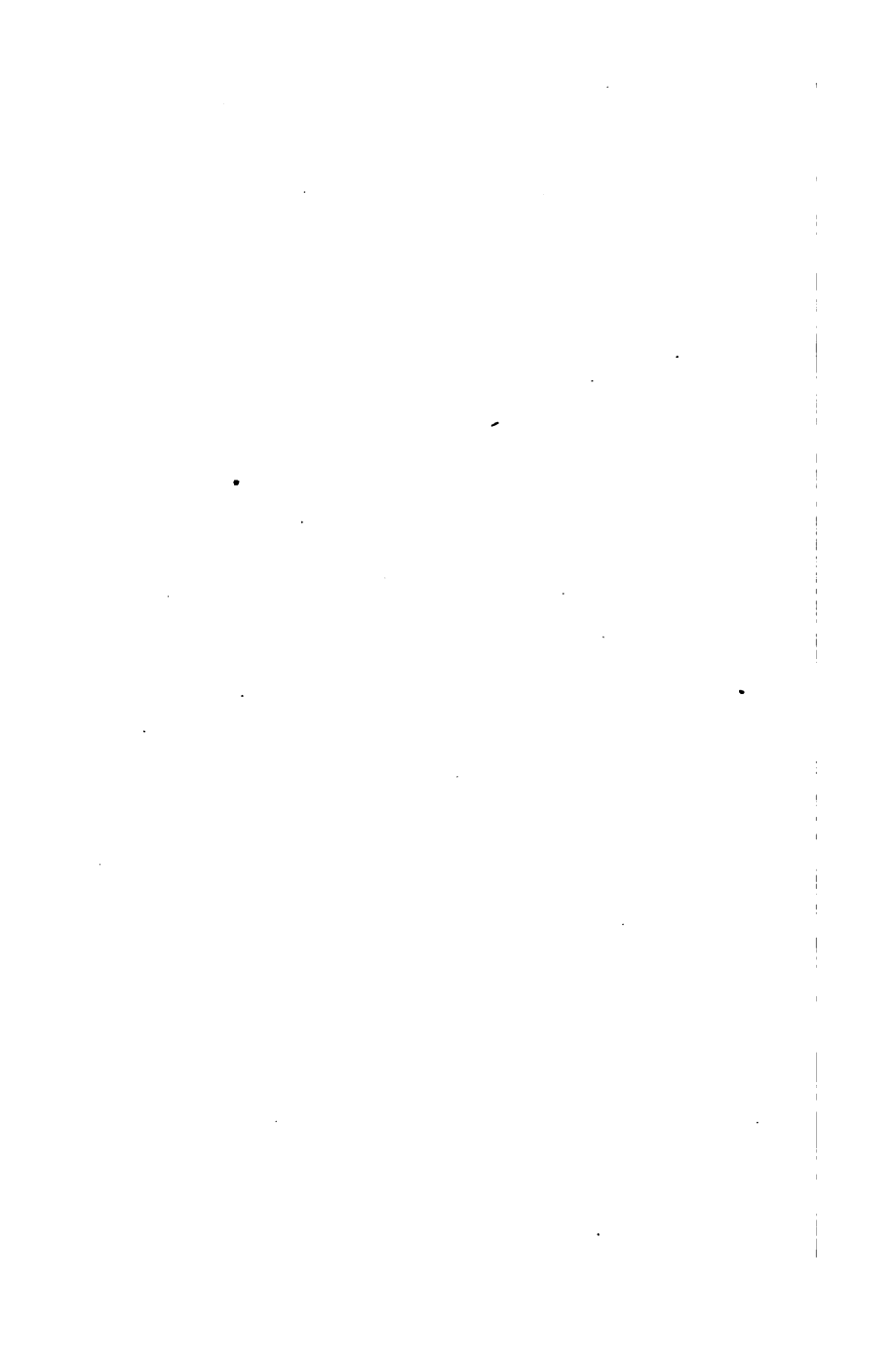
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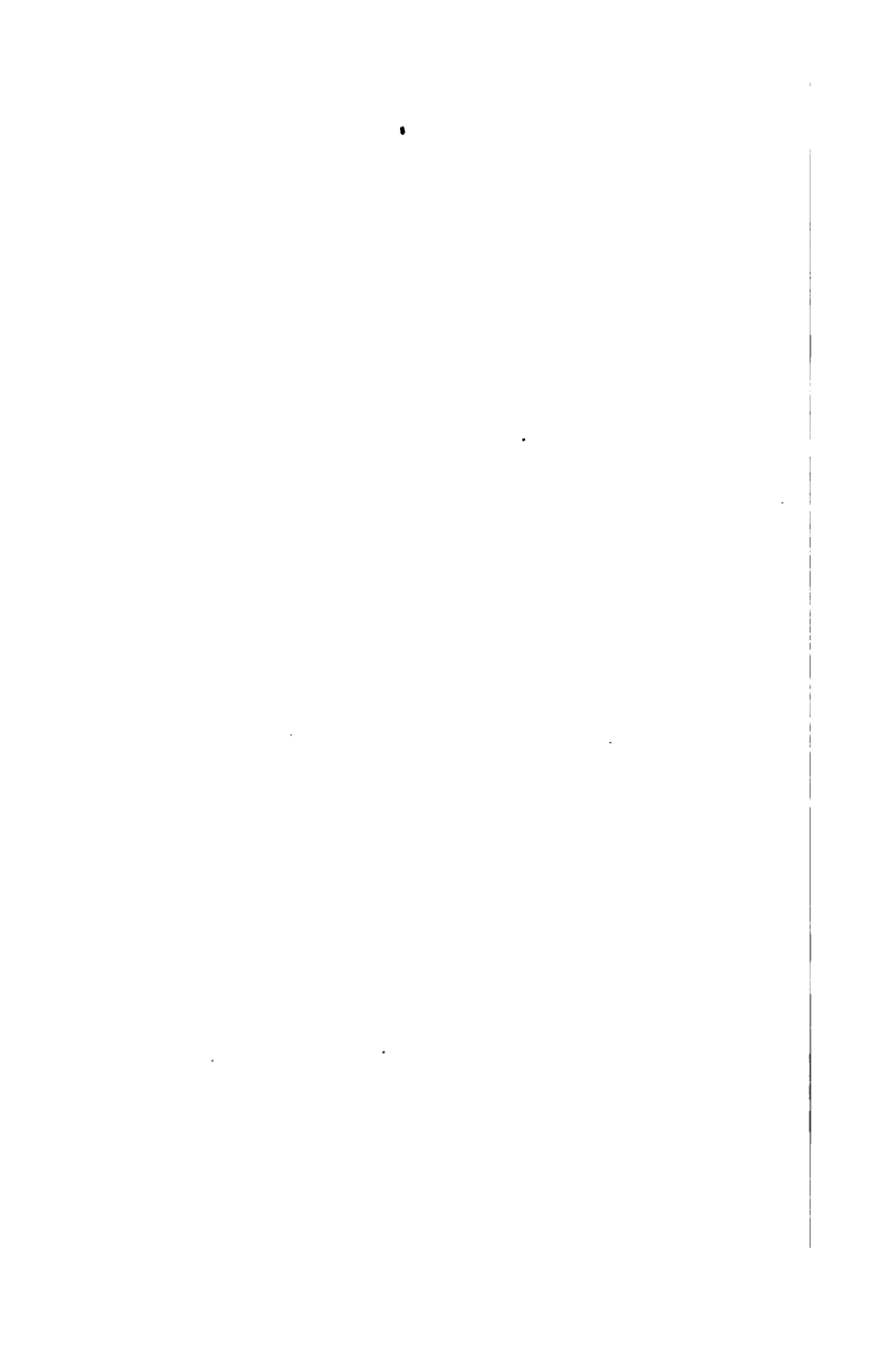
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## SERMON I.

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### *BY THE RIGHT WAY.*

FOR A GENERAL OCCASION ; OR FOR ADVENT.

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PSALM CVII. 7.

“He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.”

WHO is He who led them, and stills lead us, His faithful people, by the right way? Surely none other than the All-wise and All-loving Father, the Almighty and All-pardoning Saviour, the All-pure and All-enlightening Spirit, God with us, our true Emanuel. There are three things for us to think of here, the Leader, the way, and the end of the journey. And first of *the Leader*. Happy are the people who have God for their guide. Israel in the old days had Moses for their leader, and he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt ; Joshua led them against their enemies, and carried them into the *Promised Land* ; but thrice happy are we who

have for a leader Jesus, the true Moses, who has delivered us from the bondage of sin, and brought us through the Red Sea of His blood; thrice happy are we who have JESUS, the true Joshua, who has conquered our enemies, and who leads us, and will lead us across the river of death into the Promised Land, the Heavenly Canaan.

“ O happy band of pilgrims,  
If onward ye will tread,  
With Jesus as your fellow,  
To Jesus as your head.”

Every true man is proud of his leader. If we had asked those brave men who lately sailed to the far north whom they followed, they would have uttered, with flashing eye, the name of their captain : if we could have asked those who fought at Waterloo who was their general, they would have answered with eager pride, “ Wellington !” So we, if the world asks us of our leader, can answer *Jesus*, Name which is above every Name, Name which is as ointment poured forth, Name of victory, Name of power, Name of love, Name of sweetness. There are names in history which mean wealth, which mean con-

quest, or wisdom, or magnificence, or eloquence, or beauty ; but everything that is sweet and pleasant, everything that is glorious and desirable, is combined in that one name which is altogether lovely—the *Name of Jesus*. He it is who leads us, what more can we desire? They tell us that once as S. Thomas Aquinas was kneeling in church, after having completed his great work on the Blessed Sacrament, he heard a voice saying, “Thou hast written well concerning me, what wilt thou have therefore?” And the Saint replied, “Nought but Thyself, O “Lord!” So let it be with us, for there is none other to whom we may go. This holy Advent season reminds us that Jesus has come among us to be our leader in the right way, that we may find us a city of habitation.

He *leads* us. He does not compel us by threats of judgment, He does not sweep us along by the whirlwind and tempest of His wrath, He calls us by the still small voice of love, He takes us tenderly by the hand, even as a mother takes her child, and so He leads us in the right way.

And now let us think of this right way. There are many ways through the world, but only one way to Heaven. Some there are who desire to



walk in a path of their own choosing, and yet expect to rest with God at last. Some there are who say, "I will walk in the way of my affections and feelings, I will do as my natural impulse prompts me, what I like, that will I do." Ah! dear brethren, that is not the right way, it may be *your* way, but it is not God's. Fancy a traveller starting for a certain city, and coming to a place where two roads met, the one road pleasant, with shady trees, and flowery banks, the other rough, bleak, and hedged in with thorns; and fancy the traveller, instead of asking his way, choosing the pleasant path simply because it was pleasant! Some of us love the flowers in this world too well to make our journey in the right way. Others there are who say, "I will walk in the way of mine understanding, my learning shall light me, my science shall guide me." Ah! that is not the *right* way, brethren; science can do much, but it cannot give us a light clear enough to show us the way to Heaven. Others there are who say, "I will take the shortest road to Heaven; I do not believe that it is a long and wearisome journey; I will walk as I please now, and when the end is near I shall change, and reach home quickly." Ah! such

as these have forgotten the words “*strive* to enter in at the strait gate, few there be that find it.”

Once a pilgrim on the road of life was overtaken by a youth, who asked him the way to Paradise, and the old man pointed to the gate. The youth sprang forward to reach the portal with a bound, but fell bruised and bleeding ; and the old man told him gently that Paradise could not be gained thus at a bound, but after long and patient journeying, on weary feet. Israel, you remember, tried to enter the Promised land by a different and shorter road than which God had commanded, and they were driven back in confusion by their enemies.

There is but one way to Heaven, that which God chooses for us, and where Jesus leads. That way may take us through various scenes and circumstances. All our lives are not made in the same pattern, but there must be the same scarlet thread woven through every life's pattern, the sign of salvation, the clue to the *right way*. Some amongst us are destined to be rich, others poor ; for some the way of life lies in active scenes, for others in quiet retirement ; some are frequently exposed to the fierce sun of

trouble, others are more sheltered from the storms of life. Still, through whatever scenes our way of life may tend, we must strive to make it the *right way*. What, then, is this right way? It is the *King's Highway*, the way of holiness. There are many crooked paths, and byways of sin in the world, if we once wander there we are in deadly peril; let us, then, for the future determine that as for us "*we will go along by the King's Highway.*" The principal street of ancient Rome was called the *Via Sacra*—the Sacred Way; our feet should ever be on the true sacred way, the path purchased with Christ's blood, the road trod by Him, the wayfaring Man, who leads us poor wayfarers in the right way. On this path of ours there are certain gates. We are brought to the first gate as feeble, trembling infants, strangers in a cold world. Who will open unto us? A little hand is stretched forth, the gate opens, a little Child is there, and a voice is heard saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, to Me the Child Jesus, and a little child shall lead them." So we pass through the *gate of holy baptism*, and begin our journey in the right way.

Infancy and childhood are passed, another

gate is before us. Before it we kneel in solemn prayer, for we have vows to renew, promises to make, a battle to prepare for; a voice is heard saying, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, put away childish things, quit you like men, learn to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, fight the good fight, see that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, if any man would follow Me let him deny himself." So we pass through the gate of *holy confirmation*, and go on our journey in the right way. Soon we come to another gate, a golden gate, and fair to look upon; we hear a voice saying, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for thee; come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." So we pass through the gate of *holy communion*, and in the strength of that blessed Food we go on our way rejoicing in the right way. Anon we come to another gate, some earlier, some later, there is a gloom around it, the wind blows keenly, and the way is wet with tears. The hand which opens that gate is wounded and bleeding, the face which looks upon us is stained with weeping, and we hear a voice saying, "Take up thy cross, and follow me—art

“thou sad and lonely? I was despised and  
“ rejected of men.

“ Well I know thy trouble,  
    O my servant true,  
Thou art very weary,  
    I was weary too ;  
But that toil shall make thee  
    One day all Mine own,  
And the end of sorrow  
    Shall be near My Throne.”

So we pass through *the gate of sorrow*, and go on our journey in the right way. At length we reach another gate ; it may be whilst our head is yet bright with the gold of youth, or when silvered with the frost of old age, but sooner or later we come to it. The way is very gloomy, cold mists as from a river rise around us, a horror of great darkness seizes us, and we see that the gate opens upon a deep river with a swelling tide, and the path ends there. No wonder that the bravest shudders to approach ! How shall we enter that gloomy river, how cross those swelling waves ? Still the same hand is stretched forth to us, and the same voice is heard saying, “ When thou passest through the waters  
“ I am with thee, though thou walk through the

“valley of the shadow of death, My rod and My staff they comfort thee ; he that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live ;” so we pass through the *gate of death*. For one bitter moment the dark waters close over our head, and then we are on the farther shore, and all is bright. We stand in the light as of that of a stone most precious, the air is laden with perfumes, and with the sound of many voices, and again that One Voice is saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.” Near at hand is a light still brighter, which we may not attain to yet, which streams down from the golden city, and the gates of pearl, and the glassy sea, and on the gates we see written the words—“Welcome Home”—for this is *home*, dear brethren, this is the city of habitation, the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

As we look back along the path of our life, what do we see? I think that on God’s part we see mercies, opportunities, loving-kindness. On our own part I think we see efforts, failures, sins. A discouraging view without doubt, yet, dear brethren, if we have been *trying*, let us not be downcast now. If we have tried, and mean

to try yet more earnestly for a closer walk with God, all shall be well. Every morning of our journey Jesus whispers to us, "Friend, go up higher." I know we have often wandered out of the way. I know we have been weak, wilful, wayward, but I know, too, that God will pardon all who are penitent, and I know that Jesus will keep close to us if we will keep close to Him, and will lead us in the right way till we find a city to dwell in, from whence we shall go no more out.

## SERMON II.

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### THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN. (SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.)

By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.

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S. LUKE XXI. 33-34.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves.”

So, and with such solemn words, doth Christ the mighty Prophet close the awful strain of the Prophecy in this day's Gospel. “My words shall not pass away.” “Heaven and Earth shall not pass away.” “My words shall not.” My words. Oh, surely here we are listening to the divine asseveration of the Eternal Son with which He clenches and confirms the weighty truths He has just now uttered:—truths weighty, but truths marvellous,—truths hard to understand and harder still to reconcile,—truths strange and unacceptable to flesh and blood, and to the worldly mind.

Sounds of fear and awe had been the burden of the prophecy. Distress of nations; hearts



failing for fear ; perplexity and strange signs everywhere :—such had been the burden of His utterance. Yet withal a melody of sweetness had run throughout it all. A melody of hope and of redemption had been linked and intertwined with the solemn roll of the Advent Prophecy, as He adds—*then, i.e.*, in this darkest, direst hour, *then* look up, *then* lift up your heads, for *then* your redemption draweth nigh. Strange picture indeed ! Strange intermingling of outward terrors and of inward joys :—outwardly all that can inspire fear and awe ; inwardly all that can rouse the most exulting hope ; earth and all that it has of greatness and stability departing in a final crash, and Christ appearing to redeem His own with His everlasting redemption.

Is it permitted us to picture to ourselves the mutual looks and glances which the little band of astonished hearers must have been exchanging—looks of wonder and amazement and inquiry what this strange paradox could mean ; aye, and perhaps whispered expressions, too, of half impatience at the mysterious terms in which their Lord was speaking ; as though they would say, “ what words are these ? Can there ever be any “ realities to correspond to such strange words ? ”

And then He adds, as if He would say, "Marvel ye at My words? Think ye that My words can be mere breath and nothing more? Earth, sea, and sky, My word created all. The lightest word of the Son of Man is more enduring than the everlasting hills. Yea, Heaven and Earth *may* pass—*shall* pass away, but My Word shall not pass away." So He sets His seal to His assertion and declares its truth.

Now, we may easily believe, and, in all probability, rightly so, that this solemn asseveration was called forth at the moment by some expression of wonder, or look of astonishment and doubt, as when on a former occasion it was said, "These are hard sayings, who can hear them?" The more so as the very next words following those with which our Gospel closes are, "Take heed to yourselves." So that we may fairly conceive our Lord's strong language to have been addressed to a spirit of doubt—unconscious it might be, for people may often doubt without distinctly realising it to themselves even when it is visible to others—addressed, therefore, to a temper of *unintentional* doubt; not to the temper of intentionally disbelieving and contradicting what our Lord said, but to

that of not realising the facts corresponding to His words. And in this sense let us take the words as spoken to ourselves, and ask ourselves—who of us does thoroughly realise the certainty of Christ's Second Coming?

We will consider, first, that which the words were meant primarily to assert, *i.e.*,

- (1.) The certainty of Christ's Second Coming: the abidingness of every word of Christ.
- (2.) The means of realising that certainty—take heed to yourselves.

I. The abidingness of Christ's words, the certainty of Christ's Second Coming, and of the dissolution of this frame of things we behold.

The first truth is that all the things around us, "Heaven and Earth," are created by Christ. By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. No fortuitous concourse of atoms massed themselves into this world of beauty, and order, and symmetry. It is no mechanical force of its own which holds this Universe in its perfect balance. Not so. It is the ceaseless energy of the unseen God, of God the Son, of Him Who spoke this Text upon the Hill of Olivet; of Him

Who, as S. Paul has written, even *now* upholdeth all things by the Word of His power. Yes, it is the Word of God which holds the world together, and the Sun would pale *now*, and the Stars would fall *now*, and the voices of Nature fall back into their original silence *now*, but for the Word of the Lord, which bids them all remain.

Is it so hard to think of the wheels of Nature stopping? I think quite otherwise. Why should they go on if they were not caused to go on? They would stop this moment were the Word of God, which bids them roll on in their courses, to be hushed and still.

Now, it is just so far as this is the practical conviction of our hearts every day and hour and minute that we are really godly. To be godly is to feel that God is ever near, and ever acting round us, and to feel this in a practical, efficacious way. To be godly is to go through life with this thought always coming and going across our mind, as if it were a part of us. A life of godliness is a life of faith, and faith is that peculiar faculty of the soul by which a man *feels* the Presence of God, just as some animals have the power of seeing in what we call the dark. That

is the difference between the real Christian and the half Christian. To the man of this world the outer shell of things is all. To the Christian everything is as a Word of God. God speaks to him through everything. God's Word is that which supports, directs, controls everything, and the Christian sees this, and feels this, so that everything is transmitting to him some message from the God Who made it and sustains it. The man of this world struggles through life as best he may, and when old age comes and the companions of early days are gone he is very solitary. For in all this strange world he has never heard the Word of God, which is in it all, and which would have been as a cherished friend and companion to him in his days of loneliness, if he would but have made acquaintance with it in his journey through life. It is the opposite of this with the Christian. To him all things are full of God. Wherever he is, and whatever he is doing, the Word of God is making itself known to him. God looks into your hearts from the deeps of the midnight sky: God calls you to high thoughts from the mountain top: God rouses you to solemnity in the voices of the hurricane. Oh, Heaven and Earth are themselves

only as the sound of the voices of God. So long as their voices are needed, so long will they last. So long as their witness is requisite so long shall they endure. They have a work to do, and a message to deliver, for their Maker. They shall pass away when they have spoken out their message and have done their work, and when we shall *see* Him face to face in the *new* heavens and the new earth of the open vision of the Most High. Wait awhile; as surely as it is the Word of God that sustains the world, so surely at the same Word the end shall come. But the end will *not* come till this visible Creation shall have done its work, and some better thing be coming; and *therefore* it is that amidst the sights and sounds of uttermost dissolution we are bidden to look up and rejoice, for it is but as the rending of a veil, which, when once it is destroyed, will let us see "our redemption drawing nigh." Therefore is it that the dread picture of the latter days is ever associated with the paradox of Christian hope rising buoyant over the scenes of uttermost visible fearfulness. It is because the dying out of earth is the dawn of heaven, and the wreck of Time is but the clearing of the path for the manifestation of

the Eternal. "The Sign of the Son of Man" shall re-appear above the crash of the universe.

## II. How to realise this?

Our Lord says, "Take heed to yourselves." We must force ourselves to look at our life and all about us in this spirit. By prayer, by resolute determination in God's strength to see things from God's point of view, and not man's; by avoiding, as far as in us lies, the excitements and distractions of busy life and frivolous society, which drown the voices by which God speaks to the soul, and dim the eye of faith by the dust of the world.

We *know*, we all of us *know*, the things of which I have spoken; but we do not realise them. There is a world of difference between knowing and realizing. When a poor man is made suddenly rich, it is long before he realises it, longer still before he *so* realises it as to act naturally and easily upon his knowledge. His heart and feelings are still filled, possessed, overcharged with the thoughts and customs of his poorer days. When a heavy bereavement falls upon you, you do not realise it at once. Your heart is still filled, possessed, overcharged, with the old associations and life-long habits. You cannot feel, and be at

once in actual practise, what you know you have become and must continue to be.

So with us and our ideas about this world. We *know* the world is doomed. We know that Christ is coming to judgment. We know that through the crash, and the doom, approach the footsteps of the everlasting Dawn. But our hearts are filled with the idea and associations of the present. We do not realise that it is all to go.

How are we to force ourselves to realise it? Under God, I know no surer way than that of prayer and resolute meditation. It may sound strange to talk of resolute meditation ; yet the two words go well together. It is our mistake if we think they do not. I know that the word meditation has a dreamy sound to most people. It conjures up thoughts of reverie, and wandering fancy, and unchained, listless ease. Alas! this only shows how little we truly meditate upon the things of God and of Eternity. *These* the subjects for vacant fancies and rambling thought! Oh, no. When we say, "meditate "on these things," we mean this, fix your every mental power upon them, concentrate your whole mind on them, call up each separate idea strongly, vividly, before your mind's eye, and,



as I may so say, try to act out the whole scene as if it were going on. Shut out the *World*; take heed to *yourselves*. Try to realise yourselves with the whole world falling from beneath you, falling from around you, falling into nothingness, and leaving you alone in the Universe face to face with Him who shall then stand before you as your Judge—may God grant that He be also your Redeemer. Shut out the *World*; take heed to *yourselves*, and think that the Son of Man is even now approaching, that He is at hand, yea at the very door, as indeed He may be, and then realise to yourselves *how* He would find you, how you would feel, if He were now coming to you as you are. You can do this. Any man can do it. There is such a thing as the power of a holy imagination by which you can do it. Any man can go into a room apart, can sit alone, can call upon God to fill his soul with the thought of things as they are: can fasten his mental vision upon those things until they close in upon him like mountains hemming in the narrow vale. And then the greatness of these thoughts will begin to appear to you. Not all at first, perhaps, but as time goes on, and as you *repeat the process*. No man who ever truly meditated but *repeats the process*.

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As you revisit a scene or a mountain which has fascinated you once, so the realities which you have once realised in meditation will draw you by their divine attraction again and again, until at last *they* will be the realities to you, and the things and objects of this life will be but as the counters which stand for money in the games of children. Do this, and the pictures drawn by our Blessed Lord in His prophetic utterances will be no longer strange or perplexing to you ; and then, when the end shall come, you will not be taken by surprise or at unawares, but will lift up your head with joy, for in the midst of the falling universe you will see the Sign of the Son of Man, and hear the footsteps of the triumphant Redeemer, your Saviour and your God. Amen.

## SERMON III.

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### THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.)

By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., *Canon of Chichester.*

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1 COR. IV. 1.

“Stewards of the mysteries of God.”

THE subject of this day's Collect and Epistle is so strongly marked that no one can help observing it. The least thoughtful worshipper in all this Church cannot have helped noticing how precisely each answers to the other, and how one thought and one thought only runs through both. The collect is a prayer that the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries may so prepare His way by the conversion of sinners that at His second Advent “we may be found “an acceptable people in His sight.” The Epistle is a description of the Christian ministry, and of its responsibility, and it asserts that this responsibility is—not to man, but—to God. It seems only right therefore, that, to-day, we should give our thoughts to the subjects thus brought before us—what the clergy are, what their office is, who gave them that office, how that

office is to be exercised, and in what light it is the duty of Christian people to regard them.

I. First, then, in our collect we call the clergy "stewards of Christ's mysteries," and then in the Epistle S. Paul lays it down that the special duty of a steward is fidelity, or faithfulness. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." If any one asks the question—faithful to whom? the answer is easy,—faithful to the person whose steward he is. And this is why S. Paul goes on in his next sentence to say,—“it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment.” Why so? Plainly because he was not their steward, but God's. The "mysteries" of which we are stewards are God's mysteries, not man's. They are entrusted to us by God, not by man. Therefore it is God, not man, that we are responsible to. "He that judgeth me," says S. Paul, "is the Lord." S. Paul even says that though he knows nothing against \* himself, yet even that does not prove him to be faithful. A steward may believe himself to be blameless. But that is not enough. The question is,—will his master

\* It may be worth while to add that the word "by" in "by myself" means "against," according to the English of the period of our Bible translation.

be satisfied with his stewardship? So then, as far as we have as yet gone, it appears that in our collect we have been praying for our clergy on the understanding that they are God's stewards, and not man's, and that they are responsible to God for the way in which they exercise that stewardship.

It may be worth while to notice for a moment how entirely this cuts off the Church of Christ from the theory upon which the Dissenting bodies by which she is surrounded are organized. According to the Dissenting idea, the "minister" is the minister *of the congregation*, selected and appointed by the congregation, and therefore responsible *to them*. In the Church of Christ, on the other hand, he is not the minister of the congregation at all, but the steward of God. According to the Dissenting idea, he is simply a person chosen by the congregation to lead their devotions and to preach them sermons. In the Church of Christ, on the other hand, he is a person entrusted by Christ with certain things necessary for the salvation of Christ's flock; things which only God can enable him to apply successfully; and accordingly in our collect we have been praying that God will enable His ministers so to apply them that all His flock

may be saved in the day of Christ's second coming. Thus you see in churches of man's devising the minister is the minister of man, but in God's church he is the minister of God. S. Paul shows us this very clearly in his farewell address to the clergy of the Church of Ephesus. In the twentieth chapter of the Acts we see him (verse 28) telling those clergy that it was "the Holy Ghost" who had "made them "overseers" of Christ's flock. Now it was S. Paul who had ordained these clergy. Yet he does not say a word about that. What he does say is, that "the Holy Ghost had made them "overseers to feed the Church of God." So then it is clear that S. Paul considered the clergy whom he had ordained to the charge of the Ephesian Church, were appointed by God the Holy Ghost, and that their duty was "to "feed" that Church. And what were they to feed the Church with? The answer to this question may be found by means of another question—What does God give them to feed His Church with? When Christ in the wilderness caused the Apostles to feed the five thousand, *He Himself* provided the food by miracle. The store which the Apostles had was altogether

insufficient. So it is with the Church, and with her clergy. They are appointed by the Holy Ghost to feed the Church of God. But they have nothing of their own which will suffice. Therefore God Himself provides them with what is necessary. They are stewards of God's *mysteries*—*i.e.*, God's mysteries are the food which He supplies to His ministers that they may have wherewithal to feed His flock.

Now, what is food for? The object of food is to sustain life. What, then, is *spiritual* food for? It is to sustain *spiritual* life. And as God the Holy Ghost calls the clergy to feed the Church, so He entrusts them with that spiritual food which can sustain the spiritual life of Christian men. He *entrusts* them with it, I say. And He will call them to account if they do not feed His Church with it. But the point here to be first noticed is that there is such a thing as spiritual food, and that it is necessary to sustain spiritual life : bodily food for bodily life—spiritual food for spiritual life. Bodily food comes to us through the course of Nature. Spiritual food comes to us through the ordinances of Grace. God the Holy Ghost is the author\* of our spiritual

\* Here compare Nicene creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost,

life. God the Holy Ghost commissions His ministers to feed the spiritual life. God the Holy Ghost also supplies His ministers with the food requisite to sustain that life. In true religion all is from God. It is Christ alone Who has redeemed us from Sin and Death. It is God the Holy Ghost alone who regenerates us and gives us a new spiritual life. It is the mysteries of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, by which the Church is fed, and our spiritual life is sustained. You see, then, why I began by saying what a very different picture our collect, our epistle, and S. Paul's own teaching give of the Church from that which is given by persons who forget that the commission of her clergy comes from God. The Bible teaches that God entrusts His commissioned clergy with certain things necessary for the well-being of Christian men. The dissenting theory is that men choose certain other men to conduct their worship for them, and to preach to them. If they do not satisfy them they send them away, just as you send away a person you have engaged "Lord, and Life-giver," with the fact of the Invocation of the Holy Spirit on the waters of Baptism, and on the Eucharist Elements, which directly connects His action both with spiritual Birth and spiritual sustenance.



to transact any business for you, if he does not do it to your liking. S. Paul says, "it is a "small thing to be judged of man," which it would not be if it was man who gave us our commission. S. Paul says that it is "the Holy Ghost" who had made the Ephesian clergy "overseers," and the mysteries of which we are stewards are God's mysteries, not man's, so that our responsibility is to God, who entrusts us with these mysteries in order to bring His flock safe to Heaven.

II. But how is this office of stewards to be exercised by the Clergy? How are the Clergy to "feed the Church of God?" What are these mysteries which they are to dispense in their character as stewards? Look back a moment. We said just now that the mysteries of God are clearly those things by which the spiritual life of souls is to be sustained. God gives us a new and spiritual nature. By nature we are born in sin. God causes us to be born again to a new life. Those who live according to that new life grow stronger and stronger in it, and when they come to die the old nature dies out altogether, and the new and divine life lives on, and at last will be received into Heaven and its happiness for all eternity. But this spiritual life in us wants

sustaining. It must have *its* food, just as much as bodily life must have *its*. So God gives it this food. And this food *must*, of course, be a divine and spiritual food if it is to be suited to keep up the spiritual life which God has planted in us. God's mysteries *are* this food. A "mystery" means something which we men could not have gained or found out for ourselves. They are called "mysteries" in order to remind us that they do not come from man, but from God. So then to begin with, you see that the Clergy do not pretend that they have anything of their own to give you. What they have to give is from God, for your good. And if it is from God you may be sure that it is exactly what you need. And they are Christ's mysteries. Christ died to save you. He wishes that you should be saved. So He did not only die for you, but provided also for your spiritual sustenance, so that you may be sure of coming to the eternal happiness which He died to purchase for you. So then, these "mysteries" are whatever is necessary to sustain the immortal part of you. Part of our nature dies when we die—but not all of it. Part of it lives on beyond the grave. God gives food for the immortal part of us—such food as will enable it to

have eternal life in Heaven. The soul does not die.

