

# SERMONS, VOLUME 1

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE

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SERMONS  
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## LIST OF THE SERMONS

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# ADVENT SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 30, 1856

*“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”* —LUKE xii. 40.

I DO not think I can employ the Sundays in Advent better than in speaking to you of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I ought to dwell often on the meaning and purpose of that Festival, seeing that you are invited to keep it every Sunday. It is suggested to all Churchmen by the great Festival of Christmas, but there are reasons of great force which lead me to fix your thoughts upon it now. These thoughts must be turned to it very often, without being fixed upon it to any profitable purpose. You read of debates, trials, legal judgments about it in the newspapers; it is mixed with all the frivolous talk of the day. You must often be tempted to think that it is the least serious subject which the journals are occupied with. “Other questions,” you may say, “lead to some result; this is vague and interminable. Others we can refer to practical tests; this belongs to a region of metaphysical abstractions. And yet all the pettiest passions which other controversies call forth are at work here. All the devices and stratagems of party warfare are in requisition in the nineteenth century as in the ninth. This seems to be the topic which Christians specially select for the purpose of showing to all men how little love they have one to another.”

There can be no doubt that these thoughts have arisen in many hearts. It would be sad indeed if no others had been suggested to any of us. There must be a compensation for every evil in God's universe. All things must work together for good to them that love Him. When we find the question of Sacraments mixing with all the vulgarest and most mundane questions, we may learn the deep and profitable lesson, that they are gifts to common men and not to theologians; that if they

have any power at all, their power must be manifested in our daily lives. The disgust at the mixture of low and grovelling feelings with what we profess to regard as transcendent and divine, may lead us to inquire whether there is no refuge from this strife of tongues, no peaceful home to which we may fly. The painful discovery that all the vehemence and all the triviality that we complain of in others has its seat in ourselves, may lead us to ask whether there is not an escape from ourselves as well as from the world. The answer to these questions may open to us the very deepest as well as the most practical meaning of the Eucharist.

But a minister of Christ has no business to assume that these better feelings, if they are left to contend with the others, will get the mastery. He is bound by his office to aid them so far as he can, to take pains that they may not be crushed either by confusions of the intellect, by perplexities of the conscience, or by an imperfect belief in the Power which is at hand to sustain us when we are most feeble and most wrong. A right use of the Advent season may, it seems to me, be one of the most effectual means of counteracting the mischiefs, and of drawing forth the good which is latent, in the present circumstances of our Church. Most people have a sense of something of gladness in the Advent of our Lord when they connect it with Christmas. Most people have a sense of something of awe in the Advent of our Lord when they connect it with judgment. The Church brings both thoughts together in her services of to-day, and in those that follow. Each habit of mind belongs to the very name and nature of the Eucharist. We feel instinctively, that in that service we lose both if we lose either. These controversies threaten both equally. If we can in any wise establish and realize their union, we have averted at least a great part of their curse.

And this is not all. Oftentimes it must have happened to us all to meet with two subjects, in each of which it is very important for us to see our way, beset with nearly equal hindrances. After making various ineffectual attempts to remove them, we are inclined to adopt the conclusion that each is a hopeless labyrinth, that it is mere waste

of time to look for an exit out of either. Then we discover that there is a passage between them, and that the one is the clue to the other. I believe that that is the case with respect to these two great topics, I will not say of theology, but of human life. I believe there is a problem respecting Advent, which the earnest and devout consideration of the problem respecting the Eucharist may help us to solve.

What is the problem about Advent? I think you have all been at times perplexed by it. You hear of the Son of Man coming. You are told to be ready for His coming. Expressions of this kind do not occur once or twice in the New Testament, they are characteristic of it. Sometimes you hear of His coming as a thief in the night; sometimes you hear of His returning as a bridegroom from the wedding. In the passage from which my text is taken, both these forms of speech are combined. What do they signify? Are they merely figures which point to the necessity of preparation for death? Is our departure out of this world that which is denoted by the coming of the Son of Man? If so, what has this coming to do with the first coming of Christ? Why are the two brought together in this day's services, as if there was a close and direct relation between them? But if it is not so, wherein lies the force of the admonition? How can each one of us bring it home to himself? How can a coming of Christ to reign over the earth, or to judge the earth at some distant day, be held forth to generations of men as an event for which they are to be ready, which may come suddenly upon each man? No doubt the point may be explained to the satisfaction of divines and commentators; they may have their own technical way of interpreting the phraseology of the Bible. But surely that which is addressed to the consciences of ordinary men must commend itself to those consciences. That which calls on them to cast away the works of darkness, cannot be itself a dark oracle. That which comes as a message from the true God, cannot require any tricks or subterfuges to explain it. If this language is not strict, what language can be? What is it sent for, but to lay bare the falsehoods and treacheries of our hearts?

Is it not urging us to put on an armour of light, in which we may appear before the Judge and Searcher of hearts?

To parry these questions is impossible. But is it less difficult to parry those others which are suggested by the consideration of the Feast of the Lord's Supper? I do not speak of some which may start up in particularly captious, sceptical hearts. I speak of those which have tormented Christendom for centuries, which have not been more debated in schools than in nations, which have affected the condition of all Europe, which are to this day the watchwords of opposing Churches. All these, you know, turn ultimately upon the presence of Christ. When we come to that Feast, is He there, or is He absent? Is it a real presence or an imaginary presence? Do we meet Him there only because we believe Him to be there? Or is He there, and is that to be the ground of our belief? If He is there, must He not be equally present to those who believe and to those who do not believe? If He is there, may not He be worshipped there? If He is not there, does the Sacrament signify anything? Is there any substance, any person, to whom the outward sign refers? Are we bound to anything by it? Is there any bond between the visible and the invisible world?

Surely these are practical questions like the others, most practical. Like them, these cannot be put by under pretence that they are too mysterious for us. They are not too mysterious to be debated in drawing-rooms; they cannot be too mysterious to be spoken of in churches. They are not too mysterious to disturb the hearts and consciences of poor men and women; they cannot be too mysterious for us to hope that God, Whom we invoke daily as the Author of peace and the Lover of concord, of Whom we ask daily that He will grant us in this world knowledge of His truth, will enable us to see our way into them, that we may not lose the peace which Christ gave and of which His hand and His side were the assurance, that we may not lose the truth, which He saith can alone make us free.

We speak of the Advent or coming of *Christ*. I do not, of course, in the least object to this language. It is perfectly Scriptural. But yet

it is important to observe that our Lord Himself speaks much oftener of the coming of the *Son of Man*. As He does so in this passage, it may be worth while to inquire whether that name does not throw light upon some of the first set of questions which embarrassed us. What was the desire of nations? What was it that the different tribes of the earth, so far as we can gather their longings from the different songs, mythologies, complaints of philosophers who scorned the people, complaints of those who represented the people, were seeking for and could not find? Surely it was a Son of Man. It was One higher than men, Who could govern them. It was One acquainted with men, Who could feel as they felt, suffer as they suffered. To unite the two sides of the character seemed impossible. But each presented itself with mighty force and attraction to one and to another. To *that* ideal it was felt there must be some reality corresponding. What we say when we speak, as we have spoken to-day, of Christ's coming in great humility, when we speak of His entering Jerusalem sitting upon an ass, amidst hosannas which proclaimed that He was the heir of David's throne, is that He did combine what seemed to be contradictory, what yet the heart of human beings confessed to be essential elements in the Divine Man they waited for. We affirm that He appeared Who had a right to rule the wills of all human beings, Who established that right by never exalting Himself above any, by being the Servant of all. We feel that we are setting forth His being and character most consistently when we speak of His birth in the manger, of His temptation, of His cross, as interpreting the power which He used when He bid the winds and the waves be still, when He restored the man whom no man could bind with chains to his right mind, when He raised the dead. All His Royalty and Divinity, we say, were expressed most completely in His humiliation and His sorrow. These declare what the very nature of power is, in Whom it dwells fully and perfectly. These, we say, declare the mind of Him from Whom all things proceed. He that has owned Jesus as the Son of Man, has in Him seen the Father of All.

This has been the faith of Christendom, the faith which has given all their worth and interest to Advents and Christmas Days. These have declared that a Son of Man, such a Son of Man as this, has actually proved that the dominion over men is His, that from Him they receive the life of their bodies and the life of their spirits, the power to see and hear, the power to think, believe, hope, love; that in Him they are constituted by God's eternal law, that apart from Him they have no life at all.

Thus the coming of Christ, that first coming in great humility, imports a continual lordship of His over the being and faculties of man. He did not dwell for thirty-three years upon earth to show forth a spectacle to men of One with whom they had had nothing to do before, with whom they were to have nothing to do hereafter. He came, so Apostles teach us, because by Him all things had been created and by Him all things consisted, because He had been appointed heir of all things, because all things were upheld by the word of His power, because the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. And this purpose, they say, was not accomplished till He rose from the dead and ascended on high, till He claimed the glory which He had had with His Father before the worlds were. *That* was the vindication of His title to be Lord. That proved Him to be the Christ who could baptize men with the Holy Spirit. That was the beginning of a society which could be nothing but universal, because it stood on the Name of the Son of God and Son of Man. That led captive men's captivity to sense and visible things. That was necessary that the promise might be thoroughly accomplished, "The Lord God shall dwell among you, and He shall be your Father, and ye shall be His children."

By this language we are able to understand that other language which refers to the coming, or to the appearing and unveiling of the Son of Man after His Ascension. We ought, it is said, and said most truly, to give the same effect to the same words when they refer to the most different times and circumstances. Let us try to do so. Let us think how Apostles who believed in *this* Coming of Christ must

have thought of every event in the history of the world, and of every event in the life of an individual man. Must not the first have been regarded as discoveries to the world of its true King, of Him Who rules all its secret movements, Who really directs all the springs of that policy which statesmen and sages pretend to direct, of Whose constant order and government calm times are the witness, Whose righteous authority is attested by those great crises, those moments of vengeance, when the framework of society is rent in pieces, and the crimes and oppressions of men who have made themselves the ministers of evil instead of good, are visited with a plague of fire and a plague of blood? One of these great acts of retribution stood out before the Apostles as the coming of the Son of Man in *their* day. It had an importance which could be assigned to no one that had preceded it. For it gathered up into itself all the history of the previous world, it inaugurated the history of the new world, it declared Jesus to be the Son of Man Whom the Jewish nation had existed to bear witness of, in Whose name its kings had reigned and its prophets had prophesied, Whom it rejected because He came to bless all the families of the earth, Who was exalted on high to be the blessing of all those families in spite of that rejection. *This* was the revelation of Christ in that day, which Jesus taught His Apostles, which the Apostles taught the Churches they founded to expect, and even to long for, though with awe, as the judgment-day on their own land, as the redemption-day of humanity. The destruction of the Temple was to be the sign of the Son of Man, the sign that His body was the temple in which God would meet man and man might meet God.

This unveiling of the Son of Man they speak of in language which can leave no doubt that they meant us to measure all subsequent movements and catastrophes in the universe by the same rule, to regard them as days of the same Lord, as manifestations of the same invisible presence. When again, as in the text, the address is to the conscience of individual men, when they are told to be ready because they know not when the Son of Man cometh, I do not see why we

should doubt that there is a direct reference to the same events, for the life of every man is bound up with the life of his nation and of his kind. That which affects a society for good or for evil, must affect every member of it for good or for evil. The very test of the difference between one member of it and another is the use which he makes of these general admonitions, the interpretation which he puts upon them, the earnestness with which he lays them to heart as messages to himself. But I admit that this meaning does not and cannot exclude the truth that every judgment which is not national, every family chastisement, every sickness, every voice of parents and friends speaking from without, every secret monition in whatever form it may come to any one of us, is a call to recollect the Son of Man, is in the strict sense a visitation from Him. And here again our experience may tell us what special force there is in that phrase to describe the hints and pricks which are administered to our consciences, and the judgments that are pronounced upon our thoughts and acts. What is it that we are convicted of? Is it not of some selfish, self-seeking deed or purpose which showed that we did not take up our position as men; that we did not acknowledge the obligations which the law of kind lays upon us? Are not these reminiscences the torments of a sick bed? Do not they witness—It is a Son of Man who is Lord over us; we have despised these His brethren, therefore we have despised Him?

We may then very well admit that when our Lord says, “*In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh,*” He gives us all and more than all the warning respecting the hour of death which preachers have ever drawn out of His words. Assuredly it is no contradiction of His other teaching—it does not jar with any conception of His Advent which we receive from Him—to say that, though on earth we may fancy ourselves under a law of selfishness, though here we may act as if we had no ties and relationships to those who surround us, when we close our eyes on the things with which they have been familiar, we pass into a region where we shall know assuredly that the Son of Man is reigning, where it will be impossible any longer to think that we are

out of His presence, or to escape from that divine law of love which binds man to man, which binds earth and heaven together. The lie upon which we have acted must then be laid bare; the whole scheme of our existence must be exposed and broken in pieces; we must confess Him who gave Himself for men to be the Lord of all.

And now let us turn to the other subject. If this be the idea of Christ's coming, whether to the world or to individuals, which the New Testament sets before us, what is to make us ready for His coming? What is to save us from that sleep into which our Lord warns us that we may fall? what is to arouse us if it has overtaken us? Surely we must be reminded of His presence with us. The natural notion that what is invisible is unreal; that He does not govern us because our eyes do not see Him; that He does not govern the world because the world fancies that it governs itself, this must be set at naught. We must have an assurance—a continual assurance—that the senses are as little judges of what is true in morals, as they are in physics; that self, which appears to be the centre round which everything here revolves, is no more really the centre than our earth is the centre round which the heavenly bodies revolve. What shall give us this assurance? What shall make the enormous paradox which Christendom has confessed, upon which all the civilization of the modern world has depended—that One who died upon the Cross is the King of Man, and that in Him all the glory of God is revealed—a part of our lives, a substantial principle which may determine all our acts; which, if it does not determine them, may torment us and be a witness against us when we regulate them on another and an opposite maxim? Assuredly an ordinance which told us that Christ was not present with us, but that we may by an effort of memory bring back an act which He once performed, a suffering which He once underwent; that we may even, by an act of imagination, bring His Person to our mind, would confuse us as much about His first coming as His second. The Death which it would present to us would be an event merely, not a power drawing all to itself, not the pledge of a victory over Death and Hell. And the hope

such a service encourages must be as little satisfactory as the vision of the past. It must be a hope, not of a revelation to every eye of that same Son of Man who had been pierced, but only of certain rewards and distinctions which shall be bestowed upon those who have believed in Him or loved Him more than others. But would a service which supposed that, by a miracle, at a certain season, He made Himself present to those from whom He was habitually absent vindicate much better the purpose of His incarnation and the effect of His death? Would not such a service make void the idea of an actual union of God with men in a Mediator, make void His own words, "Lo, I am with you always;" make void the intimations of that truth which are brought to men by His visitations in the different circumstances of their lives?

Is there then a theory of our Eucharistic service which is more comprehensive than either of these, and may supersede them both? God forbid that I should propose such a one, or should wish you to embrace it! My desire is to show how miserably men fail when they try their hands at theories, in matters which concern the relation and the intercourse of God with His creatures. It is not that I believe this relation is less real than that of men with each other; it is not that I hold this intercourse to be more accidental or uncertain than that of men with each other. I know no ground for the relationships among men but their common relation to God. I know no security for the permanence of fellowship among men but that fellowship which depends upon no chances, which the Unchangeable God Himself has established. But this relationship and this intercourse are, as I hold, represented to us in Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, outward and visible signs of a spiritual grace which He Who cannot lie gives to us. They are not, and cannot be, represented by theories which are the products of our intellects, which have no hold upon the deeper spirits of human beings, which cannot present themselves in any forms, which are of necessity partial and one-sided, which deal with what is dead, not with what is alive. I do not oppose a new theory to old theories that have worn themselves out by the friction of centuries, and yet that will never

confess themselves to be defunct. I oppose to them the Sacrament itself which is the subject of them; I say that that was appointed by Him Who knew what is in man, and that it has not grown old and will not grow old; that it is as fresh now and as adapted to all human wants as when the first disciples received it with joy and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. What this Sacrament asks of you and me, of lawyers and of divines, is that we will not fancy it wants our patronage, our explanations. It asks that we will leave this man and that to utter his rash, hasty, and imperfect dogmas about it, and that we will not try to enact in opposition to them other dogmas as rash and imperfect; that we will allow Christ to take care of His own ark and of that which it contains, without supposing that we can make it steadier or safer by stretching our clumsy hand to keep it from falling. On all such vulgar and profane experiments God in the history of His Church has pronounced His judgments long ago. Every new age will try to prove that it is wiser than He is, that it knows better how to maintain His cause than He does. He has poured contempt on all that has been attempted for this purpose even in a noble spirit, by learned men of deep minds in other times; He certainly will expose the puny mimicry of ours.

But He never has scorned, and never will scorn, any one who seeks not to defend this Sacrament, or to make theories about it, but to receive it. All are invited to do that. If a man is told that the wicked are either not partakers of Christ's body at all, or are partakers of it to their own destruction, he may well say, "Then assuredly I must not approach that table, for I am one of those wicked. My conscience tells me that I am." But when he has arrived at that conclusion he may say further, "Verily, I can see no way out of this wickedness, unless some one has come into the world to deliver me and my kind from it; unless some one shall enable me and all of us to be partakers of His righteousness. I hear that such an One has been: my fathers said so. Here is the Sacrament which assured them that it was so. Here is the Sacrament which told them that they might eat and live, that they

might cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. It speaks to me who feel the need to do that perhaps more than they did, as it spoke to them. It bids me partake of One Who died that I might live, and live for evermore. My spirit wants that food. Whether I have faith or whatever is said to be needful for that end, God knows; I leave myself in His hands. I am weary of myself; I want to be delivered from the burden of self—I want to have that life of the Son of Man Who did not spare Himself, but gave Himself for men. It may be that I want much more than this; if I do, I believe God will give it. This I know that I want, and this therefore I will seek.”

Another may have been harassed much with thoughts of death and of the preparation he ought to make for it. He may have tried hard to follow rules that have been given him; to fix his thoughts steadily on the possibility that this year or the next his soul may be required of him. He has found it generally impossible. The duties of life have thrust themselves in his way, he could not neglect them; if he has neglected them that he might be fitter for his change and for that which is to follow, a sense of bitter contradiction has seized him—he has felt he was cultivating that selfish habit of mind which has the very nature of sin. Then he hears of being ready for the Son of Man. He is told of a Sacrament which sets forth His death to death till He comes. “To set forth that death to others, to partake of that death myself,” he thinks, “must be surely better than to make painful and desperate efforts for realizing my own. So I enter into the common death; so I come into sympathy with all my fellows; so I acquire the mind of Him Who never sought to please Himself, Who died that we might have life.”

I give you instances of the way in which men may be led to apprehend the inner nature of the Sacrament, that which is most puzzling to dogmatists and theorists, by the sheerest necessity, by the experience of their own errors, of their own profoundest evil. Such persons, if they find Christ at the altar, will certainly find Him also in the study, by the fireside, in the midst of their common work. Such men, if they worship Christ then, will gain help to preserve them from all idolatry of any

outward things whatever, whether they be the elements of bread or wine, or anything else that is sacred because it is God's creature, and accursed when it is made into a God. For those who eat this heavenly food in haste because it is the Lord's Passover, with their staff in their hand and their shoes on their feet, well know that they need it to deliver them from forgetfulness of an unseen Presence, from devotion to anything visible. They have not time to speculate and debate. They want strength to live. They want to be ready for the Bridegroom, whether He call upon them to toil for Him here or to feast with Him hereafter. They want to partake of His humility because they are sure that that was in truth the greatest manifestation of His glory.

And if we come, brethren, with these desires to the Eucharist, it may be for our blessing, and not for our hurt, that we have read of it in the midst of reports of the crimes of states and of individuals, of tyrannies and slaveries abroad, of mercantile frauds at home. It can bear to come in contact with these things, for the Son of Man Himself came into closest contact with a tyrannical, slavish, Mammon-worshipping world. He came into it that He might raise us out of it. He came into it that we might know that the Spirit of Cruelty, the Spirit of Lies, is not our King or the King of Men; that we have a Father in Heaven Who will not let us yield in any act of our lives to the oppressor, if we will yield ourselves to His Spirit. In our baptism, our godfathers and godmothers declared that we were the children of that Father; they renounced in our name all our oppressors. In the Eucharist we assert our sonship; we claim to be partakers of the Son, in Whom God owns us as members of His family; we ask that nothing in heights or depths, or things present or things to come, may separate us from His love or break our allegiance to Him. In that Eucharist we declare that our hope is in a Lamb of God which has taken away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of Himself; therefore we ask that we may be ready when the Son of Man comes to claim us as sacrifices to God, and that we may not be found choosing another master for ourselves, and shutting ourselves up in a hell of selfishness and despair. In the

Eucharist we gave thanks for a death not for ourselves only, but for the whole world; therefore in it we look forward to a Redemption which shall be not for ourselves only, but for the world, when Christ shall appear without sin unto salvation.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

DECEMBER 7, 1856

*“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” —1 CORINTHIANS x. 11.*

THE passage from which these words are taken resembles in its general design the one which we have been reading as the Epistle for this morning. In one as in the other, St. Paul claims the Jewish Scriptures for the use of Gentiles as well as of Jews. In one, as in the other, he declares that all the narratives which seemed to belong to the chosen people exclusively, had a wide human application; that the force of them was not less for those who lived in his day than for those whom Moses or Joshua led; that the progress of ages would make the warnings and the consolations in them more and not less intelligible, more and not less necessary. “All these things,” he writes to the Corinthians, “happened unto them for ensamples: all these things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” And this is the moral which the Church in her Collect to-day has drawn from the words which she has taken from the fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

There is, however, one peculiarity in this tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians, which is latent, I am convinced, in the other Epistle, but which is not fully brought out there. That the members of the Greek Church may understand the rich inheritance of Hebrew experience upon which they had entered, St. Paul explains to them the *sacramental* character of the old records. The language is very remarkable. I will read it to you:—“*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and*

*did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”* Then come the words of the text; and speedily after some words to which I shall have to draw your attention in the course of my sermon:—“*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*”

Without at present adverting to these words, I wish you to observe, —1st, That St. Paul makes his argument for the unity and permanence of the Scriptures, and their suitableness to the ages in which they were *not* written, depend upon the fact that the events which they recorded were Sacraments of God’s presence. 2d, That he makes this assertion the ground of direct moral exhortations against idolatry, against fornication, against murmuring, against that sin of tempting God in which all other sins may be included. In other words, the use of the Scriptures for what we should call the most plain practical purposes, as warnings against direct open crimes, as preservatives of a right inward temper, is deduced from what many at first sight would reject as a strange and fantastical estimate of their character.

I trust that our reverence for St. Paul as a Christian warrior, conversant with hard realities himself, eager that all his disciples should be earnest and real, especially watchful of those tendencies in the Corinthians which were likely to make them speculators rather than doers, will save us from pronouncing that he can, even for an instant, when he was treating of so all-important a subject as this, when he was professing to deal with it in so very practical a manner, have

deviated into an exercise of fancy or of wit. And yet what are called the typical applications of Scripture are for the most part such extravagant exercises of the fancy and the wit, are so abhorrent from the sense of plain people, anxious for a guide to their feet and for a power that shall enable them to fulfil the plain, hard tasks they have to fulfil, that I cannot wonder if some have wished to forget this passage in the Apostle's writings, and have even listened with impatience, but not with entire disbelief, to those who have told them that he was allowing the conceits which he had learned in the school of the Rabbi Gamaliel to mar the simplicity which is in Jesus Christ.

I am desirous to speak to you on this subject, on this Second Sunday in Advent, when our minds are fixed by a solemn prayer on the Scriptures which are written for our learning, because I am sure that if the Scriptures are, as many think, losing their hold upon us, the cause of that enormous mischief lies very greatly in our confused apprehensions respecting what is called their direct, and what is called their spiritual signification. Though I admit most fully that there is a protest in honest, manly English minds, against all attempts to strain Scripture from its broad obvious sense, to make it fit the experience of particular minds and the circumstances of particular ages, I am bound to acknowledge also that such interpretations do find favour with minds of a devout and Christian quality, and that they are felt to be an escape from the dry critical expositions which make the customs and habits of an Oriental people the main guides to the understanding of a book, which we have been taught to regard as a possession for ever. The conflict between these feelings has been greater at all times than we know; but we are probably right in supposing that it never was so great as in our own. The critic entrenches himself in philological laws and maxims, boldly maintaining that if the Bible history is a history, it must bear to be tried by these. The sufferer on a sick-bed feels that the words speak directly to him or to her, and that that speech must be true, whatever becomes of the other. Each is liable to special narrownesses and temptations. The student quickly discerns the morbid and

self-concentrated tendencies of the mere devotional reader. The devotional reader feels instinctively how merely antiquarian the student is apt to be, how little he understands the wants of human beings. Neither is sufficiently alive to his own perils; neither sufficiently understands how much he needs the help of the other. Each has his circle of sympathizers and flatterers, to keep him more exclusive, to prevent him from discerning between that which is true and false in his mode of thinking. By degrees each spends half his energy in denouncing the other. Bystanders, who have as much interest in the controversy as either, begin to regard it as hopeless and interminable. The indifferent or the scoffing multiply. Both parties regard them with nervous and cowardly apprehension; both, alas! are contributing to their growth, and are strengthening them in their negative conclusions.

If I thought that what I have called St. Paul's sacramental idea of the Old Scriptures, was identical with that idea of them as figures, or likenesses, or emblems, or types of events belonging to our Dispensation, or of facts belonging to our spiritual life, I should have no hope whatever of any settlement, now or hereafter, of this strife. But it seems to me that the true understanding of his words, the true application of them to our own condition, would save us at once from any desire to find forced analogies in the divine history, which interfere with our acknowledgment of it as history, and from that inhuman method which takes the juice and meaning out of all events, and leads us to think that the men who were concerned in them were not creatures of our flesh and blood, feeling our wants, bearing our burdens. It seems to me also, that if we rightly appreciated his method, the Bible would become to us a divine book in a sense in which it never can be a divine book while we regard it as a collection of letters dictated by a Divine Being.

It is evident from the passage I read to you, and from those which follow it, that St. Paul is speaking to the Corinthians expressly as a Church cemented by Sacraments. He had the double purpose of teaching them to understand and not to abuse their Sacraments, by

faithfully studying the Scriptures of the Jews as records of their Sacramental discipline, and then to understand those Scriptures by the light which fell upon them from the Sacraments of the New Dispensation. I wish to follow him in that course of thought. As I endeavoured last Sunday to show you how the difficulties respecting our Lord's Advent in humiliation and His advent to judgment ran parallel with the difficulties which were agitating men's minds respecting the Eucharist, and how by reflecting on each we might arrive at some satisfaction respecting the other: so now I will endeavour to show you that our difficulties respecting the Scripture, and our difficulties respecting the Eucharist, likewise illustrate each other; and that we shall not enter fully into the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper if we study its nature anywhere but in the Bible, or the Bible if we try to understand whither it is leading, and how the different stages of its history are related to each other, except from the Lord's Supper.

You will not fail to perceive, I think, that the circumstances of our day, to which I adverted last Sunday, call for at least one part of this inquiry. A certain Act of Parliament determines—so we are told by those best competent to interpret *such* documents—that the Articles contain the whole meaning of Scripture, and that no appeal lies from them to the Scripture. But the Articles themselves assert that an appeal does lie from them to the Scripture. It is this characteristic of them of which we have boasted most. If it is taken away from them, we do not merely contradict a single one of them, we set aside the history and the purpose of the whole body of them. They were formed to protect the Church against a theory which did set at naught the authority of the Scripture, which did treat Scripture as an unintelligible document until its living words were tied and bound in an ecclesiastical interpretation. The Articles assume that the Scriptures are an intelligible document, more intelligible than any which human wit can invent. They denounce certain notions proceeding from the private judgment of doctors, established into dogmas by the private judgment of Popes, which had interfered and do interfere with the free manly study of the

Scriptures, which fettered the conscience of mankind, which hindered men from seeking that common and universal Truth they need, and which our Lord says can alone make us free. Our Common Prayer-Book serves this purpose even in a higher degree. It enables us to feel that we have a fellowship with each other, and with men of all ages, in our deepest wants, and in that truth which is to satisfy them. It makes us discontented with all notions, whether derived from other men or from our own narrow wits, and certain that nothing but Communion with a living God Who knows all and loves all can suffice for any. The Prayer-Book therefore presumes the Sacraments as its ground and standard; and the Articles assume the Scriptures as their ground and standard. Acts of Parliament may command us to understand the Articles without the Scriptures; but if we cannot, and if the Articles say that we cannot, we must adhere to the doctrine we have subscribed. We cannot involve ourselves in a daily self-contradiction. If those have involved themselves in one, who have fled to the help of Acts of Parliament, under the notion that the only way to assert God's truth is to convict their brother of an error, the lesson is a profitable one, and we may lay it to heart.