What, then, is it that feeds the soul and keeps its true spiritual life really *alive*? You all know very well that Christ says that our life depends on Him, like a vine's branches live by the sap which comes from its root, so that the food of the soul is whatever keeps it in true union with Christ. How are you to be kept in true union with Christ? There are more things than one that go to this. There is first the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. We Clergy are responsible to God for teaching you the *truths of the Gospel*. Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear: whether the truths are pleasant, or whether they are unpopular, it must be all one to us;—we are bound to preach them all the same. If we do not, God will judge us. Our business is not to preach what pleases a congregation lest the congregation should get rid of us, and find some one else who will suit it better. The "mysteries" are God's, and not the congregation's. If we received them from men, then men would be the best judges if we preached them rightly. But we are answerable with our souls to God, and we dare not alter what He has committed to us. So much for teaching.

There come next the various ordinances of public worship. In coming to Church you come into God's House, not into man's. You come into God's House that your souls may be with Him, and Him only, for a while. You do it that your whole spiritual nature may for a while be with Him, and—as I may say—get more and more accustomed to being with your Heavenly Father, as children are brought more into their parent's company as they grow older, so as to be trained always with them when they are grown up. We shall have to be with God when we die—which answers to our being spiritually “grown up.” So we come to Church, as into God's Presence, to learn more and more what it is to be with Him, and become *fit* to be with Him always.

Then, besides these, comes the chiefest “mystery” of all—the divinest “food” of all, by which the Church of God is fed, and the spiritual life of souls maintained—the Body and Blood of Christ—which is our spiritual food and sustenance in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Who—unless Christ had bidden us to do so—who would have *dared* to tell you that He Himself became the food of your souls in this Holy Sacrament? Outside of the Church you see Dissenters who

call it a *recollection* of Christ's death. Their ministers have no commission from Him to offer you His Blood and Body as your spiritual food and *they do not do it*. But we do, *because we are bidden to do it*. We dare not do less. If we did not do it, we should not be "found faithful;"—and "it is required of stewards that they be "found faithful." The Holy Sacrament *is* a recollection of Christ's Death; but it is more also. It is *the* spiritual food of your spiritual life. By it your soul is nourished and strengthened in all good. By it your union with Christ is kept up, strengthened, made closer and nearer as life goes on, until when life ends and you come to die, you are bound so close to Him that Death not only does not separate you from Him, but only leaves you closer to Him. When a Christian dies, that which Death takes away is only what had kept him from Christ, for his spiritual union with Christ has been growing closer and closer all his life through, and Death only breaks the last hindrance that had kept him apart from his Lord.

III. Thus then, thirdly and lastly, I come to the last point which I named at the outset—how ought Christian people to regard the Christian ministry? It seems to me they ought to be very

thankful to God and Christ Who have thus provided that men are not left to themselves in things of so much consequence to them. How could men be sure that their Clergy were teaching them God's truths, and delivering to them God's mysteries, if after all their Clergy were only *their* ministers, and not God's. Where a preacher is responsible to his flock he must do what pleases his flock, and religion goes so straight against men's natural dispositions that men naturally want to have its difficulties smoothed over for them, its strictnesses softened, its doctrines suited to the changing taste of the times. "Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits," is the natural utterance of men now, as it was in the days of Israel. The one great security which Christ gives to you is this tremendous responsibility under which the "ministers and stewards" of His mysteries lie, a responsibility not to man but to Him, and the fact that He has provided that spiritual sustenance for souls which in His Church is ever offered to you, and which *cannot fail* to serve your spiritual needs, because the power of that spiritual food comes not from us but from Him. Yes, and let this be the comfort of all doubtful hearts among you, Christ is

among you, and to all who are striving upwards however feebly, He Himself is the very food of your spiritual being. He feeds you, and you cannot fail to grow in grace, even though you may not see it. He sustains you, and you shall not fall utterly, though the remains of sin in you seem sometimes so strong as to overwhelm all that is good in you. Only keep close to Him. The more you tremble, the more persevere in devout seeking of His Presence and His heavenly Food, and believe me you will some day find that the "mysteries of God" have indeed been to you "Life Everlasting."

SERMON IV.

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*THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.*

(CHRISTMAS DAY.)

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ISAIAH XXXIII. 17.

“Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.”

THE Advent season is past and over. For a little time we turn from the days of watching, and waiting, and hoping, to the days of rejoicing. Sorrow has endured for a night, but joy has come in the morning. Now the Church lays aside for awhile her mournful weeds, and decks herself in white as a bride prepared for her husband; now her altars blossom forth with flowers, and the warning note of Advent is changed for the jubilant songs of angels. Though it be winter on the earth, it is summer-time for the Church, for the Sun of Righteousness has arisen; for Her the winter is over and past, and the



voice of the turtle, even the dove who bears the olive-leaf, is heard in our land. To-day is the prophet's promise accomplished, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." What King is this? Not David, the man "after God's own heart;" no, great David's greater Son is here. Not Solomon in all his glory, for behold a greater than Solomon is here, the true Prince of Peace, of whom Solomon was but a type, One whose wisdom is infinite—Whose glory is everlasting. It is not Cæsar the conqueror, for the conqueror of death is our King, and before Him Princes and Kings of the earth must cast down their crowns. Where, then, must we look for the King in His beauty? Surely neither the ivory house of Ahab, nor the cedar palace of Solomon, is good enough for Him! Surely He who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind, and covereth Himself with light as with a garment, will not deign to dwell in houses made with hands! Ah! brethren, now and always if we would see God we must humble ourselves and seek Him, not in the high places of pride, but in the lowly valley of humility; we must come to

the manger, and worship the King there, if we would worship Him on His eternal throne one day. We must leave the busy world of Jerusalem, and come meekly to Bethlehem, the house of bread; we must quit the strife of tongues without, and come to the calm seclusion of the Church if we would see the King in His beauty.

This festival is essentially the festival of humanity; it is not for the joy of angels that the King is come down from His holy Hill of Sion, but for the joy of men. This is emphatically the day which the Lord hath made, which He hath made exceeding glorious for us; we will rejoice and be glad therein. This is the festival of Human Nature, when weak humanity was made strong, when fallen humanity was raised up, when dead humanity was made alive again. Jesus took our body, once made in His image, that He might restore it to its lost beauty, and make our vile body like unto His glorious body. He clothed himself with our flesh that He might clothe us with the virtues and graces of holiness. He condescended to our nature, and cast Himself upon our dead body, as Elisha stretched himself upon the dead child, that He might

revive us. He came down to the valley of the world that He might breathe on the dry bones of our nature, and make them live. He descended as the dew upon the dry world, that it might bud and bring forth fruits of holiness ; so that the land which had been desolate became as Eden, and as the garden of the Lord. Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see the King in His beauty, the Infant King throned in the poor manger, which is but the step to that other throne of hardness—the Cross. Let us behold Him robed in coarse swaddling clothes, one day to give place to the robe of scorn. Where is His diadem as monarch? Go gather the thorns on the cold hill-side, and find it there! Where is His kingly sceptre? Go pluck a reed shaken with the wind, and find it there! Where are His followers and attendants? Go seek the sinful and the suffering, the mournful and bereaved; for although He is despised and rejected of men, yet all the world has gone after Him. Where is His kingdom? Go search the hearts of the humble, the meek, the lowly and faithful, and find it there. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty!” Yes, thine eyes, O poor and simple one, since behold thy King

cometh unto the meek and lowly. Thine eyes shall see Him, O sorrowful and weary one, since He says, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But from the eyes of pride He is hidden, and the haughty looks of the proud shall not behold Him. "Thine eyes shall behold the King in His beauty." In the *beauty of perfection*. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is perfect God and perfect Man. In Him all types and shadows are perfectly fulfilled. He is the true Sun, the Light of the World, which lighteneth every one who cometh into the world, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. It is that heat which inflames our hearts with love, and makes all good things to grow in us. He is the True Bread which came down from heaven, and which, says one of old time, was gathered from the earth without tilling. He is the Author of Peace, who has come to make men of one mind in a house, and to give that peace which the world cannot give. He is the true Branch of Righteousness which sprang out of a dry ground, even a dead and stony earth, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. He is the true Bridegroom who comes to seek His Bride the

Church, that He may love her and cherish her as His own flesh. He is the true Captain of Salvation, whose arm shall break even a bow of steel, and who shall tread down our foes under us. He is the Good Shepherd who will lay down His life for the sheep. He is the true Cornerstone on which the Church is built. He, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, blossoms in Bethlehem, and fills the whole world with His sweetness. He, the Bright and Morning Star, rises in the black sky where thick darkness had covered the people, and again is the commandment given—"Let there be Light." He, the True Vine, stretches His branches over all the earth, and bears the precious fruit of salvation. He, the well of living water, is opened for the refreshment of those who thirst after righteousness. He, as the shadow of a great rock, shelters the sorrowing in a weary land. Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty of perfection—altogether lovely. Where, then, shall we see Him? Where but in His Church at this glad Christmastide, in the true Bethlehem, the House of Bread! Our King comes to us to-day, and makes the Altar His throne; He who came and visited us in our

flesh, and was covered with that poor clothing, now comes to us hidden under the form of bread and wine. "O come let us adore Him,—the King "in His beauty, Christ the Lord." And more than this, our eyes shall see Him in our homes as Emmanuel, God with us. There is no house too poor for Him, no heart too humble to be a palace for the King. Are your hearts ready to receive Him, my brethren? Are they swept and garnished; are the secret corners purified from lurking sins; are the darkened windows opened to admit the light? Your homes are decorated now, are your lives decorated with the ornament of a meek and gentle disposition, is the pearl of purity among your treasures? The Hand of the Child Jesus knocks at your homes; is there room for Him in your household? He comes as a Physician to heal your diseases, as a Shepherd to guide you into the fold, as a tender Husband to form a holy union with your soul. He comes in infinite condescension to feed you with Himself, to make you one with Him; to make you partakers of all the benefits of His Passion. You cannot fold Him in your arms as did those who beheld Him in the flesh, but you may receive Him into your hands and hearts.

To-day we see the King in His beauty with the eyes of faith. May we so love Him, trust in Him, and follow Him, that one day we may see Him face to face on His glorious throne in the land which is very far off.

SERMON V.

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*THE UNKNOWN GOD.*

EPIPHANY.

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ACTS XVII. 23.

"The Unknown God,"

S. PAUL was alone in Athens, waiting for Silas and Timotheus. Let us see what manner of place it was in which the Apostle lingered. It was one of the most learned and beautiful cities of the old world.

"On the Ægean shore a city stands,  
Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil,  
Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts  
And eloquence."

It was a city famed for the heroes who had fought and conquered for their fatherland. It was illustrious for its schools of philosophy ; there the Epicureans taught that pleasure is the chief good, as they walked in the garden of their founder. There the Stoics, standing in the



painted porch of Zeno, taught that to the wise man all things are alike, pleasure no good, pain no evil, all must yield to reason ; that the best life is one of lofty, calm, and stolid indifference. Athens was, moreover, celebrated for the number of its temples and statues of the gods. One writer tells us that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man, and that it contained more images than all the rest of Greece put together. On every side the eye encountered a temple or shrine, here was an altar to the god of war, there a temple to the goddess of love, on one side the graces smiled, hard by the furies scowled. Among the plane trees which Cimon had planted, stood the statues of great men, such men as Conon the admiral, or Demosthenes the orator. The rarest paintings described the victories of Greece, and from the market-place came the ceaseless babble of poets, painters, soldiers, idlers, all eager to hear and to tell some new thing. In such a scene S. Paul found an altar to the Unknown God, and taking it for his text, preached a memorable sermon on Jesus and the resurrection.

And now we pass from the streets of ancient Athens to the streets, and houses, and churches

of modern England. What lessons have we brought with us? The Athenians loved to hear some new thing, especially in religion. So it is with many of us now. There are people who think the faith of their fathers is worn out, and that the old path to Heaven is too common. These are ever clamouring for some new thing. And the reason of this is that to them, as to the Athenians, God is an *Unknown* God; they hear of Him, read of Him, speak of Him, do every thing but *know* Him; they need an *Epiphany*, a manifestation, of Jesus Christ to their hearts and consciences. In many a street, in many a house, in many a Church in Christian England men have raised an altar to the Unknown God. I am not speaking now of unbelievers, but of professing Christians, of those who carry Bibles and Prayer-books, who go to church to criticise the sermon. To thousands who are baptised in His name God is to all intents and purposes an Unknown God.

He is Unknown to many who read the Bible. There are some, of course, who never read the Bible, to whom any book is more familiar than God's Book. To them God is as much unknown as is the History of England to one who cannot

read; I am not speaking of them, but of some who read a chapter in the Bible daily as a matter of form. Even to many of these God is an Unknown God, because they read His word without interest, as a task. The Bible is not a living book to them, but a museum of fossil remains, a collection of antiquities. These will read a work of fiction with breathless interest, and fall asleep over the eternal truths of God. They read without putting their heart and soul into what they do, and so with the bread of life before them they feed on ashes. For all such blind readers the prayers of the faithful should go up now, that there may be for them an Epiphany, a manifestation of Jesus Christ to their hearts and souls.

Again, God is an Unknown God to those who *do not realise His constant Presence*. You all believe that God is everywhere, omnipresent, but have you ever *realised* this, that He is about your path and about your bed, spying out all your ways? In Church you feel God's presence, perhaps, and hence you bow your knee reverently; but do you remember that this same God is with you out in the world, in your business, in your pleasures, in the sunshine of mid-day and

its busy life, and in the quiet hours of darkness when you are alone with God? If we fully realised this fact, surely some of us would be more careful in their way of life, more guarded in their words, and works, and thoughts ; in the employment undertaken, in the pleasure indulged in, and the society frequented. I think the commercial morality of the present day would be very different if on the Exchange and in the office, in the counting-house and the shop, men's eyes were opened to see Jesus standing in the midst, "One standing among them whom they "know not." I think the domestic life of many whom the world calls respectable would be very different if they could only fully know the truth, "Thou God seest me." Be this our prayer to-day, that to all those who have not yet realised the abiding presence of God there may be an Epiphany of Jesus Christ, a manifestation of His presence with them at all times.

Again, God is an Unknown God *to many who say their prayers*. There are many persons who are enthusiastic enough about their work or amusements, who are languid and spiritless in their prayers. They ask God for the greatest blessings, or speak to Him concerning the most

tremendous issues of life, with words which are often as the idle wind that bloweth. Ah! brethren, if you were dying of thirst in a sandy desert, and a traveller approached you, how eagerly, how passionately would you beg for a draught of water! If you were in a burning house, and you saw help coming to you, how vehemently would you entreat to be saved! And yet how many are dying of spiritual destitution in a wilderness of sin, or living in worse danger than that of a burning house, and are still careless, thoughtless, *faithless* in their prayers! To such may God in His mercy vouchsafe an Epiphany of Jesus Christ!

A day will come when you and I must die, and our place here will know us no more. You may be strong and healthy now, but the time will come when they will tell you to stay indoors; when friends will enquire anxiously about you; when your family will tread lightly as they pass your door; when you will not be able to lift your once strong hand to your brow, and a mist will gather before your eyes, and all will appear dark and strange; and you will know that this is *death*. When that day comes how shall we find our way through the dark valley, how shall we

find our way to God if He has been all along an *Unknown God*? I fear that too many of us are worshipping they know not what, both in the Church and in the world. We need an Epiphany of Jesus Christ in our *home-life*, that it may be more gentle, more pure, more self-denying, more holy. We need an Epiphany of Jesus Christ in our *every-day work*, that it may be more honest, more upright, more unselfish, less sordid, and more noble in purpose. We need an Epiphany of Jesus in our *Church services*, that we may realise the presence of God, and exchange the dry bones of mere formalism for the living reality of worship. We need such an Epiphany in our *every-day cares and sorrows*, that we may see Jesus, the Heavenly Gardener, weeding our life-gardens, and pruning our vineyard with the keen knife of affliction, that He may save our souls alive. We need such an Epiphany in our *every-day comforts and blessings*, to teach us to see the Hand of an all-loving God, giving us more abundantly than we either desire or deserve. Some time ago a clergyman, whilst travelling in Scotland, was struck by the appearance of a Highland maid, whose bright face seemed to indicate that she had never known

care. He questioned her, and found that she had never thought seriously on any subject, or looked beyond her present careless, happy life. As he was leaving the place the clergyman asked the Scotch girl if she would promise to say a short prayer daily till they met again, and the prayer which he taught was in four words, "Lord, show me *myself*." After a time he came to the neighbourhood again, and found the Highland maid still there, but utterly changed. She was no longer the light-hearted, careless being of old times, and she assured her friend that her prayer had been answered, and now that she saw herself she was miserable. The clergyman taught her a second prayer, "Lord, show me *Thyself*," and when they next met the face of the Highland girl was once more bright and happy. "What can I do," said she, "to show my gratitude to Jesus, who has done so much for me?" "Learn yet another prayer," was the answer, it is this: "Lord, make me like unto *Thyself*."

Let these simple prayers be our models at this holy season of Epiphany, that we may be led to see our sinfulness, to see our Saviour, and to be made like unto Him.

## SERMON VI.

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### *AN HONEST AND GOOD HEART.*

(SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.)

By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., *Canon of Chichester.*

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S. LUKE VIII. 8.

“And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold.”

EVERY year as it comes round finds us reading this Parable of the Sower in our Church Service; and it comes soon after the beginning of the New Year, in the early part of Lent. Why does it come in the early part of the year? Why does it come in the beginning of Lent? It comes to remind us to make good use of the new year's opportunities. It comes to tell us that once more Christ the great Sower is sowing the seed of His Word in our hearts, and that if we have not hitherto borne fruit as we ought, we may begin to do better.

Now the Parable tells us two things. It tells us what God expects of us. This is the first thing. It tells us that God expects *fruit* at our



hands. The good ground brought forth an hundred-fold. If we are *good* Christians, *good* hearers of God's Word, if we come to Church and go away again in the spirit that we ought, then we shall be bringing forth fruit an hundred-fold. Everybody in this Church who is not bringing forth fruit is not a good hearer. He is not receiving the Word into an honest and good heart. This is the first part of what the Parable teaches you. If you are an honest hearer you are bringing forth fruit an hundred-fold. Now everybody likes to consider himself honest. A man will be ready to say a good many hard things against himself. A man will be ready to say he is quick-tempered, or careless, or thoughtless, or "a little wild." All these things people will be ready to say against themselves ; but I never yet knew a man who would not be in a passion if I said to him he was not an honest-hearted man. And yet what does God say to you here ? He says that if you are an honest-hearted man you are bringing forth fruit an hundred-fold, in return for the seed of His Word and Gospel.

And the second thing is this. Christ the great Sower finds out that we are not, all of us,

bringing forth an hundred-fold. Some I trust may be. God knows, and man does not. But many—very many of us—are not doing so, the question is—why not? Why are we not honest-hearted? What is the matter with us, what prevents us dealing fairly by God and His Word? This is the second thing the Parable teaches us. It tells us the various kinds of things which prevent men dealing fairly by God. It tells us the things that make us dishonest towards God, and which make our coming to Church and hearing His Word no good to us or to anybody else.

These, then, are the two things we read this Parable for at the beginning of every Lent. Lent is the time when we think over our lives and ask God to show us our faults. Lent is the time when Christian people look into their hearts and their ways, to see if their ways are good ways, and their hearts are honest hearts. And so we read this Parable every Lent to remind ourselves (1.) of what we should be if our hearts were honest and good :—(2.) of the kind of things that make us go wrong, and prevent us from being honest towards God. Let us look at both of them a little.

The Parable warns you that if you are honest-

hearted you will be bringing forth fruit an hundred-fold. Now, my friends, *are* you bringing forth fruit at all? Perhaps some one will say he does not know what bringing forth fruit means. Well then, look at the Parable. You know what bringing forth fruit means when you look at a tree, or when you sow corn. When you sow corn you expect it will grow corn. You don't sow wheat for it to lie in the ground and never grow up; and you don't sow wheat and expect when it grows up you will reap barley. You expect to reap wheat when you sow wheat, and you expect to reap a great deal more than you sowed, or else where was the good of sowing? The harvest is of the same kind as the seed, and a great deal more of it:—that is what we have to look to in the Parable; and that is what we are meant to look to in ourselves. When God says He expects *fruit* of us He means that He expects us to take home to ourselves what He puts into our hearts, and to keep it there, as the earth holds the seed, and then to go and produce the same kind of things over again in our own lives that He puts into us by His teaching. God puts His Word into our hearts, and if our hearts are honest there are two things that

we shall do. We shall keep His Word in our minds, and we shall produce its like over again, both in our characters and in our actions. So then you have two things to see to ; you have to keep God's Word in your minds and in your hearts ; and you have to see to it that you grow like it in your characters and your actions. You cannot *do* good without *being* good : so the first thing is to take care that you keep God's Word in your hearts, so as to make yourselves like unto it, and your actions conformed to it. God's Word is preached to you and read to you in Church that it may stay in your minds all through the week and grow there. People have different ways of trying to keep God's Word in their minds. All people who are trying to do right read God's Word every day if they can. Many people try to make Sunday run over, so to say, into the week, either by saying the Sunday Collect every day in their private prayers, or by thinking over again every day some one thing which God brought into their hearts during Church Service on Sunday. When people come to Holy Communion they generally manage to remember what particular prayer they made to God at the Holy Communion, and they repeat that particular

prayer afterwards every day, until they come to the Holy Communion again. This is an extremely good way of keeping God's Word in their minds. God never speaks to us so closely as He does in the Holy Communion. Even if you do not feel that He has said anything to you as you knelt before Him, you may be sure that He has sown some seed in your heart if you have come to Him with a penitent heart and lively faith. And if *you will every day* pray over again what you prayed when He was coming to you in the Sacrament, you may be sure *He will every day* stir up the good seed He sowed, and be making it grow in your heart, and be making your character grow up even as a goodly tree, which will bring forth fruit like the good seed He has sown in you. People who try to keep the good seed in their hearts in this way soon find out that God *does* make it grow. They find out too that God has got something to say to them on Sunday in Church, which it is a pleasure to them to remember. Sometimes it will be in one way, sometimes in another. Sometimes it will be something in a sermon which seems to cut straight into their hearts. Sometimes it will be a verse in a Psalm, or some lines in one of the

Hymns which seem exactly to fit them, as if it spoke to them about what they were thinking of, or about something which happened to them in the week, or as if it were a word of comfort straight from God about some trouble or affliction. And when this happens to you, my brethren, I say to you—take care of it. Be very careful to take this word away with you. Keep it well in your hearts all the week, till you come to Church again. Take care that all the week through you never say or do anything which you would not like to be doing or saying if God Himself were still speaking to your soul as He did speak to it then. Take care that you never *think* anything which you would have been ashamed of thinking while God was speaking to you as He spoke then. And then, when you come into Church next time, God will see that you have kept His Word in your heart ever since, and He will speak to you again, and He will help you to *be* better and to *do* better more and more every week that you go on trying.

Now think what a difference there would soon be in this parish if every one of us were only to do this in right earnest—say—for three months, or only for the next five weeks up

to Easter. Why, of course, if every one would just make up his mind all through this week until next Sunday to keep in memory what God is saying to him now,—not one of you would ever let himself say an angry word to anyone between now and next Saturday night,—not one of you would tell one tale of scandal,—not one of you would think any harm of any one else, much less tell a lie, or get drunk, or take advantage of any one else, or charge more for anything than it was worth. No husband would be unkind to his wife, no wife would drive her husband to the public-house for want of being made comfortable at home, no children would be kept away from school, or left to run wild in the streets for want of care and attention at home. And so everybody would be living kindly and peaceably with everybody else, and you would really help each other to grow good, as you ought, and no one would be tempting his neighbour to do wrong, and everything would go quite smoothly and pleasantly compared with what it does. And this would be one part of the fruit that God looks for, for “the fruit of the Spirit “is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, “goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

Why if you would only try this, all of you, even during these few weeks up to next Easter, I would answer for it that you would feel such a real pleasure at your Easter Communion that you would never stay away from Communion again. God would be so pleased at seeing you all trying to keep His Word in your hearts, that He would bless you with more and more of that peace and joy in believing which you read of in the Bible, and which He takes care to give to every one who is in earnest about serving Him, and you would have no taste at all for anything evil.

I say if you would only act like this. But, my brethren, let me tell you that if you are *not* doing this, God has very little to say to you, for this is what God means by an *honest* heart. If you are not acting in this way your heart is not honest. You are not dealing fairly with God. What do you come into Church for? You come to be with God for awhile. You come to be nearer Him than common. You come to ask Him to help you to *be* good, and to *do* good. You come to ask Him to sow the seed of His Word in your hearts that it may grow. And if you go away and think no more about it, you are doing just what a man does who should ask another to



give him something, and then as soon as his back is turned should throw it over the hedge. You would not call that fair dealing, would you? What would you think of it, when you had done your best to spare half your dinner or your supper for a neighbour, if he should just forget all about it, or go and throw it into the ditch? And this is just what you do towards God when you go away from Church and never try to keep His Word in mind. And God sees you do it. This is why so few of us grow up real Christians. This is why we want a time like Lent to think about it. We get used to forgetting. But God does not forget. God sees you go out of Church, and remembers how you go. God says, "I gave that man some good thoughts just now, some thoughts which will quite stop him from the mischief he will get into to-morrow, if he will keep them in mind. I will look and see what he does with them." O man—beware—there is a temptation getting ready for you to-morrow. God has just given you the good thought which will keep you out of it. God will be looking at you to-morrow to see if you deal fairly with Him, and if you don't, then when the Day of Judgment comes He will require that good thought of you.

Oh! we have all need to be careful. There is God's goodness on the one side of us, but there are the world and the devil on the other. Men and brethren, *do*, as you value your salvation, look at the rest of this Parable and take the alarm, and pray God to help you. You have been thinking good thoughts during this last hour. God has been sowing His Word in you in this last hour. God is coming to you in Holy Communion directly. Then you will go out of Church—and what then? Ah, before you reach your own homes there will be devils flying round about your souls to pick out the good seed, if you have not made it fast, and do not pray to God to drive the devils away. And then on Monday morning comes your day's work to choke your hearts again, if you do not pray to God to keep you from the evil that is in the world. Keep yourselves from careless thoughts as you walk home this day, for careless thoughts are the means by which the devils fly away with the good seed. Get up a little earlier to-morrow morning to say your prayers more earnestly, lest the day's work should choke the good seed of to-day's thoughts. And so you will be honest with God, and He will give you grace to bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

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### *THE DISCIPLINE OF LENT.*

(SERMON FOR ASH WEDNESDAY.)

By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.

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JOEL II. 12.

“Turn ye unto Me saith the Lord, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”

It is the first day of Lent, and perhaps we cannot spend our time better now than in considering, as far as there is time for it, the general object and purpose for which Lent is ordained.

For *whom* is Lent ordained? Not merely for open sinners. *They*, alas, are perhaps the last persons whom Lent and its Services ever touch. *They* require to be sought out in their homes, or to be brought into contact with some Clergyman who may guide or influence them. *They* are rarely to be found in our Churches. Lenten Services have little attraction for *them*. But

Lent is ordained as part of the regular orderly course of each year's life of a Christian man. It is appointed, with all its darkly-shaded colours, for those who in their measure are striving, with what success God knoweth, to lead the new life begun in Baptism, who are fed by the Body and Blood of Christ, and animated by the Holy Spirit of God. Why cast a dark shadow across the lives of those whose souls should be filled with all joy and peace in believing? Why do it every year as it comes round, and call upon them to mourn and weep, and fast and lament—to afflict at once the body and the soul, and all this as a part of their *Christian* lives? There are several steps in our answer.

I. It is not merely that none of us is perfect. It is not merely that we have, each of us, the best of us, uncounted sins to mourn over since our last Lent was finished. We do not put off our repenting of the year's sins till Lent comes back again, and then repent them in the mass as one might say. It is not this. But the reason is that in each one of us is planted a domestic enemy. It is not merely that we commit *sins*. It is that in us there is *SIN*. We bear about us a tainted *nature*; and, whether our sins

have been many or few since the Lent of a year ago, Sin is yet in us, yet ready to raise its head, and once more stifle and destroy the better life within us, unless we by God's grace stifle it. Ever, as long as this life lasts, this will be the case. Once relax the energy of your Christian life, and you will find the flesh still alive and vigorous to assert itself anew, and drag you down again to depths of evil which you thought you had done with for ever.

Thus, then, for every one who is trying to lead a Christian life, there is a perpetual need of keeping under the old nature. And as whatever ought to be done at all times is in danger of not being done at any time, unless a fixed time be set for it, so there is a fixed time set that every Christian may be *called* solemnly and earnestly to repeat the subduing of the natural man to the spiritual, every year as it passes by. It wants doing again and again, for more reasons than one; partly because, in the press of this world's work and labour, we are in continual danger of relaxing; partly, and this, I think, is *very* important, because every year that we grow older the form and way in which the old Adam resists the Spirit changes somewhat. It is the same one

enemy within us, but it is an ever-shifting mode of attack. Youth has one sort of temptation, manhood another, age another. The Flesh has many ways of lusting against the Spirit. You may, by God's help, have overcome one way, but then it is only to find that you have grown *out* of that kind of temptation, and *grown into* another, which wants a renewal of the old discipline to meet it, and overcome it. The Lent which served you well a few years back, in which to steel and nerve your souls against the temptations of that time of life, you want again *this* year to serve you in overcoming the fresh forms in which the old evil is ready to break out anew. *Never*, while life lasts, does Lent come amiss; never is it unnecessary to the Christian who is striving after that holiness without which he can never see His Lord in the eternal Easter.

Why, then, in that case does not Lent last all the year round, if all our life is one perpetual strife against the evil that is in us? The answer is not difficult, and it brings us to the second step in our consideration. For—

II. Secondly, Lent properly observed, will stamp upon our hearts and consciences, the solemn sense of the strife between the Flesh

and the Spirit, so that it will not die out if we are conscientious and careful. Like the soldier's drill, a certain quantity of it is enough for a while. But then he must repeat it, or the effect dies out. Body and Spirit are not so very much unlike after all ; and the soldier of the Cross must go through his annual discipline, as the earthly soldier must repeat his military exercises, if he is to have his powers well in hand for service against the enemy. We *want* our annual Lent to stamp again and again upon our Consciences the sense that there *is* this deadly enemy—the Flesh—within us, which wants ever keeping down. We *want* our annual Lent to practise us again and again in those habits of subduing the desires of the Flesh and of the mind by which alone they can be kept down during the rest of the year. The deeper earnestness and the greater solemnity of our Lenten devotions fill our whole souls with a spirit of devoutness which will leaven the prayers and devotions of many a month after. They will set a *stamp* upon our consciences, which will not be rubbed out for many a day, if we are but honest with ourselves. This is why Lent lasts so long. And it is the longest season of the Christian year because this matter

of subduing the Flesh to the Spirit is the greatest difficulty of all in the Christian life. Self is our greatest enemy, and this enemy comes in so many forms, and is ever so close at hand, that it needs our utmost watchfulness. One man's old Self comes out in love of society. The love of society and company carries him quite away until he forgets himself in the excitement of conversation or amusement, and it will take hours, perhaps, for him to be calmed down again into real sobriety of temper. What is dissipation of mind, if this is not? For a while, perhaps, no great harm may follow. But it is the Flesh—*i.e.*, the old nature, which is in league with the World—getting the better of the Spirit—*i.e.*, the new nature, which is one with Christ, until that side of us which is turned towards God and the World to come is overborne by that side of us which is open to the World, and the Devil and all manner of temptations. And the result is sure to follow. Satan is lying in wait, and after a time He makes his spring, and you offend in word or action. You are carried away, as you express it, by the excitement of the moment, and the Sin that is within you comes out in some actual act of sin. Another man's old Self shows



itself in some other way; and another's in another. Be the way what it may, it is the same rule in all cases. We all want the Christian soldier's *drill* in the practice of self-subdual, and Lent is the time when we are called to our annual self-recollection, and the practice of subjugating our wayward moods and roving tempers to the firm hand of the renewed and spiritual being.

Thus, to take the case I mentioned, love of society. The cessation of all convivial meetings during Lent puts a check on that. How many a man and woman has been enabled to break a growing habit of foolish talking, degenerating perhaps into gossip and scandal, by the help of the quiet and freedom from occasions of temptation which Lent brings? I need not speak of other and more open evils. Or, again, how the worry of business mixed with what we *call* the claims of society acting on us for long months together wears down the keen edge of our devotion, until with worn bodies and jaded brains we are positively unfit for converse with God at night, or even at morning. Weary in body and mind, we have small power for prayer at night. Unrefreshed in the morning, we are scarcely alive to serious effort till the day has well begun, and .

our morning prayers are languid, feeble, and hurried. Our old spiritual tone is going down. Our whole spiritual vitality is wearing out. Then comes Lent with its restriction upon all that ministers to the old Self, the Self of self-pleasing, of amusement, of excitement. The progress of our deterioration is arrested. We see the danger we were in. We recover our spiritual tone. By God's grace we not only recover it, but we are warned for the future, and do not let ourselves fall back into the like mischief again. The longer prayers of Lent, our more solemn and frequent presence in the House of God, bear fruit in the deeper and more earnest devotion of the whole year through. It is a new start. It is the Church's annual opportunity for each of us to make a fresh start. And it leads up to the Easter Communion when we kneel beside the vacant tomb of the Lord, and pray that the World may be to us an open tomb, and a vacated grave from whence He by the power of His attraction has drawn us out for ever.

I believe that it is impossible for us to be too thankful for this ever-recurring opportunity of starting afresh, and making good, so far as we can, the steps taken amiss in times

past. If any of us have been in any degree upon a wrong track, or taking a wrong direction in the spiritual life, here is the great annual opportunity to make a pause, to arrest our course, to pray God to give us the light and the strength of His holy Spirit to see and to amend our error. And then—

III. Thirdly, it is only natural and right that such a season should be one of some self-denial. I do not wish to recommend violent asceticism, which may often have just the opposite effect to what people intend. For violent and unaccustomed asceticism has a tendency to fix the mind upon itself, and draw it away from the true spiritual object which is in view. Still some self-denial is not only right, but it is the natural instinct of the devout soul. It is the natural spontaneous instinct of true Christianity. For true Christianity lies in love and sympathy with Christ our Lord. It lies in following His steps, in striving to be in sympathy with His life. Every time that the true Christian seeks fresh illumination, and fresh strength to pursue his course, he cannot but ask himself :

“ Whence comes this strength I seek? Is it  
“ not from the Man of Sorrows—from One

“acquainted with grief? How did Christ my  
“Saviour win the right and the power to give  
“me this strength to raise my fallen nature?  
“Was it not by His sufferings? And after  
“the descent of the Holy Ghost at His  
“Baptism, was not the first effect of it  
“that the Spirit *drove* Him into the Wilderness  
“to *His* forty days’ fast?”

These are the thoughts which pass spontaneously through the Christian’s soul. He *cannot help* such reflections. He *cannot help* feeling that some *voluntary* suffering with Christ must mark the followers of Him whose whole life was one course of *voluntary* suffering for us. And whensoever God has vouchsafed to any of us a new outpouring of the Spirit, there must be *some* denial of self to follow it. The incoming of the Spirit will be signalized by some subdual of the Flesh, some marked *taming* of the natural desires, either those of the indulgent flesh, or of the ambitious mind, or the merry heart. It was so with our Lord after His Baptism, when the Spirit drove him apart from men to the long fast in the Wilderness. It will be so with us after every marked working of the Spirit upon our souls. We, too, *cannot help* being *driven*, (mark

that word driven)—driven by the Spirit, as well as led by our own spontaneous feeling, apart from the throng of men, into some “wilderness” of retirement, where the Spirit may have time and scope so to leaven our nature, and so to tame our will, that when Satan comes again with his threefold temptation, we may be conquerors in the strength which Christ has given us. For this, as it strikes me, is the true lesson of Christ’s example in the matter:—the incoming of His Spirit must lead to some marked subdual of the natural mind. What particular kind of subdual will depend on what it is in us that most needs subduing. It is not exactly the same in every one. You may know if your Lenten discipline comes from God by its running exactly counter to your selfish desires. In some the old Self comes out most in taking self-chosen paths in life, in scheming, and planning, and following our own fancies and ideals. In such cases, the discipline which the Spirit will drive you to is a simple submission to the will and disposal of God. Self-indulgence, softness, ease, love of other people’s good opinion, excessive love of praise, or self display, will be the case with others. *From* all the circumstances which foster

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these, *to* the wilderness which *starves* them all for want of aliment, the Spirit is sure to drive you for a while, if He has truly come to you. And if this be so, then you may take courage, and believe that you are truly *suffering with* Christ, and not merely inventing asceticisms of your own, which may be—and often are—only self-pleasings in another and a subtler form. Then your Lent will mark a real spiritual growth, and when the Devil comes back to tempt you at the end of it, he will find you filled with the Power of Christ to overcome him, even as Christ Himself repelled him at all points when *His* forty days of Fast were ended.

SERMON VIII.

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THE DEVIL THE REAL TEMPTER.

(FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.)

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S. MATTHEW, iv. 10.

“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan.”

JAMES, iv. 7.

“Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.”

YOU all know that Lent is the time for thinking about our faults, what they are, where they come from, and how to cure them. Christmas was the time when we thought about Christ's coming into the world. And the next question is, what did Christ come into the world for? I have no doubt every one in this Church will say directly—Christ came into the world to make atonement for our sins. This answer is quite right. Christ *did* come into the world to be a propitiation for our sins. This is the foundation of all our Christian Hope. Without this Christianity is nothing. There is no other name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved, but only the name of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Then comes the next question. Is this all that

Christ came into the world to do? Was it only to make *atonement* for our sins? If you ask your Bibles to tell you the answer, you will find that God will answer—No. This is not all that Christ came to do. He came to make atonement for our sins, and also something more. He came to put us in the way of getting out of our sins, as well as to be a propitiation for them. The two things are very different, and the two together make up what the Bible calls Salvation. They are its two halves. You know that if you have fallen into debt, it is a great thing for anyone to go and pay off what you owe. But then it is quite a different thing for some one to come and put you in the way of not getting into debt any more. You know it is of very little use for any of us to help a man out of debt if we feel sure he is so careless that he will go on getting into debt again the same as before. If you want to set a man straight altogether you try to teach him not to be extravagant any more, and then there is some use in helping him.

Now our sins are our debts. And Christ came to do both these things;—to pay our debts and to put us in the way of *keeping out of it* afterwards. This is why Lent comes next after Christmas, because Lent tells us of these two things



both together. Lent sets us thinking about our faults, and how Christ puts us in the way of mending them. It tells you that Christ did not come only to make atonement for your sins, and then leave you no better *in yourselves* than you were before. He came to put you in the way of not sinning. He came to show you how to keep out of debt. He came to stir you up to fight against sin, and to show you how to fight against it, and to give you strength to overcome it. So Christ came to make us good, as well as to make atonement for our sins, and the two together are the two halves of what the Bible calls Salvation. It has been well said, Christ came to save us *from* our sins, but He cannot save us *in* our sins.

Lent is the time for considering our sins, what they are, where they come from, and how to fight against them. This is the first Sunday in Lent, therefore the Gospel for to-day begins by telling you about Temptation. *Temptation* is anything that leads you into sin. If you want to understand anything, you want to know where it comes from. You say you want to get to the root of the matter. Now temptation is the root of sin ; so if you want to fight against sin you must look to the root of it, and you must resist temptation. This is why on

the first Sunday in Lent we always read the history of our Lord's *temptation*. Christ came to show us how to resist temptation, in order that we might not fall into sin at all. The history of Christ's temptation is meant to teach us what temptation is, what kinds of temptation there are, where they come from, and how to conquer them when they come. When any one is being taught a trade, his master explains to him what he is to do, and then lets him look on while he does it. In this way you learn your trade. So Christ in this history is teaching us what we have to do, and showing us how to do it. Christ was tempted by the Devil.

And this brings you to the first thing you have to learn. It was the Devil who tempted Christ. So it is the Devil who tempts you. Remember this. It is not yourself only you are pleasing when you do anything that is wrong. Very often when men do wrong they are *not* pleasing themselves at all. They are uncomfortable all the while, and only fancy that they enjoy it. But whether it pleases them or not, whether they enjoy their sins or not, it is the Devil who is *really* being best pleased. Every time you think a bad thought, or read a bad book, there is the Devil looking on and enjoying the fact of your

being so wicked and so foolish as to let him entrap you into doing what will make you miserable. It is the Devil who puts it into the hearts of young men to be profane and foolish talkers. It is the Devil who puts it into the hearts of young women to be conceited, and giddy, and light. It is the Devil who sets you upon talking scandal, or upon cheating or lying, or Sabbath-breaking. It is the Devil who finds you in excuses in staying away from Holy Communion, or makes you get into quarrels with your neighbours ; just as it is the Devil, who is waiting outside the Church door to pick up any good thoughts which have been sown in your hearts, and fly away with them before they have had time to settle in your minds and bring forth any fruit. Now, my brethren, do try and think what a dreadful thought this really is. Suppose God were to open the eyes of your souls so that you could really *see* what is going on, how it would startle you and terrify you. And yet it is real ; but people go on sinning, because they don't see it. Why, when a man is going into a bad action, or when a girl is going astray, there is really the Devil leading them quietly on, giving them just a little push here, or a pull there, as he sees they will take it,

watching them, and gradually helping them on in their evil, until at last he lands them in some great sin :—and then the Devil is pleased, for he has got what he wanted. And so it is in quarrelling. He puts an angry word into a man's mouth, and the poor foolish man says the word, and then the Devil puts another angry taunting answer into the mind of the other person. And that poor foolish person says the answer. And then they begin to get angry, both of them, and then comes a quarrel, perhaps a fight, and the Devil is looking on all the while, and thinking how foolish you must be to let him push you on into doing his work. For the sound of people quarrelling is music in the Devil's ears ; and I often think how the Devil must wonder that people who have the Bible in their hands, and churches where they are taught, and prayers in which they can speak to God, can be so foolish as to let him do what he pleases with them, and make themselves miserable in this world and the world to come for his satisfaction.

We do not *see* that it is the Devil all the time, but it is so really. And this is just one great *use* of the history of Christ's temptation. There were several different ways in which Christ was tempted,

just as there are many different ways in which we are tempted. And one great use of the history is that it shows us that in whatever way it was that Christ was tempted, it was the Devil *all the same* who was tempting Him. The Devil may deceive us, but he could not deceive Christ. Christ saw that it was the Devil, and He said at last, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Then the Devil saw it was of no use, and he left off tempting Christ. It is so with us, let whatever will be the way in which we are tempted, whether it is to think too much of ourselves, or to be greedy and covetous about getting on in life, or to fear the world's opinion, and neglect the worship of God, be it what it may, it is the Devil all the same, and what we have to do is to speak out plainly and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Satan knows quite well that the moment we see it is *he* that is tempting us we are on the highroad to overcoming him. And this is why he manages so that people imagine that it is themselves they are pleasing when they are doing wrong. After all, there is very little pleasure in sin. The pleasure only lasts just long enough for you to be caught thoroughly in the sin, and unable to give it

up again. And as soon as this is done, then there is no more pleasure in the sin *to you*, but the Devil makes you go on committing the sin because of the pleasure it gives him to see you fall. You know how true this is with the drunkard: how when the sin has gained fast hold of him he would be glad to give it up, for he feels the misery of it, but it is too late. He must go on drinking to please the Devil, though it is no longer any pleasure to himself. Now if the man had *seen* that it was the Devil who was tempting at the beginning he would have been on his guard. And so this history is written to put you on your guard against all temptation, and you must remember the whole rule, "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you."

"He will flee from you." Yes, this is the second of our two texts this morning: and our Gospel of this morning shows us how true it is. As soon as Christ said, "Get thee hence, Satan," so soon we read, "then the Devil leaveth Him." And if we will say the same *and mean it*—and call on Christ to say it for us also to the Devil—then the Devil will flee away, and all on a sudden you will find that *you do not care one bit for the very thing you were only just now wishing to do.*

Only be firm, make up your mind that it is not you that is wishing the evil, but that it is the Devil who is trying to make you wish it, and then, as you tell him to "get him hence," ask Christ to drive the Devil away, and you will find yourself left in peace. And then good angels will come round you, and good thoughts will be put into your mind, and you will wonder how you could have been so foolish as ever before to have let the Devil have his way with you and lead you into wrong at all.

So next time that you feel lazy at night and tempted to hurry over your prayers, remember it is the Devil tempting you with the temptation of the *flesh*, tempting you to indulge the lazy *flesh*. When in the morning you are tempted to hurry over your prayers that you may get down quickly to your work, remember it is the Devil tempting you with the temptation of the *world*, tempting you to serve the *world* and your earthly duties in preference to God. And you must say to the Devil that you know *he* is there tempting you, and you must bid him begone—and *he will not dare to stay*, if you bid him go in right good earnest. He will not dare to stay. And if he did, Christ will not let him. You are safe if you

will say, "Get thee hence, Satan," and really mean it.

If you live on in this way you will soon come to be very quick in finding out when Satan is coming near you to tempt you. The better people are the more they get a sort of insight into such things as this. They get a sort of perception when God is speaking to their souls, and when the Devil is coming near them. Christ knew it was the Devil *directly* the Devil came to tempt Him, for Christ was *perfectly* good. The better we grow, the more we grow like Christ, the quicker we shall be to know when the Devil is coming towards us to tempt us. And this is why good people seem to others what they call *particular* about little things that they see no harm in. You know a bird will flutter and be frightened if a snake is near, when you don't see the snake. But the bird has quicker sight than you, and the bird knows what it is about. So good people have a quicker sight than you, and know that the Serpent which tempted Eve is coming near to tempt them and you. You don't see him, and you are caught. They see him, and they are safe.

So this first Sunday in Lent begins by



reminding us what sin is, where it comes from, and how we are to avoid it. It is the Devil who is tempting us, and the only way to be safe is to see that it is the Devil, and to say, "Get thee hence, Satan," remembering the saying,—

"Resist the Devil and he will flee from you,"  
and remembering the prayer in our Litany—

From all the deceits of the Devil  
Good Lord deliver us. Amen.

SERMON IX.

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*THE DEVIL RETURNING.*

(THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.)

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S. LUKE XI. 26.

“Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

THE Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent was intended to teach us that in all temptation it is Satan or the Devil who is really tempting us. This was intended to make us feel two things very strongly. It was meant to make us feel very much afraid of doing wrong at all; since every wrong thing we do is putting ourselves into the power of the Devil. It was also intended to make us feel our need of God's help, and to pray to God more earnestly to keep us out of sin, and to drive away the great and terrible enemy who is always trying to ruin us. It teaches us more than anything else the meaning of the prayer, “Deliver us from evil;” or, as it may be understood, “Deliver us from the Evil One.”

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Now in the Gospel of to-day, our Lord Himself carries on the same teaching a little further. To-day's Gospel tells us of one of Christ's miracles, and of a speech or sermon which Christ made after the miracle was over. The miracle was this. There was a man over whom the Devil had gained power. As the New Testament says, he was "possessed" by a Devil. In those days the Devil was in some way able to gain the mastery over men's bodies and minds, and make them say and do things they never would have done else, just as now the Devil gets the mastery over the temper and thoughts of a bad man, and makes him think evil thoughts and do bad things whether he chooses or not. Our Lord set the poor man free from the Devil who had been master over him; just as it is Christ to Whom we look to help us to keep out of the power of the Devil who tries to get the mastery over us; and then, when He had set the poor man free, our Lord went on with the speech or sermon which we have been reading.

Who is the sermon for, and what is it about? It is a sermon for all of us, it is a sermon for all Christian people as long as the world shall last; for all persons whom the Devil tempts, and for

whom Christ has died ;—for all persons whom Christ has put in the way of being good and pure and holy, and whom the devil tries to get hold of again. Christ has set all Christian people free from the Devil. The Devil is outside of us, if I may so speak. The Devil comes *to* us, and he tempts us ; as we saw in the Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent ; but still he is outside of us, and if we do as we ought we may keep him out. The Devil cannot now get possession of our minds unless we choose to let him. Christ has set all of us free from the Devil, as he had set the poor man free by the miracle we have read of. And so the sermon is for us.

Next, what is the sermon meant to teach us ?

It is meant to keep us on our guard, and so to follow up the lesson which we learned from Christ's own temptation on the Mount. The lesson we learned from that was to "resist the Devil, and he will flee from us." The lesson we are to learn to day is what will happen to us if we do *not* resist the Devil. It tells us plainly that if we do not resist him, if we still leave our hearts open to him, he will come back again worse than before, and we shall be made worse and more wicked than if Christ had never set

us free from him. So it tells us that Satan is really anxious to get the mastery over us again. It tells you he is *sure to try* to do so. It tells you to look out for his trying to do so, and that if you *leave your heart open* to him, he will come back and make you worse than ever.

So, then, these are the lessons of Christ's sermon to day :

- I. That the Devil is sure to try to get the mastery over Christian men's hearts.
- II. That if they *leave their hearts open* they will not be able to keep him out, but will grow worse than ever.

You must not leave your heart open. What does this mean? It means this :—that it is very little use leaving off bad ways if you do not learn good ways. I told you two Sundays ago that it was of little good to us that Christ had saved us from the punishment of our sins if we did not grow good. I told you that Christ had saved us from that punishment that he might put us in the way of growing good. So now this sermon of our Lord's comes to tell us that leaving off bad ways is not enough, that it never will last, that a man who *only* leaves off bad ways without learning good ones, is quite

sure to be again overcome by the Devil, and made worse than ever. His heart is empty, and the Devil will come back worse than before. You must grow good. You must have something in your heart which will keep it full, and leave no room for the Evil One to come in again. He is quite sure to *try* and come in again. We must all reckon upon that. What we have to see to is, that when he *does* come back there is no room in our hearts for the evil thoughts, and wishes, and desires he wants to put there.

And, upon this, there are two sets of things we have to say to you :

First. All Christian people have been set free from the Devil. He is turned out of the heart of every Christian. Christ turns him out of the heart of every one of us when we are baptized. He is outside all of us after that, and if we do as we ought and live Christian lives, we may keep him out. He comes to us and tempts us, and tries to make us let him in. Our business is to say continually, "get thee hence, Satan." But if we leave our hearts empty after Christ has swept them clean of the Devil, then he will get in again. This is why so many baptized children go wrong, and grow up so badly. We do not train them

up in goodness. They are not taught to be holy, and to love what is right. We do not fill their hearts with good thoughts and the love of good ways, and Satan is always prowling round about young children's hearts, trying to get in again. What we ought to do is to see that young children are brought up in good habits, and that, as soon as they are able to understand, they are taught to see the badness of what is bad, and the goodness of what is good. We should try and make them like what is good, so that goodness may have possession of their hearts, and leave no room for the Devil to enter in. Now look how many people do just the reverse of this. A man and his wife are *not* careful to set a good example, and then the child learns bad ways from them. Or they let the child run into bad company, and pick up bad words, or learn to think there is something fine and manly in fighting, or swearing, or cheating: and then how can they wonder that the Devil gains the mastery over the child. Why do we want to gather the children into day-schools, and Sunday-schools; why do we want to train them up for Confirmation, and Holy Communion, but because we want to have their hearts filled with something which will prevent the

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Devil from being able to come back again and take up his abode there ?

And now you may see why Confirmation comes when it does in a young person's life. It comes just as a young person is growing out of childhood, and when the Devil is coming to it with a number of fresh temptations it had not had before. So Confirmation comes in that the young person may receive more help from God against the Devil. God gives you His Holy Spirit in Confirmation to fill your heart, so that you may keep the Devil out. And then, after Confirmation, you come to Holy Communion, and in Holy Communion Christ Himself comes and abides with you and in you, and if only you *keep* Him there the Devil *cannot* gain an entrance. Christ will be there always, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan," so long as you keep saying, "abide with me," for "Thou art my defence." It is Christ Himself who must come and take up His abode in our hearts ; the Holy Spirit Himself must have filled our souls ; or else the Devil is sure to come back and make us worse than if we had never been cleansed.

Secondly. The same rule tells you what you are to expect and how you are to go on, if any



of you have fallen into bad ways and are now mending. It is no use to think that merely leaving off the bad ways will do. If you *only* leave off the bad ways *it will never last*. You must grow into good ways, so that the goodness you grow into may keep you from the bad ways you have broken off. And you cannot grow into goodness of your own selves. God only can make you do that. God only can make you really *like* goodness. But God can do this, and He will do it for every one of us if we ask Him. You must have your heart occupied with good habits and filled up with the love of being good. If not, the Devil will come back again, and you will go back again into your old bad courses, and you will be worse than ever; for there will be *more* evil Spirits come back into your soul than used to be there.

Oh there are many evil Spirits that the Devil sends to get the mastery of our hearts. Do none of you know what it is to have an evil Spirit in you, making you cross and angry and ill-tempered with every one who comes near you? You would rather not be ill-tempered; you would *really* be glad to be better tempered; but you cannot help it. Something seems to have

the mastery of you, against your will, as it were; and you go on being evil tempered, and a plague to yourselves and the very people you know you ought to be kindest to. It is the Devil of unkindness that you have let in to your heart, and he is tormenting you, and making you sin against God and against your neighbours. So also there is the Devil of covetousness and avarice:—how he gains the mastery over many, and makes their lives a torment to themselves and no good to any one else! A miser is very miserable as well as very wicked. And there is the Devil of uncleanness and lust, and the Devil of Drunkenness, and the Devil of lying, and tale-bearing, and scandal, and so on.

Now when any of you have heartily prayed to God to drive out any of these evil Spirits that had gained the mastery over you—you know that God has always done it. For a while—a very little while perhaps—but *for a while*, you have been free from sin. And what I say to all of you who may, this Lent, be trying heartily to be set free from any of these Devils is this:—do not be so foolish as to expect that being set free for once is enough. God drove out the evil Spirit when you asked Him, that is true. But

the evil One will come back; and if he finds your heart still empty when he comes back;—*i.e.* if you have not been filling up your heart with the kind of goodness opposite to the sin you have turned from, he will come in again worse than ever. He will not come back again *directly*. God will not let him do that. God will keep him away long enough to give you time to have had your heart filled with the real *liking for*, and *love* of what is good : and if you have used your time as you ought the Devil will not be able to come back into you.

Therefore those of you who are now striving to amend of any evil way, be warned and make good use of your time. Be very earnest in prayer to God to fill your hearts with His Holy Spirit. Pray that God will help you into good habits. Come again and again to Holy Communion, and at Holy Communion pray specially for the particular grace and strength you require; and what you pray for at Holy Communion remember to repeat every morning and every night during the week which follows. And so you will have God in your hearts, and good habits growing up in your lives, and you will begin thoroughly to love what you keep praying for, and the love of

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goodnes will fill up your hearts, so that when the Devil who used to be your master comes back again he will find no room left for him to set so much as his foot in.

And this may God of his great mercy grant to be the fruit of this Lent to many a soul here present, that we may receive the blessing with which the Gospel closes:—

“Blessed are they that hear the word of God,  
“and keep it.”

## SERMON X.

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### IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

(PALM SUNDAY.)

*By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.*

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#### LAMENTATIONS I. 12.

“Is it nothing unto you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if  
“there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.”

IN these words the Prophet represents the Holy City as sitting in the dust, and appealing to all who pass by whether any desolations, any reverses could be compared to hers. The words originally refer to the ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldees. But, like almost all the Old Testament Scriptures, they have interwoven with them the testimony of Jesus : so that words, which at first applied only to the outward fortunes of the Jewish capital, break out and overflow in streams which meet only in the Man of Sorrows. The Image of the Incarnate Son of God peers forth upon us everywhere ; the cries of David, the lamentations of Jeremiah, are but the first sounds, the mysterious

preludes, which prepare us for the full burst of the sorrows of Calvary and Gethsemane.

The life of our Lord was all one long Way of Sorrows—one strangely minute and intimate acquaintance with grief. He, the Holy, to dwell among sinners, to be flung amid the crowd of men to be scorned, rejected, despised! Think what it must have been for Him to see the sins of men, to be able to look down all along the future into the results of men's sins, to see how age after age, and generation after generation, men would go on sinning, with all His mercy beaten back from the sullen rock of human hearts. It was an inconceivable anguish that broke forth in the words He uttered this day when He came to the brow of the Mount of Olives and looked down upon Zion enfolded by her guardian hills;—when, knowing how near was the consummation of all her sins, He looked and cried, “O, Jerusalem! “Jerusalem! O that thou hadst known, even “thou, at least in this thy day, the things that “belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid “from thine eyes!”

With this day begins the direct contemplation of the Passion. All before had been but as the sullen drops which preceded the deluge of sorrows.

On this day He rides like Isaac to his sacrifice. Around Him are jubilant crowds, overmastered by a sudden impulse, the garments cast in the way, the palm branches of triumph, and the cry of Hosanna.; this is He who raised Lazarus from the grave—this is He who cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be He. Yet He knew that ere those palm branches would have time to wither, every heart there would be pouring its unholy venom upon His soul—every tongue crying, “Not this man but Barabbas!” “Away with Him!” “Crucify Him!” Yes, *now* He is taking festival possession of His City and Temple, putting on His kingly crown, and clothing Himself in royal apparel. Yet all the time He is looking forward to the crown of thorns to be woven round His temples, and on His shoulders the purple robe of scorn, and for a throne the Cross to be set up on Calvary. He is going up unto His bloody death.

And is it nothing unto you all ye that pass by? Now that the voice of His Church calls you to contemplate those sorrows through which your redemption was wrought out, do you intend to pass by unheeding?

. Is Holy Week going to be to you just like any

other week, given up to the world and to self?

Surely, if we did really feel what we profess, we should all through its advance be lingering upon each step along that marvellous path stained by the traces of His blood, and strive to plead each item of it before God in earnest prayer.

At any rate, this morning, let us stay awhile under the shade of these solemn thoughts, and may He take from us all hardness and coldness of heart, and touch us with a sorrow responsive to His sorrow !

First, then, we see Him keeping the Passover with His chosen Apostles. The storm was gathering without. Here, at least, we should suppose there is peace—one last pure joy to be tasted with His own.

By no means. Of *one* of them He has to say, "One of you shall betray me : " to *another*, "The cock shall not crow ere thou hast denied me : " to *all* of them, "Ye shall be scattered and leave me alone." Was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow ?

Then He goes forth with a calm resolve. They wind their way through the valley and up the hill ; He moves apart and kneels alone, and opens His soul to the Agony. He began to be



sorrowful, and there long time He knelt atoning in the garden the sin of Eden. It was the moment of the Power of Darkness, and His humanity quivered in every fibre. All horrible and seducing suggestions of the Evil One were before His eyes—every terror was set in array before His heart. We see the signs and sacraments of His Agony in the strong crying and tears, in the blood flowing, in the Angel strengthening Him. But we cannot penetrate into this mystery of awe. Saw we ever sorrow like unto His sorrow?

Ah! if in the world to come any of us be allowed to hold converse with the Angel who was privileged to bear succour to Him then, we may be taught something of that mysterious hour.

This passes away. From the Agony He rises, but it is only to meet Judas, to be kissed with the Judas kiss, to be wounded to the heart in the house of His friends; and the rude crowd seize Him, and drag Him away from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, from Herod to Pilate again; and the same crowd which had made the Mount ring with "Hosannas," now makes the street ring with the cry for His blood. They bind the hands which

had spread out the Heavens like a curtain ; they spit upon the face—that sacred face, which it is the rapture of saints and angels to behold ; they mock Him in every point of view, as Prophet, as Priest, as King. They bow before Him in scorn, though He is the King of Heaven—they buffet and scourge Him, they crown His royal head with thorns ; yet, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, He openeth not His mouth. Saw ye ever sorrow like unto His sorrow ?

He, the everlasting Son, is set down as a blasphemer of the Father—as a rebel against the miserable Cæsar ; and, faint and weak, they lay upon His body the heavy Cross, and upon His soul their heavier ingratitude and sin. Rudely and coarsely the rough troops drag Him through the city and up the mount of sacrifice. They stretch Him on the Cross as it lies along the ground : unresisting, they fit His arms to its arms ; nails and hammers fix his hands and feet, and then the Cross is reared upright while He hangs. The Son of man is lifted up. They stand staring and looking upon Him.

There is all Israel gathered to its feast, and the true Passover is offered, and they know it not. His failing eyes look round ; among all

those thousands there was no man—no, not one—to pity Him all those long, slow hours, with all their long drawn out agony of nerve and body—outward type of the fiercer agony of mind within. Oh, pains of death, from which we pray to be delivered, what must they not have been in His case when Satan was exhausting all his devices to make Him waver in His allegiance to the Father! For we know that Satan *was* permitted to prove Him to the uttermost. Not by pain of body only, but by bitterer trial of the soul. Alone, alone—that bitterest word of all to one that suffers—alone, solitary in soul, did Christ go down to death—solitary in soul, the cloud darkening over Him until the last lingering look of the Father's face was gone, lost in the gloom. There are none to minister to Him now. After the Temptation angels ministered unto Him. In the Agony an angel strengthened Him. In crises of His Ministry voices from Heaven came to Him. He could ever say, "I am not alone; the Father is with me." Not so now. The angels are aloof, the Father's face withdrawn. He is treading the wine-press alone. The cry of grief, the most piercing cry that Universe has ever heard, rings through Heaven and

Hell—"My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Saw ye ever sorrow like unto His sorrow?

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? This Crucifixion has become very familiar to us in words. We talk of the Cross. We discourse of the justice and mercy displayed therein. We speak of the precious doctrine of the Atonement, and of our sins as done away thereby. And it is very much to be feared that our heads are so filled with the doctrine that our hearts have little hold upon the fact. Ah, there is an awful spiritual selfishness by which men congratulate themselves that their sins are atoned for, and therefore think little about sinning, and nothing about their Saviour; and such men crucify Him afresh in every movement of their cold, unloving hearts. But those on whom the precious blood has been sprinkled know well that all that awful Agony was not only the price of their salvation, but it was also the measure of the heinousness of the sin which each soul of man has to do battle with and overcome.

The Cross is not only a sign of redemption to us—it is a revelation of the hideous awfulness of the nature of sin in us. Oh, if I am a Christian,

I can never feel a stirring of sin within me—pride, anger, selfishness, impurity, but the vision of the Cross comes athwart my heart, the dying cry of the Saviour rings again through my ears, and says, “Ah, wretched man! it was this “which brought your Creator to the Cross, and “yet you are taking it into your bosom again.”