You can scarcely have failed to observe that St. Paul does not say in this chapter, "The Israelites passed through the Red Sea, and that was the likeness or type of the baptism which you Corinthians receive when you enter Christ's Church;" but he says, "Our fathers *were baptized in the cloud and in the sea.*" In like manner he does not say, "They ate manna and drank of the rock, and that was the likeness of the bread and wine which you eat in the Eucharist;" but he says, "*They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink.*" This is an evident difference of expression, and it indicates a difference in the thought which was to be expressed. St. Paul teaches that the passage through the Red Sea was a sign that the invisible God had taken the Jewish nation to be a people of inheritance to Himself. Every Jew who went through the sea on dry land might accept that sign, might believe that fact. So far as he did, he did not merely escape from Pharaoh

the tyrant; he confessed himself to be under the government of a Righteous King, a Deliverer; he became a freeman. In like manner St. Paul teaches that the fall of the manna was a sign, to each Jew who fed upon it, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Accepting that sign, believing that fact, he entered into a new sense of dependence upon God; in place of the flesh-pots of Egypt, he had not merely the poor nourishment of the desert, he had the rich nourishment which came from trust in an Almighty Friend, from an assurance that He would not desert his race or him. Of the rock St. Paul uses still more remarkable language. He speaks of it as following them. The rock which Moses struck was, of course, stationary; but the water which flowed from it betokened a Presence which was with them always. Each time they drank of an ordinary well, they had a new token of this Presence. The greatest bodily suffering, therefore, which travellers through a desert can endure, was a spiritual lesson; the relief from it was, in the strictest sense, spiritual drink. Every Jew who confessed whence the deliverance came, acquired a new and higher life. He tasted that the Lord was gracious. He became sure that the Ruler of Nature was not a distant Being, was not One Who could command springs to flow forth, but Who had no concern with men. He must be *their* Lord. He must care for them more than for all things. He must be at their right hand, that they should not be moved. All this the Apostle gathers up in the words, "*That Rock was Christ.*" It is compendious language, a kind of symbolical shorthand; but it is perfectly intelligible when taken in connection with the words that precede and follow it; and it was not resorted to carelessly. His very object was to convince the Corinthians that they were not under a different spiritual government and constitution from that under which the Jewish fathers had lived. In all its principles and method it was the same. He Who administered it was the same. The Christ Whom Paul had preached to them as taking flesh, as dying, as rising, as ascending, was that Christ, that Angel of the Covenant, that

Son of God, Who had led the Hebrew people in a pillar of cloud by day, Who had followed them by night in a pillar of fire.

You will see how much coherency such a statement as this gives to the Old Testament records. At the outset of them we are told that the Lord God made a Covenant with Abraham and his seed; that each one of that seed received a sign of that Covenant. To remember this Covenant; to believe that the sign was not a mere sign, but the witness of a living truth—a truth concerning him at every moment of his existence—this is declared to be the characteristic of the true Israelite. To forget this Covenant; to suppose that the sign meant nothing; to suppose that he was not under the continual guidance and government of the God of his fathers; this was the characteristic of the revolting Israelites; this was the root of lawlessness generally; this, above all, led to the transgression of the Second Commandment, to the worship of visible things. But how did the remembrance, how did the forgetfulness exhibit itself? He who connected the sign of the Covenant with its signification, regarded every event that befell his nation or himself as a sign suitable to the circumstances of that time, addressed to the heart and conscience, meeting their special sins and necessities, pointing to one object. All were tokens from the Unseen Being, recalling him whom a thousand influences were reducing into a slave of tyrants, to his rightful allegiance, to his free service. To him who felt no force in the primary sign, nothing else was a sign. The poet says of a man whose mind had been debased and sensualized till all perception of beauty had been extinguished—

A primrose on the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him, And  
it was nothing more.

A state of mind, as many of us know, exceedingly possible; one into which we may sink without exhibiting the outward savageness which is attributed to this potter. But it is better surely to see no brightness in primroses than to see nothing in birth, and marriage, and death; in terrible crimes, or noble acts of devotion; in the struggles and the

falls of other nations or our own, but something to fill a half-hour of vacant talk, or of bootless reading. Not to regard these as signs is surely a great brutishness. It is that which we find the holy men among the Jews attributing to their countrymen; it is that from which, by earnest prayers and thanksgivings, and vigorous recollections of God's mercies and judgments, they seek to deliver themselves. And they speak of God Himself as working by all His acts to effect that awakening and renovation in their minds and the minds of their countrymen, which they cannot produce by any effort of their own. They assure them that He does not forget His Covenant, though they may forget it; that it is everlastingly true, and must accomplish itself; that their idolatries and crimes, all which have arisen from their refusal to believe God and to trust Him, will but manifest His truth and His love to the world; that all things are leading us to a more perfect discovery of His relation with mankind, and of His own essential nature; that One is to be revealed in Whom He can hold perfect communion with men, they looking up to Him as a Father, He owning them as His children.

Here then is a justification, an ample justification, of those who say that the Bible is a book of business and of life, of plain practical morality, and that we have no business to turn it into a book of riddles and allegories. Here is the justification also of those who say that the history is to be read as the history of a nation, and that it cannot be explained away into a set of spiritual maxims and examples for the use of individuals. The history of the journey through the wilderness, and of all other ages of the Jewish Commonwealth, is a history of simple events; of migrations and wars; of victories and defeats; of pastoral, agricultural, commercial prosperity and adversity; of the sins of men who were of our flesh and blood, of men who spake right and did right because they were true. What makes the history a Bible is, that all these facts are interpreted. They are shown to be signs. The meaning of a nation's existence is brought home to us. The personal ground of a nation's law is laid bare before us. Whether the laws are such as belong to all nations, such as mankind was hereafter to recognize

as its laws; or whether they are temporary and local, devised for the education of a particular people, still they are brought before us as God's laws; because the maxim of the whole book is that He is the Educator of that people, and of all people; that all circumstances are His instruments, that all events are assertions of His presence and His rule; that whatever happens to men is intended as a means of showing forth to them His righteousness, and of moulding them to His image.

But if so, here is also the justification of those who insist upon claiming the Bible for themselves and their own time, who must take it as a message to their hearts and consciences, must warp its words from their apparent sense rather than not find that sense in them. Here is the justification for their meaning, the excuse for their outrages on philology. For if the Bible speaks of a Living God, a God Who reigneth for ever and ever; if it sets forth the principles of His government as uniform amidst all changes in the outward tokens of it, they must be right in the essence of their doctrine; they are bound to hold it fast against all schoolmen and all critics. What they want is, that it should be strengthened and not modified. What they want is, to see that they may take the Bible more exactly than they have taken it, and that they may read it now, not less than in the old time, as a book concerning a society; and that so it will become a more precious book to themselves individually than it ever has been. When they trace it as the progressive history of God's revelations to a family, to a nation, and to mankind, they will understand more what support there is in it for them as men, what awful admonitions to them as men whom God has claimed, not as servants, but as sons.

It is on this ground that St. Paul addresses the Corinthians as those upon whom the ends of the world had come. All the purposes and revelations of the different ages had been converging to one point. The Son of God, the express image of the Father, had been revealed in the nature of man. He had brought that nature through death and the grave, and had exalted it to His Father's right hand. Gentiles had been told that He had been made of a woman, made under the law, that

they might receive the adoption of sons. The highest glory that men could attain had been vindicated as the common possession of Jew and of Greek. "Wherefore," he saith, "let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." The temptations which had been about the old people of God, to sensuality, and murmuring, and idolatry, were about them, not less strong than they had been in any former time. "Nevertheless," he goes on, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." What is this way of escape? What was the strength that was to preserve them in the recollection of God's presence and their union with Him? How would He prove His faithfulness? St. Paul takes his instance from one of the temptations of the Jews, that which he regarded as the root of all the rest, that to which the Corinthians were exposed in its most palpable forms. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

Here then was the escape from the temptation, if they were wise men, and really entered into the meaning of that sign which was given them. The bread which they received at their great Church feast, when they regarded it as the communion of the body of Christ; the wine which they received at that feast, when they regarded it as the communion of the blood of Christ, would be continual witnesses to them that they were members of one body with each other and with Him, and so would be a continual protection against the tendency to worship outward and visible things which haunts all men, and into which they must fall, if there is no power acting upon their spirits to deliver them from it, and to give them a divine object of trust and reverence.

I think the consideration of this passage might be very useful to those of us who have been wont to think of the Eucharist rather as a transcendent service for the use of high saints, than as a protection for weak and sinful men from even the grossest and lowest vices. The Bible never makes *that* kind of distinction between the sinner and the saint which we sometimes make. All are regarded as taken under God's care and government; all may receive the signs of that care and government, and may believe them, and may cast themselves upon Him to save them from that which degrades and destroys them. There can be no higher blessing than this to the greatest saint. If he supposes he does not want it, he sinks back into the condition of the worst sinner; he renounces his dependence. He is in peril of a worse and deeper descent than the mere sensualist has ever known. If that sensualist claims the deliverance which Christ offers him, if he seeks the righteousness which is not his own, he becomes a saint. There can be no higher title to the name than that which is acquired by continual trust, from a sense of past wrong and present weakness. The morality of the Gospel is exalted because it is so universal. This highest idea of participating in the life of Christ is only possible, when we regard ourselves as members of the same body with the lowest. So we understand how that life can only be given through that flesh and blood which He shared with the worst of us, through that death which He died with the malefactor.

Again, this consideration might be of great use to those who are wont to suppose that if we have a very lofty idea of the worth and nature of this Sacrament, we must touch upon the borders of idolatry. St. Paul teaches us that the loftiest thought of all, that which makes it an actual communion with the body and blood of Him Who has glorified our humanity at the right hand of God, is the effectual deliverance from idolatry. A low notion of the Sacrament, by turning it into a mere ceremony, leads directly to superstition and idolatry. That view which treats it as the sign of Christ's eternal presence with men, and of their right to claim fellowship with Him, shows how this Sacrament

is the consummation of all the sacraments by which God educated His people out of idolatry in the days of old, and how it may make everything that happens to us in our common life, sacraments to save us from ever exalting the creature into the place of the Creator.

This is part of the help which we may get from the application of the Sacramental principle of Scripture to our own cases. Not a little also, I think you will see, may be learnt respecting that subject which has perplexed us all so much, about the participation of Sacraments by the wicked. We may see how nearly falsehoods border upon great truths, and how much mischief we may do if we use our methods instead of God's to distinguish them. St. Paul says that all did eat the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink; and yet he teaches us strongly that the food was not received; that they would not have it because they did not recognize the meaning of the sign. He speaks of our being all members of one body, because we all eat of that one bread. He surely instructs us that we cut ourselves off from the body, by denying our relation to the Head of it; not that the relation is an unreal one. All these differences make themselves clear in the light of Scripture and the practice of life. Dogmatists make divisions and destroy distinctions.

There are still other difficulties concerning the Eucharist, through which the study of this chapter might help us to see our way. They refer to sacrifice. Some call the Eucharist a sacrifice. Some call it the commemoration of a sacrifice. Our Service is very express in giving it the latter name. We speak of the "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and oblation, which Christ made upon the cross, for the sins of the whole world." No principle is so important for us to vindicate as this. All history attests the tremendous consequences of the notion, that the sacrifice still requires to be perfected, that we are not to give thanks for it as complete. But St. Paul speaks in this chapter of a sacrifice, as implying communion, a fellowship with the Being to Whom it is offered. He speaks of the sacrifices of the Gentiles as offered to demons or demigods (we unfortunately translate the word "devils") and not

to God; and of the fellowship of the heathen being therefore with these imperfect beings, with all their mortal and earthly passions, and not with the True God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the reason which he gives why the Corinthians should not eat things sacrificed to idols, though they were innocent things in themselves. It implied a participation in the worship of those lower beings, an acknowledgment that men were subject to them, when Christ had redeemed them and brought them to His Father. Let us understand then, well, what this finished sacrifice has done for us; let us understand why we are to give thanks for it. If it had left us merely to the recollection of the past, it would be unlike all God's elder sacraments; for they brought the Jews, who received them truly, to recollect that He Who brought their fathers out of Egypt was with them in the promised land, with them in whatever land of exile they might be called to dwell in, and that they might offer themselves as sacrifices to God. These sacraments told them that they must not be content with the present or with the past, that God intended them for a more perfect communion with Him, that He intended to manifest Himself fully to the world. No lower belief, no feeble hope, can assuredly sustain us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. The sacrifice has been made once for all. But it has been made that we might be united to the great High Priest, Who has entered within the veil, and Who is presenting His finished sacrifice continually before His Father. It has been made that we might look onward to that day, which is to wind up all the revelations and all the sacraments of God, when His servants shall see His face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads, and "there shall be no night, and they shall need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God will give them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

## THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

DECEMBER 14, 1856

*“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”* —2 CORINTHIANS V. 18.

I SPOKE last Sunday of the Scriptures, as explaining the nature and purpose of Sacraments. I spoke of our Sacraments as throwing back a light upon the method of the Scriptures, and upon that hope which they set before us. But as my object was to discover the character and virtue of that Sacrament which we call the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion, I could not confine myself to these general considerations. The Red Sea, and the Manna, and the Rock, might be, as St. Paul taught us that they were, sacraments of God; the principle which was indicated by them might be a universal one; every event in the history might be regarded by Prophets as a sign and sacrament of the same unseen Presence. But the Scriptures tell us, besides, of the special institution of *Sacrifices*. These sacrifices, it appeared, had associated themselves with a Eucharistical service; that had been supposed to have a sacrificial signification. It was impossible not to ask whether it had or no. Here, as in all the other parts of the subject, the Scriptures are satisfactory guides. If we treated them as a continuous history, as the history of a gradual discovery of the nature of God and of His purposes to mankind, we were driven to the conclusion, that a time came when the sacrifices of the Law had done what they were meant to do, when a complete and satisfactory sacrifice was offered once for all. The Eucharist, if it meant anything, must be a thanksgiving for this complete and satisfactory sacrifice. It could not be itself the completion of anything that had been left imperfect. But if we accepted St. Paul's statement, that every sacrifice implies communion with the Being to whom it is offered, if the very end of our

Lord's Incarnation and Death was to establish a complete communion between men upon earth and their Father in Heaven, then the feast which celebrates the accomplishment of the sacrifice must assert only the commencement of a communion, which may be most real now, but the full fruition of which can only be when all the evil which resists the Divine righteousness and love is entirely vanquished.

There is another aspect of this subject, at which I did not even glance in my Sermon last week. The thought of a sacrifice instantly suggests the thought of a priest. All who regard the Eucharist as the completion of an unfinished sacrifice, of course regard the person who administers it as a priest offering a sacrifice. But how is it that that notion appears to be sanctioned by a Church, which asserts the completion of the sacrifice so distinctly and vehemently as ours does? How is it that a prayer which says that a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction" has been made by Christ, "for the sins of the whole world," may only be read by one whom we call a priest? How is it that we allow no other to consecrate the elements? It is not an excuse for ourselves to say that Priest is only the contraction for *Presbyter*. We are bound to explain why we have reserved this office to the *Presbyter*; what dignity we associate or do not associate with *that* name; whether we trace any resemblance between his office and that of the priest under the Old Covenant; and if any, what it is.

You will easily see that these questions are suggested to me by the Collect and Epistle for to-day, as the subject for last Sunday was suggested by the Collect and Epistle for that day. Now, as then, I hope not to increase our difficulties by contemplating two topics together, but to lessen them. The subject of the Christian Ministry may seem at first to be made more perplexing by its association with the Eucharist. Ultimately perhaps that Service may help both us and you to appreciate better our obligations and our powers. And on the other hand, if we can gain any understanding of the work which is given us to do, we may appreciate better what the worth of this Sacrament is, and how it is related to the life of individual men and the life of human society.

I have not taken my text from the Epistle for this morning, though the opening words might have tempted me to do so. If I could have explained in what sense St. Paul bids the Corinthians count him and Apollos “ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God,” I might have hoped to lead you into the very heart of this subject. That explanation I believe we may derive from the second epistle which St. Paul addressed to the same Church. There, more fully than in the first, he exhibits his own sense of the responsibilities and terrors of his office. There, more fully than anywhere, he compares the Minister of the Old with the Minister of the New Testament; and in the passage I have chosen, he lays down, it seems to me, principles which we ought to apply to the discussion of the whole subject, principles which teach us the significance of the Eucharist as much as the significance of the Ministry.

His primary assertion, “All things are of God,” does not assuredly belong more to the New Testament than to the Old. It is the characteristic Hebrew maxim, that upon which the ancient economy stood, that upon which the whole Bible is constructed. But he was uttering no truism. His simple language lays the axe to a whole scheme of religion with which those Corinthians, who had been bred in Heathendom, were very familiar, and which was not the least strange to the Jew, however his divine oracles might bear witness against it. The questions, how men might worship one God or many Gods, how they might please or propitiate one God or many Gods, how they might become Gods, were *the* questions which the priests of different nations had striven to answer; with the last of them philosophers also had occupied themselves. The different methods of prayer, of sacrifice, of purification, which different priests had invented or sanctioned, the different personal or local calamities which they were designed to meet, indicated the characteristics of the various nations. They grew continually in number with new wants and new sins. They provoked rival experiments; they gave rise to popular reactions; they prompted civil rulers to interfere, that they might turn the sacerdotal

inventions to their own account, or oppose them if they were making civil society untenable. That one grand proposition, "All things are of God," might seem to lie beneath all these attempts, and to justify them. When it took the form in which the Jewish history presents it to us, it undermined them all. The experiments of man to reach God are treated as hopeless. God declares Himself as seeking men whom He has made in His own image, as claiming them for His servants, as making them aware of a relationship to Him which is higher than that of servants. But this idea was, if possible, more unintelligible to the pharisaic Jew than to the heathens. *Their* Gods might be capricious and full of mortal passions and impulses; but at least there was a hint of a friendship and sympathy between them and their worshippers. All that the Pharisee learnt from the teaching of his holy men was, that the God of Abraham stood apart from such fellowship and sympathy, that He dwelt in darkness inaccessible, that out of the darkness issued decrees which were committed to writing, and which men were to observe. And since it was very hard for men to keep these decrees, and terrible punishments threatened them if they did not, His priests, like the heathen, were to devise means for averting the tyrant's wrath. The Pharisee boasted, no doubt, that he had divine authority to guide him in the choice of those means. God, he thought, had favoured his race, and had vouchsafed to it the knowledge of the methods by which He might be conciliated. He said so; but he lied, and he knew that he lied. He could not destroy the whole meaning and life of Scripture, he could not set at naught the principle which was at the foundation of it, and then make it his guide. It was not his guide, for all that he read and worshipped the letter of it. As our Lord told him, he substituted for the commandments of God the traditions of the Elders. *These* taught him with what words and ceremonies he was to draw nigh to the Majesty of Heaven; or, to speak plainer language, these taught him the arts by which he was to hide himself from God, by which he could make the Holy One of Israel cease from before him, and not interrupt him in his course of baseness and falsehood.

St. Paul then just as much destroys the edifice of religious notions and practices which had been raised by the Rabbinical schools, and the architecture of which he had at one time so delighted to study, as that which had been growing for centuries in the heathen world, and had been receiving all strange and incongruous additions from priests, from kings, and from people, when he asserted that "*all things are of God,*" and when he explained the force and purpose of his words by subjoining, "*Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.*" Here God is Himself declared as the great Reconciler, as entering into communion and fellowship with men in that Son in Whom He had originally created them; as using all His law, His judgments, His terrors, as instruments for effecting His great purpose, for bringing the wills of creatures who had revolted from Him into union and consent with His own. And this purpose, so far as it consisted in removing all barriers between His creatures and Himself, every obstacle which could hinder the communion of man's spirit with the Father of Spirits, every vision of wrath which could make him unwilling to draw nigh, every thought that some compensation must be made for sins committed, or that some acts of merit must be done before he arose and returned to the house from which he had been an exile; this reconciliation, he declares, was effected when God raised His Son, Who had borne our death, out of the grave, when He exalted that Son in our nature to His right hand.

On these two clauses the third, of course, depends: "*He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.*" St. Paul could have no conception, therefore, of a Christian Minister, except as a man who was sent to testify that all things were of God, and that He had in Jesus Christ reconciled us to Himself. It is involved in the first proposition, that the Minister must regard himself as receiving his authority and commission from God. St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, was here speaking in the spirit and the language of a Jew. No Jew could think that he held any office whatsoever except by God's appointment. Whether he offered sacrifices in the Temple, or made curtains for it; whether he led the people and gave them laws, or served by the standard of his fathers

with the meanest family of the meanest tribe, he was still designated to his work by God; God would give him the wisdom and the courage and the strength that were required to fulfil it. If the priest had not been taught to consider himself as chosen and clothed by God for his service at the altar, he would have been the one exceptional man in the whole commonwealth. And what a perilous exception! Of all persons in the commonwealth, he was one who might do most mischief if he set up an independent authority, if he lost the sense of being under a government. Of all persons, he had the greatest temptations to confound himself with God, to make himself a god. Surely it was necessary that he, of all men, should be fenced round with statutes and ordinances to show him that he was not his own master. And yet the nature of his function made it a contradiction for him to think that he was the servant of men. He was likely enough to fall into that opinion, but the effect of it was that he became their slave and their tyrant alternately, or both at once.

Did, then, St. Paul transfer to the new economy what he had learnt in the old? This is scarcely the right way of stating the case. He rather learnt the true position of the Old Testament Minister by feeling that he was called to be a Minister of the New Testament. Often as he had read the books of Exodus and Leviticus, he probably never had understood what was written about Aaron the Priest, till he felt that he had a divine designation to be an Apostle.

To deliver such a message as he felt that he had to deliver, unless God Himself had committed it unto him, would have seemed to him the strangest, the most monstrous of all assumptions. For was it not a message of reconciliation from God to man? Was it not a message that He had actually reconciled men to Himself in Jesus Christ? How could he declare that reconciliation if he did not believe himself to be an ambassador from God? How could he declare that all things were of God if he did not own himself and his words as of God?

The continual assertions in St. Paul's writings that he was an Apostle not of man nor by man are vouchers for this conviction, as

far as he himself was concerned. But was this message to be heard no longer when he had left the earth? Then it had been a false one in his mouth. For he had proclaimed a permanent reconciliation with men; he had taught that the Church existed to testify of it. Or was each of those who should declare this news hereafter to see a light brighter than that of the sun, and to be struck down, and to be led blind into a city? That light, that blindness had told St. Paul that One Whom he persecuted had taken the nature of man and was the King over men for ever. Must it not be that all offices among men were now, as heretofore, divine offices? Did not the revelation of this King show under Whom they were held, by Whom each person was called to the one for which he was intended, to Whom each person was responsible for the duties which were entrusted to him? Did it not behove any one, who would do his work faithfully, to confess whence his trust was derived, and to seek strength from Him Who had laid it upon him, that it might not be abused? Was not the obligation to make this acknowledgment, to act on the faith of it, heaviest upon those who preached a Gospel of Reconciliation to men? If there was no such Gospel, if the notion was a dream, the fancy that men were called to preach it in one time or another is of course an equally gross fiction. But suppose the Gospel to be a reality, suppose it to be for all times, suppose it to be the proclamation of a Living Person in whom God is united to men and in whom God converses with men, then it is strange to suppose that men should not be called to set it forth; then the danger is of men supposing that their gifts or their wit constitute them the proclaimers of it, and that they are not, as much as St. Paul was, ambassadors of God, who must give account to Him whether they have borne true or false witness of Him, whether or no they have testified by words and acts that all things are of Him, and that He has reconciled them by Jesus Christ unto Himself.

Accordingly, St. Paul never suggests, for an instant, that the difference between the Old and the New Testament ministry is, that the one was appointed by God, and the other not; that the one would last from

age to age, and the other not; that those who had the one might call themselves ministers of God, and that those who had the other might call themselves ministers of some society which had chosen them to do certain offices on its behalf. What he does say is, that the ministers of the Old Testament were, to a great extent, ministers of a letter written and graven in stone, and that those of the New Testament are ministers of the Spirit; that the ones are ministers of condemnation, and the others of righteousness; that the ones are to exhibit the glory of God under a veil, and that the others are to present it openly, as revealed in Jesus Christ. These are very great distinctions certainly; they point first to the existence of a discipline, preparatory to the full manifestation of God in the Word, made flesh and dying for men; secondly, to a reconciliation grounded upon that manifestation, and to the gift of a spirit of Righteousness, Who should make men inwardly righteous, and should fit them for communion with a Righteous God. They point, therefore, to those truths which are fully embodied in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; to the truth of a perfected atonement for the whole world; to the truth that men are invited to be partakers of the holy life which dwelt fully in Christ; and to the truth that their spirits are admitted, in Him, to the knowledge of His Father and their Father.

To this connection of the Christian Ministry with the Christian Festival, I have desired to draw your attention this afternoon. That connection is expressed in the practice which reserves the administration of the Eucharist to the Presbyter, assigning to the Deacon, as his highest honour, the right to assist in the celebration of it. If such a rule exalted the Presbyter, or priest, above other ministers, above the congregation; if it afforded any warrant for those inventions by which the priest, in all ages, has been tempted to bind and enslave the sin-stricken consciences of men; if it led to a confusion between the minister of the Old and the New Testament, so that the latter was reduced again under the condition of the former, no length of prescription in its favour, no amount of traditional evidence for the

authority whence it proceeded, could justify a Church in retaining it; seeing that it would clash with eternal principles, to which all prescription and traditions must yield. But if it bears a deep and solemn testimony to the fact that the utmost which a Christian minister can do is to assert the reconciliation of God with men in Christ, and on the strength of that accomplished fact to beseech them to be reconciled to God; if it declares that none of the schemes which priests have devised for the reconciliation of men with their Maker can be of the least avail, and that it is a sin and a treason against God to suggest them; if it points out wherein the function of the New Testament priest is more glorious than the function of the Old, because he is the herald of that which the other showed to be necessary, and of which he held out the promise; then I think we may understand why this old and long-established bond between the office of the Presbyter and the service of the Eucharist was not consumed in those fires by which all old ecclesiastical maxims and conventions were tried at the time of the Reformation, and why it may still endure fires more hot and searching than those. This at least I am sure of, that there is no more significant, often more terrible, hint to our consciences of the end for which we exist, of the Gospel we are to deliver, of the paltriness of our words to convey it, of the intercourse which God holds with the heart and conscience, while we are, at best, the instruments for removing impediments which obstruct the hearing of His voice, while we may be creating impediments instead of removing them. To be taught that the very highest act we can perform for men is one in which we utter nothing of our own, in which we are merely servants, is the greatest humiliation to our priestly arrogance, and the greatest lesson respecting all the rest of our work, that I can imagine.