Men and Brethren,—Let the Cross teach you the heinousness of sin. So only will it be your salvation from sin. If it brought Christ to the Cross, shall it not bring you to Hell? Yes, if you indulge it; no, if you crucify it. Oh, how the Tempter must look on in Satanic mockery as he sees men trifling with evil, speaking of sin as a frailty of nature—a thing to be palliated, or dealt softly with, smoothed over, or even jested with! It is a solemn, awful, terrible thing—so awful that it could bring all this inconceivable misery upon the Creator Himself, before even He could work its cure and loose its hold upon those He had created. Never in this life can we fully know the terribleness of evil. The story of the Cross, the history of the Holy Week, stand written that the Eye of Faith may look upon them, may study them, may meditate upon them, until something of a true Christian horror of

evil may be kindled in us ; and then, and not till then, shall we lay hold upon the Cross as the weapon of our salvation.

Oh, men and women, think of this when temptation is strong and the flesh weak, when frivolity and levity are sweeping you along, and idle words and foolish fancies, or worldly glitter, are taking all the stamina out of your spiritual life:—fall upon your knees—call up the scene of the way of sorrows—the hill of Calvary—the supernatural gloom—and say—“This was the work of sin: I am as good as repeating all that once more.” For so you are. *You* who professed to be saved from sin by the Cross:—*you* to sin wilfully once more:—what do you do but mock the Cross you profess to trust in, and embrace the Sin that wrought the Passion. Ah, does not the Saviour bleed again as you crucify Him afresh? See His sad eyes fixed upon you with their silent pleading as they say, “*Is it then nothing to you?*” And be very sure that to those who pass by and turn back unto their own wickedness—it *will be nothing* in that Day when nought but the Cross of Christ can save you from the Doom. Thus, then, the Cross of Christ is the Revelation of the awfulness of Sin ;

it is the standing Warning—the tremendous, overpowering, overwhelming warning to all Christian men to the end of time, of the deadly mischief which lurks in every—even the least—access of sin to the Soul of Man.

And as this thing Sin is in us all, and as we have to be cured of it, therefore Brethren beloved, is it, that no Christian man dares for one moment leave hold of that Cross and Saviour by which and by whom his own sin is to be cured. The flesh must be crucified, for Sin is in the Flesh. The World must be renounced, for the world is enmity with God. The Christian dares not set his heart upon anything whatever in this perishing time. It does not signify much. There is all eternity before us in which to rejoice at will before our God. For the few years we have to spend in this world we *must* be content to sign all things with the sign of the Cross and set our hearts on none.

It sounds a hard condition. Not so hard as it sounds. Try it. Be crucified to the world, to the objects, whims, fancies, schemes of this perishing time. Do your duty in this life's business as a stranger in a foreign town gets through his work there, while his heart is in the

old home beyond the sea with his friends and kindred. Do your work so:—will it spoil your gladness? Not a whit. Why the very fact of your *not* being engrossed with the things of time will leave your spirit's eye and your spirit's ear open to the sights and sounds of things invisible—the home of Saints—the House of God. Through your soul's eye the Sunshine of the other world shall steal in with cheerfulness unailing, through your soul's ear the Voices of Paradise shall reach you with harmonies of peace unchanging. Because you began by crucifying the world and the flesh, therefore the world's disappointments cannot touch you. Because you began by crucifying your own will, therefore the crossing of your will which we all meet with in this life does not vex you:—and as years roll on God will send you foretastes of the infinite peace which awaits you when the Cross has done its work both *for* you and *in* you.

But—and this is one great lesson from this Holy Week—we *must* be content to crucify all in us that is contrary to God's will; and that not only in some, but in all things, tastes, desires, wishes, habits, associations, which are in any way likely to lead us from Him.



Otherwise Christ's Cross avails us not. The more that any one of us has given way to Sin, the keener is the difficulty and the greater is the trouble of doing this. It is hard for any one. To most men it is very hard. But the Cross of Christ has purchased for us the strength to bear our Cross; as well as taught us the deadliness of the Sin which we must crucify.

And if we seek that strength, it will be given us. Its power is infinite. There is no height of sanctity it cannot produce in us if we will but use it. And as the way of the Cross led Christ to His throne, so, too, the same path will lead us to our throne with Him. Let our prayer be—that His will may be done in us and by us, and that we may have so crucified our Wills as to have no Will of our own, even as He came not to do His own Will but His Father's Will, though the Father's Will led Him to Calvary.

## SERMON XI.

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### *THE LESSONS OF THE CROSS.*

(GOOD FRIDAY.)

*By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.*

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S. LUKE XXIII. 48.

“And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned.”

YES, for silence fell upon them. Silence from out the darkened heavens came down on all. Hushed were the voices of those who but an hour ago had mocked and reviled Him ; hushed, too, the mourning voices of the women who had bewailed Him.

All stillness is impressive. The silence of an utter solitude has its majesty. But the silence which received the dying words of the Son of God is the most impressive of all—the silence of the vast multitude gathered round the Cross.

And if ever there was a day when one feels that human words should be few, chastened, and

subdued, it is Good Friday. Silence on such a day as this is the truest eloquence. Nothing, as it seems to me, but a sense of duty could make any one speak words of his own, or break in upon the solemn pealing notes of the gospel sentences, which seem to sound from out of the recesses of eternity, sounding across the lapse of centuries, like the solemn minute guns which announce to a hushed creation the death of the Son of God.

No one, it strikes me, who has heard day by day during the still morning hours of this Holy Week\* the four times repeated history,—following step by step, again and again, the terrible particulars of what was going on this very morning nearly 1840 years ago, no one who has listened with open ears and half-shut eyes, trying to realize definitely to himself, before his mind's eye, what was actually going on ; no one of us, I say, can help feeling that the natural instinct of a Christian man *must* be that of the people who stood in silent crowds round the hill outside the town, and with their own eyes saw the dread deed done.

“And all the people that came together to

\* This Sermon was first preached in a Church where there had been a daily 8 a.m. celebration, not so usual then as now.

“that sight, beholding the things that were  
“done, smote their breasts and returned.”

The Church bells toll to-day for the death of  
the Son of God.

We kneel as Christian mourners for the dying  
Christ.

Oh, sirs! oh, men and women, young and old!  
how many of you here in Christ's House this  
day were thinking, as the evening hours went by  
last night, that *that* night, yes, that very evening  
so many years ago, Christ your Lord was  
spending His last evening on the thankless earth,  
that those very hours were hearing his last words  
to His Apostles in the Upper Room—Christ  
washing the Apostles' feet—S. Peter hasty in  
rejoinder—his Master answering with gentle  
cautions—with the mysterious Eucharist to crown  
the whole? How many of you were travelling  
over the details of the marvellous anniversary, as  
the slow hours moved on from point to point, and  
brought each fact in the Gospel history to view?

How many of you, if you looked out of window  
into the silvery haze of the half moonlit night,  
thought how that very moon—the Paschal  
Moon—had shone down upon Him and His  
Apostles, as they walked down the steep and up

the glen until they reached the olive-shaded grove, where, half in light and half in thickest shadow, He went forward to kneel alone in agonising conflict with the powers of darkness, until the Incarnate Son is aided by the glistening presence of an angelic minister ?

How many of you if, as you chanced to see a light dance or flicker in the darkness, thought to yourselves—so gleamed the torch in the hand of the man who walked darkling with Judas under the thick branches of the olive-trees to find where Christ was kneeling to await their treason ?

How many of you, if in the dim morning you awoke ere day, thought upon your beds—Now, yes, at this very hour, perchance at this very minute, was Christ my Lord being dragged before the midnight gathering of the Priests and Rulers, that His mock trial might be hurried over before the day began. For so it was. It was those still hours when most of us were sleeping that were the actual anniversary of that midnight seizure. No rest that night for the angry Priests and Sanhedrim. In their hall they waited all the chill hours through, until, at last, a noise of hurrying soldiers up the street, the doors fly open, mid-most in the entering throng

the torch-light shows the form of Jesus of Nazareth, at last their prisoner, and no one by to aid Him or to snatch Him from them.

Men and brethren, Christians whose every hope of goodness here, or of happiness hereafter, was purchased by the agonies of those hours from the Eucharist of Maundy Thursday, to the death for which even now our own Church bell has tolled, who would not have watched once at least the whole night through before Good Friday, to track and realize each item of the stupendous facts which the Church commemorates below, which Christ our Lord can never forget above.

Pass we on until daybreak, until noon, until afternoon. We cannot tarry over every hour's recital. We come at last to the hour of our text. The strife, the buffeting, the Cross, the pain, the Death, are over now. The knell of Christ has sounded through the universe until the very sunlight pales. Silence comes down upon the gazing thousands. Awe-struck they gaze upon the crucified. Understand they what they look upon? Ah, no. But from out that sorrow-laden Cross, there streams strange influence into their souls. They may not understand it, but it tells upon them. Something has spoken to their

hearts. A voice has found them from those silenced lips, which wakens slumbering conscience. Why did they smite their breasts? It is the action of the roused sense of sin. Upon that Cross sin now lies slain, and from that Cross the healing virtue already begins to flow, first rousing the sense of sin in us who have been its victims, next pouring forth the healing virtue to remove the sin it teaches us to feel. Ah, it is a thought which must often come over the student of the Gospels. How many of the three thousand baptized at Pentecost may not have been among those who smote upon their breasts on Good Friday?

And now *we* gaze upon the Cross. And I ask,—Brethren, understand *we* what we look upon? Theoretically, and in words, we all do. From our very infancy we have all been taught its meanings. In its central inner teaching perhaps, so far as doctrine goes, there is nothing that has not been said to you again and again. *With us* it is rather the carrying of its meanings out into their real bearing upon our own ways of thinking, and our actual lives that is likely to be deficient. We know the inner truth so familiarly *as a doctrine*, that we may have

forgotten how it ought to be acting *as a motive*, in and through all our daily conduct. Let me, therefore, now turn to a few of those practical issues from it which we may profitably carry away with us from our contemplation of the Cross.

We, too, have come together this day to the sight and contemplation of the Cross, and Him who hangs thereon. We, too, have smote upon our breasts, and bewailed our sins. We are about to return from that sight. Let us take home a few thoughts to stand us in good stead in our Christian conduct in the days that are to come.

I. And first, from this sight of Christ hanging dead upon the Cross, let us go back to our Christian life and work with the strengthened conviction that *failure in good is impossible*. It seems to me that to the anxious, the desponding, the sorrowing Christian, the first great lesson which those dead lips speak is one of infinite encouragement. Oh, the lips of the Incarnate were eloquent with encouragement while yet in life; but a thousand-fold more as they speak from out that marvellous stillness while nought else is heard but the smiting on the breasts of the unnumbered multitude. For what does it



mean? Does it not mean this—that in the conflict of sin and Satan against Christ and goodness, Satan *thought* he had now conquered? For three long years since the mighty strife began in the temptation in the wilderness had Satan been stirring up all the forces of evil to *crush* the One whom he had failed to tempt. And now the evil one thinks he has succeeded. The Christ whom he could not tempt, he has at last brought to the Cross. For the moment, the Prince of this world seems to have got rid of Him who had threatened his usurped dominion. The voice which had called back Lazarus from the grave is itself hushed in death. The word which the spirits of evil had been forced to obey has—to all appearance—spoken its last in a felon's execution. The hand which had been outstretched to snatch S. Peter from a watery grave, is now stretched powerless upon the Cross, and will soon itself be wrapped in grave clothes. To all appearance the triumph of Satan is complete. Death was the one mark of Satan's completed victory over our first parents. Death is the one mark of his continued hold upon our fallen humanity. In the death of Christ we see Satan's apparent triumph *by force* over the One over

whom he had been unable to triumph by temptation. This, *in this aspect*, is the meaning of the death of Christ. The power of Evil has failed to delude or seduce the Divine Champion of Good, and, therefore, had compassed His death by force, by stirring up the evil that was in men—the Sanhedrim—against Him. And for the moment it seemed to answer. Christ was put to death *in the flesh*. For the moment evil seemed utterly victorious—Satan never more utterly supreme than when the Son of God hung down a lifeless head upon a pierced and bleeding body, and a Roman Legionary had to report to a heathen Procurator that Jesus of Nazareth was dead indeed.

But what then? It was the last hour that Satan could speak of himself as prince of this world. Christ's kingdom indeed has not yet fully come; and Satan still fights a losing battle upon the territory he had held so long since his primal usurpation; but, at the utmost, Satan does but fight a losing battle now. In the Crucifixion Satan had *done his worst*, and we know how it ended. The apparent triumph of evil did but lead to the real triumph of good, and three days were not gone by, before Crucifixion

the Cross, yes, and His actual Death, these things could not bind, or quench the inner life of Him Whose Body they first reduced to helplessness, and then actually slew. Infinite perseverance is the path of duty, undying faith and hope the path of rectitude in respect of the Church and of Her work, as in respect of our own inner life. We may be faithless and desponding, but Christ will never fail His Church, any more than He failed to re-animate that human body which, for awhile, both His enemies and His own Apostles imagined to be consigned for ever to the tomb. The tomb could not hold His Body, nor the guard of soldiers prevent Its rising again ; so neither the world nor the devil can subdue the Church, or hold it in subjection. Let not any of us be guilty of faithless despair now ; remembering the shame which will hereafter overwhelm those who, *having* despaired, must witness, without sharing, the future triumph. And then,

III. Thirdly, let us learn the lesson of never indulging in desires for God's glory, except in God's own ways. Even now we can see in some measure that the Cross of Christ *did* in a signal degree set forth God's glory and conduce to his honour. Yet—humanly speaking—what a

strange way of doing honour to Him Who was the Creator and is the Sustainer of the Universe. The Maker of all, crucified like a common felon between two murderers ! We may be sure that Christ Himself would not have taken the course He did, had it not been the wisest, the best, the noblest. Yet when He first announced it to His Apostles, S. Peter would not hear of it. S. Peter desired His Master's honour, but he desired it in his own, and not in his Master's way. Get thee behind me, Satan, was Christ's reply. Here, again, we see our lesson, and another of the thoughts, which we must take with us from before the Cross to-day as we return to our own homes. Let us be very careful about mistaking zeal for our own plans for zeal for God's glory. One iota of calm perseverance beneath the shame and humiliation of the Cross which Christ has appointed, is worth years of zealous endeavour for *our own plans* or notions as to how God's glory is to be advanced. The Apostles would gladly have *fought* for Christ, but only one of them stood beneath the Cross. His bravest and most zealous Apostle denied Him utterly when he saw Him brought to trial. To *follow* Christ is the Christian's duty ; not to decide in what way

Christ's glory will best be served. It may be that we serve Christ best in absolute quiet, in total self-surrender, and even in withdrawal from all visible work whatever. There are those whose life's work is like that of Mary and John beneath the Cross on the day of the Crucifixion, to stand there silent and observant in rapt adoration of His total self-surrender. It is ours to offer ourselves. It is His to decide the form of service which He pleases to accept. This alone is certain, that whoever would serve Him acceptably must ask to have the spirit of His Crucifixion renewed in his own experience, and to give up himself, with all his desires, powers, wishes, thoughts, and purposes, as a willing sacrifice to God, even as the body of Christ was nailed motionless to the Cross. And may this Good Friday have done something, brethren, with each of us towards the realising of this total self-surrender! Amen.

## SERMON XII.

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### *HE IS RISEN.*

(EASTER DAY.)

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S. MARK xvi. 6.

“He is risen, He is not here.”

“THIS is the day which the Lord hath made, we  
“ will rejoice and be glad in it.” Of no day can  
this be said so truly as of this, the fairest and  
brightest of Festivals. It is no wonder that the  
Fathers of the Church lavished upon Easter Day  
every epithet of praise and affection ; it is no  
wonder that they call it the Great Day—the day  
of days,—the Queen of days,—the Sovereign of  
all Festivals. In the words of one, it is the Bright  
Sunday—God’s Sunday—the Lord’s day of joy.  
In the language of another it is “God’s own  
“ Easter Day, the feast of feasts, solemnity of  
“ solemnities, so far passing all other feasts holden  
“ not only by or for men, but even those held in

“honour of Christ Himself, as the sun doth  
“surpass and excel the stars” (S. Gregory  
Nazienzen). And yet another (S. Chrysostom)  
calls it “the desirable feast of our salvation, the  
“day of our Lord’s Resurrection, the foundation  
“of our peace, the occasion of our reconciliation,  
“the end of our contentions and enmity with  
“God, the destruction of death, and our victory  
“over the devil.” No wonder that in the primi-  
tive Church Easter was one of the three special  
seasons chosen for the baptism of converts, and  
that at this holy Festival certain of the Christian  
Emperors were wont to loose from prison all  
except the worst of criminals, since “as Jesus  
“delivered us from the grievous prison of our  
“sins, and made us capable of enjoying im-  
“measurable blessings, so ought we in like  
“manner, as far as possible, to imitate the mercy  
“and kindness of our Lord.” (S. Chrysostom).

Gladly, then, do we pass from the desert of  
temptation, and the dark days of the Lenten  
penance, and exchange the notes of mourning for  
the hallelujah of joy. If we have used Lent  
rightly, or have thought on the sufferings of  
Jesus; if we have been with Him in spirit in the  
sorrows of Gethsemane, and amid the cruel crowd

on Calvary, we shall fully realise the glorious contrast offered by Easter. A glorious contrast indeed ! In place of the mocking insults of the Judgment Hall there is the pious ministry of Joseph ; in place of the tearing thorns, and the bloody sweat, there are sweet ointments and fair linen ; instead of the wild excitement of cruel Golgotha, there is the peaceful silence of a spring garden ; instead of the hot breath of angry men there is the pure perfume of early flowers. And above all, in place of a dead Saviour, crucified for our sins, there is a living Jesus who has risen for our justification.

And now as we kneel in spirit by the empty sepulchre, let us notice some incidents of the Resurrection, and gather some flowers of holy teaching from around the grave of Jesus. We know that Joseph of Arimathea had gone to Pilate, and had " begged the body of Jesus." He did so that he might show openly the love for Christ dead, which he had dared only to show secretly whilst He was yet alive. He, like the ministering woman, " did what he could," and gave a tomb to Him who " had nowhere to lay His Head," and gained thereby, we doubt not, a home eternal in the heavens. We, too, should come to-day to



rejoice by the body of Jesus, of the risen, glorified Redeemer. To Mary Magdalene He said, "Touch Me not"; but to us He says, "Take, eat, this is my Body"; and since Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, we are bidden to receive through the Sacrament the Body and Blood of the True Paschal Lamb, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. And now that the dear Form, so maimed and wounded by cruel hands, so often despised and rejected, buffeted and insulted, is laid to sleep in the tomb where even in death He has fulfilled the Scripture, and made His grave with the rich, the fears of His enemies still live. The great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre is not enough, and so they sit and watch, and seal the stone. And so it is to-day. The enemies of God and of His people put obstacles in the way of a resurrection to better things, obstacles of doubt and unbelief, obstacles of tyranny and falsehood, and set the seal of authority on them. They desire to keep the Truth dead and buried, and to hold men back from the higher life. But it may not be. What power had the Jews against the "Power of the Resurrection?" When Jesus, the true Samson, awoke from sleep, and found Himself tied with

the Philistine cords of His enemies, He brake them easily, and the very earth shook, as did the house of Dagon of old. As says an old writer of the Church, " Good cause had the earth to quake, " when the God that made it, powerfully calls for " His own flesh from the usurpation of her " bowels; good cause had she to open her graves, " and yield up her dead, in attendance on the " Lord of life, whom she had presumed to detain " in that cell of her darkness. What a seeming " impotency was here, that Thou, who art the " true rock of Thy Church, shouldst lie obscurely " shrouded in Joseph's rock ! That Thou, that art " the true Corner-stone of Thy Church, shouldst " be shut up by a double stone, the one of Thy " grave, the other of Thy vault ! That Thou, by " whom we are sealed to the day of our redemption, " shouldst be sealed up in a blind cavern of the " earth ! But now, what a demonstration of power " doth both the world and I see in Thy glorious " Resurrection ! The rocks tear, the graves open, " the stones roll away, the dead rise and appear, " the soldiers flee and tremble, saints and angels " attend Thy rising. O Saviour, Thou liest down " in weakness, Thou risest in power and glory ! " Thou liest down like a man, Thou risest like a

“God !” (Bishop Hall.) And so now, though the wicked and the unbelieving put stumbling-blocks and stones of offence to keep men down in the grave of sin, and the prison-house of death, yet the Power of the Resurrection triumphs, and “the stone is rolled away.

And now the faithful women have heard the angels' message, which was the pledge to them and to us of the Resurrection—“He is risen, He “is not here.” Not here, indeed, in one sense ! Not here in the midst of enemies who daily mistake His words, and lie in wait for Him ; not here to be despised and rejected, to be insulted, and set at nought ; not here to die, not here to lie in the grave. Yet in another sense He is still here. He has not left us comfortless ; He is with us yet by His Holy Spirit, with us in His Church, with us in His Sacraments. “He is risen.” In that one assurance stands our hope as Christians. Jesus came to give liberty to the captives ; when the stone was rolled from His tomb, when the bonds of death were loosed, all mankind partook of the benefit ; for all who were fast bound in the misery and iron of sin, the year of jubilee, the year of release, had come. Yes, Jesus, who is risen, has proclaimed release from the *wrath*

*of God.* That black cloud which had hung over the earth since the first Adam fell, was cleared away on the bright Easter morning when the Second Adam rose. That heavy debt which we owed to our Heavenly Father, and which we had not wherewithal to pay, was paid when Jesus rose on Easter morning. Since Adam was banished from his first home, the closed gate and the fiery sword had guarded the entrance to Paradise; but now Jesus has passed through, leading the penitent thief, and so for us a "door "is opened in heaven."

"He is risen," and we are freed from the *power of sin*. Sin is no longer the ruling influence, and need no more have dominion over our mortal bodies. Satan cannot now lead us captives at his will. We are become more than conquerors through Him who fought out that bitter battle on Good Friday, and rose triumphant on Easter morning. "He is risen," and we are freed from the *power of sorrow*. I do not tell you that we shall never more know sorrow, that this world has ceased to be a vale of tears; but I do tell you, O mournful ones, that you must not sorrow as those without hope. There is no grief so dark, no misfortune so desperate, that the light of the Resurrection

cannot shine upon it, and bring comfort. In the chamber of sickness, in the pinched home of poverty, in the prison cell, or the workhouse ward—in the agonized horror of the hospital—at the brink of the very grave itself, the power of the Resurrection asserts itself, and because Christ is risen, strength is given to us to rise out of the darkness of misery into the pure light of holy resignation. “He is risen,” and therefore the whole *character of death is changed*. We know that our dear ones will all fade as the leaf; we know that we ourselves shall go hence, and be no more seen; but we know also that we shall not die eternally. The grave is no more a pit of destruction, but is now

“That blessed tomb,  
Become the room

Where lay Creation’s Lord asleep.”

Death is no longer the grisly king of terrors, but the kind Friend who comes to set the sufferer free, and bids the tired find an asylum where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary “are at rest.” The Lord hath turned our captivity, the captivity of our souls to the law of concupiscence, of our bodies to the law of death. Now if we see the grave close over some loved

one's form, we can look beyond the grave, and in the light of the Resurrection look on that existence where

“ No sorrow now hangs clouding on their brow,  
 No bloodless malady impales their face :  
 No age drops on their hairs his silver snow,  
 No nakedness their bodies doth debase ;  
 No poverty themselves and theirs disgrace ;  
 No fear of death the joy of life devours,  
 No loss, no grief, no change, wait on their winged hours.”

And yet one more word on the Resurrection as a *personal matter*. Jesus has risen, but have *we* risen with Him ? Are we trying to lead the higher life, and to seek those things which are above ? Otherwise what is the joy of Easter to us—what the blessings of the Resurrection ? We cannot be partakers of that Resurrection if, whilst Christ is risen, we lie still in the grave of corruption ; if, whilst He has triumphed over sin, we are yet its slaves. How dare we look forward to the final rising at the last day if we have not known a moral and spiritual resurrection here ? We know that in that great day “ they that sleep in the “dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting “life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Those who hope for the Resurrection unto life

eternal in heaven, must strive to lead the higher life now. Corruption cannot inherit incorruption. An old writer says quaintly that "since Adam "planted thorns round about Paradise, there are "some miserable people who are more in love "with the hedge than all the fruits of the garden." But if we would have heaven for our home, we must not mind earthly things overmuch, nor love this present world better than the life to come. Shall we not strive to make this Easter *a reality*, a true time of Resurrection for ourselves ; and try, in the power of the risen Jesus, to rise above besetting sins, evil habits, faults and failings ; daily endeavouring to go up higher in thought, and word, and work ; climbing by Him who is the true Ladder set up between earth and heaven—Jesus, the living Way, the Resurrection and the Life!

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## SERMON XIII.

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### *BEING WITH JESUS.*

(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

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ACTS IV. 13.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

Two rough-handed working men are brought before the Jewish Sanhedrim, charged with preaching strange doctrines, the faith of Christ crucified, and the resurrection to eternal life. The memories of Calvary and Gethsemane, of the garden-grave from which the stone was rolled away, of the mysterious darkness, and the rent veil of the Temple, were all fresh in the minds of the Jewish rulers, and there was great excitement in Jerusalem. Look now at the Judgment-Hall. On the one side are ranged learning, power, influence, political and religious. The priests are there, fulfilling the duties of the Temple in the course, or order, established by Solomon. The captain, or officer of the Levites is there, whose



duty it is to maintain order. There, too, are the Sadducees, men of education and learning, who do not believe in the Resurrection, and whose motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Annas is there, with Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, who was probably the brother of the Jewish historian Philo. All these are men who have spent their lives in the study of the law of Moses and the traditions of the Elders. A goodly array, indeed! And who are on the other side? Two poor fishermen from the Lake of Galilee; one with grizzled hair, well advanced in years, once called Simon, now better known as Peter. The other is young, and fair to look on; both are dressed in fisher clothes, and their hands are stained with the nets and ropes—the younger one of the two is John, the son of Zebedee. They have been in prison all night, because the civil officers feared a disturbance, and the Pharisees and Sadducees, though opposed to each other, dreaded equally the strange doctrine of the fishermen. These fishermen had been preaching, and with good effect. These ignorant men had been preaching to the learned, and many believed, and the rest were angry, and when people are angry at a sermon there is generally

some power in it. It was a dangerous time and a dangerous place for preaching such as theirs. All the authorities were opposed to them. Perhaps they remembered the words of Holy David : " I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed." It was no wonder that the rulers were astonished at their boldness, the fishermen were but humble folk. S. Peter certainly was a man of some position, he owned a house at Bethsaida, and another at Capernaum ; but still he had little education, and he and his companion had dared to teach learned scribes and elders who had been brought up at the feet of Rabbis. At last they understood how it was they were so brave. These preachers were followers of Him who had bid fair to turn the world upside down,—“they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

Thus we learn the reason of the Apostles' boldness ; we see what carried them through all dangers, and difficulties and temptations, we see what made the Gospel triumph. They had been with Jesus, and He was with them always. For many centuries after our Lord's death the teachers of His Gospel courted certain death ; they were mocked, tormented, sawn asunder, burnt with fire,

In these days there are some who would not adventure the tip of their little finger in the fire for Christ's sake, but it was not so of old time. When a Roman Emperor wanted amusement he ordered Christians to be thrown to the lions. During the first three hundred years of the Christian Church there were ten persecutions. The last was during the reign of Diocletian, which continued for ten years, when "Diocletian's fiery sword worked busy as the lightning." He caused a medal to be struck bearing the motto, "The Christian religion is destroyed, and the worship of the Gods restored." In Spain two pillars were erected in his honour, "for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, and extended the worship of the Gods." But it was all to no purpose. Those who had been with Jesus triumphed; His Gospel spread as the leaven made the meal to swell, and as the mustard seed became a great plant. The Gospel increased, its enemies decreased. The mighty Emperors who persecuted the Church perished. Diocletian was driven from his throne and died a madman; Nero perished by his own hand; Domitian was murdered by his servants; Hadrian expired in agony; Severus, through his son's treachery,

Decius perished in a marsh ; Valerian was flayed alive by the Persians ; so the fighters against God were found to be liars, and perished all the sort of them. Jesus, the little Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus the worker in the carpenter's shop, the despised and rejected, the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief, proves stronger than all the kings of the earth, although they and the rulers take counsel against Him. Jesus conquers because He is God as well as Man, and they who trust in Him are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and giveth us the victory.

And now to bring the matter home to ourselves. Can our friends and enemies, when they see *us*, take knowledge of us that *we* have been with Jesus? There are as many foes of Christ and of His Church now as there were in the old times. There are unbelievers who deny the divinity of Jesus and of His Church. There are others, who profess and call themselves Christians, and yet whose only *real* belief is in *themselves*, in their own will, and in their own way, and who find the Gospel a very unpleasant check upon their lives.

These are they who cry "we will not have this "man to reign over us." These fight against the Church, deny her divine powers, would rob her

of her rights, would strip her of her beauty ; these would break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers, and make the Holy Place the abomination of desolation. *Yet they fail.* They cannot kill her Truth. They may rob the Church, they may deprive her of political rights, but they cannot take away the divine power given to her by Jesus Christ. They cannot root out the truth from the hearts of the faithful. There are some who sneer at God's Priest ; but he remains a Priest still. There are those who ignore the Sacraments, yet Sacraments they remain. The infidel may rave against Creeds, the Secularist may expel God from everything, but like the Jewish rulers, they are forced to take knowledge of the Church, and to see that her members have been with Jesus.

What made the Sanhedrim take knowledge that the Apostles had been with Jesus ? It was because they saw the *boldness* of Peter and John. It sometimes happens that in our everyday life we meet with those who speak evil of holy things, who blaspheme Jesus and His Church, who mock at Sacraments, and sneer at the Bible. What is our duty on such occasions ? There are some who declare their distaste for such words, but who yet

are afraid to interfere, and take refuge in silence. This is moral cowardice of the worst kind. There is a time to keep silence and *a time to speak*. Every Christian is an Apostle of Jesus Christ, signed with His Cross, enlisted in His army, and he cannot be called Christ's faithful soldier and servant unless he defends his Master's honour on all occasions. Where is the man who would hear the fair fame of his friend or relative attacked, and keep silence? How much more should we defend the honour of Him who sticketh closer than a brother. Let no one be ashamed to confess his faith; and when that faith is evil spoken of, let us act so that the world *must* take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

There is a story often told, that on one occasion one of the bravest generals of Frederick the Great declined the king's invitation to dinner, because he was going to receive the Blessed Sacrament. The next time he was present at the royal table, the king and his guests mocked at the Holy Eucharist, and at the scruples of the general. The old man rose, saluted the king, who was no man to be trifled with, and told him that there was yet a greater King than Frederick, and "that he never allowed that Holy One to be insulted

“in his presence.” The courtiers looked on in astonishment, but the king clasped the hand of his servant, and expressed his sorrow that he could not believe as firmly, and declare his faith as fearlessly.

Once more. In our home life, and our daily duties, let us take care that friends and foes alike may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. When we see a family where sons and daughters are unselfish, thinking of each other rather than of themselves, caring for their parents' wishes, rather than their own way, trying to do some work for Christ's sake rather than for their own pleasure, then we may take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. When we find people gentle and kindly in their judgment of others, trying to see the *good* instead of the evil, and ready to give others credit for pure motives, then we take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. When we find people hopeful in times of distress, patient in tribulation, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, then we may take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and we may be sure that they shall be His in that day when He shall make up His jewels.

## SERMON XIV.

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### *I WILL GO TO MY FATHER.*

(ASCENSIONTIDE.)

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S. LUKE XV. 18.

“I will arise and go to my Father.”