That it has not sufficed for this purpose, that we have been able to set up our pretensions in spite of this warning, and even to convert it into an apology for them, I do not wish to deny. I believe it is very needful for us to consider how we have fallen into this error in past times, how it may be repeated in our own, that we may not be

high-minded, but fear; that we may be taught to rely upon nothing in our circumstances, upon nothing in ourselves, but upon God, Who governs our circumstances, and will govern us if we do not fight against Him. I shall not speak now of notions respecting the Ministry and respecting the Eucharist which have prevailed in other Churches, and have hindered them from being witnesses of God's reconciliation to man. How grievously the Romish doctrine of an uncompleted sacrifice has affected the whole life of Christendom; how it has thrown back the world not into Judaism only, but often into Heathenism; how it has given rise to a system of ethics which destroys the distinction of right and wrong, to a system of politics which is an excuse for any tyranny and for any anarchy—I feel more strongly than I can express. But the Laudian doctrine respecting the Priesthood and the Eucharist, which is a native formation, and which is saved from some of the consequences of the wider scheme by the conditions of English civil life with which it has been encompassed, exhibits, I think, a no less instructive and alarming example of the way in which the most blessed institutions may be robbed of their character, and be turned to mischief, if we suffer ourselves to forget the reasons which the Scriptures give for their existence. The fact that the Eucharist cannot be administered without a Presbyter became to the members of this school the groundwork of all teaching and all belief. Their great business was to maintain that certain blessings were transmitted through the hands of lawful ministers in this Sacrament, of which those must be deprived who sought them through other hands or in any other way. Thus men's minds were fixed upon a certain object which they were to attain, and upon certain means and agents through whom they were to attain it. The old inversion was renewed. It was not God declaring that He had reconciled men to Himself; it was men by a certain process reconciling God to themselves. The old consequences of the old inversion were renewed. The priest was regarded as the depository of the grace which he transmitted. The ordinance was not a witness of a direct communication between men and a living God through the ascended Mediator.

It forced itself upon your notice. It eclipsed the sun in the heavens, instead of being a transparent medium for conveying its rays to the earth. I speak of the theory as it stood out in the controversial books, and as it expressed itself in a number of acts which startled those who did not trouble themselves with books. God forbid that I should say the men who held the theory did not many of them receive a life through the Sacrament, which one would rejoice to share with them! That is the very point I am maintaining. I say we cannot block out the light of God's countenance from men, however we may try; that Sacraments are stronger than all sacramental systems; that suffering and sinful men betake themselves to the one, while they debate and declaim about the other. It does not prevent these sacramental systems from being very mischievous and accursed things, that God comes forth Himself to counteract the denial of Himself in which they might issue.

I believe He did so come forth in the days of Charles and of Laud. The strength of the protest against their system lay in the deep and true conviction of their opponents, that God is living and reigning, and that He has not delegated His powers to any body of ministers, or shut up His grace in any ceremonies. That conviction, with the assurance that the business of the minister was to proclaim a Gospel or good news concerning Him to men, called forth all the energy and courage, which at last proved invincible. The Puritans

insupportably advanced, Their arms made mockery of the warrior's  
tramp,

because they were asserting the presence of a Living Being against those who were setting up offices and ordinances which without Him are dead, because they were appealing to the consciences of sinners, which can recognize His voice and cannot understand any other. But it was soon proved, to the satisfaction of those who had struggled—I think bravely and nobly and usefully struggled—against our priest-craft, that

New Presbyter was but old Priest writ large;

that ministers making no pretensions to sacramental endowments might bind the spirits of men as tightly and as cruelly as those who thought that they were the sole possessors of them; that men who thought their function was only to preach the word, might substitute for that word hard dogmas and hard practices, which misrepresent the character of God, and make themselves objects of faith instead of Him. For here again the old teaching intrudes itself. All things are no longer referred to God. The Gospel is not a message from Him, that He has reconciled the world to Himself. Men are by certain acts of faith to bring themselves into reconciliation with Him; divines must ascertain the quality and degree of those acts of faith. They must define the ways in which men may approach God, and ascertain that they are at peace with Him. Whatever ministers may call themselves, when they undertake this office they must cultivate all the arts of priestcraft.

And here again we see how inseparably the Eucharist is connected with the Ministry, and how any narrow and lowering notions respecting the one, necessarily affect the treatment of the other. When the Gospel which ministers preach is no longer a Gospel to mankind, a message that God has reconciled the world to Himself in Christ, but only a message how certain men may, by certain methods, acquire peace of conscience and the rewards of Heaven; then this Sacrament becomes inevitably the badge of a sect, or the witness of who are its true and spiritual members; not God's seal upon our union with Christ, not His invitation to us to hold communion with Him. My text gives the one basis for a Church, for a Eucharist, for a Ministry. Change it for any other, and no contrivances will prevent the Church from sinking into a narrow and artificial corporation; the Eucharist, first into a mere expression of human feelings and thanksgivings, next into a means of procuring the blessings which we are to be thankful for; the Minister, first into a mere representative of the convictions or desires of a certain society, then either into an organ of its prejudices or the founder of some sect which separates from it.

In modern times, when people have become weary of the oppressions of a body calling itself a Universal Church on the one side of them, and of the sects which they see tearing nations into pieces on the other, the notion has gone forth, that if men could but shake off all the associations which are connected with the priesthood as a divine institution, and could merely elect officers to perform the devotional services which they think requisite for the satisfaction of their consciences or their religious impulses, a Church might grow up suitable to our time, or to some better time that is approaching. Those who propose such an experiment should be listened to with all respect and attention. Probably their plans would embody many useful hints and devout suggestions; undoubtedly they will lay bare many evils which are eating into the heart of society now, many sins of Churchmen and statesmen which must be repented of and forsaken, if society is not to perish altogether. The more they make us ashamed of ourselves, the greater should be our gratitude to them. But if they lead us to think that there can be any reconstruction of a Church, which has not the doctrine that all things are of God at the basis of it, which does not lead us to regard all offices as more, not less divine than we have regarded them hitherto, I believe we can expect nothing from such a change but the reproduction of all ancient corruptions, and the removal of the good which has counteracted them. We have not believed wrongly, my brethren, that we are called by God to our work, and that we cannot perform it if we are not called to it. We have been very wrong in not making it evident to you that our calling is for your sakes, that we are witnesses of His care for you. We have not been wrong in saying, that when we stand at His altar and give you the bread and wine, we are there as His ambassadors. We have been very wrong indeed in pretending that we can be anything else, that we have any dignity or sacredness of our own whatsoever. We have not been wrong in asserting a communion between God and His children. We have been very wrong in limiting it according to notions and fancies of ours; in not believing and rejoicing that God may make the truth and

the power of which we testify known without our testimony; in not desiring that all shall be prophets, that all shall have God's Spirit; as that old legislator did, who would not suffer the order of the Priesthood to be changed, because that concerned not him, but the Nation and its Lord. Do not tell us that we have not a right to speak by words and signs of a complete Redemption which God has wrought out for men. Denounce us that we have not understood the length and breadth of that Redemption; that we have so often represented God as the author of slavery, not of freedom; that we have so often ourselves been the enslavers of those whom His Spirit is seeking to make free. Do not say that we are mocking you, when we speak of ourselves as priests presenting Christ's finished sacrifice for you, and blessing you with the food of His body and blood. Only complain of us because we have not told more of the High Priest within the veil, the Elder Brother of the whole family, in Whose Name we and you may draw nigh together to one Father. And join with us at the altar in confessing these sins of ours and yours to Him, and ask there for strength to fulfil your ministries, to prove that God has given you a work as well as us. Then you will find that the security against the falsehoods and the oppressions of men is in the God of truth, the God Who delivers, the God Who reconciles; that while we trust Him, all will be the ministers to us of good; that if we lose sight of Him, the means which He has contrived for our blessing will become our heaviest punishments; that the pledges which He has given us of our unity with Him and each other, will become the watchwords and the weapons of an endless strife.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

DECEMBER 21, 1856

*“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—*

HEBREWS xii. 1, 2.

THE Collects on the other Sundays in Advent seem to have been formed from the Epistles which follow them. The Collect for this day reads as if it expressed the most opposite temper of mind to that which the Epistle encourages us to cultivate. The one says, “Rejoice evermore;” the other complains of the sore lets and hindrances which meet us when we try to run the race that is set before us. How can such a tone of melancholy, such a sense of oppression, be compatible with obedience to St. Paul’s precepts?

I have been trying to show you that the Eucharist reconciles many difficulties; that in the light of it we may understand why our Lord’s Advent in humility and His Advent in glory are brought so closely together in Scripture; why Scripture itself has throughout so Sacramental a character; why the Ministry of the New Testament surpasses the Ministry of the Old, and is not hopelessly separated from it. Perhaps this difficulty also, which touches so nearly upon our commonest and deepest experience, which concerns the clashing of grief and joy in our own lives, might also disappear, if we could enter more into the meaning of this Festival, and partake of it more faithfully.

I cannot separate these two objects. Intellectual perplexities, if so they are to be called, interfere with a simple, honest acceptance of the blessing that God designs for us. Indifference to the gift, or a careless

use of it, makes our perception of the ends for which it is bestowed indistinct and fluctuating. It must be so in this highest instance, for it is so in every lower instance. Some may see more truly than they act; some may act more truly than they see. But vision does become dim through insincere acts; acts do become heartless and self-contradictory if they are repeated without any desire or effort to know wherefore they are enjoined, whither they are tending. Light and warmth may be different in themselves; but it is not safe to refer them to a different source, or to reckon on the continuance of either where the other is wanting.

I do not think it is impossible or improbable that the words in the Epistle to the Philippians may have suggested the thoughts out of which the prayer in the Collect grew; because I do not know what is more likely to make us desire that God would raise up His power and come among us and with great might succour us, than the discovering how little we are able to rejoice unless He does give us the recollection of His presence and of His goodness. The Philippians themselves were apparently more desponding than most of those to whom St. Paul wrote; for that reason he tells them more of their right to gladness. But the text I have chosen from the Epistle to the Hebrews gave the form to the petition, and was evidently in the mind of the writer. Nor is there any that I know which so fully expresses the meaning of the Communion, or may serve so well to gather up the hints I have thrown out respecting it in former Sermons, and to prepare us for the Christmas participation of it.

I. There is nothing we are so familiar with in the books of rhetoricians as invocations of departed worthies to look down upon their descendants, either that they may reprove them for some baseness, or encourage them to strength and victory. Considering how such language has been abused by those who have attached no meaning or scarcely any meaning to it, who have regarded it as little more than a figure of speech, it is wonderful how much power there still remains in it—how it stirs the blood of us who hear, even when we

have not much faith in the sincerity of the speaker. He is often startled, like other enchanter, by the spirit he has raised; perhaps commends himself for the skill which could make a somewhat stale imposture successful. He does himself injustice. He has been truer than he gives himself the credit for being; the heart of man responds not to his artifice, which is paltry, but to the truth hidden within the artifice, which is mighty. Men's consciences tell them that it is so; that they are habitually unmindful of the presence of unseen spectators; that when that thought of it is awakened in them they are not in a more false and unreasonable state of mind, but in a truer state, than their ordinary one. How it can be so they may not ask themselves; their instincts are better than their logic; they know that they are for the moment better and more serious men for the impression that has been made upon them, and they cannot refer a moral benefit to the belief in a lie.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been recalling to his Hebrew brethren the acts of those ancestors with whose names they were most familiar. All those acts he had traced to their faith in an Invisible Lord, and to the substantial hope of which that faith was the ground. They subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong, only because He Whom they could not see was more real and living to them than any of the things which they did see. Then he speaks of those whom he had contemplated apart, as a body. They are a cloud of witnesses; they are watching the Israelites of that day, who are engaged in a race as serious, as full of hindrances, as full of hope, as their own. Each runner, when hardest pressed, when most out of heart, might be sure that he had those spectators, and that their sympathies, and all the mysterious aid which comes from sympathy, were with him at every moment.

It is possible for a person trained in those rhetorical practices to which I have referred, and knowing that religious men of all Schools and Churches have resorted to them unscrupulously,—it is possible for him to think that these words are an instance of them, and a warrant

for them. It might not remove that opinion to point out the exceedingly practical character of the previous chapter, the impatience which the writer must have felt for fine speeches, when the heroes whom he revered were all doers of work; when it was to work, and the trust that is the soul of that work, that he was awakening the flagging spirits of the Christians in Palestine. With our artificial notions, we should dispose of all such arguments. We should say that, this being his object, he of course thought himself obliged to use all such passionate appeals as experience shows to be effectual, at least for a while, in stimulating torpid natures. The true answer is, that the argument of the Epistle, where it is most strictly argumentative, had all been directed to the purpose of proving that Christ has rent asunder the veil which separates those who have left the world from those who are in it; and that it was a formal, logical, inevitable conclusion from these premises, that this cloud of witnesses were actually with them, not brought to them by some violent effort of the fancy. He who believed those premises, had no doubt a duty to perform after he had stated the grounds on which he believed them. Every power which God had given him was demanded, that he might break the fetters with which sense, and fancy the creature of sense, were binding the minds of his readers, and hindering them from looking straightly and steadily at the facts of their position. He had a right to any forms of speech, to any illustrations which nature or human life could supply him with; not that he might conjure them into some unnatural excitement, but that he might clear away the enervating delusions to which they were, from indolence and despondency, surrendering themselves.

The writer of this Epistle, then, is not sanctioning and imitating the insincerity of those orators who make it part of their trade to talk of heroes and saints looking down from their shining seats; but he is explaining why honest men, in their best and truest moments, when they most needed to be braced for action, when death was looking them in the face, have felt the need, and confessed the power, of the conviction that they were not alone or unheeded, that the hosts on

their side were greater than the hosts against them. It is horrible to think that they did what they ought to do, because they believed what they had no right to believe. It would be a comfort surely quite infinite, to know that they had a right to believe it then; that we have a right to believe the same always; that the dispositions in us, which withstand the belief, are the false ones.

Now the words of my text, well as we may know them, often as we may read them, do not give us the requisite assurance that it is so. We can say they were addressed to the Hebrews; to the Hebrews of a particular age; that they proceeded from an inspired writer; that they do not sound the least like those which we, in the nineteenth century, are wont to hear. In hours of blessed sorrow, these reasonings may be knocked down; chronology may be abolished; we may feel sure that whatever was true then is true now. But this does not last; old doubts recur; if we keep something of what we learnt in such hours, we are too apt to think it was meant specially for us; we are the favoured persons who may, if we can, turn Scripture promises and consolations to our use. *If we can!* But how much lies in that! Can we, shall we ever be able, till we are taught again that we are not better than other men; that no truth concerning God's nature and His relation to man can be of private interpretation?

The Communion is the continual re-affirmation of these words to each age of the Christian Church, and to each member of it. The Communion says to us all: "The pillar of cloud, which followed those Hebrews who embraced the Gospel when St. Peter preached it at the feast of Pentecost, over whom St. James presided, to whom St. Paul, or some one who had the mind of St. Paul, wrote, is following you. Numbers have been gathered into that cloud since. Every new face that looks out of it has been ploughed with furrows like those of his forerunners. Every one has been in the race; every one, by being in it, has learnt to feel with those who are in it now." So this Festival speaks. For if the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not a true one, then the existence of this Supper cannot be explained; it has no business to

exist. If it is a true one, he who partakes of the Supper need not try to picture to himself those who were combatants once, as spectators now. This Sacrament bids him remember that they are so. The fact may be as strange to him as light to the eyes of children. But the light is with them, and they have organs to take it in. This object also is quite independent of our powers of vision; by degrees we may use them to look at it, as simply as children look at a lamp or at the sun, though with an increasing, not a lessening wonder.

II. It is not always easy to persuade ourselves that we are actually running a race, any more than that there are spectators of the race. Here again the thought has become so hackneyed that we almost suspect it has no significance. But it has taken such hold upon men in all countries and periods, that our consciences tell us it cannot be based upon a conceit. Those who are engaged in the contests of the world for eminence and success have felt that it is applicable to them. They live to distance other runners, by fair means or by foul. Prizes—precious or worthless—are before them; he who will give up most for the sake of them has the best chance of winning them. The Greek games and the Roman amphitheatre were continually suggesting thoughts to the mind of St. Paul. In that Epistle to the Philippians out of which we have been taught to-day, he speaks of forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth to the things that are before, pressing to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. That he was not trying to distance any in this course, is clear enough from the eagerness with which he beseeches the Philippians to follow in the same path, to do the same thing; from the earnestness with which he testifies that his greatest reward is to have them as the sharers of his joy. But though there was this all-important difference between him and those with whom he compared himself, he had the strongest inward conviction that the comparison was a true one, and that the strivings of men's spirits after a spiritual reward, a spiritual goal, are as real as any efforts and energies of their bodies can possibly be.

He speaks therefore of casting down or putting aside every weight, as runners of course were bound to do. The word has reference not merely to the care which they must use before they start, to be free from any unnecessary burden which could put them at a disadvantage, but to the previous training by which they had acquired lightness of limb, to their abstinence from the meats and drinks which would make them dull and feeble. St. Paul may import this likeness almost literally into the other region; he may mean that the activity of the spirit is weakened by the same causes that weaken the activity of the body, and that on the whole a good discipline for the one would also be a good discipline for the other. But he must mean, I think, more directly those burdens which press upon the conscience, crush hope, interfere with manly action. He must mean that incubus of the past, which sits so heavily upon some of us,—the recollection of evil deeds done, of good deeds omitted, of thoughts left to travel their own way, of base feelings and desires cherished, of hours of intercourse abused that can never be recalled. He must mean the weight of the present, with all its petty anxieties and vanities; with the occupations not of the hand but of the mind, which appear most unworthy of a spirit living among spirits. He must mean the aching sense of responsibilities which are not fairly encountered; the uncertainties about our path, which of different roads we should take, the doubt whether we have not lost our way altogether, and, instead of running a forward race, are not moving in continual circles back to the point from which we started. He must mean the weight of the future; of doubts of what is coming upon ourselves and upon the world; doubts whether everything may not prove at last to be built upon the sand; doubts whether all we believe is not shadow; doubts whether all we see is not shadow. These are heavy weights surely. Who knows how heavy, in the brother who is saying the same prayers with us, who is kneeling by us at the same altar? And yet there is a weight which I have sometimes felt to be more terrible than these,—the weight of a leaden indifference; as if we cared nothing

about either past or present or future, about the world or ourselves or God; as if all were dead alike.

Now when we are told to cast off these weights, every weight, the first sound of the words is pleasant enough; but the second thought of them is distressing. Do they not mock us? Who can cast off that which is part of his very self? Who can say that that which has been shall be abolished; that that which is with us now shall not be; that the thick mist that overhangs what is coming shall be changed into clear sunlight? How are those eyes which are watching us to help us to do this? If they found the secret, it has died with them, or they did not impart it to us. And they cannot impart it now. I think, brethren, they did impart it, some of them, before they died; and that perhaps, even now, we may be learning the lesson from them. Is it not that which the Communion of the Lord's Supper is teaching us? Is not that repeating to us the command, "Cast thy burdens upon the Lord," and telling us how it might be obeyed? For He to Whom past, present, and future are all one, He Who is, and was, and is to come, invites you, His creature, to claim fellowship with Him in His Son your Lord. Seeking Him, you do cast away these burdens which are pressing down your spirit, the burden which He bore Who bore the sin of the world. You can cast yourself, with all that has been, with all that is, with all that you are fearing shall be, before Him Who knows it all. You can come with all your darkness into His light. You can rise up new men in Him Who has died and risen for you, putting off the old self, putting on that new and redeemed man which is created after God in Christ Jesus.

III. And so the force of those next words, "The sin that doth so easily beset us;" the sin which is about us, encircling us like a girdle, becomes also apparent. The image of a load or burden comes home to us all; our consciences recognize it instantly, but they are not always satisfied with it. The sense of evil is something so very intimate, so very personal, that any phrase which expresses merely an oppression under which we are labouring, seems inadequate to represent it. Is it always a pressure at all? Do we never hug it and entertain it? If disgust follows

after, did not relish and enjoyment go first? Was not the indulgence courted? Had we any wish to be severed from it? Questions hard to answer; nay, questions which it is often most unwise to ask. For does not this debating about the nature and degree of sin often keep us in sin? Whilst we are thinking how much wrong we have been guilty of, is not the wrong accumulating; is not the guilt becoming greater? Do we not want something better than any hints about self-examination, which may force us to stay on the level of self, which may make the judge a partner of the crime? Does not the Communion point to another and more excellent way? Does it not speak of a life-blood which cleanseth from all sin; of a divine dying Love which is more subtle than sin, subtle as that is, and can enter into hollows of the spirit where that cannot enter, and can at last drive it out and occupy the ground which it has occupied? Whether we understand what these promises mean or not, will anything else suffice to deliver us from that close, penetrating evil, that poison in the blood, from which we are suffering? If we cannot understand, will not God give us understanding? Is it not the very thing that we ask of Him? At all events, can there be any refuge from a cold, selfish, dark nature, but in the nature of a pure and loving Being, in Whom is no darkness at all?

That examination of ourselves which the Church, following St. Paul, enjoins upon those who would eat of that bread and drink of that cup, is not, I apprehend, an examination into our own state of mind, to see whether we have internal qualifications for coming to the Feast, but an examination whether we want to get rid of ourselves, whether we would really have a Deliverer, if we could find Him, from all that degrades us, a Friend in Whom we could inherit that righteousness and truth which we have not, and are never meant to have till we forget ourselves and seek them in Him. It is certainly a profane thing to come to a Sacrament which tells us of fellowship with a righteous Being, if we would rather be without such fellowship; which tells us of a new and noble nature, if we prefer our old and base nature. And therefore to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith—that is to

say, whether we count Christ to be the Deliverer and the Giver of a new life to Mankind, which the Bible says He is,—must certainly be a most desirable preparation for the Marriage Supper. If He has not taken upon Him the nature of man, if He is not the Bridegroom of Humanity, if He has not died that we may enter into His eternal and risen life, the Sacrament must be a falsity, and therefore we are false in coming to it. And through the dulness of our spirits, and through their fondness for routine, such a forgetfulness of this does steal over us continually, that we cannot be too thankful for any admonitions which tell us that God is in earnest whether we are or not, and that as He wishes us to inherit a blessing, He would rather plague us with diseases and sundry kinds of death, than that we should be defrauded of it through our distrust and unthankfulness. Such admonitions, like all that happens around us, and all the experiences within us, are meant as goads to drive us to the Father of our spirits, not as reasons why we should turn away from Him. They are not to unsettle us with anxieties and frettings, but to show us how we must get rid of all these, because we have a race which they will be a perpetual let and hindrance to us in running.

IV. This is the next subject on which the text dwells. These weights and this besetting sin are thrown off because we cannot run with them, or can only run impatiently and irregularly. Does this running merely refer to those acts, which are sometimes called religious, by which we are supposed to be preparing ourselves for another world? It means, I apprehend, the whole course and business of a man in the world, everything that he is busy about, wishing for, toiling for, what he is thinking in his lonely hours, what he is doing in society, his domestic life, his political life, his very lowest occupations. Whatever he is about, he is running some race. There is something which he supposes it possible he can come at some day or other. What the text says is, that there is one common object and goal for all men, that all in their different works and callings may set that before them; that if they do, every such work or calling will become human and not

selfish; the work and calling of a man, and not of an animal; of a creature who looks upward, and not of one who goes upon his belly and eats dust. All such callings and works require patience; patience to do the thing that has to be done faithfully and well, patience to bear up against all the obstructions that interfere with the doing of it, patience to make it subservient to a higher and universal end. It was therefore, brethren, that in the old times the State looked upon this Communion of the Lord's Supper as a qualification for its offices. That doctrine was turned to an abominable use, to grovelling ends of party and secularity; and all have reason to be thankful that no statute any longer enforces the obligation. But the principle which was implied in it cannot be repealed. That remains true whether we understand it or not; the full understanding of it would, I believe, be the secret of all moral and social reformation. It is, that no offices which are administered by men, or affect the wellbeing of men, may be held as if they were bestowed by earthly patrons, or as if they were the prizes of successful wit and cunning; that they are stewardships from God, to which men must appoint, and which they must hold every hour under a sense of God's presence and judgment; for the abuse of which they must therefore seek His forgiveness, for the right performance of which they must cast themselves upon His grace; otherwise their acts will be done either in cowardly deference to other men's judgments, or in self-willed dependence upon their own, in each case equally to the injury of those whom they are sent into the world to serve.

V. It may appear to some, but I hope not to many of you, as if the latter words of the text must take it out of the circle of our common duties, and restrict it to those which are more sublime. The Apostle says, "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Here is the full interpretation of what has gone before. We have here the correction of some of the worst tendencies of religious as well as of worldly men; we have here the vindication of our whole human

life from the narrownesses and corruptions of both. How often do preachers bid us think of death as the end of all the works we are engaged in! how often do they bid us run with that goal in sight! The writer of the Epistle points to a different goal. Jesus Christ, the Giver of life, is the goal of the race. If the runners have their eye upon any object but Him, they will miss their prize. How often are we told to think of our faith, to consider whether we have a right to claim Jesus Christ as our Saviour! The Epistle bids us look from our faith to a Living Person Who is the only root of it, the only end of it. Our faith is not in itself, but in Him; if we think of it instead of Him, it perishes. The Epistle bids us look to One Who bore the Cross for man, died the death of man, rose again as man, ascended on high in the nature of man. All the acts which we are bidden to contemplate, by which we can recognize Him, are acts which concern our race. And the encouragement which is given us is, that we cast off the slough of that slothful, cowardly, self-seeking nature, which belongs to us as individuals, and may be clad with that enduring, self-sacrificing nature of Him Who died and lives for all. How this is to be done, He Himself shows us; for He had an end before Him, as we have before us. He had His Father's eternal love always before Him. In darkness, and agony, and desertion, He had to cast Himself and us upon that love. The joy that was set before Him was the joy of making men partakers of it.

And now, then, we may begin a little to learn the force of those words, "Take, eat, this is My body; drink, this is My blood." Of that human and divine nature which was in Him, those who are let and hindered in running the race that is set before them may participate. This is the pledge that God does raise up His great power and come amongst us, in the midst of our weakness and ignorance. This is the pledge that we may cast down every weight that presses upon us, and upon our fellows, and upon the world, before His Cross; that we may lay other men's sins and our own—for are they not the same, are we not sharers of a common evil, of a common death, however various the forms it may take?—before Him Who was made sin though He

knew no sin. This is the encouragement to give thanks for all men and for all things; for our birth into a world of sorrows; for all the sorrow we have found in it; for all that has compelled us to feel we are of one blood with all human beings. This gives us a warrant to pray for all known and unknown, friends and enemies, and to hope for all. This is the assurance that Christ's coming in the flesh was indeed glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill to men. This is the pledge of the pierced side and the wounded hands, which is given to us as it was given to the Apostle; we remember to-day that Christ is risen indeed, and that He is our Lord and our God. This is the pledge that we are members not merely of a fighting body, but of the Church of the first-born, of the assembly of just men made perfect. This is the pledge that we have no need for Christ to descend into earthly elements, because our spirits may be with Him in those heavens where He is. This is the witness that we are not dreaming a dream, but expecting that which, by the eternal laws of God's Universe, by the oath of Him Who cannot lie, must be, when we look for a coming of Christ in the glory of His Father and the Holy Angels, for a day of Redemption, when He shall claim the Universe which He has purchased. This is the voice coming to us all out of the depths of sorrow and anguish: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

(INNOCENTS' DAY)

DECEMBER 28, 1856

*“And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—MATTHEW xviii. 2, 3.*

I HAD intended to confine my discourses on the Eucharist within the four weeks of Advent. But there are some thoughts suggested by the Innocents' Day which I should wish to connect with this subject. Nor can I regret that the Sunday after Christmas and the last of the year should be devoted to it.

If we think of this day as anything more than a commemoration of an event—and the day can be merely that—it must belong to the present and the future, not only to the past. It must tell of a certain state of mind which it would be very desirable, if it were possible, for us to keep or to recover. Innocence seems a treasure so unspeakably precious, that we must admire all to whom we can attribute it, and mourn for ourselves and for all who have lost it. This admiration and this lamentation are wont to take two forms. The child is regarded as not only the father but as the model of the man. And since Christian theology speaks of the child as born in sins, the moment after its Baptism is taken as that when it attains the summit of perfection. Then it wears the white robe, which might no doubt be kept stainless, but which is in fact soiled by all mixtures with the outward world, and by the unfolding of the feelings and passions within, which are to flower in youth and bear fruit in manhood. What can we do but lament that

this innocence has departed, and try to regain what faint image of it or substitute for it we can?

At another time, or by a different class of persons, the question is viewed historically, not biographically, in reference to the race principally, to its individual members secondarily. "What a glorious time," we exclaim, "that must have been, when the first man and the first woman were still pure! What a misery to their descendants that they lost Paradise! What multitudes have fallen in their fall! If some are reserved from the ultimate punishment of it, all have been wounded by it, even mortally."

There are two corrections of these plausible and popular statements; one is derived from the Sacrament of Baptism, which is appealed to as justifying the exaltation of infantine innocence; the other lies in the tenor and in the express words of Scripture, respecting the life and history of mankind. Baptism was first proclaimed to a corrupt generation, polluted with all actual transgressions, a people which had rebelled against God's Covenant. It was declared to be a Baptism of Repentance for the remission of sins. The Baptism which was to succeed this, it was prophesied, would be of a still more searching, penetrating, fiery quality. To that Baptism, Heathens as well as Jews, defiled with all imaginable crimes, were invited by Apostles and Evangelists to come. Eminent fathers and doctors of the Churches wondered how any should be allowed to receive it except those who had voluntarily turned from their iniquities. They resisted the demand of parents, though they pleaded the precedent of Circumcision, and the probable practice of Apostles, that their children should be acknowledged as heirs of the New Covenant with themselves.

The conscience, heart, reason of mankind, triumphed over their scruples. Infants had the nature which Christ took; they could not be kept from Him. To say that they were not spiritual, voluntary beings, merely because the will was as yet dormant, was to deny the plainest facts; if they were, they had a right to be claimed as such beings, not to be treated as animals. But assuredly their condition does not determine

the character of the Sacrament in the opinion of any Church. Our own Catechism, written expressly for their use, takes pains to explain how they are admitted to it, notwithstanding their want of the repentance and faith which we naturally expect of the receivers. Who could imagine from such statements that Baptism put more honour upon the unconscious innocent than upon the offender who had deliberately forsaken the evil of his ways? Who could gather from the history of this ordinance that the infants whom Herod slew were to be more precious in our sight, because more precious in God's sight, than the bravest champions of the faith, provided they had walked in lasciviousness, lusts, and revellings, like those to whom St. Peter wrote (according to the strict construction of the words he reckons himself among them), or had been persecutors and injurious like St. Paul?

But if Baptism speaks so decisively against the attempt to make it a voucher for this opinion, how do the Scriptures speak of the attempt to exalt the garden of Eden, and turn its innocence and its charm into an excuse for regret and longing? From the beginning of Genesis, where the story of Adam's banishment from that garden is recorded, to the latest chapter of the Apocalypse, where we read of the Water of Life and the Tree of Life, is there one instance of such regret or such longing in the life, prayers, lamentations of a single holy man? Does Abraham in his tent, or Joseph in the prison, or Moses in the wilderness and wishing to die, or David when his heart is cast down within him, or Jeremiah when his heart is broken for the daughter of his people, waste one sigh that Adam had not fallen, express one wish that the earth had not been replenished by man? There is sorrow enough for those who had broken God's Covenant and sold themselves into slavery, for those who, being planted wholly a right seed, had corrupted themselves. There is crying enough that God would rend the heavens and come down, that He would arise and judge the earth. But though these brave sinking warriors have boldness to utter almost every complaint before the God Who knows what they mean, though they say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "Let us speak

with Thee of Thy judgment,”—where do you find one maintaining that it would be better for him or for the world if there had been no revelation of God’s righteousness, fighting with sin and overcoming it, of God’s mercy to the sinner? Such blasphemy does not enter into their thoughts. They look onwards, not backwards. They desire more knowledge of God’s Truth and Love, not the loss of what they have. As the discovery of their own evil and of the world’s evil becomes more appalling, they have a clearer vision, which they are sure will wax brighter to the perfect day, of a good which no evil can quench. For this they wait. Must they not bless God that He suffered men to eat of that tree, of which the fruit was death? Did not life lie behind that death,—a diviner life than any which Adam could even dream of?

So says the Scripture; and so says that Sacrament of which I have been speaking in these sermons. The other may expose one form of that irreverent, ungrateful retrospection to which we are all so prone; this strikes at the principle of it. We cannot receive the pledges that the Son of God has taken the nature of men, and then deduce our humanity from Adam instead of Him. We cannot receive the pledges that the Son of God has died the death of men, and complain that Death has entered into the world. We cannot receive the pledges that the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world, and not confess that the victory over sin is greater than the unconsciousness which precedes it. We cannot believe that He has made a full and perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world, and not be willing to accept St. Paul’s words, in the fullest sense we can give them, confessing our inability to enter into the length and breadth of them; that “not as the offence so also is the free gift”; that “as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life”; that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

But there must be a true reverence for the childhood of the individual and of mankind, or this false reverence would have been

impossible. When our Lord took a child and set it in the midst of the disciples, and made its face the answer to their question, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" nay, even told them that they could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven unless they were converted and became as that child, He certainly laid them and us under a very serious obligation to inquire what it is in this image which He loved, and after which He would mould us. His words indeed, taken in their most simple and obvious sense, scatter all notions that we are to sigh after the state of Infancy as one which has been left far behind us; for He tells grown men that they may and must attain all which is blessed in that state, notwithstanding their experience of the world and of sin. But they do assuredly justify the feeling of mankind, which the theories of philosophers and divines fail to justify, that a childlike man is the highest and most developed man.

You speak of a child as unconscious. You denounce what you call self-consciousness, as utterly inconsistent with its proper nature, as almost revolting. Yet, if you saw no consciousness awakening in this same child, you would be obliged to call it idiotic. If it never learnt to speak of itself in the first person,—if it never began to say with full emphasis, "This is mine," and "This I am to do," you would lament that it had no energy to act, no feeling of responsibility. Here is the puzzle which is continually thrusting itself in our way. It gives rise to continual changes in our speculations; to still more in our practical education. Are we to be awakening that sense of self which threatens quietness, obedience, simplicity? Are we to stifle it, and so to form a mere good-natured slave, a creature without any purpose or determination? The question is asked again and again by anxious parents. In general, before they have found the answer, it has answered itself. They are obliged to confess that they are not creators, that another discipline than theirs has been at work on the being which has been committed to them; perhaps they are obliged to wish they had been sooner aware of that fact, or at least had sooner understood the immeasurable importance of it. Then they may be struck with the reflection, obvious

enough,—and yet to how many of us new and startling!—that perhaps these facts of our experience have something to do with our divinity; that that does not stand wholly apart from human life; that the passage between them may have been opened by One Who knows more than we know.

We have been praying this week, “Almighty God, Who hast given Thine only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin, grant that we, being regenerate and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit.” It can scarcely be doubted, I think, that whatever is meant by becoming a little child, or being a little child, in the text or elsewhere, is included in the word *Regenerate*, which is used in this Collect, and that that word receives its explanation from the previous clause respecting the Incarnation of the Son of God. *That* is made the ground of the regeneration and new birth of the creatures who call upon God as their Father. They may claim to be sons of God by adoption, because the Only Begotten has made Himself their Brother. If Baptism admits one and another into this condition, if it gives one and another the filial name and the filial privilege, it does so because Christ had first vindicated that name and those privileges for all human beings, by taking their flesh. It cannot do less or more than the charter from which it derives its force authorizes it to do. It can confer no separate or independent grace upon any creature. It can only say: “Thou belongest to the Head of thy race; thou art a member of His body; thou dost not merely carry about with thee that divided nature which thou hast inherited from the first Adam—a nature doomed to death, with death stamped upon it—thou hast the nature of the Divine Son, thou art united to Him in Whom is life, and from Whom the life of thee and of all creatures comes.”

What follows from such a statement as this? Surely that the purity or innocence of any human creature is not and cannot be his own; that we are only innocent so far as we claim nothing of our own, so far as we look out of ourselves, so far as we forget ourselves in another. Whether

we approve of this language or not, whether we call it mystical or not, we all testify to the truth of it. That reverence for unconsciousness, that almost worship of childhood, is nothing else than a silent homage to this doctrine. And the protest against mere unconsciousness, the desire we feel that a child should grow into a distinct living person, the conviction we have that the command “**K**now thyself” does descend from Heaven, even when obedience to it seems sometimes to bring us to the very brink of hell; this also is a witness in behalf of the same doctrine. For how can there be any giving up of self if there is not a self to give up? How can a man cease from his own works and his own strivings, if there is nothing working and striving within him which he has to cease from?

It must then be true that we are to watch, with intense interest and thankfulness and hope, the gradual outburst of all those life-buds which yet destroy the unconsciousness of infancy. We ought to welcome the appearance of every strong energy, even of every feeling and passion which is a prophecy of manhood, even of vehement self-assertion, whatever possibilities of evil may be latent in it, though it *may* terminate in savage independence and defiance. To regard any of these as diabolical, because they may be turned to diabolical uses; any as appertaining to the old selfish Adam nature, because they *may* be debased into its tools, is to deny the purpose of God in Creation and in Redemption. But we are equally denying that purpose if we do not regard all the discipline of the family and the discipline of the school, all softening influences that act upon the affections, all hardening influences that fortify the will, the friendship which binds together the members of a society, the law which appeals to the conscience of each one, everything which awakens the powers of mind or of body, everything which restrains their irregular exercises, as God’s instruments for preventing His child from becoming its own slave, instead of His free servant. We could ill spare the brief records of our Lord’s own boyhood in St. Luke, because they tell us that the boy has his prototype as well as the man, and that when the

Nature crescent does not grow alone In thews and bulk; but as this temple waxes, The inward service of the mind and soul Grows wide withal,—

we may be sure that there is One with him Who, as He grew in stature and in grace, was always doing His Father's business, and learning obedience in it. Those who would take these records from us would do us an unspeakable injury. But God forbid that ecclesiastical fancy should add one letter to them! It is the Manhood of Christ we need chiefly to hear of; that Manhood for which the childhood and boyhood were only a preparation; that Manhood which is to show us how we are not, and how we are, to aspire after the state of the child.

These words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" contain that secret also. In all things denying Himself, in all things exalting His Father, He was necessarily without sin; because sin consists in setting up a self, in refusing to own any end beyond self. He was undefiled and harmless, innocent, not because he was free from one temptation, not because the consciousness of all human guilt was not upon Him, but because He could bear it into the presence of His Father, because He could keep up entire communion with His love under the sense and pressure of it.

Therefore, brethren, all attempts to make ourselves innocent by putting ourselves into a regulated atmosphere, and trying to bar out the intrusion of evil; all attempts to cut ourselves off from sinners, lest they should defile us; all treatment of other men's evils as if they were not our own, must be fatal to the acquisition of Christ's innocence, the only innocence which God knows anything of. On the other hand, it is contradicting Scripture, and reason, and experience, to say that those who have been most stained with outward and inward defilements may not receive the gift of innocency in its fullest measure. "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," was the confident and well-grounded assurance of a man upon whose conscience lay the burden of adultery and murder. For those crimes the sword was never to depart from his

house. No petty penances, such as confessors lay upon kings, but such as God lays upon them and their subjects equally, the loss and rebellion of children, exile, sorrow without and within, were appointed for him. But he himself had a free heart and a right spirit. He had dared to seek God's righteousness, to fly to Him from his own evil, and therefore it had not power to hold him a prisoner. Guilt fell off from him. He was purer than ever he had been, because he trusted in God more than he had ever done, and in himself less. It cannot be otherwise in a higher and diviner dispensation. St. Paul declares that it is not. The history of individuals and of mankind witnesses that it is not. And let men frame what notions they will about baptismal purity, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper witnesses that the sin-stricken man who has discerned that he never had, and never can have, anything righteous in himself, may become altogether childlike and spotless when he turns from himself, and seeks for fellowship with Him in Whom is no sin.

I have dwelt specially upon this point, because I think we have here the true sense and meaning of the Innocents' Day. If it had stood apart from the Festival of the Nativity, as the special qualification of certain infants who died before they had contracted any actual guilt, we might fancy there was something in their circumstances peculiarly fortunate or celestial,—something which raised them higher than others in the records of Heaven, because they saw and knew so little of earth. But when we are taught by the time which is chosen for celebrating them, as much as by the event itself which we celebrate, that all their worth is derived from their relation to the Son of Man, and to His adoption of our flesh; when we are reminded by the recurrence of their festival after those of St. Stephen and St. John, that the middle-aged man and the old man had just as much innocence as those who died in their cradles,—were in Christ's sense of the word little children, because they confessed their sins and believed that God was faithful and just to forgive them their sins and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness,—we are certainly taught a lesson of the most opposite kind to that which some would enforce upon us.

But I cannot separate this doctrine respecting true Christian innocence from that other which Communion by its very name inculcates upon us, and which is never more urged upon us than by the season of the Nativity. We seek communion with the Righteous Lord of man, with Him Who took upon Him the nature of man. The righteousness which He revealed is a righteousness for each, because it is a righteousness for all. If we refuse it to any one, we must explain on some other grounds than God gives us in His Word why we have any right to it. That is what is indicated to us by the admonition of the Church, that we must be in charity with all men when we come to that feast. It is to bind us to all men in the participation of the very highest gifts which God Himself can confer. If we would shut out any from those gifts, what do we mean by seeking them? If we would not shut them out from *these* gifts, what are the gifts which are not included in them, which are not inferior to them? The text is a most searching one. Ministers and people may well shrink and tremble at the application of it. You want discipline to keep out notorious offenders. Few of them come; if we have courage, we may easily exclude those who do. But here is a discipline not for the notorious offenders, but for all of us; for those who pass muster best with the world; for those who are most satisfied with themselves. Are we more content with ourselves than with that man and that? Do we know nothing in ourselves which should exclude us, more than anything that we know of him? Do we come because we will not let anything exclude us from seeking the God Who alone understands what has kept us from Him, Who can take that barrier away?

Brethren, we talk much of divisions in the Church; we have many nostrums of our own for healing wounds; many schemes of comprehension; much zeal to banish opponents of ours, who, we affirm, are the causes of strife. Let as many as think these methods have been successful hitherto, try them again. Let those who despair of such, make one other experiment. It is an old and simple one. We have sinned in breaking the Communion of the Church. Let us confess that

sin, each for himself and the whole Church, when we meet at the Communion. Others may have committed it. We are not suppressing their sins when we are acknowledging our own. If we feel those that are pressing upon us most nearly, we shall feel also those with which we seem to have no immediate concern, but to which we may have contributed very largely.

That is one Christmas lesson connected with this Service; the lesson which we shall practise better when we become more of little children, and have learnt to confess to the Father of our spirits, as they, when they are kindly and truly dealt with, confess to their fathers after the flesh. There is another lesson, also a very plain one, which has to do with this season. We speak of Christmas gifts and Christmas charities, and we lay every Sunday some alms upon the Communion plate. I do not say that it would be better if we gave more than. Let those alms be taken as signs and pledges, rather than as specific acts. Let charity find its way through other channels; even, if you will, through the most formal and legal. But let the signs be true signs. Let us give always because we are in communion with God and in communion with men. Let all charities have a savour of the Nativity in them; let them have a divine origin, and a human character and purpose. You complain, perhaps, that charities have not this character and purpose; you talk of the display of subscription lists, of the little sympathy which accompanies donations that pass through some unknown collector or board. But why complain? Why should we not try to make it otherwise? Why should not communicants feel that they have a bond to each other? Why should not those who receive the bread and wine in every parish church or private chapel, meet to consider what they may do in the best, simplest, most childlike way, for making others sharers in their blessings, physical, intellectual, spiritual? If we are tired of more artificial organisations, why not use this, which has so deep a groundwork, which has stood for eighteen centuries, which need never grow old, because it implies by its very nature that we seek a continual

renewal of life from One Who has promised to bestow it, and Who does not deceive us?

I would suggest this to you as a thought for the conclusion of the year. May it ripen and expand and bear some fruits in the one which is coming! And there is another, which may sustain it and make it effectual. Our Lord told His disciples that unless they were converted and became as little children, they could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Did He mean that Kingdom of Heaven which He had already given them power to preach of to others; that Kingdom of which they were to say to all men, “It is at hand, it is about you; submit to it; become the subjects of it”? Yes! that very Kingdom! They had a right to say—Judas had a right to say—to the inhabitants of every village and street, “A Kingdom which you cannot see is in the midst of you. It is a Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace and Joy. You are heirs of it. Christ has taken your nature that you may enter into it.” The words were true; no unbelief in those who heard them or in those who spoke them could make them untrue. But if they would enter into this Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace and Joy which is brought near us—if they would breathe this atmosphere which is surrounding those who speak and those who hear—ministers and people must alike have that poverty of spirit, that simple trust, which belong to the child. And this appears to us often—to us quite as often as to you—as if it were a sentence of perpetual exclusion. Where are proud and vain men, such as we are, to find this poverty? where are suspicious and doubting men, such as we are, to obtain this trust? Each time the exhortation before the Communion is read—each time that we are called to true repentance and faith and thanksgiving, the question may come back to us; yes, and with increased anxiety, even terror. I know but one way of treating it; the Collect to which I have referred already—our Christmas Collect—points out the way. We are children of God; Christ, by taking our nature, has assured that title to us. It depends on no accidents; it rests not upon any condition of our feelings. And because we are children, God has sent forth His Spirit that we may call

Him Father, and that we may do the acts of children. The Spirit is the last great gift to our race; the gift to it, not in its unconscious infancy, but in its full ripe manhood. That Spirit was given that we might know the treasures which God has freely given us,—the treasures of His own Nature. That Spirit is the Spirit of Trust and of Humility. That Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and of the Father. He is with us always, speaking to us always, working in us always. The reproaches of our conscience for our pride and self-will are His reproaches. All movements to give up our pride and self-will are His movements. When we ask that His Spirit may be renewed in us day by day, we ask to have our pride and self-will taken away by One Who is mightier than they are, mightier than we are. We ask what He prompts us to ask. When we draw nigh to the altar, He is with us, to fulfil the purposes of that Communion, to unite us to God, to unite us to our brethren. He is there that we may enter into the enjoyment of that Kingdom of Truth and Love which shall have no end. He is there to kindle that light in us which may afterwards shine before men, that seeing our good works they may glorify our Father in Heaven.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN THE YEAR

JANUARY 4, 1857

*“This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”* —1 THESS. iv. 3.

As long as we have any technical association with the principal word in this sentence, I doubt whether we shall understand what St. Paul wished the Thessalonians to understand by it. He was not writing a system of divinity, but a letter to men who were working and suffering in the world, and who wanted strength to work and suffer. When he spoke to them of sanctification, he spoke of that which concerned their every-day business; of that which every man might feel and know that he needed, because he was busy. The learned men among them, if there were any such, who tried to get a definition of the phrase from some book, would be always at fault; the simplest wayfarer, who was in the actual battle of life, and was fighting it manfully, would have some glimpse of its signification at once, and would see further into it, the harder he was pressed by his enemies. For what did such a man discover in the first century of the Christian Church? what does he discover in the nineteenth? This, I think: “It is hard to *do* the thing which I ought to do; hard oftentimes, when a number of different arguments present themselves to me, to know which *is* the thing I ought to do. I am glad to get advice from this man and that—though oftentimes the advice is very wide of the mark. It does not meet my difficulty. There is a mist over my eyes which it does not scatter, so that I may see the thing as it is; there is a lameness in my gait which it does not heal, that I may walk in the right way. Still, I can obtain a certain help from friends, when the question is about *acts*. I can, in simple deference to their judgment, take one course and avoid another; or I can balance between their opposing counsels, and perhaps strike out some better path for myself. But how different the case is, when that

other question arises. How am I to *be* right! And it does arise, it does force itself upon me. I may have shuffled through the world a long time without asking myself whether my words and deeds express what is in me, or whether I merely adopted them because they were expected from me; changing them, therefore, when I go into some other society, as I change the current coin of one country for that of its neighbour, when I pass the frontier. It may be an interruption to my work to entertain this question. I may be very glad to dismiss it: but it comes back to me. I cannot pretend to be straightforward and honest if I do not face it; and yet, when I do face it, what insincerity comes to light within me! At home, in secret hours, I have to endure an inquisition. I have to be put upon a rack, which is much more searching and terrible than any I can ever be exposed to in the world. And then many words which I hear in the world—words which fell very lightly on my ear once—will seem to repeat this secret examination, and to increase the torture of it. I hear people complimenting themselves, complimenting each other, upon their sincerity. Whatever other virtues they may be wanting in, that they can claim. Happy, enviable men! What would I not give to purchase their secret! What efforts would I not make to attain the blessing which they appear to have reached so easily, and to hold so securely!”

Yes! to be or not to be, that *is* the question. Can we be honest, not merely in transactions with the world, but honest with ourselves? Can we not merely practise justice when there are a thousand influences of law and opinion to make injustice perilous, but hold fast justice in our heart of hearts, though all those influences should be thrown into the other scale, and to do right should be the only hazard? Is it accident, the want of opportunity, the dread of detection, which keeps us decent? Do the conventions of society make us courteous and friendly? If they were taken away, should we let loose, should we have pleasure in letting loose, our contempt and malice?

I am far from saying that it is wise or right to force this inquisition upon our fellow-men. Often, I am sure, we confuse their consciences

rather than clear them by doing so. But it is forced upon ourselves in our private hours. We have to meet these demands, or confess we cannot meet them, when those who are about us suppose that all is right, and would persuade us that it is so. And then comes the most terrible of all crises in a man's history, when a Sisyphus sentence seems to be laid upon him, when he is lifting a stone that is ever descending upon him with greater weight. He finds all outward schemes of reformation vain. He cannot engage in them; for they only helped to lay bare an internal disease, and to aggravate the suffering from it. He must eradicate *that*. But what is that? Is it not himself? Can he remake his own being? He finds baseness and corruption at what seems to him the very root of it. Is *he* to establish nobleness and purity there? Yet who else can? All Nature says, "It is not in me." All Society says, "It is not in me." And oh! how the effort to cure seems to augment the malignity of the complaint! How much worse he is, since he began to meditate on this evil, to pry into the depths of it! Shall the ground be covered over again as well as it may be? Shall he try to walk over it as before, forgetting what he has seen, not in a dream, but in actual revelation, below?

To one who has felt thus—in any degree thus—the word *Sanctification* may have a very promising sound: promising because it speaks of reality; for he is well tired of everything artificial. It seems to say, "Just what you are seeking may be accomplished for you. You may be made right; not on the surface, but within. There may be a reformation; not in the acts, of which the world takes cognizance, but in you, from whom the acts proceed." In past time he may have conceived of a Saint either as one who had reached a transcendent elevation of thought and character, or as one whose external habits separated him from other beings of his race. He may have thought the first condition enviable but unapproachable; the other disagreeable, if not morally offensive. Now his definition of the word is changed altogether. At all events the saintship or sanctification he wants is the power of stooping, not of rising. His self-conceit and consequence are his burdens. To be

delivered from these is his ambition. He has been standing too much apart from his fellows; who can impart to him the difficult art of being at one with them, in entire sympathy with them? He is certain that he is not better than they are. And yet he is always wishing, struggling to pass for something better; to be gloriously inhuman. Who will enable him to be more simply human, more natural, more unassuming than men are wont to be?

He thinks this simplicity, this inward truthfulness, must be a gift; for does not discipline induce formality? He is half inclined to suppose it must be dropped into some favoured souls by some chance angel visitant. Will such an one ever come to him? Are there any waters into which he might step, after they have been troubled, and be healed of the disease which has kept him bedridden so long?

It is not of an angel St Paul speaks in the text. Writing to a set of ordinary men, lately Heathens or perhaps Pharisees, he says to them all, "*This is the Will of God, even your Sanctification.*" A very marvellous message when we hear it first. It seems as if anything was true rather than that. We are struggling to make ourselves right that we may obtain the favour of God; struggling to bring our minds into the state which He can look upon with some complacency, and for which He may ultimately reward us. St Paul, you see, says nothing of that kind; he regards the subject from an entirely different point of view. It is the Will of God, he says, to sanctify you. "Oh yes," we reply, "no doubt God has given us a law;—He has told us what we are to do and not to do. That is His Will; if we can conform ourselves to it, so much the better. But the complaint we are making is, that we cannot: the adjusting our wills to *that* Will is the difficulty. Who can take that out of our way?"

No, this is not what the words are saying. St Paul undoubtedly believed that God had given men a law: no one believed it more. He had felt the whole force of that belief, the whole anguish of it. He had known his own inability to keep that law, his own dislike to it. And it was by this process he learnt that the Will of God was his Sanctifi-

cation. Beneath the law he found there was a Divine Person, a Divine Will, which was the author of it. And that Person, that Will, was acting upon him, was working in him, to will and do of His good pleasure. This Will was not compelling him to certain acts; was not setting before him certain motives which might incline him to do those acts; it was speaking directly to his will; it was making him to *be* that which he was created to be, that he might do that which he was commanded to do.

You think, perhaps, that St. Paul had a beautiful soul, shaped to receive this Sanctification; one which gracefully, naturally submitted to it; upon which it fell like the dew-drops upon a flower that opens to take them in. Never, surely, was there so great a mistake. If we may trust his own statement, it was through resistance, through reluctance, through the vehemence of self-will, that he became aware of the might of that Will which was subduing him to itself. If he had not discovered that in his own person, he would never have spoken out so boldly to the Thessalonians: "This is the will of God, even *your* Sanctification." "I am sure that in you there is no hard and rugged soil which there is not in me, that there is no pride choking up the avenues through which love might enter in, that did not choke up my reason and heart. All that I have learnt in myself has proved to me that this Will is not a partial one, not one that chooses some specially tender, soft nature for its operations; that it is absolutely a Will to good and to nothing else; that it is a Will which seeks to bring all wills into harmony with itself."

St Paul had the same difficulty in believing this that you or I can have; greater difficulty, because he understood the resistance of the human will immeasurably better than we do; because he had seen it in a multitude more of terrible cases; because he had realized it more in himself. But the faith, "This is the will of God, even your Sanctification," rose out of all these experiences, rose above them all. When his calculations failed him, he fell back upon it; when his hopes were crushed, he fell back upon it. Other things might be doubtful—this was certain. Upon this ground he stood; upon this heaven and earth stood; if heaven and earth passed away, this would not pass away.

I said that men found continually that the further they went down into themselves, the more there was of corruption, and darkness, and evil, till at last they supposed the very root of their being was nothing else. St Paul had gone down into these depths; he had found this rottenness; in himself he says he found only that. But he discovered that there was a root below himself, a true divine root, for himself and every man. He found that each man, when he tries to contemplate himself apart from Christ, is that evil creature in which no good thing dwells. But no man, so he teaches, has a right to contemplate himself apart from Christ; God does not so contemplate him. He was formed at first in the Divine Word; in Him he lives and has his being still. To be ignorant of Him, the true root of his life, is his misery; to know Him is life and peace. He was sure that it is God's will that men should be that which He had formed them to be; that they should find the true source and spring of their life; that they should not go on in a vain and desperate struggle, to cut themselves apart from it and to destroy themselves. But if this was so, the Will of God was their Sanctification; the Will of God was to graft them upon this living stock. Upon it they might grow, and might bring forth living fruits. He was certain that such a Will was not a lazy, inoperative will. It was not one which acted to-day, and would cease acting to-morrow. It was the Will of the Everlasting Father; it had fully uttered itself in Christ the Divine Word, when He took upon Him man's flesh, and gave Himself up to Death, and rose again from the dead. It would go on acting itself out in all the energies of the Almighty Spirit, the Comforter Whom Christ promised His Church, to abide with it forever. Every man then in the Thessalonian Church was to receive this announcement, as made directly to him. He was not to argue about it, whether there was not some special infirmity or evil which put him beyond the scope of it, and showed that it was meant for others rather than him. If he believed that he was under a law, that there was something which it was right for him to do, something which it was right for him to be; the more infirmity, the more evil he was conscious of, the more proof had he

that these words were addressed to him. But the same principle which made it a sin to deny them to himself, made it an equal sin to deny them to any one of his fellows. Whatever might be their temptations, outward or inward; however they might have yielded to one or both, there was no possible limitation of this sentence. The Will of God in its fullest sense, in its length and breadth, was their Sanctification. It was not a poor paltry benevolence, which wishes all creatures happiness, and will perhaps take pains to give them the outward animal ease and felicity which some men crave for which no man is ever content with. It is not a Will to save them from toil or suffering, or rightful punishment. It is a Will to impose and inflict these, so long as they contribute to the purification and elevation of the will, the spirit within; so long as they helped to remove clogs and impediments from that, so long as they tend to bring the man to the state in which alone he is a man, renewed in the Image of God.