So spoke the prodigal son ; so also might have spoken that other Son, who was a Prodigal only in His love for mankind. He too, had left His Father's house, and gone into a far country, but not to do His own will. He exchanged the courts of Heaven for a homeless earth, where there was no room, no welcome for Him ; where He had no place to lay His head. The undying flowers of Paradise were left for the thorns of a cruel world. The goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the saints, the hosts of ministering angels, were replaced by the society of a few rude peasants. In place of the untiring devotion of Heaven, He found His dis-



ciples sleeping during His agony ; in place of rest at the right hand of His Father, He found himself forsaken on the bitter resting-place of the Cross. We have followed Jesus step by step through the dark valley of His humiliation, from the swaddling clothes and the manger, through the fasting and the temptation, through the workshop and the wilderness, through the Judgment Hall, and to the Mount of Sacrifice ; now all is changed. The winter of sorrow is past, the rain of tears is over and gone, the flowers of comfort appear on the earth, the blessed Easter and Ascensiontide have come to us, the Son of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings ; He has said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do ;" and so He arose and went to His own home. He arose and came to His Father. The message had come to Him, "Arise, and depart, for this is not your rest." It was time indeed for him to depart ; yea, the time was come, earth was not His rest. The Bethlehem manger was not good enough for the only begotten Son of God ; a little gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, were not sufficient for Him who planted every shrub, and filled every mine with its treasure.

The carpenter's shop was no fit abiding place for Him in whose Father's house are many mansions ; it was indeed expedient that one should die for the sins of the people ; it was necessary that the cup which the Father had given should be drained to the bitter dregs ; but now the work on earth was finished, and the rest in Heaven was won. Now the victory was gained, and the triumph of the Conqueror was to begin. Now, as we stand gazing up into Heaven, at this holy season of Ascension, we seem to be able to pierce the bright cloud which received Jesus out of sight, and to behold the Father coming forth to meet His Son, kissing Him, putting the ring on His finger, and shoes on His feet, and setting a crown of pure gold upon His head. There must be no more thorns for that Sacred brow ; in place of the garment of scorn they have brought forth the best robe. The sceptre of His kingdom is a right sceptre, and He holds it now in place of the reed of mockery. The stable is no more for Him, but the highest room ; the darkness of Calvary is exchanged once more for the brightness of the Father's face. Gethsemane has given place to Beulah, the good land where there are no false friends, no Judas to betray, no Pilate to

condemn. As once the whole city of Jerusalem went out to meet Jesus, so now the inhabitants of the Heavenly Sion go forth to meet Him who was dead and is alive again. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels stand before Him, and come before His presence with thanksgiving, and go into His courts with praise. Now they raise the anthem of exultation for Him, of whom it was said, "Crucify Him." One choir of angels is singing, "Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength;" another answers, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength." Some shout in triumph, "Who is the King of Glory?" Others make response, "The Lord of Hosts, the Lord mighty in battle."

To-day, brethren, in thinking of the Ascension, we are brought face to face with a great mystery, one link in the great mysterious scheme of salvation. But as there is an analogy between the world of Nature and the mysteries of the Vicarious Sacrifice, and the Resurrection, so there is a like analogy between Nature and the Ascension. What were the influences which drew our Lord upwards to Heaven? The world of Nature shews us an attractive power drawing upwards. It is this which makes the trees, and

plants, the springing grass, and the growing wheat struggle upwards towards the source of light, and heat, and beauty. This too, was, we may believe, one of the influences which drew Jesus to Heaven. Another influence which acted on our Lord was the desire to complete His divine work, "In the Ascension," says a writer of old time, "is consummated the work of "the Incarnation, and the merit of the Passion, "and the reward of Glorification." The work of Christ was not completed by His birth, or temptation, or sorrowful life, or death, or resurrection; it was necessary for the perfect fulfilment of His task that He should ascend into Heaven, and sit at the right hand of His Father, and, living, ever plead for those for whom He died. And there is yet another reason for our Lord's Ascension to Heaven. It was His Home. It was His Father's House, the dwelling of the saints and angels whom He loved. This was the great attractive power which drew the Saviour up to Heaven. He was going Home. My brethren, we all know this feeling. For all of us there is "no place like home, be it never "so homely." It was this feeling which caused Hadad to sigh for the brown hills of Moab among

the painted palaces of Egypt. It was this feeling which made Israel, beside the waters of Babylon, weep when they remembered Sion. How many an exile in a foreign land, though surrounded by the fairest scenes of nature, has yearned fondly towards some humble spot far away, some barren hill-side or dull village, which with all its rudeness and simplicity was dear to Him, because it was His home. How many a one has taken a long and weary journey to look with sad, loving eyes on a place which knows Him no more, but which was home to Him once! Dear friends, is not that Heaven, whither our dear Lord has ascended, our true home? Is there not something to draw us up thither? Is there not the love of some little child, not lost, but gone before—is there not the love of some gentle mother, some brave father, or faithful wife—above all, is there not the love of Jesus to draw us Heavenwards, and to make us feel that here we have no continuing city, but that we seek one to come?

Our ascended Lord speaks to us in a great voice from Heaven, the saints and martyrs cry to us from their place of rest, our dear ones who have passed away from earth echo the call, all

alike say to us, "Come up hither." We must not, indeed, stand ever gazing up into Heaven, and yearning aimlessly after our far-off home. We read that the disciples, after Jesus had left them, returned to the holy city to do the work which He had given them. So must it be with us. We must not seek for Jesus in dreamy contemplation, but in the holy place of the sanctuary, and the faithful discharge of our duty. We must strive so to work, and fight against sin, that we may daily go up higher in thought, and hope, and aim, catching an echo of heavenly music in our earthly journey, till at last we shall ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who died, and rose again, and ascended up into Heaven to prepare a place for us, and to open the gates of Heaven to all believers.

**SERMON XV.**

***THE HOLY GHOST THE SANCTIFIER.***

(**WHIT SUNDAY.**)

*By A. R. ASHVELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.*

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**HEBREWS XII. 14.**

**"Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."**

My Brethren,—I presume that every one in this congregation hopes to go to Heaven. We all hope it. We all know that it was to enable us to do so that Christ came amongst us, and that the Christian religion was given to us. Christ Himself has told us that He is even now preparing a place for us in Heaven. So that on the one hand He came into the world to enable us to reach Heaven ; and then, on the other, He went away again to prepare a place for us in Heaven. This is true, and we all know that it is true. But is this the whole truth about the Christian Religion? To hear some people talk, aye, and to hear some people preach too, one might almost imagine that they thought that the work ended here, and that if we do what they

call *believe* (1.) that Christ has done all this, and (2) is preparing a place for us, then we cannot help going to Heaven. But is this really so? There is many a man who believes all that is written in the Gospels about our Lord, who believes that Christ has made atonement for his sins, who believes that Christ earnestly desires his salvation, and yet who—if God were to take him into Heaven this moment—could not by any possibility be happy there. Why so? Simply because to be happy anywhere you must (as we say) be *fit* for the place, *fit* for the company we find there, *fit* to take a pleasure in what goes on there. If not, then the only thing that could happen must be that we should be out of our element there : and no one can be happy out of his element. You see, then, that after we have been taught that Christ has opened to us the gates of Heaven, there yet remains another question to be answered, how are we to become such persons as to be able to be happy in Heaven?

Heaven will be very unlike this world in many ways. No selfishness can reach Heaven. No pride, no envy, no personal ambition, none of those pleasures in which the mere man of the world finds his enjoyment :—none of these, and



none of the tastes that they foster and encourage, can find anything to gratify them there. To carry these tastes there is impossible. And if you could do so you would be miserable, for you would be filled with longings and desires for things and pleasures which Heaven does not furnish you with. So then the question comes back to you:—*How* are you to be so transformed that you may be capable of being happy in Heaven, if you get there? For I suppose we shall all admit that we shall require to be very much transformed indeed, very much changed, and that we must get rid of many evil tastes and likings, must acquire many holy desires and habits, before we should have the remotest chance of *enjoying* the Presence of God, the society of angels, and of redeemed souls, and just men made perfect. How is this to be done? Who is to do it? By what power is it to be brought about?

My Brethren, this is a question which has often been put to me as a clergyman. Men and women have come to me and said it is all very well to tell us that Christ has *opened* the kingdom of Heaven to all believers, but how if we cannot enter within the opened gates? How if we feel that if we *did* enter we should be totally unfit to be

happy there? Surely Christ does not mean to mock us. If he died to save us He must also mean to make us *fit* for Heaven, as well as open the gate of Heaven to us.

And what is our answer to such souls? Nay, rather may I not say what is Christ's answer? What is the Bible's answer? What is the Church's answer? Our answer is this:—That the Gospel does *not* stop short with Christ's redemption. The Cross and the Atonement are the beginning of the Gospel, not its conclusion. They are its foundation, not the completed edifice. God knows full well—far better than you do—that you cannot make yourselves fit for the Heaven Christ has purchased for you. God knows that you do indeed want transforming, that you want making over again, that you must become new creatures, before you could be happy in His holy Heaven. And this is why, after the Gospels have shown you all that Christ did and suffered *for* you, the Epistles are full of the doctrine of what the Holy Spirit does *in* you. This is why, after our Good Friday and our Easter, the Church always celebrates her Whitsuntide. It is because the Gospel of Christ does *not* stop short with Christ's Redemption, but goes on to

show us how we may, so to speak, profit by that Redemption, and become fit for the joy of Heaven and the Presence of God. We cannot renew ourselves. We cannot of ourselves subdue a single evil habit, much less uproot one darling sin or evil temper. And, therefore, as soon as our Lord went back to Heaven He sent the Spirit of God to dwell in our hearts and to transform our characters and tastes, and likings, into what they must be if we are to be happy in the Heaven which He has purchased. This is what Whitsunday means. It is the day when we commemorate the great truth that Christ has not left us to ourselves after that He has redeemed us ; that He has put it into our power to grow good, and holy, and pure ; that His Spirit is ready to finish the work of our salvation by making us indeed God's children, and fit for our Father's Presence.

How does the Holy Spirit do this? My Brethren, *we* cannot tell you. We cannot tell you *how* the Spirit of God transforms our characters any more than we can explain to you *how*, in the first instance, God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. The Apostle S. Paul, whose letters are full of the subject, never tells

us this, never even seems to try to tell us. Yet, as you all know, he is always writing about it. Half the Epistle to the Romans must be disbelieved if any one is to doubt that the Holy Spirit *does* come into us, *does* change our dispositions, *does* overcome bad tastes and wishes and desires, *does* give us new tempers, the love of God, gentleness to man, control over ourselves, and all that enables us to grow like to Christ our Head. It is true that S. Paul does not tell us *how*, but then perhaps we could not understand it if he did. Who of us understands *how* it comes to pass that Christ's death avails for our redemption? Who of us understands how the Holy Sacrament nourishes all that is good in us?—how Christ feeds our souls therein? Yet we do not doubt these things. And so, though S. Paul never tries to explain it, still he is never tired of enlarging upon it. *He knew it*. He had tried it, and found it true. And therefore he is never tired of describing to you how you may know if you are being led by the Spirit. It is not by one or two marks only you may know it. If you are led by the Spirit, it tells upon your whole character. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, "gentleness," these things he keeps telling you

over and over again are the fruits of the Spirit. These are the fruits in our own characters which we are to expect the Holy Spirit will produce. These are the marks by which we may know that the Holy Spirit is preparing us to obtain the benefits Christ died to win for us, the happiness which is in store for us. You know there is scarcely an Epistle of S. Paul's which does not dwell on these things again and again. From all which you will see that God intends that we should be (as you may say) made over again by the Holy Ghost in this life, so that when we come to be transplanted into the next world, there may be no tempers left in us contrary to the will of God, and which Christ would disapprove. Thus you learn that the Holy Spirit came into the world to finish the work of our Salvation which Christ commenced. On the Cross Christ finished the work of our redemption. He finished our atonement. In our hearts the Holy Ghost carries on the work of our renewal. 'He completes our sanctification. The two together make up the completed work of man's redemption. Christ won Heaven for us. The Holy Ghost fits us to enter Heaven. This is why in the Creeds we say "I believe in the Holy Ghost,"

just as solemnly as we say "I believe in Jesus Christ." "To believe in" is to "put my whole trust in." And so we put our trust in God the Holy Ghost to prepare us for Heaven just as we put our trust in Jesus Christ to save us from Hell. Our Lord finished the work of our redemption long ago, long before we were born. God the Holy Spirit works in us now, all our lives long, and will continue to strive with us as long as we live. And when we say that we believe in God the Holy Ghost, we are professing our faith that He is really God ; that He hears our prayers ; that He answers our prayers ; that the more we pray to Him the more He will strive with us, the more He will work in us, subduing for us those evil tempers which would keep us out of Heaven, and producing in us those holy dispositions without which we could not be happy in Heaven.

My Brethren, think for one moment what an infinite comfort there is in this great fact which I have been speaking of, this great fact that God the Holy Ghost is with us, has come to us as on the first Whitsunday. Ever since that first Whitsunday has the Holy Ghost been abiding in the hearts of all the faithful to make them fit to

take their place with Christ in glory. He is with you, He is in you. So that when any one comes and asks me how he is to be sure he can ever have that holiness without which no man can enter that Heaven which Christ has purchased for him, I reply—"You believe in "the Holy Ghost, do you not?" If you do, that is the same thing as saying you believe that God Himself will work out your renewal and your spiritual transformation as surely as Christ worked out your atonement. God can do everything. You know that you could not subdue your evil dispositions, much less acquire holy dispositions in their place, any more than you could have worked out your own atonement. But God can enable you both to overcome your bad desires and to acquire Holy tempers in their room. God can do everything, so it is our own fault if we do not grow better, when God is Himself with us already to make us better. One thing only I suppose God Himself cannot do, and that is to make us holy against our will. For holiness itself means this—it means that we only wish and will the same things that God wills. Holy tempers, holy desires, holy affections, all these can only mean this—that our will

is set on being and doing just what Christ Himself would will if He were in our place. Therefore it is absurd of us to talk of God making us holy against our will. But if we honestly wish to have our will established in goodness, then God so strengthens our weak wishes, and so works in our feeble characters that He makes us really and thoroughly to be what we so feebly wish to be. He converts our weak wishes into stable and steadfast resolutions, and thus as time goes on He changes our characters into all that Christ desires to see in those whom He died to save.

And so our salvation is worked out. God and our own souls working together, for however little we can do, that little must be done. Prayer and watchfulness on our side. Constant prayer. Unceasing watchfulness. Prayer to the Father, to the Son, and *not least* to the Holy Ghost for His ceaseless help. And then, when God sees that we do *really*, however feebly, hunger and thirst after holiness, then His word goes forth, "Blessed are ye, for ye shall be filled," and the Holy Spirit does fill us with all joy and hope in believing, and leads us on towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.



Such is the great lesson of Whitsunday. And this is why every year as it goes round we keep the Feast of the Holy Ghost as well as that of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. Men, even fairly good Christian men, seem to me to trust far too much to themselves for their growth in grace and holiness and fitness for God's holy Heaven. They seem to forget that, being what we are, so prone to evil, so slow to good, it wants no less than a miracle for any one of us to be made ever so little like Christ our Pattern, that as it is only God's power that can work this miracle, so we have God's power by which to work it, and lastly, that if we neglect this grace of God, we are neglecting the only power which can ever make us "meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light." It is not in our power to amend a single sin, any more than it is in our power to atone for it. And all the believing that Christ has atoned for our sins will not mend one evil temper, unless we call upon God the Holy Ghost to complete the work of our salvation by producing in us that

Holiness,  
Without which  
No man shall see the Lord.

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Therefore do we sing each Whitsuntide—

Holy Ghost ! Come down upon Thy children,  
Give us grace and make us thine ;  
Thy tender fires within us kindle,  
Blessed Spirit ! Dove Divine.

For all within us good and holy  
Is from Thee, Thy precious gift ;  
In all our joys, in all our sorrows,  
Wistful hearts to Thee we lift.

Holy Ghost ! Come down upon Thy children,  
Give us grace, and make us Thine ;  
Thy tender fires within us kindle,  
Blessed Spirit ! Dove Divine !

AMEN.

## SERMON XVI.

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### *THE HARVEST.*

(FOR HARVESTIDE.)

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JEREMIAH VIII. 20.

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended.”

THESE words were first spoken of the ruined hopes and blighted fortunes of God's people, Israel. Truly for that perverse and sinful generation the summer was ended. Once His people had enjoyed the glorious summer of God's favour, and had basked in the sunshine of His love; He had led them like a flock, He had given them one good land, He had promised them a better. He had guided them through the wilderness by a cloudy pillar, and all the night through with a light of fire; they had even eaten angel's food, for He gave them meat enough: and yet for all this they rebelled, and were not obedient unto His word. Now, in the days of Jeremiah, the cup of their sorrow was full mixed; God

delivered them into the adversary's hand, and caused those round about them to lead them away captive. They were fast bound in misery and iron, and as they sat by the waters of Babylon they wept when they remembered Sion. When they remembered! Ah! well might they weep, since :—

“ It is truth the poet sings,  
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow,  
Is remembering happier things.”

Israel thought of the pleasant land which they had despised, of the cedars of Lebanon, and the hills which stand round about Jerusalem, and now, in the black winter of their discontent, they mourned “the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

Once more, brethren, God has turned over a leaf in the Book of Nature, and found a text for us. God has given us, as it were, two revelations, one written in the Bible, the other written in the rivers and the sea, the clouds and the lightning, in the song of birds, and the beauty of flowers. It is not only in Church and in pulpits that sermons are preached. Every tangled forest, every crashing earthquake, and raging tempest,

every smiling corn-field, and laden orchard, is a preacher by which God sends forth His voice, and that a mighty voice.

“ Your voiceless lips, O flowers, are living preachers,  
Each cup a pulpit, and each leaf a book,  
Supplying to my fancy numerous teachers  
From loneliest nook.

“ Were I, O God, in Churchless lands remaining,  
Far from all voice of teachers and divines,  
My soul would find in flowers of Thy ordaining  
Priests, Sermons, Shrines.”

Just now all nature is saying to us, “the summer is ended.” The plashing rain preaches from that text, the fierce winds proclaim it, the lightning writes it in fiery letters on the sky. The dying leaves lie like monuments bearing the epitaph, “the summer is ended.” And now that “the harvest is past, and the summer ended,” and the fruit gathered, will you not think a little of yourselves, about the time that is past, about the harvest for which God looks, about the future of your souls ?

There are various classes among us to which the text applies. “The summer is ended.” This is true of the old and feeble. It was summer-

time with them once ; how strong they were ! No foot was lighter in the dance, no voice was clearer in the song ! They tell us brave stories of their youth, and they repeat them very often, for their memory is failing. The arm of the old soldier or sailor, which struck so bravely for king and country in the old war-time, needs the help of a stick now. The eyes which flashed so brightly from pulpit or platform cannot read the largest print now. The voice which kept the opera entranced is shrill as a little child's now. The winter of age has sprinkled snow on the hair, and sent a chill frost into the bones, and frozen the current of the blood. For the old the summer is ended. But though the summer be ended for the body and the mind, though it be winter with the limbs, and the eyes, and the ears, and the brain, it need not be winter for the soul.

For those, too, who have endured severe affliction the summer is ended. It is false and useless to say that we must not be sorry sometimes. We must not be sorry as those without hope, we must not despair, nor rail against God, nor neglect the work which He has given us to do ; although our eyes be blinded with tears, we

must pray for resignation, but we may be sorry. There are some among us who must carry a life-long sorrow in their breast. For those whose house is left unto them desolate, whose fireside shall never more be bright with happy faces, or merry with the music of children's voices, and who know that on earth they shall see their dear ones no more, except in memory, when,

“ Ere the evening lamps are lighted,  
And like phantoms grim and tall,  
Shadows from the fitful fire-light  
Dance upon the parlour wall ;  
When the forms of the departed  
Enter at the open door,  
The beloved, the true-hearted,  
Come to visit us once more ;”—

for such as these “the summer is ended.” And for those who have lost their worldly property, whose savings have been swallowed up in bankruptcy when they are too old and infirm to retrieve their fortunes ; for those families left destitute by the death of the bread-winner, and reduced from ease and comfort to poverty and dependence, for such as these also “the summer “is ended.”

But every one of these unnumbered cases is

but the type and parable of the deepest meaning of all. There are those who pass through life and neglect the opportunities of grace which lead to salvation, and for them at last a time shall come when it shall indeed be said with awful meaning, "the summer is ended." The wise man tells us that "there is a time to get and "a time to lose." You know that this is true of worldly matters. You know that if you had not invested your money at a certain time you would not have realised a fortune, and you know too, that if you had bought that other property when it was offered, you would have been ruined. It is thus with the things of daily life, it is thus with the things of life eternal. There is a time to get a chance of repentance and amendment, a time to escape from the clutches of some bad habit or besetting sin ; a time to get, and a time to lose. It is written in the Scriptures, "Behold, I set before you an open door ;" and again it is written, "the door was shut." There is a time when for all the door of opportunity stands open, and there is a time when it is fast closed. Oh ! You men of business, you busy workers, so occupied in the world's workshop, so thoughtful about making money, so



much in earnest about this life, when will you set your spiritual house in order? When will you be in earnest about your salvation, and the things which concern your peace? Shall not the gathered harvest remind you of God's goodness to you and to all men, and warn you that the Lord of the harvest is looking for fruit from you, the fruit of a holy life and the flowers of purity and meekness? Does not the end of another summer teach you that another season of opportunity is gone for ever, and that you are one year nearer the Great Harvest? You who live in the summer-time of pleasure, sitting down to eat and rising up to play, flitting through life as a summer butterfly flits from flower to flower, will you not be serious when you remember that "the summer is ended," and that your gay, useless life must likewise end one day? And you who are living in the summer dream of careless indifference, who say, "To-morrow shall be as to-day," how long will you sleep before the awakening comes? Think of the death-bed of the worldling, of the indifferent, of the careless. When "the reaper whose name is death comes with his sickle keen," when your place on earth shall know you no more, and when all the

panorama of your past lives shall be opened before you, and the long procession of neglected opportunities shall pass before your eyes, then, if you ask for yet another chance, the answer will come, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; the summer is ended." It is related that a certain Eastern slave was once bidden by his master to go and sow barley in a certain field. The slave sowed oats instead, and when his master reproached him, he answered that he had sown oats in the hope that barley might spring from them. The master reproved the servant for his folly, but the man answered, "You yourself are ever sowing the seeds of evil in the field of the world, and yet expect to reap in the Resurrection Day the fruits of virtue."

You have doubtless heard of the great painter, who, when asked by a brother artist why he produced so few pictures, answered, "You paint for time; I paint for Eternity." My brethren, we must sow for Eternity, if we expect to reap the harvest of Eternal joy. For those of you who are doing this, striving after holiness, and letting your light shine before men, it is always summer—summer here, more perfect summer hereafter. True, sorrows will come upon you

but you shall have summer in your heart. You shall live here in the summer garden of God's Church, where Jesus the Heavenly Gardener cares for you among the green pastures of quiet contentment, and the still waters of deep and unchanging faith. The flowers of joy and peace and hope shall spring around your path, and when you go hence it shall be to the better summer of God's presence, where

“No cloud nor passing vapour  
Dims the brightness of the air ;  
Endless noon-day, glorious noon-day  
From the Sun of Suns is there ;  
There no night brings rest from labour,  
For unknown are toil and care.”

SERMON XVII.

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*HARVEST HOME.*

(FOR HARVEST THANKSGIVING.)

*By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.*

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Jeremiah v. 24.

“He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the Harvest.”

THERE is a time for all things ; a time to work, and a time to rest ; a time to pray, and a time to give thanks ; a time for sorrow, and a time for joy ;—but there is one thing for us to do at all times, and which should be going on along with all else that we either do or think of, and that is to remember God.

A good man never forgets God. And yet, though it is the very essence of Christianity always to remember God, still, even about this a good man will ask,—*When* is God *best* pleased for us to remember Him?—And the answer is, God is best pleased to find us remembering Him in our times of rejoicing.

So Harvest Home is the time of all others when we ought to think of God. For all men are concerned in the joy of Harvest Home. It touches all alike, from the richest to the poorest, whether the dwellers in towns or the labourers in our fields. It is God's great annual gift of sustenance to the race of man : and therefore there is, perhaps, only one other day in all the year when we ought to think of God still more, and that is Christmas Day, when Christ came, Who is the Bread of Life ; unless, indeed, we are to speak of Easter, when He came back from the grave, even as the corn springs up again after the seed has lain its appointed time in the ground.

And *what* ought we to think about most at Harvest Home? We have said that different thoughts belong to different times. *What* ought we to be thinking of *most* when we remember God the Giver amid the joy of harvest?

I answer that there are several thoughts we ought to dwell upon : and there is,

I. First : The Constancy of God's Gifts. God's gifts are never failing. Harvest *never* ceases. Man's ways of providing are doubtful, uncertain, and precarious. God's providing is sure. Har-

vest is the one thing which never fails you. There may be good and bad crops in harvests, some being better and some worse than others ; but the worst harvest that you ever knew *was* a harvest still. It was a very different thing from no harvest at all. See how different it is with man's providing. Look at trade, or manufactures, or investments. Can you rely on them? All things of man's devising are like man himself, they are changeful, they are uncertain, they fail, ay, and what is worst of all, for those who depend upon them, they often fail *utterly*. A change of fashion will be the ruin of thousands who depend on a certain manufacture. A political quarrel among people thousands of miles away will deprive millions of the means of subsistence. The carelessness or dishonesty of a merchant or a banker here at home will bring poverty and destitution upon hundreds of families on the other side of the globe, who never heard his name. But—harvest *never* ceases. What was God's promise? "While the earth remaineth, seed "time and harvest shall not fail." And it has been true. Even at the worst of times it has been true. "He reserveth unto us the appointed "weeks of the harvest."

So at Harvest Home God wishes you to think of the *sureness* of His Word. And then,

II. Secondly : The next thought is, how entirely the Harvest is God's gift, not Man's making. You know how people talk of a man's making a profit, or making an income, or making a fortune. Well, even these phrases are open to the objection of seeming to forget "Who gave thee the power to get wealth." But even though we may use these phrases without thought, still no truth-speaking man ever extended them to the harvest. No thoughtful man ever speaks of "*making the harvest.*" No. You sow your seed, and you reap your harvest ; but God *makes it for you.* If any of us has ever spoken of making his harvest, I hope he will learn this Harvest Home to speak more like a Christian for the future. You *reap* your harvest, but God has made it for you, or there would be none to reap.

And thus it has always seemed to me that there is something more shocking about an ungodly farmer than almost any other sort of man ; except it be the seaman. They both of them depend so entirely upon God. There is an old French proverb, a very old one, which says—" If

“a man needs learn to pray let him go to sea.” And we might say—“If a man would learn how “entirely his gains are the gift of God, let him “turn farmer.” Your harvest comes so entirely from God. You drain and dress your land ; you plough and sow your seed, and—what then? Oh! you have to wait and see what God will send. It is all over, as far as you can do, when you have put your seed into the ground. It is all waiting after that ; while God gives you the wet and the dry, each in its turn, and the wind and the showers, and the sun ; and too much or too little of either, or any one of them out of its place, would spoil your harvest, and you could do nothing to help it. But God is as good as His word. Harvest does *not* cease. And now,

III. Thirdly : Think what harvest *teaches*. I said to you just now, that God made the harvest, not you. And therefore I say, *thirdly*, that Harvest Home is the time to think of God’s power and God’s goodness.

You put a little seed into the ground, sowing it thinly, the thinner the better. *Where* do you put it? You put it into God’s earth, for the earth is the Lord’s. Into God’s earth you put it. You do not keep it in your barn. Little good



would it do you if you kept it to yourself. But you trust it to God. And God takes it. The seed rots and dies, as our bodies do when they die. The seed rots and dies, as it seems. It is gone altogether away from you. If you go and dig it up again it would be of no good to you. No, not even of the little good it would have been before you sowed it. So you leave it in God's earth. And God keeps it there week after week, but not for ever. For when the appointed weeks of harvest come, He gives it back again to you. And when He gives it back again, it is *no more a seed* but a *harvest*? Talk of miracles! Why, I say here is a miracle God is working before your eyes every year as it goes round; a perpetual miracle; one which God has promised never to omit. The times may be bad, or the seasons may be discouraging, but after all His word standeth sure. "He reserveth unto us the "appointed weeks of the harvest."

Thus God is showing his power, and goodness in every harvest field, and we should think of Him gratefully and solemnly at every Harvest Home. Gratefully and solemnly, I say, for a Harvest Thanksgiving should be a very solemn and a very real thing, and its effect should *not*

go off when to-morrow morning comes.

What do you go to Church on Sundays for? Is it not to tune your souls for the week's work and labour, so that when the Monday morning comes your first waking thought may be, "I will go forth in the name of the Lord God," and your morning prayers may be a real dressing of your souls to do God's will in the day you are beginning?

Just so after this day's Harvest thanksgiving, we should have tuned our souls for the next year's round; we should go forth in a thankful spirit; and every day as we say our "Grace" at our daily meals, we should say it the better and more earnestly for the recollection of this our *great annual Grace*—the "Grace after Harvest." For this is the great year's saying of "Grace" for God's gracious provision for our bodily needs. The Harvest Thanksgiving is the saying of "Grace" for the whole year. God has been showing His Power and His Goodness in the Harvest He has given us, and we are turning our mind and hearts towards Him, solemnly and gratefully. And now,

IV. Fourthly and lastly :—There are yet one or two more Harvest Thoughts, partly about God,

and partly about ourselves, which I must not leave out.

All this world is God's making ; everything we see in it is from God's hand, and is so made as to remind us of the God Who made it, and of some Truth He would have us remember. This is the one great lesson we learn from the Parables of our Lord. There are very few Parables in the Old Testament, but as soon as God Himself (who made the world) came into the world, then He was continually showing us how all the things which He had made were *so* made as to be full of teaching about Divine things. Why you know our Lord could hardly see a sower sowing seed, He could hardly see a fisherman at His nets, or a flower lifting its head towards the sun, but He must draw some *teaching* out of it. And by all this He was teaching us that the world we live in is not a dumb thing which has no meaning for our minds. The Christian reads God's messages in the fields, since those Parables about the lilies and the corn. It is our Lord Who turned every harvest field into a Sermon, when He said "The Harvest is the end of the World, "and the Reapers are the Angels." So our last thought to-day about the Harvest Home shall

be God's heavenly Harvest Home when *we* are to be the Harvest, and our souls to be gathered (please God) in the Garner of Christ. Here is the description of it, "I looked, and behold a  
"white cloud, and upon the cloud sat One like  
"the Son of Man, having on his Head a golden  
"Crown, and in his Hand a sharp sickle. And  
"another angel came out of the Temple, crying  
"with a loud voice, saying, Thrust in thy sickle,  
"for the time is come to reap, for the Harvest of  
"the earth is ripe."

Therefore our last Harvest thought to-day shall be—"The Old World's Harvest Home."

What is God's Harvest? What is the fine corn He will lay up in His garner. It is the souls of the righteous who have kept their vocation: the souls of those who have borne the storms of this world, its winds, its frosts; who have been watered also by the dews of His heavenly grace, and who thus, after much tribulation, are received safe—safe at last—within the heavenly garner, never more to fear, or feel the blasts of earthly trial or earthly persecution. And thus, what harvest says to us is,

Have pleasant thoughts of Death.

Since Christ came, Death is no longer Death.

It is a mistake to call it so. It is the ingathering of one more shock of corn against the final harvest.

Oh! Brethren, Harvest has many voices for the Christian soul; but I know not whether this may not be the one which touches us most nearly. You walk through the Harvest field of Autumn, rich in all its golden glory, and a man's heart bounds with a thrill of joy as he beholds the glad sight of the year's harvest waiting to crown the labours and the waiting of the year. Yes. But remember how differently the same field showed under the cutting sleet of February, or the remorseless blasts of March. We are apt to forget the difference. Yet it is in that very difference that half the harvest lessons lie. Stop, therefore, and think about it for a moment. Suppose for one instant that a being from another planet were to walk across our fields when the tender blade is only shooting, and when it is but quivering and struggling, a little weakly thing, against every wind that blows. What would he say? Would he not say—here is an unequal battle. Here are wind and sky and biting cold, all leagued and banded together to destroy a tender little green thing which has

been so foolish as to brave their powers. Would he not laugh to scorn the notion that the little tiny plant would come off successful? And yet it *does*.