In this sense, brethren, and with this faith, I would beseech you to consider the words which we have heard in the Epistle and Gospel and Collect for to-day; in this sense and with this faith I desire that we may apply them in the year upon which we are entering. It may seem a fall to pass from the Nativity of Christ to His Circumcision; from the message that a Child was born and a Son given, to the severities of the old law, the law of servants. It would be a fall indeed if the message which Christmas Day brought to us, "God has sent forth His Son, made of a woman, that ye might receive the adoption of Sons," were in any degree invaded or weakened by the Circumcision message, if the Covenant that is done away were again forced upon us, who have received the sign of the diviner Covenant. But we keep the festival of Christ's Circumcision on purpose that we may not suffer this moral degradation. We are always in peril of it. We are always ready to fancy that we are not redeemed, not claimed as God's children, not grafted upon a true and holy root. We are always supposing that by some painful acts, devised by ourselves or borrowed from the practice of other days, we are to bring ourselves into a condition which we ought

to attain, but which God has not bestowed upon us. St. Paul teaches us—the Church, year by year, repeats his lesson—that Christ's Circumcision is an answer to all such reasonings, the prohibition of all such experiments. The purpose of Circumcision was accomplished when the Son of Man underwent it. His birth and death explained why it had been instituted. His birth and death destroyed its use, preserved its signification, brought forth the substance of which it was the shadow. If the Nativity says that Christ's Sonship is the ground upon which our life and the life of humanity stands, the Circumcision says that we have no acts whatever to perform in order that we may place ourselves on this ground; that all obstacles have been removed which hinder us from asserting it as ours; that we have no right to demand anything of any human creature, before we tell him that it is his by the constitution of God's Universe, that it is his according to the Mind and Will of God Himself.

And this privilege we are to vindicate for ourselves, and this Gospel we are to preach to others, because only by doing so can we come, or can we bring them, within the scope of that Sanctification of which the text speaks. That, I have explained already, we can only refer to the Will of God; to the perpetual operation of that Will upon spirits whom He has formed in His image, whom He has created in His Son; whom He has reclaimed and regenerated in that Son, that they may derive life and virtue from His life and virtue, and may bring forth the fruits which become such a root. This Sanctification takes effect by all the discipline which God brings to bear upon the hearts and spirits of men, by all the signs and tokens which make them aware of their relation to Him, by all the inward attraction which binds them to Him, by all illuminations respecting His purposes, by all severities and hardships which remind them of their evil nature, reprove them for having yielded to it, force them to abjure it and seek protection from it. Here is that Circumcision, made without hands, of which the Church speaks to-day; hereby God teaches us that He is not watching over us less than over His people in any older generation, that He is

dealing with us upon the same principles which are set forth to us in their history; only that He has brought us to a point which was always before them, but which they never reached; only that He has given us a light respecting His methods and His ultimate object which He did not vouchsafe to them.

We enter then upon the New Year, with the assurance that whatever befalls us in the course of it, that must be an instrument in God's hands for effecting this inward circumcision, that must be intended to fulfil the Will of God which is our Sanctification. I do not know what can sustain us in looking forward into the dim shadowy future, if this truth does not. Anxiety and restlessness get the dominion over us, when we speculate about what is likely to come upon us; they get the dominion over us often as completely when we consider what we should be doing, in which direction our work lies, whether there are not a hundred incompatible duties which we must perform in succession or at once. The notion of a Fate which may crush us at any moment lies beneath the first of these calculations. The notion of a Taskmaster who is making tremendous demands upon us, who is reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed, is involved in the other. Is it not natural that despondency, irregularity, indolence, should be the result of both? But if for a Fate, you substitute a Father; if for a Taskmaster, you substitute the Will of God, which is our Sanctification, surely the whole condition of your minds is changed; you can wait, for you have hope; you can work, for you have an Inspirer of your work, and One who must conduct it to its right issue. He is preparing events; He is preparing you to meet them, to be instructed by them, to make use of them. The events are under the direction of a Will which is a Will to simple and perfect good; you are under the more immediate direction of the same Will; you can enter into its meaning; you are invited to work with it. True, you are subject to an outward law; Christ, the Everlasting Son, was subject to one. But you can obey that law in the spirit of a Son, for Christ did so, and His Spirit is with you to mould your purposes and your

acts to the likeness of His. You will have to undergo immeasurably sharper crosses than you can ever contrive for yourself. Christ in His very infancy was marked as One Who was to bear a cross. He took it in simple filial obedience. And the Will which laid it upon Him sustained Him under it; that He might sustain all those whose nature He has assumed, whose burdens He has shared.

There is another lesson also in this Circumcision Festival, which I hope will go with us through the year. We sometimes say that the Jewish Covenant has nothing to do with us, and has no resemblance to ours, because it was the Covenant with a nation. God forbid that that circumstance should put a difference between us and them! God forbid that we should feel that their nation was under the direct care and government of a Living and Righteous Lord, and that ours is left to the care of ignorant and foolish mortals! God forbid that we should think it is the Will of God to sanctify us as individuals, and not to cut off from our nation whatever hinders it from fulfilling the tasks which are given it to do! Let us not destroy our patriotism—yes, and our personal morality, for that is inseparable from our patriotism—by such doctrines as these. The Father of all does not regard special nations less, because by the birth and death of His Son He has redeemed mankind. We are only holy as individuals, because we have a portion in that universal holiness which Christ has put upon our race. All God's Sanctification is to make us more united to our fellows. All His severe Circumcision is to separate us from those selfish inclinations and habits which set us at war with them. Whatever punishments He designs for England this year, are to destroy the weeds which are ruining its soil. Those weeds grow on the soil of our hearts; they are sowing seeds that stifle all better produce there, as well as in the country at large. We know it is so; we know that the worship of money, the meanness of party, the hypocrisies of the tongue, the hypocrisies of the soul, cannot be traced by any reasonable men to some imaginary public. They are to be found in you and me; in you and me they must be extirpated. This is the proof that we cannot separate the Covenant with the

nation from the Covenant with its members; this is the proof that a Sanctification for one must be ineffectual, if it did not contemplate the other. This is the reason why we should ask for a national repentance and reformation, and should not trust our desires for a repentance and reformation in ourselves, while we think of ourselves apart from the sinners by whom we are surrounded. This is the reason why we can hope for no Sanctification, till we believe that it is the Will of God to sanctify us all.

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JANUARY 11, 1857

*“But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.”*

—2 CORINTHIANS iv. 3, 4.

I OBSERVED two or three Sundays ago, that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians set forth more completely than any other part of St. Paul’s writings his own struggles as a Minister to the Gentiles, and the lessons which they had taught him respecting the office of Ministers in all ages. I return to it now for both reasons. The Epiphany season leads us to inquire how Christ was manifested to the Gentiles; it leads us, if we have any serious thoughts of our own work, to ask how He is manifested to men by the Gospel which we preach. St. Paul’s words, in the text, contain a very direct answer to these questions.

(1) Though every tract which is thrown about in our streets tells us that Gospel means “good tidings,” I do not think it is at all unnecessary to remind you and myself of that familiar and universally acknowledged definition. In reading St. Paul we have to be continually on our guard lest we should forget it, and so attribute to him a purpose very unlike indeed that which he attributes to himself. We may suppose that he came among the Gentiles to tell them that the Divine footsteps which they thought they had traced on our earth were merely imaginary. We may think that he spoke of a darkness and horror over the past and the future, which they had known nothing of before. In either case he could not have been a messenger of good tidings. He might have boasted that he was telling the truth; but he would have been bound to say—as he was an honest man he would have said— “It is a most dismal truth.”

(2) He speaks of this Gospel or good news being “*hid*” from those to whom it was proclaimed. What he means we must discover partly from the former chapter, partly from the latter clause of this paragraph. He speaks in the third chapter of his own countrymen. He says that there is a veil over their hearts, which was not taken away in the reading of the Old Testament. He compares it with the veil with which Moses’ face was covered, to conceal a glory which could not be looked at. He declares that that veil has been taken away in Christ; he affirms that it shall be taken away from the heart of the Jews when that heart turns to the Lord.

The verb which we translate “hid” is, no doubt, the cognate one to the substantive which we translate “veil”: it is impossible not to suppose that the two passages are connected. But we may naturally ask how the same cause could interfere with the reception of the Gospel among Monotheists and Idolaters, among those who revered the Old Scriptures and those who were without them? Supposing a veil was hiding the light from both, must it not be a different veil? I think we shall find the answer to this question as we proceed.

(3) “*If our Gospel be hid,*” he says, “*it is hid to them that are lost.*” The word *lost* might lead us for a moment to think of future perdition. But that sense is clearly inapplicable here. St. Paul is not declaring what may be the *consequences* of rejecting the Gospel, but what was the *cause* of its rejection. He is explaining a fact that was happening continually before his eyes. His language is perfectly consistent with that which he uses habitually; as, for instance, when he speaks of men being “dead in trespasses and sins.” Nor is our version in the least obscure, if we bring very common tests to bear upon it. The translators were familiar (though not so familiar as we are) with the phrase “lost sinners,” as applicable to the condition of men whose conscience and moral instincts have been stifled by a course of evil. The phrase has become a cant one; the edge of it has been rubbed off. But it has great force. We recognize the truth of it when we are not speaking a theological dialect at all. Nearly every one talks of men “who are lost to themselves,” or

“lost to all sense of right and wrong.” When St. Paul found the Gentiles given up to sensuality, he called them *lost*. Their minds, he said, were darkened; they were alienated from the mind of God in consequence of the ignorance that was in them, in consequence of the hardening of the heart. When St. Paul found the Jews shut up in self-righteousness and self-glorification, exulting in their law, exulting in their difference from all other men, he called them lost. There was the same blindness, the same hardness of heart, as in the other case. He knew that there was, for he had felt it; he had been lost.

(4) Then follows an explanation, drawn from his own experience, of the darkening of the heart which he has been describing in these two apparently different cases. *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*. You would have supposed that the Apostle of the Gentiles must have come in contact with many gods; that he had to encounter a whole Pantheon. Yet he speaks here only of one. He calls that one “the god of this world.” How is this? How could he find a general expression for such a multitude of beliefs as he must have found scattered in those regions of Asia and Greece which he visited? How could he comprehend under that expression the faith of the Latin Empire, and of all the western tribes under its sway or struggling with it, which he hoped to visit? Above all, how could he reckon among these the seed of Abraham, to whom, as he says, pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises? I reply, he did not sum up the *beliefs* of the world under this formula, but its *unbeliefs*. “The god of this world,” he says, “hath blinded the eyes of them that believe *not*.” Could he have uttered a more pregnant truth? The worshippers of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth had still, in all the earlier stages of their worship, confessed a Being who had something to do with themselves; a Being from whom came rains and fruitful seasons; to whom, amidst all his caprices, they might look for protection; who though he might sometimes dispense favours or punishments merely to please himself, yet was juster and more

righteous than those whom he ruled. But at each step in the downward progress of idolatry,—as the sins of the fathers descended upon the children to the third and fourth generation—this God with human sympathies, this utterer of laws which he did not himself disobey, was changed into a mere god of this world, often not more personal than the air of which he was supposed to be the synonym, yet acquiring all attributes that belong to the most wicked and horrible personality, from the sins of his votaries who made him after their image. Such a god of this world lay beneath all the superstitions of the nations; ready to develop himself whenever the faith in some higher and better Being, which lived on amidst all confusions in their consciences, should be utterly crushed under the moral corruptions against which it protested. Such a god of this world was, in St. Paul's day, continually putting out that truth, which in various forms and measures had been scattered through the fables of Paganism, was effacing all those footsteps of a Divine Friend and Deliverer, which had afforded some consolation to the poorest sufferers upon earth in their worst wretchedness. Such a god of this world was turning into one black undistinguishable Tartarus, all those visions of a world to come which had been mixed with pictures of Elysian plains, and of suns and stars that would not wane. And such a god of this world had just as much supplanted the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the mind of the Israelite. It was not in his case that the deification of nature had passed into a mere terror of the vengeance which natural powers would inflict upon man. He had remembered so much of the oracles of his fathers as to be incapable of reverencing nature, when he had lost the sense of its gracious Creator. The god of this world therefore became to him the mere Mammon or Money-god. *That* he enthroned between the Cherubim, *that* he believed to be seated in the Heaven of Heavens. His god was he who helped him to traffic most successfully here upon earth; and he had some dim, faint expectation that this god would listen to his prayers, and would be bribed by his sacrifices, so that when

he left the world he might not see his enemy, might not wake up in confusion at his presence.

(5) If we understand who it was that was blinding the minds of those who did not believe, we shall understand better what it was that St. Paul wished them to believe—what the purpose of his Gospel was, what its effect was upon those whose blindness it overcame. This is expressed in the last clause:— “*Lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.*” Here was the subject of the good tidings; they were tidings concerning God. They set forth the True God, the Living God, in opposition to the false god, the dead god, the god of this world, who was blinding the minds of Jews as well as of Gentiles. But this True God, this Living God, could not be declared to one or to the other in any words of St. Paul or of any man. He could only be presented in a Person; there must be a Living Image of Him; He could only be seen in the life and death of a man. What St. Paul had to do was to proclaim that God had shown forth such an Image of Himself in the world, that it would confound all images which men had made of Him out of nature or out of themselves. What he had to say was, “This is the Image of your God; this is the God Whom your hearts are seeking after, Whom the hearts of your fathers were seeking after. This is He Whom they dreamed of whenever they thought of a good and gracious Being, whenever they thought of a just Being, whenever they thought of a Deliverer from wrong and injustice, their own or other men’s. This was He Whom they fled from and hated, and wished to put to death in them, when they had done wrong and were cleaving to their wrong, because they felt that He was reproofing it and judging it. This was He Whom they were supplanting with lying counterfeits, when their souls became dark, and base, and slavish. This was He Who was always seeking after them, by blessings and by punishments, to bring them out of their baseness and slavery, and to make them aware of His guidance and government.”

Therefore the Apostle was to say further, “This good news is none of mine. I have no power to make you entertain it or accept it. My

rhetoric, my vehemence, cannot effect a passage for it into your souls. If it could, what would it profit you? The message is concerning a Person; you are called to submit to a Living Ruler; you are called to embrace a Living Friend. How can a whole heap of words, suppose you took them in ever so readily and liked them ever so much, work in you this obedience, bestow on you this fellowship? God is doing that, not we. He has created you in His Son; He desires that you should know who this Son is. He has formed you in His image; He desires that you should not mistake another image for His. He is manifesting His Son to you. His light is shining about you, and seeking to enter into those hearts, which must just as much take it in as the eyes the light of the sun. Another god, the god of this world, is using all arts to intercept this light, to draw a veil between you and it, to put out the organ which should transmit it to you. What I bid you believe is,—and I, Paul, speak who have known what darkness is and what light is—that Christ’s light is stronger than the darkness, and can break through it all.”

If this was the character of the Gospel to the Gentiles, we can understand why the Church has connected it with the idea of Epiphany. To the wise men, who had questioned the stars to tell them of the King they wanted, Jesus in His cradle is discovered as that King. An inward glory makes itself felt through the weakness of the infant. A veil is withdrawn from the hearts of these earnest seekers after Truth; and they confess that the most beautiful and august forms of the outward world cannot help them, except by leading them to a Lord clothed with their own nature, united to themselves. A like manifestation was made to every Gentile, sage or simple, who confessed Jesus the Crucified to be the Wisdom and Power of God. All his past studies, in whatever direction they had been pursued; all his past experiences of misery and sin, in the world and in himself; all his dreams of a Good God, all his tendencies to worship an evil god, were so many evidences that the Divine Image which was set before him was the one after which he had been created, and to which he must bow. And the Church does not

limit the idea to Gentiles any more than St. Paul. All the acts of Jesus among His own countrymen after the flesh, between His Baptism and Crucifixion,—His stilling of the waves, His healing of the demoniacs,—are treated as Epiphanies, or manifestations of His inward glory, as that preliminary Gospel of His Kingdom, which was to be preached in greater fulness and to all the world when He had risen from the dead. Of all the lessons which our Services teach us by their titles and by their method,—and I find those lessons more rich and full of meaning with every experience of the confusions into which we are led by our private conceits, by ill-sifted traditions, by the opinions of our own age,—this one seems to me the most precious.

For thus we are instructed, in the first place, what kind of work it is that our Missionaries have to do when they go into Heathen lands. Perhaps before they leave their own country, they think that their business is to rouse the natives of those lands to what they would call a sense of religion, an interest about their souls, a conviction of the shortness of life, the anticipation of an approaching judgment and eternity. They can scarcely stir a step in any one of those countries which England has reduced under her sceptre, or which are the subjects of some other government, without discovering traces of a sense of religion, of an interest about the soul, of an anticipation of death, of a dread of what is to follow death, to which they were quite unused on their own soil. If they have no other vocation than this, nay, if they have not learnt that this is not even a part of the message which they are to carry with them, they may soon regret that they ever crossed the seas. They had better have stayed at home, for they will find that the task which they came to perform has been done and is doing more effectually by the Yogis and Fakirs, whose influence they wish to destroy. Unless they come with a Gospel concerning God,—unless that Gospel enables them to meet the anxieties about religion, about the soul, about death, about the future, which lie like a dead weight upon the faculties and energies of tribes which have proved themselves capable, and are still capable, of noble thoughts and great deeds,—unless they can turn

the thoughts of immortality and judgment into moral and quickening thoughts, thoughts favourable to truth and honesty, from being, as they so continually are, immoral and deadening thoughts, leading to fraud and falsehood, our Missionaries are not going out upon the errand on which St. Paul and the Missionaries of his day went. They are not carrying the news of a Redemption; they are not testifying of that glory which was manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ to the world.

And what they do abroad we have to do at home. We have seen that St. Paul's message to the Jew was not in its essence and principle different from his message to the Gentile. We might have thought that he would have had to preach of the True God to the idolaters, only of Jesus Christ to those who detested idols. No, it was not so: he had to declare the True God to one as much as to the other: he had to encounter a false god as much when he was speaking to the one as to the other. The English preacher in the nineteenth century must learn that the case is not otherwise with himself. His Gospel also is concerning God. He has to proclaim that the God Who was manifested in Christ Jesus is *the* God, the only God. He has to tell men of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, all persons of all opinions, from the most vehemently religious to the most exclusively and dogmatically secular, that they are in danger of worshipping another god wholly unlike this God; yea, that they have actually worshipped such a one. And he must, like St. Paul, testify that it is essentially the same god to which persons of these different tempers and professions are bowing down. In one sense, the common saying is a true one, that there are no atheists. The man who calls himself an atheist worships the world, or something in the world, or himself; he submits to a power which is not less terrible, less exacting, because he has chosen it or made it for himself. But in the sense in which St. Paul uses the word, every one of us is in danger of becoming an atheist. It is not some other gentler form of unbelief that we have to fight with in our hearts day by day. It is literally, emphatically, the denial of God; it is the disbelief in an All-righteous Being, an All-true Being, an All-loving Being, Who has

made us in His likeness, and therefore would have us righteous, true, loving. To believe in this God, to hold fast the belief in dark days and bright days, when everything seems crushing us to death, and when everything seems full of a too delicious life, is not easy, but is most hard; let us understand it well, is *the* hard thing for human beings. We fancy sometimes that there is some other great *crux* in Christianity, which, if it could be taken away, all would come easily and naturally to us, we should have no more perplexities. It is a mistake. This is the *crux*, to believe in God, to believe that He is not false as we are, not unjust as we are, not indifferent to the wellbeing of men as we are. Men can bear many tortures for the sake of their souls; men can accept the most startling outrages upon their consciences and their reasons, who cannot accept this assertion, or only accept it as a dead, unmeaning proposition, which is explained away the next moment, which yields to every perplexing phenomenon in the world or in ourselves. Oh, brethren, we never can grasp this truth to our souls, we never can overcome the Atheism which so easily besets us, unless we take the Gospel to be the announcement that God has manifested Himself in His Son Jesus Christ; that God is manifesting Himself in His Son Jesus Christ; that only in that Image can we know Him or know ourselves; that, apart from Him we have an animal birth and an animal death; that apart from Him, we have that death of sin which only spirits can know; that in Him we are raised, redeemed, united to God and to each other; that through Him the Spirit comes upon us and works in us, that we may manifest His nature and will to our fellow-men.

And so we arrive at some other conclusions of no less importance, respecting the duties of modern preachers and their failures. There are many complaints about the inefficiency of pulpit ministrations in our day. Those who do not think them necessary for themselves, who think that they have learnt all which we can tell them, and who do not care (as they say) to come to church merely that they may hear endless repetitions of the same commonplaces, or proclamations of dogmas which they have convinced themselves are untenable, yet desire that

the poor, for whom the Gospel was originally intended, should hear it; for they no doubt want something of the kind still, and may become dangerous if it is withheld from them. These poor people, to whom truth and falsehood cannot signify much, ought to have the dose, we are told, in its strongest form. Sounding rhetoric, vehemence, rant, are all desirable for them. They need to be aroused with terrors of a future destruction; nothing else will do for them. "How absurd it is," exclaims the critic,—himself, of course, quite unmoved,—"for preachers who pretend that they believe such things, not to pour them forth with all the fury of manner and gesticulation which naturally accompanies such convictions, and which is the only effectual means of producing an impression upon the only class which can, in this day, receive such impressions! How reasonable," it is said; "if these things are true, is the machinery of the Camp-meetings, and all the results that follow from the use of it! If it is everything to make men religious, why not use the most direct means of making them so?"

To all which exceedingly plausible language, which all of you must have heard or read, this seems to me a satisfactory reply. If we *do* believe these things which are written in the New Testament, we cannot be very inconsistent if we should refer to the New Testament as our teacher about the subject of our preaching, and the manner of it. We cannot be wrong if we take *that* as our judge, rather than the opinions and examples of later teachers, who have professed as we do to mould themselves upon its maxims. Certainly we are not bringing our cause before a less severe tribunal than the one from which we appeal. Certainly Apostles and Evangelists will not wink at our misdoings, or condemn our coldness less than either the religious men who have faith in conversions which are effected by violent excitements, or than the sceptical and worldly men, who maintain that, given our foolish premises, these are the legitimate conclusions from them. But if we turn to St. Paul, that we may learn from him what the commencement of that work was, which was to issue in the formation of a Christendom and the conversion of a world, he gives us what

may be a very satisfactory explanation of the difference between his preaching and ours, but one which certainly does not make it consist in this, that he addressed himself more to the nerves of men and women than we do, or that he set before them more vivid and terrible pictures of the vengeance which awaited them after death, unless they could force themselves into an instantaneous belief of the message which was brought to them. That he did rouse the *consciences* of men as they had never been roused before, that he did awaken them to a sense of evil in themselves which they had never known before, this is certain. But the process of appealing to the conscience was the setting before them the gracious Lord of that conscience, against Whom it had been rebelling. That feeling of wrong came, when the perfectly righteous Image of Jesus Christ was presented to men, when they confessed it as God's Image, to which he would have them conformed. If we fail to do this, if we fail to set forth such an Image before men, or do not believe that it is indeed the Image of the glory of God, and the pattern of all that can be good and blessed in men, there is no need to go further for the interpretation of our want of influence upon rich or poor, upon wise men or fools. But let all of us understand it well; we shall not get an influence over those to whom it is rightly said that the Gospel was first preached, and for whom it was designed, by practising a single art upon them which a man of cultivation would see through and would laugh at. By such courses we shall serve the god of this world; we shall strengthen his empire over men; we shall do what in us lies that the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, Who is the Image of God, may *not* shine unto them. Every base motive to which we address ourselves, every dishonest argument which we make use of, puts us so much further out of communion with Him Who is the truth; makes it so much the more impossible for us, by the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It is a gross error, confuted by the most notorious facts, that the civilization or enlightenment of the nineteenth century has made falsehoods, spiritual or secular, ineffectual for the use of those

who dare resort to them. The trade of the enchanter is not spoiled; it was never more promising or prosperous. But, thanks be to God, that enlightenment or civilization or scepticism does make it unsafe for *us* to meddle with these accursed tricks, to use them as men of old used them, with comparative innocence, in the cause of Christ. We are driven back into the position which was occupied by the early preachers of the cross. We must proclaim the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth and love and of a sound mind, as the antagonist and subverter of all those spirits of falsehood which play upon the senses, which are the sources of wild inspirations and contortions of the animal frame. We are bound, unless we would desert our function or abuse it to vile ends, with no hesitating or timid speech to proclaim that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, and that they who say that they have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, lie and do not the truth. Our Gospel is to the poor, only because there is a man in every beggar, whom the god of this world is trying to hold down in death, whom the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to as His child. If we find him in a state of moral debasement, lost in brutality or falsehood, we announce to him a deliverance from that damnation; we preach of a Salvation which Christ has won for him by taking his nature and vanquishing his enemies. We may speak to him also of a wrath to come; the Apostles spoke of it to rich and poor also—to the rich more than to the poor. For God's wrath was hot then, and is not less hot now, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. When these have reached their fulness, when they make the earth an utterly hateful and intolerable habitation, that Divine wrath comes down, now as of old, upon nations and upon individuals. And there is a wrath more terrible than this, the wrath which men cherish in their own hearts, which becomes their very nature and the principle of their existence, when they give themselves up to the dominion of the god of this world. From the wrath to come, in both senses, the Gospel bids men flee to the one true sanctuary, the eternal Truth and love of God, as it is manifested to all men in His Son. Till we discover our own utter

want of truth and love, we may fancy there is some other refuge than this. We may limit God's goodness to the dimensions of ours; we may even persuade ourselves that we care more for His creatures than He does. Alas for the preacher of the Gospel who cherishes that monstrous imagination! Happy is it for him, if by any the most terrible discoveries of the heartlessness and atheism which he shares with those to whom he is sent, he is brought to become only a witness for the glory of Him Who is the Image of God! Then, when he feels most strongly the blindness which the god of this world is seeking to produce in his own mind, and the minds of all who listen to him, he will be able confidently to say, "I know that the light is mightier still; I know that no blindness will at last be able to withstand it."

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JANUARY 18, 1857

*“For to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.” —*

EPHESIANS ii. 15.

WHY Jews and Gentiles rejected the Gospel of Christ, why St. Paul attributed the dislike of it in both to their worship of the god of this world, I considered last Sunday. How Jews and Gentiles were brought into one Church or body by the Gospel, is the question I wish to examine this afternoon. This lesson too, I think, belongs to the Epiphany; perhaps also, if we can learn it rightly, we may find why the Church prays on this Second Sunday after the Epiphany, with what confidence she prays, that God will grant *us* also His peace all the days of our life.

The words I have read to you from the Epistle to the Ephesians refer directly to this topic. I have taken one clause out of a long passage; but if you consider that passage and the whole Epistle, you will find that I am not perverting it from its original intention. And there is enough in this single clause to occupy us. St. Paul does not state that problem respecting Jews and Gentiles as many among us would state it. We should ask how men who had been educated under the shadow of the Temple in Jerusalem; who had trembled at the words of the second Commandment; who, before all their other lore, had learnt that the Lord their God was one Lord, could be brought into fellowship with men who found a god in every hill and fountain; whose wide toleration could embrace the thought of new gods on their own soil, or of gods whom foreigners had worshipped on theirs; whose temples might sometimes be forsaken through the scepticism of the

philosophers and the indifference of the people, but seldom because the awe of some invisible Ruler made the wrongdoer fear to enter them. We may wonder what convictions each side must have been obliged to sacrifice, what devices could have been found to prevent the principles which neither could abandon, from perpetual jarring.

St. Paul, on the other hand, appears to regard the Jew as an incomplete, or half man, till he found the Gentile; the Gentile as an incomplete, or half man, till he found the Jew. He does not speak of opinions being adjusted or fitted into each other; of arrangements, mutual surrenders, compromises. He speaks of the human being in each as being raised to a new level; as attaining the position for which he had always been intended, but which he had never reached, when they could coalesce and become one body. The child of the Covenant, circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin; the Hebrew of the Hebrews, brought up in the strictest sect of his religion, touching the law a Pharisee; discovers that he himself, with all these advantages, must be a maimed and dwarfed creature, unless he can claim fellowship with those who are out of the Covenant, with those from whom the Law has cut him off, with those whom, not the prejudice of his countrymen, but his own eyesight, tells him are wholly given to idolatry. He must stand on a level with the Gentiles; he must eat with them; he must assert their right to all spiritual privileges, that he may not become an utterly unworthy descendant of those who were separated from all the nations of the earth, of those who bore witness for the Lord God of Israel against all false gods. That the law may not be a dead letter to him, or, worse than a dead letter, a horrible and hateful oppression to him; that he may be able to keep the Commandments as he has never kept them, to delight in them as he has never delighted in them, he must become all things to all men, he must live as one without law.

I have connected this sentence, in the first instance, with St. Paul himself; for we can hardly appreciate the force of it without such a personal application. The two partial men who are to constitute the

one new man cannot be reduced into notions or qualities; one must see, in a special instance, how either felt his need of the other. The crucial experiment would be in the case of some one who had most shut himself up in the form of being which belonged to him by his birth and education, who had most despised or hated the opposite. But though St. Paul furnishes an admirable illustration of his own principle, it is not the less general. His language can imply nothing less than that the Gospel was declaring that true manhood or humanity which hitherto had presented itself in two apparently irreconcilable aspects. Let us ask ourselves what these aspects were; what was the characteristic of the Jewish mind, as such; and of the Gentile mind, as such.

No novelties or refinements are necessary, or could help us much, to settle these characteristics. St. Paul's words to the Romans and the Athenians, that the oracles of God were committed to the Jew, and that the Gentile was seeking God, if haply he might feel after Him or find Him, lead us to the very root of the matter, and explain the various phenomena which present themselves to us. The first phrase, you will remember, occurs in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is carefully chosen. St. Paul does not say, as some of us might say, that the Jews received a revelation, and that the Gentiles were without one. He could not say that without contradicting the doctrine which he had been asserting in the two first chapters of this same Epistle, and of which the whole of it is a development. He there maintains that God *did* reveal His own righteousness in the conscience of the Gentile, and that the sin of those who worshipped the creature more than the Creator consisted in their not "*liking* to retain God in their knowledge." He maintains as distinctly in the second chapter, if we construe the words of an Apostle as strictly as we should those of another man, that there were Gentiles as well as Jews "who, by patient continuance in well-doing, sought for glory, and honour, and immortality;" and that there were Jews as well as Gentiles who "were contentious, and did not obey the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness." The distinction

between them then could not lie in the partial concession or refusal of light by God, nor in the acceptance or rejection of that light by man. But that God had in distinct speech declared what He was to the Jew, that He had severed the Jew from other people in order that that speech might be intelligible to him, that He had made him aware by a whole course of discipline of the difference between the Creator and the works of His hands, that he had made him aware of his own tendency to confound them,—this St. Paul vindicated as the privilege and glory of his people, this was the measure of the extent of their evil, this determined the work which they had to do for all lands. How great the temptations of such a position were, how Jews had failed to understand it and to fulfil it, he declares with the faithfulness of a patriot and of an Apostle, with the tenderness and sorrow of a man. He declares also that the purpose of the election of his countrymen had not been frustrated,—that he himself, the great persecutor of the Church, was an instance how it had been accomplished and was to be accomplished; that God was permitting and commanding him to prove the fidelity of the promise to Abraham; that he might bless all the families of the earth by saying, “Behold *your* God.”

Here then is one picture. A Jew beginning from God, His covenant, His law, His word, standing fast in the covenant, delighting in His law after the inner man, feeling His word as a fire within him, holding that to bear witness of His righteousness and truth was the great privilege and blessing of all, longing that He should reign over the earth, and that all which men had set up instead of Him should be put down. Here is another picture, of one of the same race, perhaps of the same man in a degenerate stage of his existence. He looks upon God as shrivelled into His own oracles; they speak no more of Him, they speak only of those fortunate favourites whom He has chosen to receive gifts which are denied to mankind. The Covenant is a sentence of condemnation upon the rest of the Universe. The Law is a cause of self-exaltation to those who know they are not keeping it. The Word is no fire, no mighty living power, but a collection of

letters to be written out and debated of, an excuse for the formation of sects which have caught some little glimpse of its signification, and who have determined that it shall signify that and only that, and that every conception besides that or beyond that is accursed. I think, if we contemplate these two images, we shall come to the conclusion, that the true Jew must have been longing for a fellowship with all God's creatures which he had not yet realized; that it was the effect of all his divine education to inspire him with this longing; and that the false Jew, just because it had never been awakened in him, just because he cultivated all the habits and tempers of mind which were alien from it, was losing the perception of that which was peculiar to him, was ceasing to understand that any oracles of God had been committed to him.

Look now at the condition of the Gentile, as it is set forth to us by the same inspired authority. He has a sense of God being somewhere very near him. Where can it be? He feels in this direction and that. Is He in the sky? Is He in the air? Is He in the world below? May He not be nearer still; with us in every circumstance of life, in the throes of birth, in the work of the husbandman, in the work of the physician? May he not be represented in the domestic relations of father and mother, of brother and sister? May He not be seen in the judge and the lawgiver, or in the priest who thinks high thoughts, and offers the blood of the ox or the sheep, which is the pledge of faith between man and man? Must not nature speak of Him? Must not beautiful and glorious man speak of Him more? Here is that feeling after Him Who is not far from every one of us, which the Apostle speaks of with such pathos and such sympathy. Here is the confession going up from ten thousands of hearts, that in Him they live and move and have their being. On the hill of Mars,—in the sight of idol temples and idol altars,—to a frivolous people who had lost the sense to a great degree of everything but the outward sign, St. Paul, the disciple of Jewish lawgivers and prophets, was not afraid to speak thus richly of the thoughts and aspirations which lay concealed beneath the wood

and the stone, the gold and the silver, which he said never could be the likeness of the Godhead.

And why did he speak so, but because he knew better than any man, because he felt more intensely than any man, the degradation and horror of idolatry; because he knew whither it was leading all people, these clever Athenians especially—into what depths of baseness and moral corruption,—into what incapacity for receiving the light from Heaven? Why, but because he was certain that he, a Jew, to whom had been committed the oracles of God, had a message to deliver concerning that God Whom Greeks and all nations were seeking after, because he was sure that message was intended to reach them through his nation? And why, not confining himself to mythology, did he wander into the regions of philosophical speculation? Why did he quote Aratus, and speak of men as being the offspring of the gods? Why did he use language about the Living God which approached the phraseology of Pantheism, and might be readily turned to its use? Why, but because he recognized the great inquiries with which Philosophy had occupied itself as genuine, and as prompted by a higher Wisdom than that which those who engaged in them possessed or could measure? Why, but because he felt how barren those inquiries proved, how they destroyed the more genial thoughts out of which the worship of idols had issued and which that worship had not utterly crushed, when they assumed to satisfy the wants which they expressed, when philosophers pretended to create the Being and the Unity which they pursued? Why, but because he knew that he could declare to Athenians that Aratus was not wrong, that they were the offspring of God, and in Whom they were His offspring?

So we are brought to a word in my text of which as yet I have said nothing. “To make in *Himself* of twain one new man.” That is one reading. If we read *Him* with some of the more recent editors, I do not know that the sense is altered or materially weakened. It is difficult to find any other nominative than “Christ” throughout the sentence, or to imagine one, and therefore the ἐν ἑαυτῷ seems most reasonable.

But I do not deny that St. Paul may have written with a feeling that he had spoken of the Father as making peace through His Son. That form of language was so habitual to him, it was so implied in all his other language, that he may scarcely have remembered whether he had used it or not. He may unawares have assumed it when the strict construction of the sentence did not authorize it. The observation of these divergencies from technical rules in his style,—divergencies into which every practical writer may fall, and which are not more characteristic of him than of the greatest of the Greek historians,—often suggests very valuable theological hints; but I am not able to say whether this is an instance of them, and I prefer taking the words in the form with which we are most familiar.

Taken in that form, or in the other, they equally illustrate what I said last Sunday about the Gospel, that it is, according to St. Paul, not the utterance of certain propositions, but the manifestation of a Person. As he spoke to the Corinthians of the light of the glory of Him Who is the Image of God shining forth in the Gospel, so he speaks to the Ephesians of that same manifestation, as making the one new man out of twain. Supposing the idea of Jew and Gentile which we have derived from other passages of St. Paul's writings to be the correct one, you will see, I think, why no words but these could account for that reconciliation of Hebrew and Greek, which we know was accomplished in spite of violent reluctance and a repulsion in each, when that which had been called the sect of the Nazarenes began to make itself felt as the Church of Christ.

Unless the Jew could actually feel that God was speaking by him and to him, his position and calling were forfeited. He became not a new man, a more complete man; he simply lost all that was precious or venerable in that which he had inherited. Unless he could feel that God was speaking to him and speaking by him, he could not in the least overcome the sectarian tendencies of an evil and degenerate age. For these tendencies arose from the notion that God had ceased to act and to live—that His words were all fastened down in a book, which

Pharisees and Sadducees, and all the different schools in each, were to make the subject of their controversies. Unless God spoke to his age *more* directly, *more* personally than He had ever spoken before, unless He came forth from behind the law and the prophets, and revealed Himself to them, none of the promises upon which earnest Jews who waited for the Kingdom of Heaven had lived and died, would have been fulfilled, none of the vain selfish hopes, none of the dark exclusive thoughts of God which the false Israelites had cherished, could have been scattered. God speaking to men in a Son, God revealing Himself in a Man, answers every expectation which had sustained the worshipper of Jehovah when his worship had been most deep and awful, when he had most felt that if the Heaven of Heavens could not contain God, how much less the temples of earth; when he had most trembled to confound God with any of the things that he saw, or with any of the thoughts of his own mind. Then the full vision of a substantial truth, of an eternal righteousness, which had sustained the heroes and martyrs of his land in their darkest hours, burst full upon him, then every thought of the Creator, King, Judge, culminated without losing itself in the confession of a Father; then the idea of a Will which was only good, and tended only to good, arose in luminous distinctness behind the law which came out of the thick darkness; then that Will was seen to be fulfilled, perfectly fulfilled, in One Who delighted to do it; then out of the weakness of death came the complete revelation of divine power and wisdom, because of divine love.

But when we have reached this point, have we not learnt how the seeker after God,—he who had felt that God must be close at hand, that He could be lost in no vague or general abstraction, that every place must speak of Him, that the highest discovery of Him must be in man,—must have also seen in such a Person the only satisfaction of *his* wants, the only fulfilment of *his* anticipations and prophecies? The actual Friend of Man who entered into conflict with the actual sorrows of men, with hunger, palsy, leprosy, with deafness, blindness, madness, the grave; the actual Friend who bore the burden with them

that He might overcome it,—this was the God-man Whom they had been feeling after, if haply they might find Him; this was He Whom they had tried to picture in a thousand forms, and whose nature they knew they were contracting and distorting in each of these forms. He Who had bid the winds and waves be still, He Who had been into the dark formless world, He Who had brought His body back from it, He Who had ascended on high, was it not He Who vindicated their title to be the offspring of God? was it not He Who justified the glory they had put upon man? And did He not justify just as much the thought which had struggled with the belief of man's exaltation in the mind of the tragedian, that his only posture is that of humiliation, that he is only safe when he confesses a Will above his own, and bows before it? And did not the same revelation justify the assurance of the philosopher, that there must be somewhere and somehow an Ideal of truth, and righteousness, and beauty, which men did not create for themselves, which is no image of theirs, but which is the image of the perfect and eternal Substance, which He can enable them to apprehend and to embrace?

In such a Person, then, that one new man in which Jewish and Gentile elements might both be reconciled, could be found. And surely only in such a One. If there were no such Being, no one of whom it could be said, He is the complete manifestation of God, He is the living centre of all human beings and of all human thoughts, I do not see what explanation we have of the history of the old world, or of its passage into the modern. But without Him I can as little understand how there is ever to be peace in that jarring world to which we belong. That the coming into it of the Son of Man was the sign that peace was meant for the earth and goodwill to men, the Angels' song proclaimed. That the coming of the Son of Man into it was not to bring peace, but rather a sword, that it was to make a man's foes those of his own house, He himself proclaimed. History has interpreted the paradox. Because He is the Prince of Peace, all the enemies of peace within the heart of man have been stirred up, all have found that they had a common

interest in driving Him out of His proper kingdom. And this is not all. He does not come to make a solitude and call it peace; He does not come to destroy all that is distinctive in nations or in individuals, for the sake of producing a dead uniformity. He comes to arouse men, and all the thoughts and energies of men, out of sleep; not to put them into sleep. All that is strongest in man hears His voice and starts into life. Therefore the Jew becomes more intensely a Jew, and the Gentile more intensely a Gentile, before they consent both to receive their law from Him. And when they do receive it, though it crushes their pride, it justifies His Father's purpose in the destiny which He has fixed for them, in the education which He has given them. We are not therefore to be surprised either at a greater amount of positive bitterness and hatred proceeding from the lusts that war in our members since the manifestation of Christ in the world, nor are we to wonder that those who are to do His work best, and to be ultimately the truest ministers of peace, should stoutly refuse to abandon any position which has been given them, or any great conviction which they have themselves won.

These recollections may be of some service to us, if we are heartily seeking in our own days to be Peace Makers, and so to be called the children of Him Who is *the* Peace Maker. Nor will it be without profit to observe that, innumerable as the forms of opinion and the habits of feeling among us may seem to be, they do resolve themselves at last into those two capital divisions of which St. Paul speaks. If we search long, we shall not find any classification at once so scientific and so available in practice as that which he resorted to, when he described the Jew and Gentile as forming the elements of the full Christian man. Wherever we turn, we shall find these elements trying to assert their separate existence, trying to set themselves in deadly hostility to each other. On one side we shall perceive a vehement dogmatism, which treats all facts as settled, all principles as concluded, by the oracles of God which have been committed to us; then a strife between those who maintain this dogmatism, to *whom* these oracles have been committed, who shall define their meaning; what their meaning is. On the other side we shall

perceive a protest against authority, a restless desire to find what is or is not to be held, believed, or worshipped; this desire leading to the most dissimilar conclusions, ending with many in an utter despair of any. These appearances are on the surface; all take notice of them. All see the inconsistencies and evils which these tempers engender. All observe the terror with which the Dogmatist regards the awakening of doubt, the movement of inquiry,—his desperate resolution to suppress them; his chafing against Providence because he cannot. All observe the contempt with which the Sceptic treats these experiments, and then the justification which he continually offers for them by his own weariness and despondency, his assurance that he has faculties which can solve the riddle of the Universe; and that it remains a riddle still. But is there nothing beneath these merely outside phenomena? Is there not in the heart of that hard, insolent, self-complacent boaster of his own round and compact system, a strong and irresistible faith that Truth must be revealed to men by Him Who is Truth, and that He *has* revealed it and does reveal it? Is there no faith, strong, irresistible, in the heart of that weary, restless, contentious—also sometimes insolent—denier of that which his fathers have confessed, of that which he is required to confess, that we cannot receive Truth from any but God, and that it is worth while to wait long, even to die, rather than not receive it of Him? If once we can do this justice to the men about us, or rather if we can thus justify God's ways to them when their own are most crooked, we may begin to trace in all that we read and see of the world, evidences that men never have been able to dispense with these two convictions, that Truth must come forth and make itself known to them; that they must be always inquiring for it. There must likewise be witnesses for these two convictions, some in whom the former, some in whom the latter, is predominant. Often we shall find them mixed strangely together, heretical dogmatists as numerous as orthodox, Protestant as Romanist, Atheistical as Christian. In the other rank there is a Scepticism of the heart as well as of the intellect. Men of the most religious temper often give as much evidence of

scepticism, impatient scepticism, as the most indevout; not a few resort to some vain and unsatisfactory superstitions merely to escape from their scepticism. It is commonly more difficult for those to understand one another who belong to the same class—who have the same essential character—than for those who are most unlike; nay, there is often an unconscious attraction of the Sceptic to the Dogmatist because he needs or envies his confidence, and a continual conflict between the brother Dogmatists and brother Sceptics.

Where is this to end? We have tried all schemes. Persecutions, accommodations, indifference, all have had their turn; all have been practised under the most favourable circumstances, by persons resolute to make them succeed, and possessing all means and appliances for effecting their purpose. And still the question is heard through earth and rises to Heaven, Whence is Peace to come;—Peace from the strivings which are rending the heart of mankind;—Peace from the strivings in our own hearts? Do you think we shall ever find a better and fuller answer to that cry than the one which was given long ago, “*He hath made of twain one new man*”? There is a Centre of Peace in the midst of this endless agitation. Dogmatists do not see it, because they put their own conclusions in place of the manifestation of a divine Person; because they think that what we want is something that we may hold, and not an Eternal God Who may hold us, and in knowledge of Whom standeth our Eternal Life. Sceptics do not see it, because they are going up into the Heaven or down into the deep to seek for that which is close to them. But Dogmatists and Sceptics, when they are wearied of the greatness of their way, when they have been stripped bare of their different kinds of pride, may at last meet at the same Cross. Then they may find that the manifestation of the Perfect God in the Perfect Man is the subject of all Divine Revelation; is the object of all human search; that in His Sacrifice is the Union and Reconciliation of Godhead and Manhood, and therefore of those elements in men which are discordant, so long as we feel that God is at a distance from us, and that all our seeking for Him is not the

consequence of His seeking for us. Thus we perceive that the only true Peace we can desire for the world is that Peace which involves not the repose of Death, but the fulness of Life; that it must be His Peace, Who called all things into life, and Who by His Son overcame Death. Then we understand that this is the Peace—His Peace, not ours—which we may ask Him, Who governs all things in Heaven and earth, to grant us now and evermore.

# CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JANUARY 25, 1857

*“Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”—ACTS xxvi. 19, 20.*

WAS this the only effect of the vision which St. Paul saw on his way to Damascus? If he had said that after that journey he began to defend the faith of Jesus Christ in Damascus, Jerusalem, and throughout the coasts of Judea, and then among the Gentiles, we might have understood that a great change was wrought in him. But was it a change, that he called his countrymen to repent? was it a change, that he thought Gentiles had a still greater need of repentance than they? These questions are closely connected with those which I have been considering since the Epiphany. They are directly suggested by the Festival of this day. They concern the force of the word *Conversion*, and all the acts and effects which have been associated with that word, from St. Paul's days to our own.

A careful reader of the Old Scriptures cannot have doubted that Jews might be urged to repentance. All the Prophets must have mistaken their function if the children of the Covenant were exempt from that necessity. In every discourse and song they had exhorted the people to turn to Him from Whom they had deeply revolted. Saul, the pupil of Gamaliel, could not suppose that there was less occasion for such appeals in his own day than in any former days. No Rabbinical prejudice, no fervent Jewish conviction, will have tempted him to that opinion. Why were they the slaves of Rome, if the nation were in its true state? Why were multitudes ignorant of the Law, and living like

heathens? Why was this sect of the Nazarenes making such progress? All the signs of the times showed that there was something very wrong, which needed to be set right. He will have dwelt upon the degeneracy of Israelites, who were forgetting the barrier which separated them from the world, who could tolerate a sect which, if its doctrines were pushed to their consequences, might destroy that barrier altogether. To bid Israelites repent of this degeneracy was natural and desirable. Was it not one of the sins of the Nazarenes, that they hindered publicans and sinners from repenting, by mixing with them and telling them that the highest blessings were designed for them? *He* would have reminded them that the punishments of a future world were in store for them. When the new teachers pretended to speak of repentance, they joined it with a strange and contradictory announcement, that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.

But before Saul visited Jerusalem, he must have conversed with Greeks in Cilicia; he must have known something of the moral debasement which was connected with their worship; he must have felt how monstrously that worship was opposed to all that he as a son of Abraham had been taught to revere. Might he not conjure those with whom he traded or conversed, to leave their abominations? Might he not tell them that they would be admitted to join the pure services of the Temple at Jerusalem? To such a reformation I cannot doubt that the zealous young Hebrew will have invited many an inhabitant of Tarsus; he may have promised himself that when he was better instructed in the wisdom of the Elders, he should be able to press it with greater effect upon greater numbers. He might have preached then, it should seem, repentance and turning to God to all those who were comprehended in the words of this passage, even while he was persecuting to the death those that believed on the name of Jesus Christ.

And yet, if St. Paul had changed this language for the phrases which would have squared better with our notions of his conversion, I do not think he would have been equally consistent with himself. If he

had told Agrippa that he was changed from a Jew into a Christian, he would have belied his own repeated assertion, that he was maintaining his position as a child of Abraham, that he was fulfilling the work of a child of Abraham when he was preaching the Gospel. If he had said that he was brought by the light from Heaven to acknowledge the mission of Jesus Christ, which he had before denied, he must have explained what he meant by the mission of Jesus Christ, and then, as I have endeavoured to show you lately, he must have described Him as the Image of the Invisible God, and as sent to show forth that image to men. Perhaps that account of his teaching may help us to understand this account of his conversion, and the result of it.

I apprehend that Saul of Tarsus may have counted it lawful, desirable, meritorious, to bid Jews or Gentiles *repent*; but that repentance will not have meant for him what it meant for the Prophets. It will not have meant “turning to God.” How much Jews should repent, who did belong to the Covenant; how much Gentiles should repent, who did not belong to it; what the signs and processes of repentance in each case ought to be; what particular crimes in either case demanded a greater repentance, or made repentance impossible; what the respective effects of it would be, when it was satisfactorily performed upon the one class or the other,—upon all these points, I doubt not, he had taken conscientious pains to inform himself, and had arrived at definite conclusions. But if the thought ever presented itself to him, “This expression, *turning to God*, is the explanation of repentance, not repentance of it,” what a number of strange and troublesome doubts were at once suggested! *Who* is to turn? By what agency or influence is the turning to be effected? And, lastly—darkest thought of all—to *whom* is Jew or Gentile to turn? Where is the Being he is to meet? How can they meet? Was it not wise, is it not safe, to muffle up such awful inquiries, which may lead one knows not whither? Were not the doctrines of repentance a harmless substitute for them? Saul might lose himself in controversies respecting them, without ever coming face

to face with Him, Whose presence made Moses exceedingly tremble and quake.

If Saul could always have been at the feet of Gamaliel, always among the Rabbis, this prudent course might have been always possible for him. But he was not a zealot. Books were not enough for him. He must act. The Law was sacred. Then the enemies of the Law must be put down. The Covenant with Abraham must be upheld. Then how ought a child of it to deal with those who were evidently undermining it? Saul cannot only talk of Repentance; he must go forth to make evil men repent by letters of the High Priests, by the sword and the prison, since these seemed the most straightforward and natural methods,—more effectual by far than any preaching which he knows of. It is in this contest with living men that he comes into contest with a man, of whom, as yet, he had known very little. When he returns, flushed and triumphant, from the synagogues, one is awaiting him in his own chamber: he has to encounter himself. And this is the nature of the encounter. The words, “Thou shalt not covet,” glare upon him as he reads those Commandments, which he has been punishing others for not keeping. The conviction strikes him, “Thou dost covet: thou art full of covetousness.” Another, a more tremendous thought, follows in quick succession. “This Law has *made* me covetous. I had not known lust, except it had so spoken to me. How can that be? Is this Law, which I proclaim as the Law of God, evil? Surely it has wrought all manner of evil in me. I should have been innocent but for this prohibition. I should have been alive without it; but it has taken away all life from me. What am I? An Israelite? A child of the Covenant? Nay, but one whom God, by this Law of His, is cursing; whom He is putting at a hopeless, impassable distance from Him.”

What was to be done? He could not go back to his school lore with much hope of comfort from it. But he might quell the restlessness of conscience by the restlessness of action. He might pacify the God who was at war with him, by doing services on His behalf. The experiment was plausible. And how much gratification there is to one who has

cause of discontent with himself, to take vengeance upon other men! The conversion from such a purpose is assuredly as great a one as one can conceive. To be brought into fellowship with the men whom he had hated, to share their persecutions from those whom he had delighted to honour, was also a conversion. But what lay beneath each of these conversions? He *himself* was converted. He actually turned, not from something else, but from that covetous self, whom the Law pronounced to be dead, to One in Whom dwelt no covetousness. His spirit claimed to be joined to that uncovetous Being. His spirit claimed the righteousness and life of One Whom he had been persecuting.

His *first* question was answered. He had learnt what it is, in a man, that turns to God. He had learnt that it was the man himself; the man who has been losing himself in seeking himself; the man who finds himself when he renounces himself. He learnt, also, the answer to his *second* question, "Who converts or turns the man?" He found that it is God Himself Who turns him, God Who seeks after the creature He has made in His image, the child that has wandered from its Father's house. He found the answer to his *third* question, "How is it possible for a man to turn to God?" That there is a Daysman between them; One in Whom God has always held intercourse with men; One in Whom men had always been able to call upon God; One Who, in the fulness of the times, had come forth to manifest God to men, and to make the sacrifice that atones man to God. And the *last* question was involved in these, "What manner of Being is it to Whom you turn?" The God and Father of my spirit, or, rather, of the spirit of a man that is in me; the God Who has been seeking and is seeking men, to bring them to Himself; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person.

You will see, then, I think, in what sense it is true, that the conversion of St. Paul meant that he became convinced of the mission of Jesus Christ. It convinced him of that only, as he says himself, because *it pleased God to reveal His Son in him*; because he was brought to know that a Son of God was the Lord of his spirit and the Lord of man, and that

this Son of God must be that Jesus Whom he had rejected as a crucified Man. You will see also, I think, why he necessarily connects this revelation of the Son of God in him with his preaching to the Gentiles. He did not know that there was such a Lord of man, till he knew that He was the Lord of himself. Then he could have no doubt; then there could be no limitation to his message. And the very highest form that that message could take was this: he could show to them of Damascus and of Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. It was not a cruel, hard-hearted announcement that they were to repent, as it would have been if he had delivered it before his conversion. For then it must have meant, "You are to do that, under peril of God's wrath and damnation, which I am quite sure you cannot do. You are to turn round to a Being of Whom I can show you no Image, of Whom I can tell you nothing, except that He has made a Law, and that He will exact the last penalty of it, and that you are utterly separated from Him." I say, brethren, that the summons to repent, under such conditions as these, was a summons which no humane man and no honest man could have put forth without self-reproach, or without qualifications which made it abortive. And therefore, in fact, no call to repentance (in the sense of turning to God) did go forth from the Jews of St. Paul's day, either to their own countrymen or to the Gentiles round about. Jews were invited to become strict Jews, and not lax Jews; to leave the society of Publicans for the society of Pharisees. Gentiles were invited to become Proselytes of the Gate, to abandon their own temples for the temple of Jerusalem. These were changes,—great changes if you will,—beneficial sometimes,—often, if we accept our Lord's authority, even mischievous and destructive. But they did not necessarily, or in their own nature, involve the least turning to God; and as little did they involve the doing works meet for repentance, the bringing forth the fruits of gentleness, meekness, justice, purity, manliness. These might be recommended as good by Jews, as they had been recommended by Gentiles. But by what charm

were they to be produced? How could the abandonment of one kind of worship for another—when the Object of worship was as equally unknown in the one case as in the other, when the worshipper was not the least brought within the range and sphere of His influence, supposing it were an influence for good—affect the spirit or heart of a man? What more could you do for him, than lead him to go through one set of acts instead of another set? The doer of the acts, the man, remains just what he was before. Whereas St. Paul, when he had once been turned to God himself, could say with all calmness and certainty, “I know in Whom I have believed. I know that it is a good God Who has converted me from a high conceit of myself, into the belief that I am not better than the worst of you. I know that what He is doing for me, He will do for you. I know that to be made right is the best thing for every man, and that it is His good pleasure to make you right.”