The giant frost which can split the rocks, and bring down the cliffs; the mighty wind which can rend your sails, and wreck your ships, and shake your towers;—these dash themselves in vain upon the lowly weakness of one tender growing blade; nay, rather God has so ordained it that they are converted into helps and ministries by which the future harvest is prepared.

The path of saints is such. And such, too, is the path by which the Church of God is ripened for her perfection and for her triumph in the world to come. The day of trouble is the day of promise, and let our discouragements be what they may, or let the enemies of God's Church seem as strong as they may, let it be ours to remember that Godliness is stronger than all; that if we are but faithful to our Lord, then the very trials which threaten to overwhelm us shall but minister to the fulness of the harvest which shall be ripened in the end. Faithful is He that hath promised; and it would be strange indeed if He who for ages and generations hath kept His

word of promise, so that harvest has never failed, should not also keep His promise to His own children, and reserve also for them and for their spiritual hopes "the appointed weeks of Harvest" in the joy of heaven.

## SERMON XVIII.

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### *THE LORD HATH NEED OF THEM.*

(THE DAY OF MISSIONARY INTERCESSION.)

By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., *Canon of Chichester.*

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S. MATTHEW XXI. 3.

“If any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them; and straightway he shall send them.”

OF all the Gospel scenes, of all the transactions of the first Advent, that which our text introduces is one of the most striking. I do not merely mean that it is one of the most picturesque, though, with the single exception of the Crucifixion, there is scarcely a subject in the Life of Christ which painters are so fond of painting as this triumphal procession into Jerusalem. I mean much more than this. It is a history full of meaning, and it is its meaning that I am thinking of.

For, to begin with, you may call it the very climax of the First Advent. It is, as you may say, the First Advent summed up into one act.



For three long, active, wonder-working years Christ had been showing Himself, proclaiming Himself, offering Himself to His people, but yet, if one may so speak, just stopping short of a full proclamation of what He was, leaving something for them to infer—so that some people even complained, “How long dost Thou make us to doubt? “If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” Now, at last, He sums up all that has gone before, and, in one most striking action which no one could mistake, He shows Himself to His people for what He really was.

It is Passover-time, and Jerusalem is full: full of people who had seen and known Him in the country; full of people who had heard of Him abroad, and were curious to see Him. Everybody was expecting Him, and the Lord did not disappoint their expectations. For once, and for the only time we know of in His history, He allows some gleam of His royal brightness to shine upon His earthly path. As He was in truth the King of Israel, so at last He appears as such, and claims the allegiance of His people in a way that no one could mistake.

There was an ancient prophecy, a Prophecy of the Days of Messiah, which all men knew, a

prophecy which described the manner of Messiah's Royal Entry into Zion and Jerusalem; and this prophecy it was the Lord's will to fulfil to the very letter. "Behold thy king cometh, just, and "having salvation," yet "lowly and riding upon "an ass." When you remember how carefully the Jews of that day studied the prophecies of their Messiah, you see that when Christ chose to fulfil this prophecy to the very letter in this public manner, He intended to be understood as making the strongest possible proclamation of Himself as Messiah and as King. The people understood it so; you see it by the way they welcomed Him. The Priests understood it so; you see it by the way they accused Him. "He *is making* "Himself a King," they said to Pilate five days after. They did not say "Other people are "making Him a King," but "He *is making* "Himself a King,"—a statement which could not be applied to any other action in our Lord's whole life but this. And so now, in the evening-tide of the Lord's earthly career, after the years of his preaching and teaching, after the years of His healing the sick and casting out Devils, and doing all the works that it was predicted that Messiah the King should do, *after* all this had

been done, now in one act He sums up all. It is the King coming to claim His own. After this no one could halt between two opinions any longer. He must be rejected fully, or accepted fully. Such, in some measure, is the meaning of the narrative. It was the climax of the first Advent, a great, striking, solemn transaction, and one which all men understood to be such.

Now turn to the Preparation. Our text describes the preparation for this great procession, and you say at once, what a contrast! The Lord sends two of His disciples to a village where they will find an Ass tied and a Colt with her. "Loose them," He says, "and bring them." This is all the preparation He wants for His Royal Progress. But will the owners let his disciples have them! Yes, they will. If any man say ought unto you say—"The Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them." "Will send them."—observe, it is not merely he *will let them go*; not merely will *let* you have them, but will *send* them as an action on the owner's own part. The disciples must have felt some little surprise at the order to unloose and fetch away a beast of burden. Hence the Lord answers whatever scruple may have been in their thoughts,

and tells them that one word will be enough, that they have only to say "the Lord hath need of them," and then straightway, on the instant, the owners will send them. And so they found it, and a man who would have struck hard blows for his property, if the disciples had seized it for themselves, yields it at a word when it is said the Lord hath need of it.

It is now Advent Time again with us, and we are looking forward to, and the Church of Christ is preparing for, the Second Advent. In all points we are taught to believe that the First Advent is to be a type and symbol of the Second. As the Lord had for three long years been showing forth His powers, teaching and preaching, casting out devils and raising the dead, and then comes up to Jerusalem to claim His people's allegiance *after* He has shown His power, so shall it be at the end of this Dispensation. For all the long centuries since Christ set His Church in the world, she, the Church, has been going up and down the world preaching and teaching Him in the world, just as He did in Judæa and Galilee; she has been healing sick souls, casting out the Devils of evil passions in men's hearts, raising those who were dead in

trespasses and sins. And so towards the coming on of the Second Advent shall there be a corresponding *climax* in the Church's Ministry; a proclaiming of Christ and of the Church to the peoples of the whole world—more plain, more open, more universal, than ever before.

The Church shall rise up in her greatness to deliver her message to all men, just as Christ went up to Jerusalem, when Jews of all nations were gathered there. The Church shall deliver her message so clearly, so plainly, that the world must either take it or reject it, one or the other, and that utterly, just as after Christ's royal entry there could be no more halting between two opinions about Him. The time will come when men will no more be able to say that Christianity *may* be all right, that at any rate it is very useful in our social condition, that it conduces to philanthropy and order in the State, just as Christ was appreciated *to a certain extent* on the part of those who profited by His miracles, but who would never *obey* Him as God, but who, in fact, cried out crucify Him *as soon as it came to that*. So are we taught to expect it shall be again towards the end. Christ's Church shall deliver her message thoroughly and faithfully to

all nations for a *witness* ; gloriously, even as Christ's last entry into Jerusalem was glorious ; but she shall be rejected, just as Christ was, for He Himself says—"When the Son of Man cometh " shall He find the Faith upon the earth?"

Ah, yes, believe me the grand picture of the Lord's triumphal procession into Jerusalem, that climax, that summing up the whole meaning of His first Advent, shall have its answering parallel when the next Advent draws on. As that was the brightest scene of His Ministry and the most outspoken assertion of His claims and Nature, so shall the last hours of the Church Militant contain the most outspoken assertions of His Truth and the most uncompromising claim to mankind's obedience to His Laws ; and as Jews from all nations were there to hear Him and see it, so shall all nations have the offer made them of the Message of the Church which is the body Mystical of the Lord.

What are the signs of the end ?

Among others surely we must count the rising energies of the Church in Missionary Work, along with her more outspoken maintenance of Truths most unpalatable to the World. When I read the history of our text, and see the

preparation which the Lord made for His last entry into Jerusalem, I think I read words which describe our case now. What was that preparation? It did not look so grand; yet it had a meaning. If the Lord was to ride as King Messiah into the crowded City, there must be wherewithal to ride on; it is written "behold thy King cometh sitting on an ass, and the colt the foal of an ass." So if the Church is to proclaim her message to all nations, there must be the *means* of doing it, there must be the messengers—those who shall bear the precious burden of the Lord's Truth in long procession through the World, even as the ass bore the royal burden of Him who is the Truth all down that long procession through Jews of every nation under Heaven. There must be, then, a large outburst of missionary zeal—an outburst—a supply of missionaries—great—unlooked for—something which will take men by surprise—an accession to the ranks of the clergy alike for home and missionary work—and when I say this I feel the bearing of our text upon the repetition of the Church's Day of Intercession in the Advent Season. Those humble beasts of burden were necessary to Christ's manifestation as the King

foretold by Zechariah. Outwardly they did not seem to belong to him. Doubtless His Disciples were surprised at being told to fetch them. They expected a refusal. But the royal entry could not be made—according to the prediction of Zechariah—without a supply of such means. So it was true. “The Lord *had* need of them,” and they—the disciples—were to go and fetch them. And as soon as they said the words, “the Lord *hath* need of them,” the owners let them go, and—the thing was done. Ah! how many there are who say to us now-a-days when we seek recruits for the ranks of the Ministry, whether for home or missionary work, what do ye loosing this man or that, tied and bound as young men are by so many ties to this world’s interests and occupations, how people make objections, and yet “the Lord hath need of them,” and they are loosed, not by our word, but by the will and power of God; just as it was not the disciples’ word, but the power of Christ, acting with their word, which caused the owners to change their mind and recall their objection.

So it has been largely with our Days of Intercession during these recent years. These Days of Missionary Intercession are our way of doing



what those disciples did. Christ said to His Disciples, loose them and bring them unto me: I need them for My Work. Christ says to us loose many men from the worldly occupations to which they are tied, and bring them unto Me. I need them for My Manifestation. How are we to loose men? These days of Intercession are what *does* loose them. God holds the hearts and wills of men; and Prayer is a power with God; and every faithful prayer that God will loose men, that God will overcome the objections of friends and families, and cause men to be set free to bear the burden of His Truth throughout the World, every such Prayer does get answered. And, I verily believe, that these Voices coming to us from the Heads of the Church bidding us keep these Days of Intercession are the voice of Christ, saying, "Loose them and bring them unto me—  
"for I, the Lord, have need of them."

Could not God loose them if it were His Will without our prayers? How can I tell? I only know that Christ did not do so Himself in the History in our Text. He sent His Disciples to do it, just as once before He said Pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send forth Labourers into His Harvest. Why should Christ have bidden

His Disciples pray, if their praying was to do no good? Christ wished for labourers. Therefore He told His Disciples to pray for a supply of labourers. Clearly Christ regarded His Disciples' prayers as a way of getting what He Himself desired. Prayer is a power then. Prayer does actually do something. When God wants a thing done He sets His Church praying for it. We cannot see into the other world, and therefore we cannot see what spiritual machinery our praying sets in motion; but no doubt it is the fact. You and I cannot by our own bodily actions or words among ourselves cause men to volunteer for God's service—but when the whole Church joins in one act of prayer to God—she is uttering that word of Power which Christ made His disciples utter—"the Lord hath need of them," she is doing what those Disciples did, and the loosing follows. It has been so with our Days of Intercession in past years. In saying this, I am only saying what everybody knows who cares to know anything about it. The Prayers were offered. The answer came. Men of every sort have offered themselves; men, many of them, who had much to bind them to the world and to an easy life at home; *tied*, by education, fortune, talent; now

loosed and brought into the work for which Christ bade us say, "The Lord hath need of "them." So shall it be again; if this, our Day of Intercession, be a reality and not a form; if our prayers be the prayers of genuine Faith. I have heard it asked whether it is wise to repeat these Days of Intercession for this object? The answer is "Yes"—if you really want it, and really mean to pray. "No"—if you don't want it, and don't intend to pray. But sure I am that from thousands and tens of thousands of faithful men in this Church of England genuine prayers will have gone up again to God this day that those of whom Christ has need may be loosed from worldly ties and secular occupations. Sure I am that there is many a man in this England of ours whom Christ has set His eyes on and desires for His Service, and whom Christ means us to loose by the prayers we are bidden to offer in this day's Intercession. We know not where these are, or who they are, or what their friends are, or how they are at present tied, but of this we may be sure that Christ knows all, and that He has certain definite men in His eyes, and is saying to us, loose those men and bring them to me, for the Lord has need of them.—Amen.

SERMON XIX.

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*WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST ?*

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(GENERAL, AND SUITABLE FOR THE DAY OF  
MISSIONARY INTERCESSION.)

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S. MATTHEW XXII. 42.

“What think ye of Christ?”

IF we searched the whole world we could find no question more important than this. Yet it is a question which is seldom asked, and is carefully excluded from general conversation, as though we were ashamed of our religion, and considered our salvation a matter of secondary importance. Other questions are asked with the keenest interest : What think you of the chances of war, of the policy of the State, of the depression of trade? Will the outbreak of war affect my investments, will my business suffer from the present crisis? How eagerly are these questions asked! Yet if it be asked “What think ye of Christ?” the interest grows languid in a

moment. And yet on the right answer to this question depends *everything* for us, our future happiness or misery, the salvation or the ruin of our souls. The day must come to the worldly man when the doctor will say, "you cannot live "many hours ;" when he will tell the pleasure-seeker that his constitution is worn out, that he must live more simply if he would prolong his life, and that he cannot live long anyway. The time must come when the careless woman of fashion, who lived only for amusement, for the flattery of the false and the admiration of the foolish, will be old, and wrinkled, and ugly. Then the question will not be one of making money, not of marrying and giving in marriage, not of salutations in the market place ; then the question will not be, " what think ye of to-morrow's bargain, or to-morrow's pleasure?" but " What think ye of Christ?" and then the question may be too late.

Oh ! let me ask you now, and get the right answer *now*, before age or infirmity cripples our limbs, or dulls our brain, or freezes our heart ; would that my poor tongue could sound loud "as a trumpet with a silver sound" as I ask you to-day, " What think ye of Christ?"

*What think ye of Christ as a Saviour?* You will answer me that you think of Christ as our Saviour, as the Saviour of the world. Yes, you think of Him as *our* Saviour, speaking generally, but do you think of Him, realise Him, as *your* Saviour individually? Do you feel that you are His, and He is yours, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh? Can you say at this moment with truth, "Jesu, my Lord, my God, my all, "I am Thine for ever; I love Thee better than home, or wife, or child, better than wealth and honour, better than ease and popularity, better than my own way, and there is nothing that I desire in comparison to Thee." Can you say this, dear brethren?

To think of Christ only as some one else's Saviour will not suffice. Again, do you realise from what Christ is a Saviour to those who will accept salvation? Surely we should not call Him by that name so languidly, so carelessly, if we thought of the tremendous doom of *eternal death* from which Christ redeemed us. Death is an awful thing under the most favourable circumstances: in a luxurious chamber, in a well-tended bed, with loving hands to minister, even then death is very terrible; far more terrible is it if

we look on the mangled victims of some railway accident, or hard-fought battle-field. But this death is, we know, only that of the body, and is nothing compared to the living death of a lost soul, of a soul that would give anything to die, a soul condemned to live for ever in a world of dead hopes, dead joys, lost chances, bitter memories, shut out from peace, shut out from pardon, shut out from God. We know how hard it is here to bear sorrow for a little while, even in the midst of friends, what must an eternity of sorrow be passed in the midst of enemies! We know how revolting are the words of the blasphemer and the impure, if we are thrown into their company for a brief space, what must an eternity be passed in such company! How sad it is to recall even now happier and better days, what must an eternity be spent perchance in sight of Heaven, and yet between it and us a great gulf fixed! From such a fate Christ is our Saviour; shall we rest day or night till we can each one say "from such a fate He is *my* Saviour?"

*Again, Christ is our Saviour from the power of sin.* Sin need not have dominion over us unless we desire it, we can be made clean if we wish to be clean. We need not be as weak as we

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often are if we use the strength offered us. We sin so often because we are not keeping close to Christ, we stumble so frequently because we are not walking in the Light of the World. We speak evil so constantly because we have not given Christ the key of our lips, because we have not realised that He is our Saviour from the power of sin. We know the strength of Satan, and are not ignorant of his devices, we even seem to fancy that it is natural for us to fall into his temptations, but we forget that if Satan is strong, Jesus Christ is stronger. The Devil has indeed power to strike some very hard blows, but Christ is our shield and buckler, our strong rock, and our castle, in whom we may trust. Ah! if we only *would* trust more to Him! This world is like a vast hospital full of wounded soldiers, wounded in the battle of life, because so many go through the world, where the arrows of Satan are ever flying, blind and naked, blinded by pride, and naked because they have not put on the whole armour of God. Will you not, then, accept Christ as your Saviour from the power of sin, will you not learn to feel that He is your defence on your right hand and on your left, so that you cannot greatly fall?



Again, do you realise how Christ became your Saviour? If a man does a noble and disinterested act the world rings with it. We love to speak of our conquerors, leaders, soldiers, philanthropists. Yet the names of conqueror, soldier, leader, philanthropist, are all included in that one name *Saviour*, which some of us utter so coldly. When you look at your peaceful homes, your easy bed, your softly-cradled child, do you never think of the homeless life of Jesus Christ, of God's Son, who cradled the new-made universe, Himself cradled in a manger, of Him who made swaddling bands for the sea, Himself wrapped in swaddling bands? Does your well-spread table recall no thought of His life of fasting and temptation, of want and hardship. Do the pains of your body, or the sorrows of your mind, never remind you of those dear wounded Hands, those mangled Feet, that thorn-crowned Head, that broken Heart? Have you ever thought when tempted to sin with your hands, for such sins as this of mine the Hands of Jesus quivered in agony? If your feet have been swift to execute evil, have you never thought for such sins as this of mine the Feet of Jesus Christ dropped blood? If your brain has suggested cruel thoughts and deeds,

have you never thought for such sins as this of mine the Brow of Jesus Christ was torn by thorns? If your heart has devised secret sin, have you never thought for such sins as this of mine God's Heart was broken? Oh! when you remember the cost of your salvation, What think ye of Christ as a Saviour?

*Again, what think ye of Christ as a Friend?*  
We know that we may have Him for a friend if we will. He says "I have called you *friends*," and we read that He was known as "the friend of publicans and sinners." The friend of Jesus! Ah! blessed name, a thousand times better than that of the friend of kings or princes. And it needs no influence, no rank, no wealth to gain His friendship, only the essential part of all true friendship—a *loving heart*.

Is Christ your friend? Do you take sweet counsel together, do you tell Him all your joys and sorrows, your cares and difficulties; do you go to Him for advice, do you make Him your travelling companion through the world? Or is Jesus only a mere acquaintance, one of whom you have heard, whom you have met sometimes, whom you think of as being far away, in the land which is very far off? Is He an unknown God

to you, a visionary Saviour, one who has gone away from the earth? Remember He will be your friend if you will let Him. He says "Behold "I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my "voice, and open the door, I will come into him." Remember, too, that if you have Jesus Christ for your friend you must give up certain other friends. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed; you cannot have the friendship of the vicious, the impure, the selfish, and the ungodly, and have Christ as your friend also; you must make your choice. Ask those who have made Christ their friend how sweet and precious His friendship is. Ask them of His gentleness in the time of trouble, of His sympathy in the time of sorrow. When bitter tears run down, what friend is there like Jesus to wipe them away; when money is lost, what friend is there like Jesus to tell us of treasure in Heaven; when death comes, who can bring us better tidings than those words of His, "I am the Resurrection and the life?" What think ye of Christ as a friend? Will He ever leave you or forsake you, as earthly friends do? No, He who cannot lie has said, "I will *never* "leave thee, nor forsake thee." Take Him by the hand now, say now on your knees, "Jesu, be

“my friend ; come near to me, lead me on my  
“way, enter into my troubles, never leave me, be  
“my friend !”

At this season our thoughts are specially turned to those who think not of Christ, because they have never known Him, to the thousands who live and die in God's beautiful world without any knowledge of a glorious resurrection and a life everlasting. We shall have learned the teaching of Christ very imperfectly if we think only of our own privileges, and forget those who are yet living in the thick darkness where the sun of righteousness has never shone. Just now a great wave of intercession is rising over our land on behalf of missions to the heathen ; let it be our endeavour to swell that flood of prayer to-day. There are those who depreciate the power of prayer, because they have never known what real prayer is. The grandest results of man's work are but as trifles compared with the results of *praying work*. The difficulties against which all the discoverers, and leaders, and conquerors in the world have contended, are as nothing compared with the difficulties against which the Church has fought, and she has triumphed thus far by the power of the Holy

Spirit given in answer to the prayers of the faithful. A clever man can do much by his cleverness, but he cannot lead an ungodly man to repent of his sins, and go humble to his Saviour. Yet prayer has done this thousands of times. As of old, so now, the prayer of faith will enable us to say with truth that we "have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." If men who live in the light of Christ's Gospel would subdue kingdoms to the King of Glory, work righteousness among those who know not the way of holiness, make those who are yet afar off partakers of God's promises, stop the mouths of the lions of ignorance and superstition, quench the fire of cruelty, blunt the edge of the murderous sword, make the weak strong in the true faith, wax valiant in the good fight, and put to flight the armies of heathenism, then we must pray, pray with heart and soul, pray without ceasing. Let us remember this solemn duty now, for I have yet to ask you, *What think ye of Christ as a Judge?* Now for

us is the day of mercy, of hope, of forgiveness, of salvation; that day will not last for ever. In place of the loving Saviour we shall see the just Judge, in place of the gentleness of the Lamb we shall witness the wrath of the Lamb. We have heard of Christ coming in humility, one day we shall hear of Him coming to judgment; then in place of the manger, and the workshop, and the Cross, there will be a great white throne. Instead of those loving words of invitation—"Come unto Me,"—those other words will be spoken, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." Pilate said, "What shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?" I ask you this question *now*. You must do one of two things, you must accept Him as your Saviour, or reject Him. Perhaps you will tell me that you have accepted Him. Are you sure? Being respectable, coming to church, professing religion, need not necessarily mean that you have chosen Jesus. Judas though he had accepted Christ, yet he sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. So men do now every day, because they want to have Jesus and their own way too; because they want to be Christians, yet love themselves better than their God; because they want to

belong to Christ in Church, and to the world when they are outside. Choose now, and choose for ever, and let your prayer be, "I come to Thee, sweet Saviour, just because I need Thee" so, take me, keep me, never leave me ; in life, "in death, Thine for ever."

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## SERMON XX.

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### *CHILDISH THINGS.*

(EDUCATION, OR FOR THE NATIONAL SOCIETY.)

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1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 11.

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child— I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

S. PAUL is speaking in his own person, but he is reminding the Corinthians of one of those common things which concern us all, and which we all must sometimes think of. Sometimes we may think of it in sadness, sometimes in hope, sometimes in indifference; but, think of it how we may, the fact remains that we cannot stand still; all that has life must grow; whether we change for better or for worse, we cannot continue the same.

NOTE.—This Sermon is suited for an occasion when the Offertory is devoted to Education, or to the National Society.



Change has begun, we have started on our road, when we begin to live. Who has not looked upon an infant in its mother's arms, and wondered at the mystery of life which was going on within? There may be thoughts there, but they are not the thoughts of this world. That mind may have interest of which we know nothing, but it takes no interest in the things which men call great. This world is strange to it, and it is strange to this world. There is no language which can pass from the one to the other and interpret between them. And yet that newly-born soul, that stranger from the world unseen, has a work to do here, a place to fill upon the earth. It must learn to know and understand the things of this visible world.

And by degrees the knowledge comes. By degrees the soul of the infant draws nearer to the world of men. Childish things come first. Thoughts, but the thoughts of a child. Speech, but the speech of a child. Not all at once does the unaccustomed spirit, fresh from behind the veil, make acquaintance with the ways of the earth and its language.

But the days, and the months, and the years pass by, and "childish things" are sufficient no

longer. The body has grown in strength and stature, and the mind has grown also in the wisdom of the world. The thoughts, the understanding, the language, are different now from what they were. The time of mere preparation is over now. The child has become a boy or girl, the boy or girl has become a man or woman, and the past is left behind for ever.

So it is, and so it must be. If we were placed in this world for any object or purpose at all, "childish things" must by degrees be put away that we may act the part of men. And yet, what can these words mean, which fell more than once with such solemn earnestness from the lips of the Lord, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?" And what means the testimony of our hearts, which bears witness within us that those words are true? For which of us does not feel that if indeed we have lost our childhood, then we have lost a treasure most precious, a treasure which would cheaply be purchased back again with all the wealth that the world can give?

Think of the brightness of that young life when the world was still strange to us and we

were strange to it ; when the soul was not yet burdened with the weight of earthly life, and everything had still "the glory and the freshness "of a dream ;" when the knowledge of good and evil had not yet come, and doubt and suspicion had not entered the heart ; when all our life was in the future, and the future was full of hope ; when there were no sad memories yet, no shame, and no remorse ! We felt ourselves free to will and to do, for we were not yet tied and bound with the chain of sinful habits, not yet weighed down with the burden of our own selves. God was there, though we knew it not. We had within us the spring of an immortal life. Surely there is something near to Heaven in that strange infant life, which cannot yet speak, or think, or understand the things of earth. "Heaven lay about "us in our infancy," but since we have learned so much of this world, heaven seems to be about us no longer. We are so weary with the heat and dust of earth that we have forgotten the glories of our Father's house.

But are those glories passed quite away from us ? Are they lost indeed, or only forgotten. We must ask to have them again. For unless

we are as little children we can never know the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And so it shall be. Here is the song of joy which rose from the lips of one who had become a little child again, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, "and all that is within me, bless His Holy "Name, who satisfieth thy mouth with good "things, so that thy youth is renewed like the "eagle's.

So then there are two lessons which we are to learn, two things which are never to be forgotten.

There are childish things which must be put away, if we are ever to do the work which God has given us to do upon the earth. And, there are childlike things which must abide for ever, and never pass away, or else we cannot be made meet for the inheritance of the saints of light. Let us lay these two lessons to heart for ourselves, and ponder them well. And when we have put away our childish things, let us ask God to give His grace that we may become more childlike every day, more full of the life which is strange to this world, but is "hid with Christ in "God," drinking more and more of the fresh river of life which is before the throne, walking every day more closely with Him, the dew of

whose birth is of the womb of the morning.

Let this be our fervent prayer for ourselves, this our daily effort ; but to-day we are called upon to think of others first. You know that I am here to-day to tell you how you can help those who cannot help themselves, those who have still to run their race, still to enter upon the journey of this earthly life. Who shall guide that young life that it may know how to refuse the evil and to choose the good? Who shall teach it how to use this world as not abusing it? To gain for itself that earthly wisdom and knowledge which may enable it to act its part here wisely and well, and at the same time to carry with it the light of heaven to mark out and cheer the path to the Eternal Home?

I have come to remind you of your duty to the helpless children of the poor in the large towns and the villages of England, the infants who are just starting upon the awful journey of life ; those too, who are yet unborn, but who, as years pass by, will have to battle with the world's temptations.

Think for one moment of the childhood untaught, uncared for, unloved. Think for one moment of those who put away childish things

by losing all that is worth living for. For there are such—there are hundreds, there are thousands, there are millions such. Sadly and soon the childish things are put away. Sadly and soon the ways of the world are learned, the worst ways of this present evil world ; and the child begins to be no more a child ; for all that is childlike is gone too, the freshness and the beauty, the truth and the innocence have passed away before they had time to be seen ; and the infant heart has narrowed till there is no place left for aught but selfishness and falsehood, filthiness, and sin. They speak not as children, they understand not as children, they think not as children ; for they have learned to speak lies, to think earthly things, to understand only to deceive—keen indeed, and subtil, “more subtil than the beasts of the field ;” but without a hope, without joy, without God.

Oh! is there any sight more sad in all the world of God, than the joyless, withered old age of early years—a child who is old before it is young, whose childhood has passed away and left not a trace nor a hope behind it!

We see such sights every day. We may heed them little, but if we think of them they make

the heart sick and the spirit faint. "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." If the sun has already gone down in the early morning, what shall light us through the day?

The work of the National Society lies chiefly in districts where nearly every child is in this dreary condition, left to the training of the world, the flesh, and the Devil; trained for no honest employment upon the earth, taught nothing of the bright hope of everlasting life; but it also gives its help to build schools throughout the country, wherever help is needed, and its own means allow. The building of schools is its first object. It has been at work for sixty-three years, and has given help to more than 14,000 schools. Another object equally important is the Training of Teachers, that the work done in the schools may be done well, and the teaching which is given may be substantial and sound. It has helped in the foundation of Training Colleges in various parts of the country, besides building and supporting three principal Colleges of its own, from which in the fifty years it has sent out 8,808 teachers. A third object at which it aims is to supply easily and cheaply good books, maps, and

all other things which are necessary to carry on a school effectively and well.

When I have said this, and only this, I have said enough to prove that the National Society is aiming to do a great and good work. It is trying to show the children of this country the manner in which "childish things" may best be put away.

But it does much more than this. It is a Society for promoting the education of the children of the poor in the principles of the "Established Church." What do these words mean? What is the message of the Church to children? Has she anything to say to them about those childlike things which are so precious?

Brethren, when a child is born into the world, while still the world is strange to it, and it is strange to the world, before the knowledge of good and evil has come, and the battle of life has not yet begun, the Church directs that the infant shall be brought into the presence of God. She pronounces that young life to be the Lord's. She speaks over the child the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. She calls it a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. She signs it with the



Cross of His redeeming Grace. She prays that "all carnal affections may die in it, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in it." She declares to you, fathers and mothers, that your child is not yours, but the child of God ; that it has a life which you could not give, which is far greater and more glorious than all that you could give. She warns you that your child must be taught, "so soon as it is able to learn," of that most Holy Name which has been named upon it ; that all childlike things must be cherished in its heart with reverence and holy awe. And when long years have passed, and "childish things" are nearly put away, she reaches out her hand again to "confirm" the blessing in the Father's Name. She prays that your child may be "strengthened with the Holy Ghost the Comforter," and "filled with the spirit of His Holy fear," and then she bids it draw near and eat of the bread and drink of the wine which He has mingled, "to its great and endless comfort." Spiritually to eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, so that it may partake of His abundant life."

Brethren, this is what we mean by an "education in the principles of the Church ;" to put away

childish things in the clear bright light of God. For these are the childish things which must never pass away. This is the draught of joy which sparkles the more brightly because it is so pure. This is the morning song which the child may sing throughout the world's sad day of strife. This is the living water which will "gently freshen all the way" through the wilderness of this world, that it may enter with joy as a little child into the everlasting rest.

This is the blessing which the National Society is claiming, and striving to secure, for the children of England.

This is the glorious work in which you are asked to-day to take your part.

## SERMON XXI.

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### THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

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GALATIANS VI. 14.

“The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

IN the pleasant Isle of Wight there is a tiny churchyard, bright with flowers, and overlooking “bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.” Among the well-cared-for graves is that of a good man, who did much in his lifetime to show forth the beauty of holiness. Over his simple tomb an iron cross is so fixed that its shadow is cast all along the grave. My brethren, our lives should be like that tomb, always under the *Shadow of the Cross*. Whatsoever our way of life may be, whether our lot be cast among those in kings’ houses, who wear soft raiment, or in the hard path of narrow means and weary toil ; whether we dwell in the good land of Prosperity, or in the wilderness of trouble, one thing must enter into our

life, and be "the be-all and the end-all" of our existence—the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is possible to have a form of religion without the Cross. Many there be who find it. Such people are ready to follow Jesus through flowery paths, and by pleasant places, to open their mouth wide that He may fill it; but when the path comes to Gethsemane and to Calvary, they turn back, and follow no more after Him. These men's religion is vain, whose God is their belly, whose end is destruction. Why are we signed with the Cross in the earliest rite of the Church in which we take part? As a sign that we must go forth bearing the Cross, as Christ's faithful soldiers and servants, until our life's end. The soldier may not march to battle without his arms and his uniform, neither may we go forth to the spiritual conflict without the Cross. That holy sign was written in water upon our brow; but it must be burnt into our heart by the fire of the Holy Spirit. We are sent into the world as into a school, where we may learn to choose the good and avoid the evil, and so be prepared for Heaven. That preparation consists in being made like unto Christ our great example, and as the Cross shadowed His whole earthly life, so it must be our

teacher. S. Thomas Aquinas once asked a great preacher of old time (S. Bonaventura) from what books he derived his sublime thoughts. He pointed to a crucifix, and answered, "There is the "Book I!" Believe me, the school of the Cross is the best school for Heaven and the Crown. We cannot become like Christ if we have our own way always, since "even Jesus Christ pleased not "Himself." We cannot become like Him if we seek only life's roses, since the thorns were His portion. We cannot become like Him if our mouth is always filled with laughter, since Jesus wept often; and, as an old preacher says aptly, "When on the Cross the Lord's side was pierced, "He who could not weep more with His eyes, "wept with His heart; then was the human race "oppressed with a greater flood than in the days "of Noah." We cannot become like Him if we live in an atmosphere of praise and flattery. All men will not praise us if we be followers of that which is good. It is written, "Woe unto you "when all men speak well of you." Be sure we are sacrificing principle to gain popularity. Jesus was despised and rejected, so shall His followers be by some men. We cannot become like Him if we live a life of pleasure and enjoyment always.

Jesus was at the gay marriage feast at Cana but for a little while ; the fasting, the secret prayer, the vinegar and gall entered most largely into his life.

When Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, only those who bore the sign of the Cross were saved. So, if we would be saved, we must, as S. Paul says, "bear about in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ." What did S. Paul mean by this? It was customary among the Romans to brand a slave on the arm, or some other part of his body, that men might know whose servant he was. S. Paul, as the servant of that God of whom he says "whose I am, and whom I serve," had marks by which he could be recognised. The stoning had left scars upon his flesh, the scourging had imprinted deep marks, the chains had left their traces upon his wrists and ankles ; people pointed to S. Paul as a criminal, but he answered, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ." We are not persecuted in the same way for Christ's sake in these days ; for us there are no scourges, no stones, no fetters, yet if we are Christ's, we must bear about His marks. Every affliction endured patiently, every besetting sin and fierce temptation conquered, is a

mark of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever a naturally selfish man learns to deny himself, and to think of others ; whenever a hot-tempered man controls himself ; whenever a covetous man learns to be liberal, he bears about the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time we do something unpleasant or irksome from a sense of *duty*, we become partakers of the Cross of Christ, and bear about the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, we all bear about the marks of our master in our every-day life, in our words and works and pleasures ; and these are either the marks of Jesus Christ, or of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Both the Good Master and the bad masters pay their wages—and the wages of sin is death. It is no easy task to bear our Cross, especially for those who trust in their own strength of will. The old legend of S. Christopher may teach us that lesson. It tells us that Christopher was a man of vast height and strength, who lived in the service of an Eastern king. One day the king, his master, was seen to tremble at the mention of the name of Satan, so Christopher determined to take service with one who was more powerful than his master. Christopher, therefore, sought for Satan; and

entered his service. As they journeyed they came to a wayside Cross, and Satan trembled before it. Christopher inquired the reason, and having heard of Jesus, determined to seek and to serve Him who was more powerful than Satan. A hermit to whom he applied sent Christopher to the banks of a swift river, and bid him help travellers across it. One stormy night a child came to the river, and asked Christopher to bear him over. The giant smiled at the easy task, but the child on his shoulder grew heavier every moment, and he was well-nigh drowned in the river. "Who art thou, O child?" asked Christopher, when they reached the shore. "Had I carried the world on my shoulders it could not have been heavier." "Thou hast carried Him who made the world and thee," was the answer. Then the strong man learned that he was accepted as a servant of Jesus, and received the name of Christopher, or the *Christ-bearer*. We, my brethren, are called *Christians*, because we bear about the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. But how many of us are unworthy of the name! They tell us that once Alexander the Great saw a soldier in his army who was a coward. He asked his name, and on learning that it was



Alexander, he bade him either change his name or do something worthy of it.

There is yet another view which we may take of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Tree of Life stood in the midst of the Garden of Eden, so the Cross stands as a tree of life in the midst of the world. It was, indeed, a tree of death to our Master, but of life to us, since His death gave us life eternal. The Cross should be to us as a tree of shelter from the hot sun of prosperity. Prosperity ruins many souls. The pleasure which pampers the body often leads away the mind from God, and rightly do we pray in the Litany, "in all time of our *wealth* (well-being), good Lord, deliver us." And the Cross should be to us a tree of shelter from the storm of affliction. The remembrance that Jesus is with us in our grief, and Himself bore our sorrows, will help us to bear the burden laid upon us. So the Cross is to us a cause of sorrow and of joy, of shame and of exultation ; it is a heavy weight to carry, and a place to hide us in ; a tree bearing most sweet fruit, and a bitter medicine to make wholesome the sorrows of life. A traveller was once lying ill of fever in his hut in a South American forest. The pool of water at

which he was wont to quench his feverish thirst dried up, and he was compelled to drag himself painfully to a more distant pool. Here the water was intensely bitter, and the sick man noticed that a tree had fallen into the stream and caused the bitterness. Presently the man grew better, and in a few days the fever left him. The tree which lay in the water was that which supplies the Peruvian bark, one of the most valuable of modern medicines. These things are a parable to us. When the Tree of the Cross falls into the stream of our life it brings the bitterness of sorrow and self-denial, but it heals our souls and gives us strength to reach the farther shore, where the Cross of sorrow shall be exchanged for the crown of glory.

## SERMON XXII.

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### *THE OVERSHADOWING CLOUD.*

(GENERAL ; OR SUITABLE FOR THE TRANSFIGURATION.)

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S. LUKE, ix. 84.

“ There came a cloud and overshadowed them ; and they feared  
“ as they entered into the cloud.”

FIVE important events in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ took place upon mountains,—part of His Temptation, His Transfiguration, His Prayer, His Crucifixion, and His Ascension. To-day let us go even unto the Mount of Transfiguration, and learn some of the many lessons which are suggested by it.

It was to that spot that S. Peter, S. James, and S. John were summoned that they might have a glimpse of the King in His beauty, bathed in the light of the land that is very far off ; that they might understand that He who was called the Carpenter's Son, was the Son of God, that

they might see and hear Moses and Elijah bear witness to His coming Passion, that they might realise the beauty of the Resurrection Body, and see the glory of God. And how did these favoured disciples behave? They fell asleep, though the glory of God was around them. "When they were *awake* they saw His glory." How like were the disciples then to some of us who are Christ's disciples now! We fail to see the glory of God manifested in our lives, in our fortunes, in our joys and our sorrows, because we are *asleep*; it may be in the sleep of sin, or of indifference, or of worldliness. We can see our own strength, our own worldly wisdom, our own handiwork in our built-up fortunes, but we cannot see the glory of God. Many go down to the grave miserable, doubting, fearful, and unbelieving, because they have had no glimpse of God's glory shining on their way of life. There is another lesson for us. S. Peter, delighted with the beatific vision he had witnessed, wished to remain on the mountain; "it is good for us to be here," he said, and then the cloud came and overshadowed the scene. There was a lesson for the Apostle, and for us. It taught him, and it teaches us, that in this life we may not spend our time in contemplating

scenes of pleasure or loveliness, as though they would last for ever, since over all the earth is written, "This is not your rest." That overshadowing cloud warns us, as it warned S. Peter, that this world is a battle-field, not a vision of Peace; a working time, not the rest that remaineth; the Mount of Crucifixion, not the Mount of Glory. To our blessed Lord Himself that overshadowing cloud was a type of what His earthly life was to be. One of the greatest of our old divines says: "His transfiguration was a bright ray of glory; but then, also, He entered into a cloud, and was told a sad story of what He was to suffer at Jerusalem. For this Jesus was like the rainbow, which God set in the clouds as a Sacrament, to confirm a promise and establish a grace. He was half made of the glories of the light, and half of the moisture of a cloud."\* We may well take that scene upon the Mount as an allegory of human life, the bright sunshine ever and anon shadowed by the cloud, the

\* Jeremy Taylor, whom we follow in this exposition. But it is at least doubtful whether that "cloud" from which the Divine Voice issued was not associated in their minds with the "cloud by day" of the Wilderness, and with the token of the Divine Presence in the Temple. Observe also that when our Lord ascended, the same "cloud" recurs (Acts i. 9), attesting (surely) His Divine nature. And He shall come again with the same symbol of Divinity.

sweetest cup of pleasure mixed with some drop of bitterness, since even the happiest

“ Taste not happiness sincere,  
But find the cordial draught is dashed with care.”

No one lives long in the world without discovering that

“ Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud ;  
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,  
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.”

Yes, brethren, even the most prosperous among us must admit that the overshadowing cloud has always come upon us in the day of our brightest fortunes. The whole of history tells the same tale. Ask the conqueror, the man whom all delight to honour,—ask him for whom fame has woven the fairest chaplet, ask those for whom wealth and beauty have poured forth their choicest gifts, and all alike will tell you of their lives that ever and again—

“ Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,  
A ghostly shadow flitted.”

Ask the Pharaohs in their tombs, ask Helen the lovely, or Cleopatra the queenly, each being dead

yet speaketh, and from all alike comes the echo of the words spoken long ago by Solomon in his glory—"Vanity of vanities." So surely as we try to fix our tabernacles here, and gaze our fill on the joys and pleasures of life, the cloud comes and overshadows the picture. It was when the wine sparkled brightly in Belshazzar's palace, and when the song and the jest were loudest, that the ghostly writing on the wall told the king his doom. When Xerxes looked proudly on his vast army, his joy was saddened by the thought that not one of those heroes would be alive in a hundred years. Pizzaro, the conqueror of Peru, was vexed with boding fears in the very zenith of his fame. When one of our great moralists looked on a scene of fashionable festivity, the brightness of the spectacle was marred by the thought that there was not one person in all that gay multitude who was not afraid to go home and *think*. Is it not true of you, my brethren, that often the cloud comes and overshadows you ;—the cloud of anxiety, the cloud of sorrow, of disappointed hope, and disallowed design ? Those who are rich in this world's goods must often find the overshadowing cloud of anxiety darkening their lives ; they wonder anxiously how their family will use

their wealth when they are gone, and some must confess sadly that "they have heaped up riches, " and cannot tell who shall gather them." Some among us have planted our home garden, and hedged it round, yet the cloud of apprehension comes lest the fairest flower of all should wither under the bitter blight of death. To the thoughtful and sympathetic there is ever present the overshadowing cloud of sorrow for others. However prosperous he may be, and in whatever happy scenes his own lot may be cast, he cannot but think of those who are living in poverty, in misery, and in crime almost at his very doors.

And what shall we say of the poor? Is there not the overshadowing cloud ever present with them, the fear of hard times, of illness, or of failing strength, a cloud which sometimes seems to shut out the glory of God from their eyes?

The Apostles feared as the radiant forms of Jesus and His companions entered into the cloud, they feared because the cloud hid their Saviour from them, as the cloud hid Him at a later day when He ascended up into Heaven. They were afraid to lose sight of Jesus even for a little while. So we, too, shall have much cause for fear if we suffer any cloud, be it of doubt, or



trouble, or unbelief, to come between us and our Redeemer even for a moment.

Why did the cloud so quickly veil the vision of glory from the Apostles' sight? Why in this life does sorrow so surely mingle with our joy, and the cloud so quickly dim the sunshine? Because man has fallen from original righteousness, and was expelled from Paradise long ago. And it is because we too often forget this, and look for the undying flowers of Eden here in the wilderness, and desire to build our tabernacles here, instead of looking for a house eternal in the Heavens; because we make gods of the idols of earthly joy, and prefer the meat that perishes to the bread of Heaven, that the cloud so often comes betwixt us and the sunshine.

Presently, from that overshadowing cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration, came a voice, saying "This is my beloved Son; hear Him."

Ah! brethren, when a cloud arises to hide some scene in which we delighted, some form which we loved, some scheme which we cherished, and we fear as they enter into the cloud, may we hear that Voice, the Voice of our Heavenly Father, giving comfort, and saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear Him." To whom else can

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we go, to whom else can we listen, when a horror of great darkness comes upon us, and the sunshine of our lives is hid? Surely in our hour of trial we shall desire to see and hear "Jesus only." We shall hear the Church, because the Voice of the Church is the Voice of Jesus; we shall turn to the Sacraments, because Jesus is present there; we shall hearken to the Priest, because he is the servant of Him whom we desire, "Jesus only." And when, for the last time, the cloud comes before our eyes, and hides the faces of those who stand around our dying bed, may we hear the Voice of God speaking from the shadows of the dark valley, and may we be able to answer, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

## SERMON XXIII.

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### *THE PEACE OF GOD.*

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COLOSSIANS III. 15.

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

THERE is something in this passage which is totally contrary to our ordinary manner of speaking. The words of the Apostle are such as no one of us would naturally have chosen. For our common thoughts of peace are thoughts of stillness and repose. When we say that any one is “in peace,” we mean that his warfare is accomplished and his victory is won. He is free from accident and all annoy. His ways are pleasant now, and his path is smooth. There is no more struggling with anxiety and sorrow—no more wrestling with temptation and sin. He is resting from his labour. It is the calm after the storm. It is the repose of the day after the battle. He

is in peace because he is kept safe and free from the assaults of evil.

But the language of the Apostle is very different from this. He speaks of peace, not as of something gentle and submissive, which exists because it is not assaulted, but as of a mighty power which has a right to command ; which sits upon a throne and bears rule ; which quells disturbance and enforces submission ; which reigns by right divine in the very midst of strife and tumult.

For he speaks of this present world, and he speaks of the heart of man. "Let peace rule in your hearts." In the heart, that abiding-place of passion and unrest, that strange chamber of imagery where each of us worships by himself alone the God of his choosing, or the God who has chosen him, amid that bewildering maze of conflicting motives and of chance desires, in that centre of power from whence proceed the impulses which move and mould the outer life for evil or for good ; amid the gusts of quick resentment and the sullenness of wounded pride, the restless thoughts of vanity and sin which the lips have never uttered ; in the heart where envy often stirs, and selfishness desires to reign, where

sloth and self-will are ever opening the door that all unlovely things may enter in and take possession ; there, in the heart of man, where sin has left its deepest mark, and the confusion of the world has done its utmost ; there, in the midst of that heaving sea whose waves are never still, is the mighty peace of God to take to itself its power and reign.

Well may the Apostle say "the peace of God." For there is a peace which is not of God. There is a voice which whispers peace, peace, when there is no peace. It is the peace of this world—peace according to our common thoughts of peace: when the outer life brings nothing to harass or to vex the soul, and within there is slumber undisturbed—when there is no war being waged, no battle being fought, no watch and ward being kept over the thoughts of the heart, the words of the lips, the deeds of the hand ; a stillness in which no pulse of the life of God is stirring ; where habit and custom are silently moulding the unresisting character ; and the soul, wrapped ever more closely in its mantle of indifference and sloth, is gliding smoothly and easily through this mortal life, to be startled at last into wakefulness by the sudden sunshine of the everlasting

day. It is peace of those who have no changes, and therefore fear not God. They who live in the light of Eternity give to it the name of death.

For peace such as this no throne is set. It has neither right nor power to reign. It can conquer nothing, subdue nothing, bear rule over nothing. It is itself at the mercy of every wind that blows. One ripple upon the sea of life suffices to destroy it. A little thwart, a petty contradiction, a trifling disappointment, a light word uttered by another's lips, one touch of change in the outer life, one little sorrow which assaults the soul within, will turn that calm into a storm, and that peace has fled away and vanished.

Not such is the overcoming peace of God. It rests upon Eternity, and the wild waves of time and circumstance may dash around it as they will. They cannot touch the deep foundations of its strength. To each and all alike, to the petty vexation of the passing hour, and to the bitter anguish with which the heart is wrung, it speaks as one who hath authority, "Peace, be still."

There is no peace except the peace of God.

And what manner of peace is this which even

the winds and the sea obey, which breathes upon the troubled waves of the restless heart, and there is a great calm ?

Who shall give it a name or who describe it, for it passeth "all understanding." Those who have known the peace of God best, those who have submitted most entirely to its rule, and live, and move, and have their being in it, have ever been the first to say that they understand it not at all. Eye hath not seen it, ear hath not heard it, the heart, which is filled with its blessedness, can never measure it. They to whom it is given can only say, in wonder and awe, "Our hearts are stayed on God. Everlasting Love has grasped us in His Almighty hand. He keeps us in perfect peace."

"Unto the which peace ye are called." Brethren, it is well that we should pause for awhile, and muse upon this thing. It is well that we should sometimes stop for a moment amidst the rush of the little things which make up our daily life, and steadily fix our thoughts upon this one truth, that we are called unto the peace of God—we, even we, unto the peace which passeth understanding. We are called to rise above this world in which we live, to conquer its restlessness with

an abiding calm, amid its tossing waves to fix ourselves upon that smooth "sea of glass which "is before the throne," which reflects the pure unbroken image of our Father's glory.

For in this world there is very little to put us in mind of peace. The thought is but seldom or never in our minds that the heavenly blessing was ever intended to be our portion here. We give it up as we give up a child's day-dream which will not bear the wear and tear of our common life, which can be fulfilled only to those who have already passed behind the veil, and entered into the joy of their Lord. Or, if granted here on earth at all, then only to "the elect of the "elect," the very "first-fruits of the Lamb," those "bright particular stars" which even to our dull gaze are shining with the beauty of holiness, and by their separate beams at midnight remind the world of the dawn.

But in this, also, the Apostle's words contradict our common thoughts. For he speaks, not to Apostles, or Prophets, or martyrs, not to any narrow circle of pre-eminent saints, but to the whole Church of Colossæ, to all who had heard the words of the Son of Man. Throughout the Epistle he is anxious for them that they should



not be content with a low level of blessedness, but should boldly claim their full reward as "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." "For "it pleased the Father that in Him should all "fulness dwell;" and upon the head of each had that Father's hand been laid, stretched out to bless; to each had been granted the seal and pledge of His adopting Love, the promise of His peace. Members of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the children of God, the God of Peace, inheritors of the kingdom which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; for whom could peace be meant if not for them? And for whom can peace be meant, if not for us? us, who have heard the promise of the Father. There is no jewel in all the treasury of Heaven too bright or too precious for us to claim, us, upon whom that Holy Name has been named. And yet we count ourselves unworthy of the everlasting gift, and put it from us. We hide our eyes in a false unholy awe when we should look on God, and when the royal voice of His peace is calling in our hearts we refuse to listen, as if the hollow peace of this world were a blessing great enough already for the heirs of heaven to ask.

And so it comes to pass that the heavenly

feast is spread, and the marriage supper is prepared, and yet they who are called most unthankfully refuse to come. They will not listen to the voice of the Heavenly Charmer, whom He never so wisely. They let the music of the peace of Christ pass by, and hearken only to the din of this world. The message, then, of to-day's Epistle is that you submit yourselves at last to the blessed power of God which is striving to bless you, that you bow down and do homage to the peace of God.

And how? What is it that the Apostle is bidding us to do? Brethren, one instant's thought will show us plainly what are the two great hindrances to our peace. The Apostle is bidding us to remove them.

I. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; "if any man hear My voice, and open the door, "I will come in to him." Do you ever make one earnest effort to keep silence in your heart for a moment that you may "hear His Voice?" Do you ever truly and sincerely mean to listen for it, and expect to hear it? Is there one half-hour in all your common day which you give to calm self-recollection and thought of Him, that the peace of Christ may enter through the "open

“door,” and take free and full possession of your being? Is it not true that from your waking hour in the morning to the closing of your eyes at night, there has been but one long succession of thoughts which only chance has guided, which you have made no effort to control. They who are content to live by chance must bid farewell for ever to the peace of God.

II. “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” We can discern the face of the sky and of the earth. We know how often a sudden gust, a little cloud, are the heralds of a deepening gloom, in which the heavens are black with clouds and rain. And are we so blind as not to discern the signs of coming temptation? A thought of envy, an uncharitable desire, a gust of irritation, a little cloud of a rebellious wish, has raised itself to vex and disturb the soul. We might have seen it in its beginning and crushed it, and the clear blue sky of our peace would have continued undisturbed. But we let it pass unnoticed, we never thought of being on our guard, and it strengthened and increased, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon our habitation, and it fell. If we had let peace rule; if we had been

watching round the throne of our king, and kept ourselves within hearing of His voice, the wild confusion of the spirit would have been a calm, and all the fierceness of the storm but a soft and gentle breeze.

These, then, are the two safeguards of the kingdom of our peace—to listen humbly for the voice of God within—to be suspicious of the first sign of a rebellious thought. Then alone will the peace of God suffice to bring every thought into captivity to itself.

Finally, the Apostle reminds us not only that we are called unto peace, but that we are called “in one body.” He would have us remember that none of us can live unto himself, for charity is the bond of peace, and yet that we most often supply to one another the occasions which disturb our peace. He would have us beware of the idle word, the thoughtless action, the inconsiderate tone, the selfish forgetfulness of another’s comfort, by which we may mar and spoil, without knowing it, the music of another’s life. “It must needs be that offences come, but woe unto him through whom they come.” Woe unto him who so slightly regards the kingdom of peace as to put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s

way. Ye are called unto peace, and called in one body, what must be the portion of that member from which feverish restlessness, disquiet, and poison, are allowed to flow into the life-blood of the whole?

Let this, then, be added to our solemn self-examination. Are we spreading peace around, or not? Are we taking any trouble to make our words and deeds a healing balm, not a blistering sore, to those who like ourselves are subjects of the Prince of peace? Are we caring to know whether we are doing so or not?

Take heed that ye be not deceived. Those who are content to put no questions to themselves, those who most seldom ask or think of peace, are those who most often, though they know it not, disturb the peace of their neighbour, and themselves are furthest from the peace of God.

SERMON XXIV.

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*FOLLOWING JESUS.*

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S. MARK x. 52.

“And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

**THERE** is a crowd of people passing through Jericho, the city of palm-trees. At every household there is a group of spectators. The workman pauses in his toil to look on, the mother catches up her child from the advancing throng, and a whisper goes round that “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” The whisper reaches the quick ears of a blind man sitting in the shade of the trees which he had never seen; for Bartimæus knows nothing of blue skies, or bright flowers, or green fields dotted with white sheep. The blind man comes to Jesus; many try to hinder him, even as many would hinder us now, but in vain; he came and received his sight. What, think you, was the first thing which he saw?

Not his home, which had hitherto been all dark to him, not the fields where he had wandered as a boy, not the palm-trees which had sheltered him, not the faces of his friends, not the fair sky of which he had dreamed, nor the flowers for which he had longed,—he saw God, he saw the Hand which had healed him. So it is with ourselves. Whilst our eyes are blinded by sin all around us seems dark. We find no goodness, no beauty in the world, all the music of life seems out of tune. We believe the earth to be peopled by knaves and liars, we think that every one has his price, we trust no one, we give no one credit for pure motives. When troubles and misfortunes beset us we regard them as a curse, our way of life is planted thick with thorns, and it terminates in a black grave. When our eyes are opened after true repentance, all is changed. We see God's hand everywhere, and then the first result is that we come to recognise the world as God's world. We used to see nothing but evil. Now we begin to see good as well. We find out that there are such beings as good men and good women, that we never thought of before. We find men and women in the divine image, and we understand the nobility of that

nature which was taken by Jesus Christ. When we receive our sight we discover something to be thankful for on all sides of us, in the beauties of nature, in the blessings of religion, even in the sharp medicine of sorrow ; amid the storm and tempest of affliction we can see Jesus walking upon the water.

The first result of the blind man's restoration to sight was that he saw Jesus, the next result was that he followed Jesus in the way. That way, remember, was one which led him away from home and friends ; it was a hard, rough way, full of dangers and troubles, ending in a cross and a grave. I cannot believe that Bartimæus ever left our Lord again on earth. When the people strewed palm-branches, and shouted "Hosanna," I think the once blind man was there to help them ; when Jesus was bowed down with agony in the Garden, I think Bartimæus was watching near, among the shadows of Gethsemane. When the soldiers led the Saviour away to judgment I think Bartimæus was waiting to know the end ; and when the end came on Calvary, he was surely there, among those whose eyes were opened, close to the cross of Jesus Christ. So with us, when our eyes are



opened we follow Jesus in the way. Before that we walk in our own way, in the way of the world; we follow the multitude to do evil, we follow our own sinful lusts and passions; we choose our own way instead of God's way, we prefer the path which is most pleasant, most easy, most profitable; but when our eyes are opened all is changed, we learn to say, "I loved to choose and see my path, but now,—lead Thou me on."

Thus we come to follow Jesus in the way; and that way is the way of holiness, the narrow way which leads to life everlasting, the upward way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. That too is a path which takes us away from self, and from self-pleasing, and from many pleasures which the world calls innocent. It is not always a smooth way; it climbs up the Hill Difficulty, and anon winds down into the Valley of Humiliation; it is a road where there are many thorns to pierce, and where there are bitter gall and sharp vinegar of self-denial; it is a way which is often wet with tears, it passes through a garden of Gethsemane, a place of agonised prayer, it leads to a cross, a life-long cross sometimes, it carries us to a grave, but, thanks be to God, to a grave

from which the stone is rolled away, and which is bright with the light of a glorious resurrection. And withal it is a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace, of peace such as the world cannot give, and it is a way which ends in Heaven.

How then, brethren, can we follow Jesus in the way? Our eyes must be opened to see that there is none to whom we can go but Jesus, that there is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we may be saved, that there is no other path to Heaven except in Him who said, "I am the way." Our eyes must be opened to see our sins, then we shall flee to the Saviour. They must be opened to see our weakness, then we shall seek strength in the sacraments which He has given us. When our eyes are opened, and we determine to follow Jesus in the way, we must, like Bartimæus, be prepared *to give up* something for Christ's sake. We cannot walk in our own way and His way too, because His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts. We must make His way *our way*, we cannot expect to have all the roses when He had all the thorns, we cannot hope to do the will of our Father in Heaven if we only do our own will on earth. Self-denial is the great want of the

present time. The cause of so much coldness and deadness in religion, and of so much open sin, and utter unbelief, lies in the fact that many professing Christians want a religion *without a cross*; they are unwilling to deny themselves, and yet the Master has said "if any man come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." I sometimes wonder if the spirit of the grand men of old time, such men as S. Ignatius or Polycarp, or many another whose name is written in Heaven, has quite died out. *They* gave up wealth, rank, friends, the dearest ties of relationship for the sake of Christ. What do most professing Christians give up for Jesus now-a-days? Many Church-goers grudge even the brief moments taken from self and given to God; "we have no time for much religion" is the cry of this over-worked, feverish century, and many a one is starving his spiritual life because he will not give up a little space to quiet thought and self-examination. Truly says one of the most thoughtful poets\* of our own time,

"He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend,  
Eternity mourns that."

\* See Sir Henry Taylor's "Philip Van Artavelde."

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I think the good old saying "No Cross, no Crown," is too much forgotten in the everyday lives of those who yet desire to follow Jesus in the way. Let our prayer be that we may receive our sight and be led to follow the "Lamb whithersoever He goeth," so that having passed by the way of the Cross and the Grave, we may at the last enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

## SERMON XXV.

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### *THE LOST SHEEP.*

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S. LUKE, xv. 3. 4.

“ And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ?”

“ THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” So it happened every day. But why ? It was not what we should have expected. The publican was spending his life in heaping up riches for himself by violence and cheating. Why should he be so eager to speak to Him who, though He was rich, yet for Love’s sake had become poor.

The sinner was black with the stains of many crimes : was it likely that he would find pleasure in the company of Him who alone was without spot of sin, the Holy One of God ? And yet they did. They “ hung upon his words ;” and “ all

“the people were very attentive to hear Him.” Why was this? Was it that He spoke lightly of their sin? that he flattered them and made them out to be better than they were?

Oh no! Go where they would, they would find none who used such tremendous, such awful words, as He did when He spoke to them of sin. It was He who said “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.” It was He who told them of a day when they would have to account for every idle word. It was He who told them of the worm that never dies, of the fire that never can be quenched. It was He Himself who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead—and He could not speak peace when there was no peace. As He spoke to them their conscience told them that His words were true. They felt that there was “nothing covered” from His eye—that what they had thought was most hidden was well known to Him; and yet, as He turned and looked upon them, they could bear His eye, for they saw that it was an eye of love. It was stern because it was so full of pity, it was severe because it was gentle. They felt that He loved them because He hated their sin. Nothing but

love could so deeply hate sin. He must have come to deliver them from evil. "He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap." He will "purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." They would not understand Him, but they were sure that He was their friend. No one else would seek them out as He did—no one else would be seen eating and drinking "with publicans and sinners."

"The Pharisees and Scribes murmured" when they saw it. This, too, happened constantly. But why? Who were these Pharisees? They were shepherds of Israel. They were entrusted with God's Law. These publicans and sinners were breaking that law? Could they mix themselves up with such as they. "Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled?" Could they keep company with these men and not be partakers in their sins? No, said they, "stand apart, for we are holier than you." We may not even "eat and drink with publicans and sinners."

Now, how did Jesus treat these men? Did He tell them that this carefulness of theirs was wrong, that they ought not to be so observant of the sins of others: that they ought to make no difference

between the righteous and the wicked ; that they ought charitably to shut their eyes and say nothing when they saw others going wrong ? No, brethren, we hear a great deal of such charity in these days, but Jesus knew nothing of it. It is not charity, but falsehood and sloth. He who is " called faithful and true " would have them like Himself. He would not have them hate sin less, but He would have them love the sinner more. He would have them remember that a man may be a heathen and a publican, and yet, because he is a man, he must needs be a brother of their own, and they must bear to him the love which was due to their Father's children. And, therefore, as His manner was, He pointed up to Heaven, and bade them look on God, and think of Him who " is a consuming fire," and for that very reason a God of Love, " a just God and a Saviour." As long as they despised their brethren it was no use to say that they loved God, for " every one " that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also " that is begotten of Him." If they loved the Father they could not be unmindful of the children. If they cared for the Shepherd they could not be so utterly regardless of the sheep. And therefore, as He would teach them heavenly



wisdom, He bade them learn from the things which they saw in the world around them every day. Their common life was full of lessons, if they would but learn.

The time when these things took place was most likely during our blessed Lord's journey from Galilee up to the feast at Jersualem. It was then that the publicans drew near to hear Him. It was then that the Scribes and Pharisees murmured because He "receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The road along which He was travelling would not be far on either side of the River Jordan. Now the River Jordan flows along the bottom of a valley which is shut in between two ranges of hills. Sometimes the hills recede from one another, and the valley is wide and spacious ; sometimes they approach more closely together, and the valley is small and narrow. But along that valley in its wider parts there are many of those spots which the Jews called "wildernesses." We must not imagine that these were dry and sandy places, where all was barren and desert. Quite the contrary. They were called wildernesses only because they were thinly peopled, and there was scarcely a town or village among them. There were no corn fields there and

they never rejoiced "with the joy of harvest:" but they were fresh and well watered from the river, and they were covered with the greenest grass and the most luxuriant herbage. And to these places shepherds brought their sheep, because the richest pastures were there, and flocks and herds abounded.

It was along this plain and among these "wildernesses" that our Blessed Saviour was most likely now travelling. And perhaps, while the Scribes and Pharisees were making their unkind murmurs, He could even then lift up His eyes, and see the hillside dotted over with the sheep and lambs (for it is spring-time) cropping the tender grass under the watchful care of the shepherd. And then He turned to those proud men who would have Him cast out the publicans and sinners when they came to Him, "and He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" They knew that if a shepherd lost only one sheep out of a large and numerous flock, yet that one who had wandered into danger and peril would be more in the shep-

herd's thoughts, and would seem to be more important in his sight, than all the vast number who were still safe in the fold. And Jesus bade them remember this, and learn that as the Heaven is high above the earth, as the eternal love of God is greater and more glorious than the selfish interests of a mere human shepherd, so certain it is that He could never cease to care for His wandering sheep, and they, the shepherds of Israel, would never be like Him until they learned to love and to seek out those erring men whom they were calling "publicans and sinners."