I think that you may now feel that there was no disproportion between the event which we commemorate to-day and the result of it,—at least not a disproportion of the kind you may have imagined. There would be one of a very different kind, if the accidents of St. Paul’s conversion, all the outward circumstances which denoted that which took place within him, were mistaken for the substantial part of it. The sound, and the glare, and the quenching of eyesight, would be most feeble and imperfect interpretations of the change which was wrought in his whole moral being; still more, of the moral change which his preaching was to produce upon the condition of the nations of the earth. He himself is most careful to save us from the vulgar error which would attribute such effects to such a cause. He records the events of his conversion several times, thankfully accepting these signs of a deeper process as most gracious and valuable for himself and for mankind. But when he tells us what was the signification of these signs, his language is that which I have quoted already: “It pleased God to reveal His Son in me;” or this: “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering,

for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”

In this last sentence St. Paul fully justifies the belief, that his conversion was, as to its law and principle, a typical one, and that the circumstances in it which are never likely to recur, were designed to fix that which is universal in it more deeply in our minds. Do I mean that we all have need of a conversion such as his was? I can only answer—Wherever there is *aversion*, there must, I conceive, be *conversion*. Wherever the eye shrinks *from* the light, there must be some power to make it turn *to* the light. If we are not conscious of anything which makes us unwilling to have our deeds made manifest, I cannot admit that unconsciousness is a decisive proof that there *is* nothing. I rather think that those who are most desirous of truth, feel most their inclination to be false, crave most for help against their falsehood. What is every act of confession, but an acknowledgment that we have yielded to a power which drew us away from the right? what is it but a prayer that we may be converted to the right? That, you may say, is not a parallel case to St. Paul’s, for his conversion took place once on the road to Damascus, and he had no need of any future conversion. I think that statement is only half correct. I think we are speaking more in his spirit if we say, that on the road to Damascus he learnt for the first time to know that there was *perpetually* in him an old Adam, which sought to hide itself from the presence of God, and that there was *perpetually* in him a second Adam, who turned to that presence as to its only deliverance. At any moment he might yield to the one; at every moment he required the help of the other to raise him and renew him. His conversion was the joyful recognition of an Almighty Friend, Whom he had suspected as an enemy. But it gave him no security, except so far as it took away from him all self-security, as it taught him that he was always dependent on this Friend, Who could and would sustain him. And his conversion created no chasm between his earlier years and his later. It brought into unity years that had seemed to be hopelessly asunder; for now he knew that God

had been with him at Tarsus, in his Rabbinical studies, in his mental anguish. Periods that he would once have given the world to blot out for ever, were overshadowed by a Divine Love and Forgiveness, which made the memory of them precious to him. He saw that all events in his outward and inward history had been working together for good. He could see that he had been marked out from his mother's womb as an Apostle to the nations, and that no wilfulness of his had been able to frustrate the designation.

For this designation assumed that he was not an exceptional man, but was like all those to whom he was sent; that his aversion from God was like theirs; that the converting might of God was acting on them as well as on him; acting on them when, like him, they were kicking against the pricks; when, like him, they were choosing darkness rather than light. When and by what means the strife would end he knew not, and we cannot know. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. It is enough for us to understand who the combatants in all cases are. It is enough for us to know that it is the will in man which God and the devil are both claiming; and that it is the will which must submit to either. Then there will be no restless, self-tormenting, self-exalting questions, whether we have passed through some process which others have not passed through, whether we have acquired some standing-ground which others have not acquired. No past process can prove us to be right if we are wrong. No want of it can shut us out from the petition, "Save me from my wrong; be merciful to me a sinner." No standing-ground can be safe for an hour or a minute which leads to any trust in ourselves, or to any putting aside of others as less holy than we are. It is the birth of a Cain which leads to the cry, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." When the Deliverer is born, the cry is that of a child to a father, "I am weak; undertake for me." St. Paul is led by the hand, a poor blind creature. But He who leads him has said, "I will make thee a light to the Gentiles; thou must tell all others of their weakness and of My strength, because there is nothing

which thou hast proved in thyself which I do not purpose to prove in them.”

We see, then, how little suddenness or excitement has to do with the nature and ground of the conversion, of which St. Paul is the historian and the example. There was a crisis in his life. There may be a crisis in the life of every one of us. There may be outward events which attach it for ever to our imaginations or our memories,—a journey, a still night, a death-bed. But the crisis of a fever does not determine the cause of death or of recovery. And *this* crisis is only the moment when we yield passively to a death which has been always stealing upon us and threatening to devour us, or put our trust in One Who has undergone death that He might deliver us out of the jaws of it. Whoever bids us wait for a crisis, or create one, bids us suppose that God wishes us to continue in evil, or that it is not the quiet penetrating energy of His Spirit, but a frantic action of ours, which delivers us from it. Both are heresies and delusions. The man who is most tied and bound by the chain of habit, should be told that he may at once defy his tyrant, and claim his redemption: the most helpless and purposeless victim of his own irregular impulses should be told that he may be strengthened with might by God’s Spirit in the inner man, till he has reduced all the rebels, that have risen against Him, into docile subjects. In every case, let the history of St. Paul’s conversion teach us that we are to interpret repentance, “*Turning to God.*” It is to have no other sense in our vocabulary. It is never to assume a signification which can lead us to ask, “How much of it will God demand? How much of it is sufficient to justify our faith in Him?” It must be always that which He gives, or it will be worth nothing; it will be a repentance to be repented of. It must always be his greatest, noblest gift. The turning of a spirit to Himself must be more than all rains or fruitful seasons. And yet we must assume and affirm constantly that this highest gift will never be withheld: it is treason against God to suppose that He ever denies that which is necessary to raise His creatures out of the evil and perdition which He hates, into the condition for which He

has formed us. Let us learn, from the history of St. Paul's conversion, that we cannot heartily believe in that love for ourselves which we do not confess to be for Jews and Gentiles; that is to say, for all the kindreds of the earth, for all men in every possible condition. Let us learn, from the history of St. Paul's conversion, that it is disobedience to every heavenly vision of God's goodness which has been granted to us, not to proclaim it as the inheritance of all men, as the mighty Power which can bring all to itself. Let us learn, from the history of St. Paul's conversion, and from that preaching of his to the nations, which the Collect of to-day will not let us separate from it, what must raise the prostrate people of Europe, and throughout the world, to the liberty which is their rightful inheritance. The heaviest incubus upon them—that which makes every other possible and intolerable—is the notion that they have a God who does not seek to convert them to Himself, but Whom they must convert from His desire to destroy them; Who is not a refuge from human oppressors, but a more terrible enemy, from Whom they need to fly. When once this dark Phantom, which they are worshipping, is encountered by the true Image which St. Paul held forth to the world; when once Christian preachers are converted, as he was, from the worship of a dark God to the worship of a God of perfect light, and they proclaim that God as still living, judging, redeeming, it will be seen why the nations have failed while they have trusted in princes, while they have trusted in themselves; how it has been the gracious purpose of God to try them and sift them by sufferings, that they may learn to trust in Him. With that trust will come strength in place of weakness; union, of division; life, of death. The Master and the Serf will learn again, as they did in the first days of the Gospel, that they are heirs of a common salvation, brothers in an Elder Brother. In every city of Christendom, throughout its coasts, and then through it in the farthest regions of the earth, the news will be heard and welcomed, that God has not left the race which He purchased with the blood of His Son; that His Spirit of truth and love is doing battle with the spirits of darkness, and malice, and falsehood, that have rent it in

pieces. And every ghostly form of superstition will hide itself from the brightness of His coming; and every tyrant will call on the mountains to fall on him, to save him from the wrath of the Lamb. And men will cast away the idols which they have made each for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats. And they will fear God, and give glory to Him, because the sound of His everlasting Gospel has gone forth; and all know that He Who has turned the hearts of His people back again, Who has united them and Himself, and therefore has united them to each other, is the One God, blessed for ever. AMEN.

## FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FEBRUARY 1, 1857

*“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together:  
for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—ISAIAH xl. 5.*

I HAVE endeavoured on former Sundays to show you that the Gospel which St. Paul preached was an Epiphany or manifestation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that *therefore* it awakened the opposition of the God of this world in the minds of Jews as well as Gentiles; that *therefore* it brought Jews and Gentiles into one. I have spoken of a similar manifestation of the glory of God as the power which converted St. Paul from a hard exclusive Judaizer into the herald of this Gospel to mankind.

One subject remains to be spoken of before we leave this portion of our year. Has this revelation of God’s glory respect only to the past and to the present? Has it nothing to do with the future? We believe that Jesus Christ was that Image of God Whom prophets had been desiring to behold. We believe that in the fulness of the time these desires were accomplished. He took flesh, and through His flesh showed forth the fulness of that glory which the previous ages had only seen in scattered glimpses. Is that enough for us? Are we content that the world should go on as it is—the Christian world, or the world that is not Christian? If not, what is it we wish for? Is it something else than the manifestation of Christ? Is it some new revelation? Is Jesus the One that shall come, or do we look for another?

Brethren, we must face this question. There is a disposition—it must not be denied—among religious men, to look for *something else* than the manifestation of Christ. They think that He has come in

the flesh and died for them, that they may escape Hell and that they may obtain Heaven. But when they are asked what Hell is, and what Heaven is, their answers are vague. One is something infinitely evil, which Christ has delivered them from; one is something infinitely good, which Christ has won for them. But they seem to regard the infinite evil as consisting in certain inflictions which God has appointed *for* evil; the infinite good as consisting in certain blessings which God has promised *to* good. Christ is, according to them, a means to an end, but not the end; the sight of Him is not itself what they covet; the loss of Him is not itself what they dread.

Again there are certainly not a few in our day who say that the Gospel has failed of its object. They appeal to facts. Has it set the world right? Has misery ceased? Has wrong ceased? Has the reign of peace begun? We have passed, they tell us, eighteen weary centuries, which have fulfilled none of the promises with which they commenced. The Deliverer cannot yet have been born into the world. It may be that there is still some King or Hero to come. It may be that we are to find in some great social change, or in some great illumination of individual minds, what our fathers supposed that He was to do for us.

I think that the last of these opinions, which fills religious men with dismay, will not be rejected—ought not to be rejected—till they have cleared their minds of the first. If those who call themselves Christians are not desiring above all things the unveiling or Epiphany of Christ, with what face can they complain of other men for setting their affections and hopes on some other object? Nay, is it certain that some of these may not, under a different name, be asking more earnestly for Him Whom prophets and kings desired to see, than they are? Is it certain that they may not be haunted with the vision of that very Son of Man and Son of God Whom, if we understood our own faith, we might proclaim to them? Is it certain that we have not been refusing to enter into the kingdom of Heaven ourselves, and hindering those that are entering from going in?

If you read the Old Testament you will perceive that there is a striking uniformity amidst the variety of its records. The misery of the Jewish people in the different ages of their commonwealth is produced by the most different instruments, but the cause of it is always the same. Pharaoh may send the people to make bricks, for which he gives them no straw, in Egypt; Jabin may torment them with his six hundred chariots of iron in Canaan; Sennacherib may come down on their fenced cities and threaten Jerusalem; Nebuchadnezzar may take and burn the Temple, and carry the people into captivity. But whoever are the tyrants, tyranny is the cause of their groaning; they cry by reason of oppression; or they are not able to cry, because their hearts are benumbed, because they like the flesh-pots better than freedom; and then the holy men cry for them in deeper anguish. And as the disease is the same, the remedy is the same. A Deliverer from Egyptian bondage, from Canaanitish bondage, from Assyrian bondage, and from Babylonian bondage, is their one infinite necessity. Men appear as their deliverers; but they appear in the name of the Lord. Their witness in each age is, "He has sent us. We have no power, not even any will of our own to save you. He has the power and the will. He is the enemy of tyrants. He is the Deliverer." Moses comes to tell the crushed slaves of Goshen this. Moses, in God's name, sends plagues upon Pharaoh, that he may let the people go. Moses lifts the rod, and the waters go back to drown the hosts of the pursuer. But at Sinai Moses speaks no more. Out of the thunders and the thick darkness the voice comes forth, saying, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me."

As Gideon thinks over those words by his sheepfold,—as Samson listens to them from the lips of Manoah,—as they are taught to Samuel in the visions of the night, when the lamp is gone out in the Temple of God, each feels the inspiration; each is sure that the Lord his God is a Deliverer; each is stirred to rise and break off that chain by which his people at that moment is bound. The King, in his lonely prayer

before the battle, casts himself upon God, his Saviour and his people's Saviour: in the strength of that prayer he can *go* forth and put his enemies to flight. The Prophet has seldom that consolation. His battles are in his secret chamber with himself, or with slanderous friends, or with a people that mock him, and fancy he is speaking parables when he is speaking stern plain reproofs to their consciences. But he has this compensation: he sees more clearly even than the Lawgivers and Kings what it is they have had to struggle with, and still must struggle with. He sees why they must put down idols; why idolatry has been *the* sin and *the* curse of his nation. He sees that Gods who are not deliverers, Gods who are tyrants; Gods who are imaged in the Kings that built tombs and pyramids with the toil and sweat of slaves, or the Kings that went forth with their six hundred iron chariots, have become the objects of fear and of worship to the children of Abraham, as well as to the nations round about them. This is the cause of their deep moral degradation; this is the cause why they cannot emerge out of the condition of servants of servants; this is the cause why they are practising all little tyrannies to the extent of their power, while they are trampled upon by tyrants themselves.

At first such a view of things appears impenetrably dark. For history exhibits an ever increasing tendency to this idolatry. It ratifies and fulfils the second Commandment. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. It exhibits moments of faith—sudden gusts of thanksgiving, then distrust and rapid declension. The Israelites sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and the rider have gone down into the sea. Within a little while they forget His works and the wonders He has wrought; they sink into stupid indifference; the host of Heaven, or any Egyptian calf, become more real to them than He Who led them by the cloudy pillar. They cannot think of a God except as a Being from Whom they are to hide themselves. How can this end? Without faith it is impossible to please Him. Without faith is no energy, no life for man. And yet to depend upon faith was to depend upon the most changeable and

fleeting of all things—upon a morning cloud that appeared for a little while and then vanished away.

These thoughts and experiences were the school of the Prophets. By this despair of faith they learned what faith was. Through this prevalence of idolatry in the world, and in their own hearts, they were forced to rely upon the might of God, and to expect the revelation of His glory. You cannot read this fortieth chapter of Isaiah, or any of the chapters which follow, without perceiving that he had passed through this baptism, and without seeing how invulnerable it had made him. He discovers a comfort for his people coming out of the depths of their sorrow, and this, not from any change which had taken place (in his day he had witnessed the most promising changes, and they had come to nothing), but from the certainty that God would declare Himself,—that He would declare Himself in that selfsame character in which He had been declared of old in the Commandments, as the Deliverer—that He would confound all counterfeits of Himself—all Gods which mimicked and usurped His power to work not freedom but oppression; robbery and murder instead of life. At every step of his experience, which has shown him more of his mortal weakness, more of the weakness of the chosen men and of the chosen nation, this vision becomes fuller and clearer. God cannot be disappointed. His purposes cannot come to naught. His purpose is to reveal Himself. And He will reveal Himself. And that revelation is the blessing and deliverance man wants. All others without this must be ineffectual. All others must be included in this.

Therefore it is, Brethren, that Isaiah is called so rightly “*The Evangelical Prophet*.” He saw more clearly than any one, that only one who perfectly revealed God, who perfectly revealed Him as a Deliverer, could be the Person whom Israelites and all nations desired, whom He Himself was teaching them to desire. He saw, indeed, in every event which took place in his own day a partial Epiphany, a manifestation of God the Righteous Judge, of God the Deliverer. He saw that these Epiphanies were not confined to Jews; that like the sun they carried a

message to the ends of the earth. But the more he recognized these revelations of the glory of God, the more he craved for one that should be perfect, that should be, in the strictest and fullest sense, for *all flesh*. A man living in the heart of Judaism, perhaps seven hundred years, at the lowest calculation five hundred years before the appearance of Christ, was certain it must be. Less than that it was treason against God to expect. The mouth of the Lord had as much spoken this as He had spoken the commands against adultery or murder or false witness. Any one of these commandments might as well be abrogated as this promise and assurance. The old heaven and the old earth might pass away, but nothing could prevent the glory of the Lord being revealed and all flesh from seeing it together.

Apostles while they joyfully claimed the words of this prophet and of all prophets as pointing to Him, Who had taken upon Him the form of a servant, and had died for men,—while they affirmed that the Righteousness and the Wisdom and the Power of God were manifest in His weakness and death,—while they said that in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,—while they vindicated for Him the words that all flesh were to share in the blessings of His Incarnation and Death by baptizing men of all nations and preaching His Kingdom to all: yet none for a moment taught their disciples to be content with what they had heard or seen or felt or believed. I use all these expressions, because I wish to intimate that the Apostles not only did not allow their disciples to rest in a hearsay, second-hand faith, derived from their testimony, but that they would not have them be satisfied with their own most solid and realized convictions, with the strongest trust which they had been able to put in Christ as their Lord and Saviour and Friend. They said, “We are saved by hope.” They exhorted the Churches to hope continually for that which they saw not. They pointed them continually to the future revelation of Christ, and of the Son of God in Him, as the one object and goal of their expectation. They said that every eye should see Him, and they also which pierced Him.

Such language as this is as definite as it can be, in so far as it points to one Person, and that a Person who had discovered Himself to men in the simplest acts of human love. But it is quite illimitable language, if one considers either the creatures to whom it is addressed or the nature of the Being about Whom it is conversant. Those creatures were subject to all forms of sorrow, material and spiritual. Some specimen of each of those material and spiritual woes Jesus had on earth encountered with His sympathy and His healing power. So long as any of them remained unredressed,—so long as the outward creation remained subject to vanity, not willingly,—so long as there were wills tied and bound with inward evil,—so long they could not but hope for a deliverance yet to be accomplished, however the pledge and earnest of it might have been already given. And that hope took a wider range than even the sight of the evils which called it forth could justify, when it turned to the infinite Goodness and Love which had been discovered in the Son. There it could lose itself in such raptures as these: “Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For of Him and to Him and through Him are all things.” Or in such prayers as this: “That ye may be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Of such teaching, if it were truly received, this must, I think, have been the consequence. Whatever calamities come upon the world will have been stimulants and encouragements to this hope. There will have been no shame in indulging it; because it will have been a hope for the world and not only for themselves. There will have been no uncertainty about it; because it did not depend upon their faith or virtue, but upon the Eternal Word of God;—the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. There will have been no fear lest they should lose sight of the deep abyss of darkness while they were dwelling on visions of light; for the more they hoped for the glory of God, the more they would feel the infinite horror of being left without it, of sinking back

into their own wretched selves. There would be no danger of their losing the motives to action on earth, while they are expecting that glory which would be revealed most completely to them when they had left the earth; because the glory is of God, the Deliverer of the earth and of man, and they could only know it by entering His service, by doing His work, by becoming deliverers themselves.

And, therefore, Brethren, we may take these lessons home for our own profit. Let us have no doubt that, however we may classify men's oppressions as individual or as social, as political or intellectual, as animal or spiritual, God Himself has awakened the cry for freedom. Let us have no doubt that that cry is, when truly understood and interpreted, a cry that God will appear as the Deliverer, that His glory may be revealed. Let us therefore be most eager to meet all these cries, however discordant they may be,—however they may be convicted of absurdities and contradictions,—however they may put on the forms of denial—with a true Christian sympathy and recognition; and let us, without precipitation,—rather by acts than in words,—rather with the confession of a fellowship in the necessities of all than with any boast of our own superior wisdom,—show that we believe we can give God's answer to them. Let us be quite sure that we shall not give that answer if we in anywise contract the statements of Scripture, or explain away its grand and full words. If it is said that all flesh together is to see the glory of God, let us be sure that all flesh *will* see it together; and let us be as confident that it is good that all flesh *should* see it. We may be quite unable to anticipate the effects on this man or on that of any burst of light. It may dazzle and blind, or it may make the whole body luminous. But at all events, light is to be desired and darkness is to be hated; and therefore we should by all means encourage men to hope for this revelation of God's light and glory. We should make their wretchedness into an argument for hope; we should make their sinfulness into an argument for hope. Yes, their sinfulness! for no man ever did yet rise out of his sin, no man ever will, till he begins to hope.

It is an old commonplace of divinity, which we are strangely forgetting, that despair is the only utter perdition; because despair binds a man in the prison of his evil nature, and fastens the chain of the Evil Spirit upon him; because all hope points upwards to God, and is the response of our spirit to His Spirit. Therefore I say it again, We ought to stir up hope in every human being. Hope for present help from God to overcome the sin that most easily besets him; hope that he shall be able to say to the mountains which now stand in his way, "Remove, and be cast into the sea;" hope for the future, that the glory of God, the Deliverer, shall be fully revealed; and that he, being included in the "all flesh" of which the Prophet writes, bearing that nature in and for which Christ died, shall be able to see it and rejoice in it. And if this seems to him a strange and incredible assurance, then let us send him to the Cross of Christ, and tell him that that is the Being, and no other, Whom we look for; that the glory which will be revealed is the glory which shone forth in His agony and death; that this has in it a marvellous power to take the poison and curse out of our nature, and to make us anew after His own likeness. Let us do this for other men and for ourselves; and then let us see whether or no they wish for some other Lord rather than for this crucified man; whether they had rather have a triumphant hero and destroyer than this fellow-sufferer; whether they had rather have one who shall glorify them, than one whose glory shall be so manifested that all flesh may see it together.

This will be a test which will prove at last decisive,—which will decide who are and who are not content to be Christ's sheep, and to follow Him where He leads them. If we use this test wisely and rightly, we may have the joy of turning some who have spent their days in restless seeking after a phantom, to a real object, and to One Who is very near them. But let us not say, when we fail in the case of any man, that the fault is his, not ours; least of all let us ascribe it to God. Let us use it the more strictly and vigilantly upon ourselves, asking whether this is the Christ we are hoping for; whether it is the glory of that Cross we would see revealed; whether we are content and desirous that all

flesh should see it, and be blessed by it, as well as ourselves. If we are, then we shall receive with more and more joy and thankfulness the words “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” The promise of this final Epiphany stands not on the decrees of lawgivers, or the expectations of holy men, or the confidence of seers. It comes from Him Who said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” It was uttered first when He made man in His own Image. All history, by its thousand voices, has echoed it and ratified it; the sins of men, which have striven to defeat it, witness for it; the Redeemer, by His Passion and Resurrection and Ascension, has made it firmer than the everlasting hills; the Holy Spirit writes it on the hearts of men, and draws a confirmation of it from every trial that has torn those hearts asunder. The fulfilment is as unlikely as it is that the sun should rise out of the dark chilly night,—that the teeming life of spring should follow the death of winter. The fulfilment of it is more sure than the return of day or than the order of heaven. *They* belong to things temporary and symbolical. *It* has its fixed and permanent realization in the New Heaven and the New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

# SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 8, 1857

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”—MATTHEW xxii. 14.*

THESE words have suggested anxious thoughts to many minds. Some of them take the form of this question, “By what tests can we distinguish the few who are chosen from the many that are called? How can we constitute a Church which shall be composed of the first class rather than of the second?” Some of them take the form of this question, “How can I know whether I belong to the called or to the chosen?” If it is needful for us to have either of these doubts settled, we may be sure that our Lord has given us the means of settling it. For it appears from St. Matthew that He used the words twice, and that on each occasion He connected them with a Parable which was to illustrate their meaning.

The first Parable you heard in the Gospel this morning. The Master of a Vineyard sends men to work for him at the third hour of the day, at the sixth, at the ninth, at the eleventh. When they are gathered together at the end of the day, all receive the same wages. The first complain; they think they are entitled to more. He who had hired them answers one who was finding fault, “Did I not agree with thee for a penny? May not I do that which I will with my own? Is thine eye evil because mine is good? Go, there thou hast that is thine: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.” The doctrine here seems to be a levelling one; it does not establish differences, but destroys them; all are treated equally. And yet these words follow,—“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

In the Parable of the King making a marriage for his Son, we also find distinctions broken down. The servants are told to go out into the highways and hedges, and to compel the poor, the halt, the

lame, the blind, to come in to the feast. But then follows an act of discrimination. One is there who has not on a wedding-garment; he is asked how he could enter without it; he is speechless. The Giver of the Feast commands him to be bound hand and foot, and cast out. Such an offence and such a punishment may seem to be naturally enough explained by the aphorism, "Many are called, but few chosen." For its obvious meaning, we shall be told, is this: The outward call to the Christian feast is addressed to men without any limitation. All are invited to come. But only a few are actually intended by God to receive the blessing; only one here and there is within that circle who are sealed for His own, whom He has chosen to eternal life.

This interpretation of the words has great plausibility. A person who has once embraced it will not readily discard it. Nor should he be urged to do so. There is so much of the deepest and most precious truth mixed up with his conclusion, that he would suffer greatly in the clearness of his mind, in the sincerity of his heart, if he cast it hastily aside, merely because he found it beset with some difficulties. A man should be very sure that he has got the juice out of every notion or theory which he has entertained, before he determines that he will throw it away as if it were a mere husk. Sudden reactions and revolutions of opinion have produced in all times, are producing in our own, effects which it is melancholy to witness, and which should make us very careful very jealous of ourselves, when we try to undermine another man's conviction, of what kind soever it be. It is not however asking too much of any who reverence our Lord and His words, to believe that He did not contradict Himself, or apply any sentence of such solemn import as this lightly. It is not too much to ask that they will seriously consider both these Parables before they satisfy themselves that they have arrived at the sense of a passage which is common to them. And that consideration must surely suggest one thought of a somewhat startling and alarming kind.

The persons in the Parable of the Vineyard who, it is intimated, were not chosen, but only called, are precisely those who thought

themselves entitled to a privilege which others did not possess. They could not acquiesce in an equal gift, in a common benefit; they must have that which they could boast of as their own, and to which they could prove that others had not a right. The very phrase which such men would have adopted to express their feeling would have been this: "Those labourers who came in at the eleventh hour were no doubt *called* to their work. They could not have taken a spade or a pruning-knife into their hands if they had not been called; but *we* who were summoned early in the day, *we* are assuredly the favourites of the great Husbandman, *we* are evidently chosen by Him, the objects of His special regard. This we and they shall find to be the case when we are reckoned with at the end of the day. Then the distinction which has been bestowed upon us will be manifest to all." This was their calculation. Our Lord says it was a presumptuous and false calculation. It was defeated by the discovery that all were dealt with equally; and the pain which that discovery cost these hirelings was the proof that the sentence which they had passed upon others was true against themselves. They were called merely, not chosen.

No one will say that any strain is put on our Lord's first Parable by this comment; it is the clear natural sense of it, which would present itself to any one's mind who had not been told that he must adopt another; it is quite independent of any particular notions respecting the application of the story to one or other Nation or Age; it is just as true, whether we say that the labourers at the third hour were the Jews, and those at the eleventh the Gentiles, as whether we suppose it speaks of different stages in the lives of individual men. Anyhow, the way in which our Lord Himself applied the Parable will remain the right way; and that way, I repeat it, should make us pause and consider, nay, even tremble, before we certainly conclude that He must have taught an exclusive doctrine on one occasion by these words, which He adopted for the express purpose of teaching us the sin of exclusiveness on another.

I. The point is very clearly brought out in the Parable of the King's making a marriage for His Son, but not more clearly than in that with which I am comparing it. The persons who come to the feast are certainly not self-invited, just as the labourers in the vineyard do not take upon themselves to work before they are hired. This is the principle of every one of our Lord's discourses and illustrations. Any one who believes them to be what He said they were, revelations of the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, will conclude at once that men are *brought* into that Kingdom by a divine, mysterious power; that, if left to themselves, they would certainly not belong to it. This assumption goes through Scripture; you find it on the surface of every passage; you find it, the more you penetrate to the heart of the Book. A calling of God lay at the foundation of Jewish life and history. The first father of the nation was a called man, the whole nation was a called nation. Our Lord, while He sets forth the steps by which the Covenant would unfold itself to take in all tribes and languages, never for a moment abandons this idea, or the forms of expression which denote it. The King, the Husbandman, the Sower, are still the sources of the blessing which the subjects, the labourers, the land, receive. The notion of good coming to man from any operation or movement of his own, from any determination that he will make a world, or climb to heaven, for himself, is at least as alien from the New Dispensation as from the Old.

II. But if this is so, how can we suppose that the general calling proceeded from the voice of certain Messengers who were sent by the King, and that the limitation of that calling proceeded from Himself? In that case the Messengers either exceeded their commission, or He Who sent them led them to suppose that His Will was more large and free and gracious than it actually was. The Parable most distinctly refutes both positions. The King bids certain persons to the marriage of His Son. They refuse to come, going their way, one to his farm, the other to his merchandise. Then He commands His Messengers to go forth into every open place and secret corner, urging, compelling outcasts to come to the feast. Who could conjecture from language

like this that the designs of the agents were more comprehensive and gracious than those of their employer; that *He* had a secret reserve in his goodwill towards those whom *they* were to press, with so much urgency and passion, that they would not shut themselves out of His blessing?