We should have known, even if He had not told us, that by the shepherd in the parable He means Himself, the Shepherd of the fold of God, the Shepherd and the Bishop of the souls of men, the Guide and Guardian of mankind. And by the sheep He must mean His helpless creatures, who cannot live without Him, who "live and move and have their being" in Him, each separate single one of whom is "as much His care, as if beside nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth." He tends them all. He loves them all.

But who are these ninety and nine who never went astray? Brethren, I have no desire to be-

wilder myself and you by embarrassing ourselves with any of the perplexing theories which have been started on this subject. I won't enter with you into any discussion whether by these words we are intended to understand the inhabitants of other planets, or the angels which never lost their firstestate, or any other of the many explanations which have all been supported by clever arguments and defended by skilful reasoning. Rather would I turn away from questions of this kind, and appeal to that which will give a truer answer—the witness of your own hearts, the voice of that conscience by which God speaks within you. And, to use words like those of our Blessed Master Himself, “ Let him who is without sin among “ you first claim to be one of these ninety and “ nine just persons who need no repentance.”

If your conscience does bear witness that you “ lack nothing ”—if you have never for one moment swerved from the obedience and love of a child of God's family—if you can lift up your head and say I am perfect even as my Father which is in Heaven is perfect—then learn what you can from this part of the parable, for it is your own. But, if not, if your conscience tells you of many shortcomings and misdoings, if you were sincere

when you said " we have erred and strayed like  
" lost sheep, we have offended against God's holy  
" laws, we have left undone the things which we  
" ought to have done, we have done the things  
" which we ought not to have done, and there is  
" no health in us ;" if you feel that you have been  
trying to be your own shepherd, setting up your  
own will against God's will, and so have been  
wandering away into desert places, solitary and  
unsatisfied, then, brethren, you must turn your  
thoughts away from these ninety and nine which  
went not astray. Whatever this part of the pa-  
rable may mean, the lesson is not now for you.  
You must look at something else. You must fix  
your eyes upon that other sheep, the one which  
is wandering away into the dry and sandy waste,  
away from the fold, away from the shepherd's  
care, away from the rest of the flock, in loneliness  
and solitude, in danger and peril, in weakness  
and misery. You must watch it as it trembles  
at the roar of the lion, as it shudders at the growl  
of the wolf, as it shrinks and shivers in the cold  
midnight blast. And then you must watch the  
shepherd's form as he goes forth to seek it, you  
must see the anxious care with which he searches  
for it, how he calls it by its own name—for in

those countries the sheep know and follow the voice of the shepherd—how earnestly he sets himself to the work of finding it, in order that when he hath found it, he may lay it on his shoulders rejoicing, and carry it back to the fold. And then, brethren, in all this you must see the image of yourself. Jesus spoke these words in order that you might claim them for your own. There is not one single person in this congregation who has not a right to say to himself, I, even I, am that one sheep which was lost, the Chief Shepherd has come forth and is seeking me, even me.

Oh! brethren, do you find it hard to believe this? Do you find it easy to say “I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost,”—easy, because you feel that you have only too truly wandered from the fold, and because you can find nothing elsewhere which can satisfy your soul; and yet hard to believe that there is One who is seeking you, and following every step you take, calling you by your name, entreating you to arise and listen to His voice, in order that He may bring you back rejoicing to the fold? Oh! brethren, believe it, for it is a message which comes to you from God. Believe it, because He is speaking

not to your outward ear, but in your inmost heart : because you have often heard His voice already. If a single good thought has ever entered your mind ; if you have ever done a single good deed ; if you have ever made a good resolution and kept it ; yes, if you have ever made a good resolution and broken it ; if you have ever for one moment had the faintest wish to be better than you are, more like the Image of God in which you were made—then by that thought, that word, that deed, that wish, I charge you to believe that God himself is seeking you. You have wandered from the fold, but you bear the Shepherd's mark. He would have you return to the fold you have left. He seeks for you "as for hid treasure." He has chosen you to be "holy and without blame before Him in love." He has chosen you, and think not that He will leave you to yourself, until you have become entirely His own. Think not that the good Shepherd can go forth to seek His wandering sheep, and then go back to the fold without having found it. Think not that He can ever give up the search and leave His work unfinished. "God is not a man that He should lie," so neither is He a man that He should change His purpose. Oh ! believe that His ways are not as your ways,

nor His thoughts as your thoughts. You may have forgotten Him, but He can never forget you ; you may be one thing to-day and another to-morrow, but His love is unchangeable, His ways are everlasting. You may wander far into the desert, but He knoweth the way that you take—He can never cease to seek for you, if haply you may feel after Him and find Him, for He is not far from every one of you.

And yet, brethren, there is such a thing as a man refusing to listen “to the voice of the “Charmer, charm He never so wisely.” There is such a thing as a man standing at the very edge of the water of Life and yet refusing to drink. There is such a thing as a child of God’s family, a sheep of Christ’s flock, hearing the Shepherd’s voice, and yet refusing to be brought back to the fold. And why? Is it because the door of the fold is barred and fastened, that none may enter in? No, for He saith “he that cometh “unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Is it because the power of the enemy is too strong, Satan’s grasp too firm, so that the sheep of the flock cannot be rescued out of his hand? No, for greater is He that is with you than he that is against you. “A loud voice” was long ago



heard "saying in Heaven, Now is come salvation  
" and strength and the kingdom of our God, and  
" the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our  
" brethren is cast down, which accused them  
" before our God day and night." Why then,  
cannot God's sheep return to His fold? It is  
because although He is seeking them, yet they  
will not come to Him that they may have life;  
because they will wander further into the desert  
instead of standing and listening to the voice of  
love. And yet the Shepherd seeks "until He  
" finds." The love of God must triumph over  
human wills.

Brethren, there was one who wandered grievously away from the fold, but he turned at last and said, "I have gone astray like a sheep that  
" is lost; seek Thy servant, for I do not forget  
" Thy Commandments."

## SERMON XXVI.

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### *AN OLD STORY RE-TOLD.*

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S. LUKE xv. 11.

"A certain man had two sons."

THIS is the commencement of a very old story ; I will try to read that story to you in the light of to-day. Somewhere in the country, no matter where, for the story is reproduced everywhere, a rich landowner is farming successfully. He has all the advantages of modern agriculture, he sows the best seed, he uses the latest machinery, his fields bring forth abundantly, and he pulls down his barns and builds greater. He has two sons who assist him in his farming, and the old father looks forward to the day when all shall be theirs. He looks out of the windows of his house, and sees the crops flourishing on many an acre, and he thinks that all shall be for his children one day. It is a godly household. His wife, now sleeping in the village churchyard, had

taught her sons at her knee the things concerning their peace ; and now, when the bell sounds, the father and his sons and servants appear in their places at Church, and daily they meet together for family prayer. What do we know of the two sons ? The elder is a steady, plodding worker, but without much love for his father or brother, one who works for work's sake. He has not much religious feeling, but he goes to Church partly because he really *is* respectable, partly because he likes to be thought respectable ; in fact, he is a type of a class of people which we meet every day. The younger son is kindly, clever, careless, one of that brotherhood who are said to be the enemies of none but themselves, but who quite forget that their careless ease is utter selfishness. In time he grows tired of home life, he finds the restraint irksome, and he says he is tired of it all ; tired of going to market and showing samples of grain, tired of watching the steam-plough traversing the fields, tired of checking the bailiff's books, tired of seed time and harvest, of the dull country life, of family prayer, and the village Church. So now the young man does not go to look at his mother's grave as frequently as formerly, and his place at

Church is often vacant, and his father's simple talk becomes a weariness to him. One day he comes to his father and tells him all, he reminds him that he is of age, and he asks for the portion of property which will come to him, and then he says he will go away. So he goes away into a far country, it may be into the great world of London, where he can be as much lost as in a desert. He either forgets, or does not care, to write to his father; and, whilst the old man is praying for him at home, the son is seeing what he calls *life*, and is wasting his substance in riotous living. There are plenty of people, both men and women, to help him. That gay house in the suburbs is his, that costly furniture replaces the simple old chairs and tables at home; he has been advised to invest his money prudently, but he thinks there is time enough, and he wishes to enjoy life before he settles down to steady work. Meantime the wine-cup circles, the dice-box rattles, the world, and the flesh, and the devil knock at the door, and are admitted. People say this state of things cannot last, and one day the crash of ruin comes. The young man fancied himself free,—“lord of himself, that heritage of woe,”—and all the while he has

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been a slave, the slave of sin, of extravagance, of debt, of false friends, and of utter selfishness. Now the crash comes, and his only companions are ruin and disaster. There are bills in the windows of the gay house, and the bright furniture is exposed for public sale, whilst every notice on the walls seems to contain the text, "Then cometh the end." The house door stands open, and the curious and the vulgar crowd in, where lately they would not have presumed to enter. The rich ornaments, and the glasses lately used in revelry, are criticised by careless lips; the costly mirrors, which once reflected the fair forms of sin, are sold to aged ugliness, and the fatal cry of the auctioneer rings through the rooms which so recently re-echoed with sounds of merriment; and some purchaser of his property says of its former owner, "Poor fellow, he wasted his substance in riotous living."

And where is the prodigal? Out in the world without one true friend. Truly says the Roman poet, "As long as thou art prosperous, thou shalt count many friends; but if thy fortunes be overcast, thou shalt find thyself alone." What can the prodigal do." He is ashamed to write home, and so he seeks employment among

the scenes of his ruin, he joins himself "to a citizen of that country;"—in other words, he goes to one of the men to whom he had shown kindness and hospitality, who had eaten at his table and drunk of his cup, and he asks him for work, and the friend either shuts the door against him, or sends him to feed swine—that is, sets him to some dishonourable employment against which his very nature revolts, and bids him do that, or starve. The prodigal tries to satisfy himself with this mode of life; he tries to be as unscrupulous as the rest, to know nothing of conscience in business hours, to go the way of the world, to imitate the sharp practice of his neighbours, and he finds that he is feeding on husks, and he craves for a better life. One day *he comes to himself*, his eyes are opened to see how mad and wicked he has been, and his thoughts fly *home*. As he sits in the swinish haunts of sin, vainly trying to satisfy himself with the husks of this world's service, his thoughts return to the days of his innocent, happy childhood, and he thinks that, after all, there is no place like home. As he looks on the miserable scenes in which he is living, he thinks sadly—

“ I remember, I remember  
The house where I was born,  
The little window, where the sun  
Came peeping in at morn ;  
He never came a wink too soon,  
Nor brought too long a day,  
But now, I often wish the night  
Had borne my breath away.”

He recalls the old happy days when he first knelt and learned to say “ Our Father ” at his mother’s knee—that mother now sleeping in the green old Churchyard. He recalls the dim, quiet village Church, and his place under the carved saints and angels, where the light from the painted window streamed across his Prayer Book, and the solemn time when he knelt with his parents at the altar and received the Blessed Sacrament of his dear Lord’s Body and Blood, and he thinks sadly of the many things with which he has been defiled since then. He knows that the servants in his father’s house are better off than he, and he longs eagerly to look on the familiar scenes, the garden where he played as a child, the fields stretching away over many a pleasant upland, and, above all, he longs to look on his father’s face.

Thus the prodigal son comes to himself, as many another prodigal has done,—some in the wild Australian bush, some in the noisy barrack-room, some in the dark fore-castle of a ship at sea, or in the workhouse ward, or the prison cell. The prodigal makes up his mind: “I will go home,” he says; “I will arise, and go to my father.” And he goes back to the old village, and the old home, but to find all changed; he sees the faces of those who do not know him; the fields and the trees are the same, but strangers meet him at every turn. He comes to the well-known Churchyard, and sees the village spire pointing the way to heaven as of old, and his mother’s grave, and by the grave kneels a white-haired old man—his father. Often that old man had stretched forth his hands lovingly, saying, “When will my boy come home?” And now he sees the wanderer before him, and all that the prodigal can do is to fall into his father’s arms and say, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” But the old man’s eyes are full of happy tears as he answers, “My son was dead, and is alive again; Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.”



Such is the parable of the Prodigal Son read in the light of modern life.

But it is not only to the young, the foolish, and the extravagant that the parable speaks. The steady man of business, the respectable citizen, may yet be a prodigal son. Our Father is in Heaven, He has given us a home here, His Church on earth, and He has prepared an eternal Home for us in His Church in Heaven. He has given us our property, the gifts of His Holy Spirit, and a goodly inheritance, that we should be members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of His everlasting Kingdom. Too many of us, brethren, waste our spiritual substance in riotous living—that is, we grow tired of the Church, our Father's House ; its lessons and its restrictions are wearisome to us, our own way seems better than our Father's will, and many of us who once knelt at the altar, and gathered our family around us for prayer, find that now they have no time for these things, and that a brief hour on Sunday is all they can spare for God. So they go away in a far country, farther and farther away from their home, and the babble of the market, and the wrangling of the Exchange, are better to them than God's

Word, till they crowd religion out of their heart, and waste their spiritual substance. The conscience which God implanted in them, the holy thoughts, the noble aims of an earlier life, all these are wasted, till a sore spiritual famine arises, and they begin to be in want. They come to the husks; perhaps on a dying bed they discover that their souls have been starved, since "he who flees from the true Food hungers, and he who flees from the Fountain thirsts;" they learn that, although their coffers may be full of all manner of store, and their bodies fed and cared for, they are still in want,—in want of riches in Heaven.

My brethren, there are thousands of such prodigal sons around us, some, perhaps, among you. What shall they do? Shall they not arise, and *go home*? Our Father waits longingly for us, Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us; but death comes fast upon us, and then our opportunity is gone. Now, whilst the arms of the Father are open to receive him, let each prodigal determine within himself, and say, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee."

## SERMON XXVII.

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### *JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.*

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S. LUKE XV. 6, 7.

“Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”

OUR Saviour often took simple subjects to illustrate great truths. He spoke of nets to the fishermen, of seed to the farmer, and of a plough to the field-labourer. He talked of leaven to the woman baking bread, and here He talks of lost sheep to a nation of shepherds. The chief property of His hearers consisted of flocks and herds; and now in Greece and Arabia there are large droves of sheep so tame that they know their names, and come when they are called. Every one, therefore, knew what Jesus meant when He talked of lost sheep, and when at another time He called Himself the Good Shepherd. We, too, shall understand our Master's

meaning if we consider that He is the Good Shepherd because *He defends His sheep*. Those Judean shepherds had wolves and lions to contend against, and so now Satan wanders among us as a roaring lion, seeking whom He may devour ; wolves of unbelievers try to strip us of our faith, wicked men try to destroy us with temptations to sin, and against all these enemies the Good Shepherd defends His sheep. Next, *the Good Shepherd takes care of His sheep*. He leads them in the green pastures of His Church, and by the still waters of His Sacramental Grace. He shows them marvellous great kindness in a strong city, and in a good land where there is no want of anything which is good. He feeds them on food which, like the widow's store, fails not, and hides them from the provoking of all men beneath the shadow of His Altar, as beneath the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But especially Jesus is the Good Shepherd because *He seeks those who are lost*.

Nothing strays sooner than a sheep, except, perhaps, a man. Those hearers of Jesus knew well what it was to seek a lost sheep. One of them had a hundred sheep somewhere on the mountains ; one morning he finds that one is

missing, and he takes his staff and goes forth to seek it among the rocky valleys and rough mountain sides. He calls it by name, and presently he hears a faint bleat, and in some lonely water-course he finds the lost sheep, half dead, and he takes it up carefully, and bears it home rejoicing. This is what Jesus, the Good Shepherd, did, and still does, for His lost sheep. This is what He did in the old days when He walked on this earth. Look in fancy upon the streets of Jerusalem, go down the narrow courts and by-lanes of sin and infamy, there is Jesus, the Good Shepherd, seeking His lost sheep. You ask whose house that is; you are told that the woman who lives there is a sinner, yet there you will see the Good Shepherd. He has found that poor, soiled, lost sheep, and He says to her, "Daughter, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." Presently a crowd approaches, the Jewish rulers are dragging forward a weeping woman taken in adultery. They want to stone her, but Jesus wants to save a stray sheep. He stoops down and writes on the ground. I wonder what He wrote. Perhaps those blessed words, "There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth." The Good Shepherd walks by the

sea-side and finds S. Matthew engaged in a calling full of temptation, and He leads him away. Wherever the sheep had strayed the Good Shepherd searched for them. He looked into a tree for Zaccheus, and upon a cross for the penitent thief. And Jesus is doing the same now as when He went about seeking to save those which were lost, with sad eyes, and weary feet, and outstretched, loving hands. Wherever sin and vice are, in squalid streets where men and women curse and gamble and fight; in grand thoroughfares, where people sin by their indifference, their selfishness, their want of charity; in places of business, where men over-reach their fellowmen, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is seeking for lost sheep.

Let us try to read yet another parable in the light of the present day. We will not place the scene among the rocky valleys of Syria, or the sheep-dotted downs of England, but in a great city. The streets are thronged with people. Youth passes by, with bright eyes and strong limbs, full of hope, and high aims, and confidence. Old age creeps along, white-haired, feeble, and dim-eyed; fair women sweep by in gay clothing, and their skirts brush against the ragged, hollow-

eyed outcast, once fair and pure as they—so long ago! Bright faces gather round one house as the bridal party comes forth, and next door the hearse bears off its burden to the cemetery. An innocent child is prattling of to-morrow's holiday, and is jostled by the white-faced criminal escaping from his doom. From one house come the sounds of revelry and joy, and close by, shut in by the drawn blinds, a father is weeping over his first-born, killed by his own excess. From the doors of the stately Church comes the music of chant and psalm, and the organ peals through the street, where the cry of the drunkard and blasphemer echo. Through all this changeful scene of joy and sorrow, innocence and sin, the Good Shepherd is seeking His lost sheep. No streets are too dark, no dens are too foul for Him to visit. At many a door He stops and says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Many a time they will not open unto Him, and He goes away sadly. There is no room for Him, He has come unto His own, and His own receive Him not. At one house there is a merry meeting of young people, and the laugh and the jest go round. The Good Shepherd, who was welcome at the marriage-feast at Cana, seeks

admission ; but they will not have Him there. His presence would be a check to their talk, the songs and jests are not fit for His ears, and so the door is shut. My brethren, how many social gatherings there are among us *where Jesus is shut out!* He goes to yonder grand house—it is the house of Dives, whose purple is of the richest, and his fine linen of the finest, and who fares sumptuously every day. He loves to be saluted in the market-place, he knows that his commercial credit is high, that his name is great on the Exchange, yet he knows also that Jesus is shut out of his house. He has taken part in transactions which will not bear *His* scrutiny. There are documents in his strong box which would read strangely beside the Gospel. With all his getting he has not got heavenly wisdom ; with all his investments, he has invested nothing in Heaven. So, when death comes to his luxurious bed, in spite of the locked doors and the watching servants, he finds that death has come in, and that Jesus is shut out.

Out in the noisy street the Good Shepherd is seeking His lost sheep. He has found one, Lazarus the beggar, clothed in rags and sores. His only idea of heaven has been a glimpse of



the blue sky between the chimneys ; his only notion of beauty, the sight of a flower in the rich man's window ; his only hope of rest, the quiet grave. And now the Good Shepherd has found him. How tenderly He bears with his ignorance ; how full of sympathy He is for his sorrows ! See, He has carried him home, his rags are exchanged for a shining robe ; all his tears are wiped away, never to return, and he sees brighter flowers than ever bloomed on this cold earth. Still the Good Shepherd is seeking His lost sheep. Under the lamps a pale form flits by—a lost sheep, indeed—one of the great lost legion. Pure women turn aside from her with scorn, and gather their skirts around them lest they should be defiled. Stern moralists are ready with the stones of reproach and condemnation. Hunger, and shame, and despair drive her on. The dark river rolls at her feet. She hesitates in her purpose. A vision of the old innocent days comes back to her ; she remembers her country home ; her pure love ; her Confirmation ; her first Communion. By her side her good and evil angels are wrestling for her soul. She has fallen on her knees. Tears of penitence spring to unaccustomed eyes—

behold, she prayeth,—“ Lord, be merciful to me, “a sinner.” And in a moment the Good Shepherd is by her side, and she seems to hear a voice saying, “ Whomsoever cometh to me I will in “nowise cast out.” Through many a rough way He has sought her, and through many a foul path and darksome road. And now He cries, “ Rejoice with Me, for I have found my sheep “which was lost.” And there is joy in Heaven, joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner who repenteth. In Heaven it is not the news of a great victory, or the prosperity of a country, or a change of Government, which gives joy. These interest the people on earth, but the salvation of a sinner is the chief cause of rejoicing among the Angels of God. My brethren, the saints and angels are waiting now for news of you. The ministering spirits who watch over your welfare are waiting, the Good Shepherd is waiting. Will that lost sheep come home? Is that careless one become more serious? Has that open evil-liver repented with tears? Has that hard-hearted man been softened? Has that worldly man looked up to Heaven? And if the answer “ Yes ” is given, there is joy in Heaven, and one grand wave of melody goes up

before the throne of God, a hymn of joy for a repentant sinner. The Good Shepherd is seeking you *now*. Ah! how tenderly He calls us by the Services of His Church, by the whisper of Conscience, by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He offers us pardon, peace, and rest. He bids the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his path; He bids the proud become as a little child, and the selfish learn to deny himself, and He will abundantly pardon. Shall not we add to the joy of Heaven now by our sincere repentance, and learn to say with truth,

“ I was wandering and weary,  
When my Saviour came to me,  
For the ways of sin grow dreary,  
And the world had ceased to woo me ;  
And I thought I heard Him say,  
As He passed along my way ;  
Oh silly sheep ! Come near Me,  
My sheep should never fear Me,  
I am the Shepherd true ?”

SERMON XXVIII.

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*THE SAINTS: THEIR CHARACTER AND  
THEIR REWARD.*

(THE FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS.)

*By A. R. ASHWELL, M.A., Canon of Chichester.*

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S. MATTHEW V. 11.

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you.”

THE glowing language of the Epistle of the Day sets before us the security of the Saints below, the glory of the Saints above. In the Gospel for the Day we have our Lord's own description of what His Saints on earth are like. That is, we have Christ's own description of those who can rejoice in this security now, and who can hope for that glory hereafter. There is a marvellous contrast between the two, and it must have struck you all very much as you heard it

broken. He himself had suffered under it. Christians had begun to find out in bitter earnest the truth of their Lord's words, that the marks of Sanctity included slander, false accusation, and the direst suffering. And then, when all this had come in earnest, then, but not till then, did Christ draw aside the curtain,\* and reveal, or *unveil* to His Servant's eyes, and through him to *all* His Servants to the end of time, how things really stood. So far as human perception went, the Christians were of all men most miserable. They were falsely accused of the most hideous crimes. They were actually made to endure the most hideous torments, death the very least of them. Such was the outward appearance. But draw back the veil, and what do we see? For human enmity, angelic succour. For earthly torment, divine protection. Angels are specially bidden to see that the faithful on earth should remain uninjured; while as to those who had gone hence, and whom we are so soon to join, their state of joy and glory is set forth in all its brightness. Oh noble commentary on the many times

\* Remember that "Apocalypse," or "Revelation," means simply, an Unveiling, or Drawing back of the Veil—i.e., the Veil which hides the reality of things from mortal eyes.

repeated "Blessed" of the Lord's beatitudes! Here, in Apocalyptic Vision does the Lord Himself supply the interpretation of the words He spake on the Galilæan mountain,—“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.” Such were His first words in that wondrous Sermon. But *how*? The Apocalypse tells us *how*. On Earth, Angelic hands hold back the Destroyers until the Saints are safe. In Heaven, our brethren, one with us, and whom we soon hope to join, are seen in that ineffable felicity which human words can only adumbrate, but which human thought can never grasp.

Thus, then, does the Epistle of the day confirm, illustrate, and explain, at the moment of direst need, the early words of Christ as given in the Gospel. It sets forth, in two particulars, something of that Blessedness of which Christ spake. Of that infinite Blessedness, no doubt the mind of man can as yet form little conception, and even of what we can understand there is much more set forth in Holy Scripture beside what we read here. But in the Epistle of to-day our attention is concentrated, so to speak, upon

two definite particulars. These are, as I have said,—

I. The earthly security of God's saints.

II. The unseen glory of the Redeemed who are at rest.

And the thought which links the two together is the Unity of Ourselves yet militant with those who have entered into the land beyond the Veil.

Let us think first a little of that *Unity*, and what it consists on.

First, then, that Unity consists in a unity of character: Sanctity or Holiness. All who have that note of sanctity may look upon these two pictures as pictures of themselves—(1.) in their present state; (2.) in their future position. People suffer great loss by reading such passages as if they concerned certain other people, without applying them to themselves. If we are Christians, these two pictures are pictures of *us*. It is *us* for whom the Angels of God hold back the messengers of vengeance. It is none other than ourselves as we shall be a few years hence whom we look upon as standing before the Throned Lamb. But, if so, then we *must* answer to the description in the Gospel. There is no other way. Examine yourselves. What is it that your

soul hungers for? Ask yourselves what hunger is. You know that it is an ever-present painful craving which will not let you rest until it be satisfied. You know how true a description this is of the desire which men and women have for earthly wealth, ease, social consideration, and the like. Those who seek these things do truly hunger for them. The craving is ceaseless. It *never* lets them rest day or night; and year after year, the craving urges them on to ever-renewed exertions for its gratification. So with the satisfying of our lower passions. They who rest their desires on the pleasures of sense do truly *hunger* for them. The sense of desire is never quiet. Let a man be never so much occupied with business and work, the hunger is still felt, and the instant that opportunity occurs he rushes to appease it. And the first note of Sanctity is that our hunger be *for* Sanctity:—an ever-present, never-resting, perpetually vivid craving to be better than we are, to realise in our own characters whatever form of holiness Christ has ordained that we attain unto. The particular forms of excellence to which different men are called differ as widely as points of human character differ. It is in Christ alone that every form of



goodness was fully concentrated. All Beatitudes centre in Him the Blessed One. But, however diverse are the forms of Sanctity appropriate to different men, all must exhibit *this*—the hunger after Sanctity.

Now, what I would say to each one here present is this:—You call yourself a Christian. You profess faith in Christ, you profess that you have a hope that this life ended, you may rest in Him. That is, you profess your hope that in this picture of the Saints, whom none can number, one figure corresponds to yourself. That hope is vain; it is an utter delusion, unless, also, in your measure, those Beatitudes, also, are a picture of you now. Where, in *you*, is that purity of heart?—You, who *know* that your real pleasures lie in things of bodily sense. Where, in *you*, is that spirit of mourning?—You, who *know* that you turn away from the slightest thing that vexes you, and that you rush into pleasure, or society, or business, be it what it may, to drown every thought of sorrow, and, as men profanely say, to kill care. Where, in *you*, is that spirit of submission to persecution?—You, who *know* that social consideration, and the flattering opinion of people round about you, especially those who are

just a little above you, is to you the object of unceasing manœuvring, and contriving. You may come to Church, indeed, but the ante-chamber of a Prince holds many who never see his face or are admitted to his real presence. And so with you. The Angels have no orders to shield you in this life, nor is there any figure in that crowd before the Throne which answers to you—unless, indeed, while time yet lasts, you turn away from your earthly idols, and begin to hunger and thirst for the Righteousness which God alone can give.

But if you *are* hungering and thirsting for that Righteousness, if to you persecution is sweet because in it you suffer with your Lord, if to you slander and false witness bear no sting, but rather the reverse, because in it you stand with Him in His adorable Passion before the false judges who sought the false witness against Him :—then look not only on the words which promise Angelic protection *now*, but look also on the picture of those who have entered into Rest, the unnumbered multitude with the Palms of Victory, for you are already one with them, and shall ere long be actually with them.

Why is this second picture given us ?

Believe me, it is *not* given merely because it represents what we *shall* be, but because it represents what those *are* who have gone before us, and with whom we (if we are faithful) are already one. We, in our earthly lives, already share their chant. From out the earthly life of Saints there rises the pathetic minor which blends with and completes the harmony of the Song of the Redeemed who have gone before. Our prayers mingle with their praises. The two together make up the full harmony of Song in which Heaven *and* Earth combine to celebrate the glory of the Lamb. Oh! Think of those Blessed ones listening for our contribution to their note of Praise. Nay, rather think of Him to Whom the Praise is offered listening for the ascent, from this far-off world of strife, of the notes of the pilgrim-songs of His Church Militant to blend with the triumph-songs of those who have won their rest.

Why should we strive so earnestly to realise this one-ness?

*Not*, believe me, merely as an abstract truth or as a mere fact to fill up the circuit of things which we ought to know. It is far more than this.

It is because our own prayers and praises, it

is because our own *lives*, can never be what they should be unless they are filled, inspired, leavened, by the consciousness that they have a part and a share in the lives of the Blessed Ones above, in the praises which they are offering now. Yes, brethren. If your praises ascend to Heaven to be mingled with theirs before the Throne, so also theirs have their vibration through earth as well. As a note penetrates in *all* directions, so their praises thrill down to earth as well as up to the Throne. They thrill down to us, and mingle with our own in very deed and truth. We do not utter an unaccompanied song, but it is "*with* Angels and Archangels and all "the company of Heaven" that the pure in heart, now militant on earth, send up the Eucharistic chant of grateful voice and offered life.

To draw what has been said to one or two practical issues :—to *one or two*, out of all the myriad practical thoughts and counsels which such a doctrine stirs within us.

First, beware that when we speak of the prayers and the praises we offer now, you do not limit the meaning of these words to vocal prayer and praise alone, or to those which we

offer on our knees, or in God's Churches. No. We here include *all* faithful service rendered to God, service in act as well as word, service done to His Church and His people, knowing that our actions are as much the outcome of our hearts as our best utterances can be. This is the true meaning of the old maxim, "Laborare est Orare,"—Work is Prayer. Every expression of the faith that is in us is Praise, be it in word or deed, in action or endurance.

And then, *secondly*, to take one example of the help that these thoughts may be to us in our actual offices of devotion. Who of us does not mourn over the difficulty of sustaining recollection in prayer? It is a grief to the most devout, to the most affectionate souls. In many, it is a most serious hindrance to the operation of God's Grace. Knowing as we do the wonderful fulness of God's answers to our prayers, meagre, poor as they are, what would not His Grace work in us if our prayers were anything like what they should be? But we strive, and strive, and seem never to be able to overcome this fatal weakness. Might we not find some help from the consciousness that when we pray *we never pray alone?*—that when we pray with the aid of the Holy Spirit we

are in union with all, whether here or beyond the Veil, who are offering prayers to God in the unity of the same Spirit? Whoever then among us feels the difficulty we speak of, let him call up before his soul's eye the myriad of the Saints even now worshipping before the Throne, and feel that his faltering devotion is privileged to be included in the grand stream of worship issuing from Saints and Martyrs, Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles ;—that his voice is but one of the vast choir which falters never, and so let him take heart again, staying himself upon that sympathy which the sense of multitude of sympathetic souls ever furnishes. Your tiny contribution to the vast river of devotion is not lost, O thou humble soul. It, with ten thousand tiny streamlets of human worship from many an unseen worshipper, is pouring its rill into the mighty current which blends with the adoration of those who now rest from their labour, and carried onward and upward it shall reach the Throne, and be accepted by Him Who inspires you with the will to pray. Realize this the next time that deadness seems to seize your soul in prayer, and you will not fail to find in it that support and strength which Christ

intended you to find in it. You will recur to the thought again and again, and never recur to it in vain, and may be that you have cause to bless God through all eternity for this one practical lesson as to the practical application of that great article of our Creed,

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

THE END.

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