III. Would you not say then that the meaning must be this: “Here are certain blessings which the Lord of man designs for man; not for one here and one there, but for man as man. They are blessings which cannot be snatched or purchased, but must be received as gifts from an unseen hand. They are blessings of such a nature that man cannot attain the end of his being unless he possesses them. And for that reason they are blessings to the heart and will. If these are not consenting, if these do not go along with the heart and will of the Bestower, the gifts are wasted. That which alone can taste the feast rejects it. And rejects it—why? Because it is too common. Because these invited guests want something which they can have to themselves—a farm which they inherited and can hold against the world, merchandise which they have won by lucky adventures, and hope to increase. As long as the treasures they are offered are such as all may possess together—except they can be held on the same tenure as those they have sought for and appropriated hitherto—what are they good for? By such arguments they show that they are indeed called—called to very high honours, the highest which God Himself has for His creatures,—called to them by His own loving voice,—but not *chosen*, because there is nothing in them which responds to that voice, because their minds are wholly estranged from His mind.”

This is the lesson which we should, I think, at once deduce from this Parable, if we attached that sense to the Marriage that God made for His Son, which Apostles and saints and martyrs attached to it. The union of the Son of God with our nature seemed to them the great blessing of all. None which God could bestow could exceed that; every other was interpreted by it. All the dreams of men in all nations and ages had pointed to this Marriage; whether they were dreams of a

perfect emancipation from evil, or of a perfect union among men, or of a perfect fruition of God, they could have no other realization than this.

For this involved a purpose in God to reconcile man with Himself; this involved the assurance that men could draw nigh to Him as justified and redeemed children; this involved the gift of a Spirit Who should bring them nigh. Such a gift as this to the race must be the subject of the Gospel. The invitation must be an invitation to celebrate this Marriage, to give thanks for it, to enter into the joy of it. The message must be carried to the highways, because those who dwelt in those highways, the most ordinary, the vilest stuff which bore the form and features of humanity, were made partakers of the most unspeakable privilege which humanity could possess or could receive. And therefore the man who had not the wedding-garment must be the man who remained shut up in his solitude and self-sufficiency, who was detected by the all-seeing eye of the Giver of the Feast as having no understanding of its universal nature, no appreciation of that Divine Love which had stooped to unite itself with the conditions of earth, no desire to give up his miserable pride that he might be filled and possessed with the same love.

IV. Such an interpretation brings this Parable at once into the closest harmony with that of the labourers in the vineyard. There those who had *agreed for a penny a day*—who from the first had gone to the work in the temper and spirit of hirelings—are utterly discontented when they find what their hire is. They had supposed they were to get something for themselves. The real reward is, to be delivered from the love of getting, to be made like Him Whose eye is good and not evil, Who wishes all to receive of His own blessedness. All are called to inherit a blessing; those only do inherit it who have the Spirit of the Master; for to have that is the chief part of the inheritance. To have that is to choose what God chooses; that is, in the highest, most inward sense of the word, to be chosen.

V. I trust these considerations may be of some help in enabling us to find the solution of those two puzzles to which I alluded, if indeed they are puzzles, and not mere doubts which we raise, without wishing to see our way through them. As to the first: how we can form a Church, or select one, which shall consist of those who are not called only, but chosen; the answer which history gives and that which these Parables give are, I apprehend, precisely the same, and quite satisfactory. If there is any sense in either word, “called” or “chosen,” God must call. God must choose: we cannot. We are told that the Husbandman sent whom He would into the vineyard; that the King called whom He would to the feast; that at the end of the day the Husbandman ascertained by His questions whose eyes were evil when His were good; that the King came in to see the guests, and to know who had not the marriage-garment. If we fancy we can take any of these functions, we must learn from some other than our Lord how we are to perform them. He vindicates them to His Father: He says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” And by His voice in History he says, “Wherever men have tried to construct a Church which should be ascertained by tests of theirs to consist only of chosen men, it has ended by the members of that Church being angry that others should receive the same wages with them, and by their denying that the King has really made a Marriage for His Son with their race.”

VI. But to the second demand: how we may discover whether we ourselves are called or chosen, the answer must be different; for no vigilance on this point can be too great, if only it is rightly exercised. The more we know of ourselves, the more we shall know how exceedingly prone we are to practise the sin of those who murmured against the good man of the house; to esteem our work hard and toilsome work; to fancy that we deserve some pay for it which others can never obtain. We shall know how little we have entered into that celestial Marriage which we are invited to celebrate; how often, when we have professed to celebrate it, low, grovelling thoughts about our own felicity have driven out genuine thankfulness, and have hindered the true

offering of Christ's finished Sacrifice for the world. How did we make these discoveries? We did not make them at all. The Husbandman who has called us to serve Him gave us the consciousness of our hardness and ingratitude. The King, Who comes in to take part in the festival, makes us understand that we have not the garment in which alone we can receive and entertain Him. From such exposures of our own evil we must not shrink. They may show us that we are acting—that we have been acting—merely as those who are called; that we have not craved for that higher and more blessed gift of being united in spirit with our Lord, of entering into His righteous and gracious mind. It is well to bear His reproofs, because He has said, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten;" because we may be quite certain that He does not call any whom *He* excludes from the circle of His chosen, upon whom *He* refuses to bestow His grace. The evil must be in *us*; in the pride which rejects the counsel of God against ourselves; in our reluctance to open the door at which He knocks. The called therefore may become the chosen—yea, every common calling upon earth, to do the most humble work, may be taken as a summons from the great Husbandman to bear our part in cultivating His vineyard, to serve Him with His own free Spirit, to enter into His own Joy.

The call from the King to sit down at the feast which celebrates the marriage of His Son may be welcomed as a pledge that He will put on us the Marriage-Garment—that He has verily and indeed chosen us to be very members incorporate in that body which is the blessed company of all faithful people.

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 15, 1857

*"A sower went out to sow his seed."*—LUKE viii. 5.

PREACHERS sometimes think that the parable we have read in the Gospel for this day applies especially, almost exclusively, to their work. They divide their hearers into classes corresponding to the soils of which our Lord speaks. Some are wayside hearers, some are stony, some are choked with thorns. *They* come to sow the seed; *theirs* is the joy when fruits proceed from it, *theirs* is the disappointment when it is wasted.

It seems to me that many dangers are latent in language of this kind. There are surely no distinctions so precious and so perfect as those which our Lord gives us in this parable of parables, this parable by which we are to understand all parables. That they apply to hearers, He tells us Himself. But they require to be dealt with carefully and reverently. If the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven could be set forth in a few technical phrases or formal generalizations, the manifold processes of Nature would not have been called in to illustrate them. Those processes are living. They must be studied in the region from which they are drawn, not in mere descriptions. It is still more important that we should study the applications of them, not in other men, but ourselves. The preacher will fall into grievous hypocrisy if he seeks to ascertain what is meant by any of these characters from observation of his neighbours. The command, "Cast first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye," must always be present to him in all its terror. No one has leave to pretend that he is exempt from it.

But this way of considering the subject is likely to betray us into a still greater mistake. We may fancy that *we* are the sowers. Other

motives besides personal vanity and ecclesiastical pretension may tempt us to acquiesce secretly with this interpretation, even if we have not courage to proclaim it in *all* its fulness and audacity. Some puzzles which divines are very glad to escape would be avoided, if they could persuade themselves that they were to some extent the persons of whom our Lord speaks. But the words in another parable—like in all essentials to this—must be applied to it: “He that soweth the seed is the Son of Man.” Be the consequences of the assumption what they may, we must start from it; no other will make the interpretation which our Lord gave His disciples of the parable, or any one hint contained in the lesson which he draws from the whole of it, in the least intelligible. Not one who stands outside of the man, and utters certain sentences, well or ill-compacted, rhythmical or inharmonious, refined or vulgar, into his ear, can sow those words to which the seed in the ground is compared. Only He Who has framed the ear that it may receive sounds, and the heart that it may entertain words, only He can do this work. Whether the seed is carried away, or falls upon stones, or amidst weeds, or into a good well-ploughed land that returns it a hundredfold, the same doctrine must hold. We cannot change the person to suit the convenience of any theorist. The Son of Man, the Lord of the heart and will of man, from Whom all the energies and capacities of man are derived, must bestow whatever *might* bear fruit in him, even if it actually perishes.

What a difference this makes in the extent as well as the depth of the ground over which the seed is scattered! The minister of a London parish perhaps complains that three-fourths of his flock die without having heard his voice, or knowing for what end he is placed among them. Does he really suppose that they die without hearing the Voice of the Son of Man? Do they die then without having been poor or sick, without having had any human relations, without ever having had a struggle in themselves, a desire formed and not accomplished? If these have been with them, the Son of Man has been with them. Wherever any human sympathy or affection has fought with any merely grovel-

ling animal affection which is its counterfeit; wherever selfishness has not held supreme and unquestioned dominion—and do you know any one in whom it reigns with no opposition?—the Son of Man has been there. You talk rhetorically, with a certain approximation to truth, of some places being very hells on earth. I say, if you go down into these hells, He is there. There is not one of them in which there are not the remains of the human face divine, however brutal, however diabolical it may have become. And where there is that sign, there is the Sign of the Son of Man; a truer one, though a more terrible one, than that which the Pharisees desired to see in the heavens.

And wherever the Son of Man is, there He is sowing His seed. The thought in any fallen creatures that there may be and must be a way out of the abyss to some firmer standing-ground, to some region of twilight if not of day, this is seed of His planting; this, in whomsoever it is found, can have dropped from no hand except His. It may, as He tells us, be quickly snatched away. It may endure for a time and then sicken, perhaps through the very sunshine which seemed likely to make it expand. It may be choked after it has gained some strength and stature. But its origin is not the less certain. The wretched circumstances of the man did not put it into him. The comrades that are mocking him and seducing him, and yet have the same hope dimly working in themselves, did not put it into him. His own selfish nature did not put it into him. From the Son of Man it came. Whether it is on the surface, whether it is in the undersoil, be assured that it would not be there, if He had not gone forth to sow, if that had not been His function ever since the world began.

But how is this, if the seed is the Word of God? Do these wretched people of whom I have been speaking know anything of the Scriptures? Is it not probable that many of them are not acquainted with the commonest facts in the Old and New Testament? May it not be that some of those who have heard these facts are only using them to make their curses more emphatic and hideous? All this may be; and yet, if the Scriptures are true, if the records of the Old and New

Testaments are facts, there is no speech or language where the Voice of the Word of God is not heard. The earth would be dissolved and the pillars of it, if He were not bearing them up. The consciences of men could not be accusing and excusing one another, if He were not awakening, illuminating, informing them. The seed then that is put into men's hearts must be the Word of God. It could have no vital generative power if it were anything else. If it have any good in it, it must come from Him Who alone is good. If it is to produce good, the Creator must go forth with it.

I know how hard it is to hold fast this belief. Even though we have Christ's express assertion that it is so; even though the whole parable becomes a contradiction, if we suppose that the seed which fell by the wayside is different seed from that which fell on the good ground, the understanding still suggests the doubt, how can that be, if God is omnipotent? And those who would suppress all other doubts of the understanding, on the plea that they interfere with the direct statements of Scripture, insist that this one ought to be cherished, and that a long array of inferences may be deduced from it. I am far from denying the difficulty, or that to some it may be a very painful one. I do not see how it can be otherwise, to any who have not resolved that the Righteousness of God which has been revealed in Christ must be maintained, however little we may be able to explain the apparent limitation of His Power. This one has been declared to us and to our children. It is an eternal inheritance. To lose it is to lose everything. Power we believe to be the handmaid of Righteousness. He Who *is* Love is *clothed* with Power. The clothing may be laid aside, as it was when Christ took upon Him the form of a servant, and became subject to Death. The Righteous and Gracious Will never can be; that came forth most in weakness. If we do not believe this, what is the Parable of the Sower to us, or any other of Christ's works, or Christ Himself? If we do believe this, why must we cheat ourselves of a lesson which is in strict and perfect consistency with it, because we are more jealous for God's Power than His Son is? I have no doubt that that Power will

vindicate itself in its good time; I have no doubt that the only Power which ever did, and which ever can act upon a heart—the Power of Love—will prove itself to be far mightier than we have taken it to be. But in the meantime let each of us say, with shame and confusion of face, “I know that it is God’s Word, and not man’s, that has encountered the rock and the thorns in me. I know that it is God’s good and gracious Will declared by that Word which my will has fought against. It is all very well to persuade myself that I have not done this, that it is impossible I should. I have tried to make my conscience swallow that sophistry; but it will not. It repeats plainly and clearly God’s words, ‘I have called and ye refused. Ye have set at nought MY counsel; ye would have none of MY reproof.’”

The decent and disreputable, the wise and the foolish, the preacher and those to whom he preaches, have the same need to make this confession; each has the witness in himself that it is a true one. Let each of us look back over the last few years of his life, or over any that he likes to choose as the most favourable specimen of it. Let him think over the outward events that have befallen him in that time; and then let him ask himself, “Did no words come close to me, to me, from loving lips, out of open graves, out of sorrows which might have crushed the proudest spirit? and did no idle conceit, no hungry craving for approbation, no bitter resentment against an offender, imaginary or real, scatter these words into air? The Son of Man was with me, sowing his Master’s seed, and the Devil carried it off. God was in that place, and I knew it not, and would have another there instead of Him.” Has it not been so? Does not that Spirit who bringeth all things to remembrance tell us that it has?

Or—to take the next portion of the parable—have we had no experience of a heart which appears to be anything but hard and stony,—it receives impressions so quickly, it is touched by the description of sorrows so easily, it is so ready to admire goodness, so ready to concur in all plans for good—and yet which *is* hard, *is* stony? for affections or convictions do not penetrate into it; they endure no conflict or

pressure; they do not displace the love of ease and indulgence which was there before. We have had such an experience—where? In some neighbour? In some person who was sitting to us as the model of a character which we supposed to be rather common in our age? Oh! has it not been at home we have found that heart? Has nothing told us that we were likely to be—that we have often actually been—our own models? That the habit of the time is our habit? It is not safe for any of us to shrink from that revelation, however painful it may be. It is the Word of God makes it to us, and that Word of God is seeking to destroy, by all our discipline, that levity of mind, that incapacity for depth and earnestness of purpose, which we have sought vainly to cure for ourselves.

Again. Have we fancied that the easy luxurious life of some imaginary or actual rich man has filled *his* heart with prickly thorns and unwholesome weeds? Or that this has happened to some busy merchant or tradesman, through his restless diligence in the accumulation of money? Or that the like have grown up in some poor man, who must always be vexed with the thought, how he will stay his children's hunger on the morrow? Are there then men or women without these? Is there any of us, priest or layman, who has not suffered cares like these to grow; who has not planted them, and cultivated them with his own hand? Silly delusion to say so! Mad attempt to disguise from ourselves the truth that there have been disciplinary fires in the world about us and in ourselves, which have been designed to burn up these thorns, that the Word of God might have free space to unfold itself within us!

But that good ground of which our Lord speaks dare we say that we know anything of that? Or must we go to the lives of the Saints, that we may learn what it signifies, and whence it derives its advantages. We may go there if we please; they will teach us much. For they will tell us of the stubbornness and the impotency of their wills, and of the sore lessons by which they were brought to understand that all things are of God, and that they could only do any good works

because He worked in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. But have we no nearer and readier helps for arriving at that truth? Are not all the experiences I have spoken of already such helps? Have we not found that we have been resisting a Will which we are created to obey? Were not the desires and thoughts and hopes of which we suffered the Evil Spirit to plunder us, thoughts and desires and hopes which God Himself was inspiring us with? Was not that hard crust of vanity interposed between us and a power that was putting contempt upon it, making us inwardly despise it? Were not those frivolous and restless cares an outgrowth, strange and irregular, upon a soil that was created to produce something different, which we knew was capable of producing something different? Is not the good ground the heart and will of—every man, when he learns that he is a man, and not a beast or a God. Not a beast, or he might trust to nature and instinct. Not a God, or he might follow the decrees of his own will. But a man related to God; His servant and His child, created by Him in Christ Jesus, planted again in that divine root that he might bring forth fruit, and that his fruit might remain.

Yes, brethren! it is our business to testify to all men that this is their condition. We are not to pretend that they must come to Church in order that they may be brought under the discipline of the Son of Man, in order that the Word of God may work in their hearts. They come here to learn that they cannot escape from the Son of Man; that He is with them when they lie down, and when they rise up; that He is spying out all their ways. They come here to be told what that flame is, which ever and anon breaks out within them; what those smouldering ashes, which they always fear may burst into a flame after it seems to have been extinguished. We are to tell them that the Word of God kindles that fire; that it is seeking to burn up what is evil and false within them; that it will not cease to scorch and torment *them* till they have yielded to this process, and desired that it should be an effectual one. We are to preach this to you; we are to preach it to ourselves, knowing well that God is preaching it to us all—not here, but out of

the whirlwind. The sermon is a poor godless *substitute* for the lessons of life. It may be a godly *interpreter* of those lessons. It may remove some of the confusions which hinder us from doing our work manfully; this confusion most of all, that we do not know whether the Creator of the Universe, the Lord of ourselves, is working with us or against us; whether every effort we make is an effort to overcome some reluctance of His to bless us, some purpose of His to do us mischief; or whether He is acting upon us continually to overcome our reluctance to be blessed, to hinder us from wasting all our energies, and from ruining ourselves. So far as the sermon does this, he who delivers it may be in a very subordinate sense a sower of the divine seed. He is not so to the exclusion of any other minister of the Son of Man who has a different office. He is so least of all, so as to interfere with His office Who alone is Lord of the field, and Who alone can make it bear. He exists to declare that that Lord is the same from generation to generation; the same in Will as when He died for man; the same in Power as when He rose from the dead; and that there can be no barrenness or failure in all His universe, when we cease to measure our will and power against His.

The Parable of the Sower, then, serves better for testing what is passing in the heart of each hearer than for arraying hearers into classes. I do not however forget that it was spoken, like our Lord's other parables, to a multitude. The desire for influencing crowds may be carried to great excess; it may involve terrible temptations. But there is a great justification for it. We may speak of a multitude of reeds being moved by the same wind. We may complain—in the language which St. Paul addresses to the Corinthians in the Epistle to-day—that those are liked best by crowds, who would bring them into bondage and smite them in the face. But such charges require to be well weighed before they are brought forward. There is something very awful, and very elevating too, in the influence which is produced upon a whole body of men by words addressed, ever so coarsely, to them as spiritual beings. As they listen to that voice, they confess that they are men bound together by the same bond, having the same interests;

they confess that the same God is speaking to them all. Can you not think that whatever the message may be which is delivered by mortal lips, the Son of Man may be in the midst of such a multitude, sowing His seed in their hearts? It is something for men to be awakened to the thought that there is any one caring for them and wishing them good. They must think more reverently, more truly, of their Father in Heaven, when they suppose He is not indifferent to them, even if they think that He is only minded to punish them for their sins. And surely no punishments which can be set before them in rude material forms are so terrible as the actual separation from goodness and truth, of which the conscience bears witness to itself, and to which it has now perhaps been for the first time awakened. The reasons for terror are not exaggerated, though they may be misreported. What is needed is not that we should speak slightly of such influences, from whatever quarter they may proceed,—not that we should try to explain away the reality of them,—not that we should boast of our own teaching, as if it were better and wiser, because it falls more lifelessly on men's ears:—but to desire very earnestly that we may bear true witness of God, and so counteract any false witness of Him. It is easy to persuade ourselves—God knows how easy—that we ought to darken His character just a little, that we may increase men's dread of continuing in their sins; that we ought, just a little, to lower the language of Apostles, when they say that it is His wish that all men should believe and come to the knowledge of the truth. Is it safe to use such very large expressions to men, so indifferent as the congregations of rich men generally are, so besotted as the congregations of poor men are likely enough to be? I answer to those who use such arguments, believing in their Bibles, “It stands written. Dare you change it?” I answer to those who believe in Jesus Christ, “You call Him the Image of God. Do you think He is? Dare you represent God as something else than that Image tells you He is?” I answer to those who plead experience, “Do you find that the distrust of God's willingness to make you all that you ought to be increases your power of becoming that which you ought to be? Do you

find that questioning whether He will break the chain of evil passions and habits from your neck makes you less tolerant of that chain?" I answer to those who speak of the Church as enjoining confession of sins as the way to peace with God, "I rejoice and give thanks that she does. I know that we ought to confess, one and all, that we are created to bring forth good fruits, and that we have not brought them forth; that no divine seeds need be taken from us by the Evil Spirit, and that they have been taken away; that we need not be cold and heartless, and that we have been; that we need not be choked with cares and pleasures of this life, and that we have been. The Church bids me to confess to God because He is good, and desires me to be good; to confess to God because He has redeemed mankind in Christ Jesus; to confess to God because He has given us His Spirit, and renewed His Spirit continually in us. If He were not our Father, and were not good, we should have lost nothing by being separate from Him; if He had not redeemed us, we should commit no sin in not claiming our redemption; if there were no Holy Spirit urging us to obedience, we should be guilty of no disobedience. Believing in One God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the perfect Righteousness and Love, we can confess, He enables us to confess together, He gives us absolution together."

And, lastly, I answer to those who talk of the impossibility of speaking to the multitude without darkening the character of God to them,—Jesus Christ spoke to the multitude, and said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." And the multitude said, "He speaketh as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." He spoke His parables to a multitude whose eyes were blinded, whose hearts were gross. And these parables are revelations of the Kingdom of Righteousness, Peace, and Joy, which He said was near to publicans and sinners. And these parables are revelations of the Will of that Shepherd, who goes into the wilderness to seek the sheep that was lost; of that Father, Who so loved the world that He gave His Son for it. These parables are declaring that God sows the good seed in His field;

that not He, but the enemy, sows tares; that in the end the tares will be burnt, and that what He has planted shall bring forth fruit, which He will gather, and in which He will delight for ever.

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 22, 1857

*“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*—1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.

THIS sentence does not merely affirm the superiority of Charity to Faith and Hope. There is an important verb in it which our translators, rightly I think, and in strict accordance with the context, have rendered “abideth.” St. Paul had been speaking of very great and blessed gifts which yet, as they were the signs of an imperfect state, should cease in a perfect state. Prophecies, Tongues, Gnoses, are all referred to this class. The last of these, indeed, *Gnosis*, he does not identify with *Knowledge* in its proper and complete sense; for the great reward which he looks to is that he shall know even as he is known. It is the childish habit of seeing things only on one side, sometimes even inverted, which is to disappear, along with the prophecies and the divided tongues which are the utterance of partial and infantine perception. But is there nothing which is precious to us now that shall be precious to us always? Yes! Faith, Hope, Charity, are not to disappear: these abide.

No attentive reader, I think, can refuse to see this import in St. Paul’s expressions. And yet, if we do see it, we must abandon some notions which have become very prevalent amongst us, nay, which have passed into theological commonplaces. It is said to be the consequence of our exile from Heaven that we walk by Faith, not by sight. A time, we are promised, will come, when Faith shall be lost in sight. So again of Hope. We are often assured that Hope in the world to come is to be drowned in fruition; that it is necessary to us here because we are not come to our inheritance. I am far from saying that there is not a truth latent in this language, or that we ought not to inquire

diligently what that truth is. But surely we cannot hope to arrive at it by directly contradicting an Apostle. He is writing about Charity. He is expressly magnifying that above Faith and Hope. And yet he says, in so many words, that all three are to continue when partial things have vanished away.

I. I shall not impose upon you my definition of Faith. No definition ought to content you. I say so boldly, because, when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives what schoolmen call a definition (though it is so unlike theirs that they immediately begin defining again in order to make it intelligible), he proceeds at once to translate his words into life. He goes through the history of his land, that he may exhibit Faith in its actual exercises. From the deeds of men we are to learn how it is “the substance of things hoped for,” how it is “the evidence of things not seen.” If one meditates upon any single one of these deeds, one perceives the force and appropriateness of the word *Substance*. This belief of Jewish fathers, lawgivers, prophets, made them substantial men. It stood under them; it bore witness of a ground beneath itself. That famous and continually recurring phrase in the Old Testament, “They put their trust in the Lord,” explains, as none other can, how they became substantial. The earth which they beheld was very fair and good. They had nothing to complain of its trees, or flowers, or fountains, of the sky that looked down upon it, of the sun which gave it light. Only they could not find their own foundation in these. They tried to refer themselves to them by making them Gods. All became capricious and uncertain. The things were firm enough; *they* had no firmness; *they* were the sports of every gale and of every change of season. These things might be feared, might in some sort be loved; but not trusted. Were these men therefore driven back upon the thoughts and speculations of their own minds, because they could find no rest in the things they saw? That was looser, more shifting sand still; sometimes it was quicksand. “They sank in deep mire, where no ground was.” No, they could not trust in themselves more than in the winds or waves. Then “they cried unto the Lord.” From amidst the

idols of sense they cried; out of the mire that was in themselves they cried, and He heard them. He made them feel that He was there. He made them feel that they might trust Him. They did trust, and were not confounded.

Thus Faith was the substance of their daily life; their strength in their daily battles. But it was also, says the Epistle, “the substance of the things they hoped for.” What was not in possession it made theirs. The unborn child, the seed that was to be as the stars of heaven, became integral portions of their enjoyment—yes, of their existence—no less than the flocks and herds which they watched by day and folded at night. The Promiser was the same as the Giver. If they had confidence in Him for to-day, they might have the like in Him for to-morrow. The sense of truth and the sense of perseverance grew up in their minds together. The Lord could not lie; what He was now, He would be always.

And so the second clause of the definition—if definition we are to call it—rises naturally out of the first. Faith is “the evidence of things not seen.” Truth, Righteousness, Mercy, are not objects for the eye. The Jew was taught that a God of Truth, of Righteousness, of Mercy, actually lived; that He was his Lord; that He might be trusted. This trust or Faith then conversed with invisible things; with things which *were*; which it could not create more than the eye created the things which made themselves evident to it. In both cases there is a revelation. The outward world reveals itself to the eye. God reveals Himself to Faith. The eye being blind, there is no revelation to it, though all the Universe is revealing itself. Faith being absent in a man, there is no revelation of God to him; though God is ever revealing Himself. Faith is the evidence in one case, as Sight is in the other.

When therefore people speak of Faith being changed into Sight, what do they mean? Are Truth, and Righteousness, and Mercy, to undergo some awful change? Are they to be translated into objects of sense? Is God to be changed into an object of sense? Have we been fighting with idolatry all through our stay upon earth; fighting with it

as the great earthly sin; as that which degraded God to the level and nature of earth; and are we to become idolaters as soon as our eyes close upon the earth? is that to be the great celestial reward? Or is Faith, as identical with Trust, to cease? Is the glorified Saint no longer to depend upon God for all that he has and for all that he is? Will some new and higher security be conferred upon him than that which is derived from unceasing trust?

These propositions have but to be stated in words, that every devout man may turn from them with horror and loathing. Yet from not putting them fairly before ourselves, from allowing them to lie hid under seemly phrases, more mischief than we can measure creeps into our souls. We do fancy that in some way or other the eternal things will be brought within the range of our senses; that they will become to all intents and purposes like the things of time. And again we half suppose that, as the price of our having trusted God's promises here, a day may come when we shall enter upon a possession that will be assured to us, as lands or goods are assured to us; which we may hold not of God, but as if it were our own. Fearful habits of mind to cherish! the more fearful, because so congenial to our indolence and to our selfishness. Oh! let us resolutely cast them off, however closely they may cleave to us. Let us remember that when the Son of Man actually presented Himself, in a body that might be seen and handled, to those whom He was not ashamed to call His brethren, it was to their Faith that He addressed Himself; it was their Faith that, by His words and His acts of healing, He sought to call forth. When it did not answer to His summons, He said to those who were surrounding Him, "You know me not, though you see me; you do not come to me, though you follow me." It was to Faith only that He revealed Himself, when the senses appeared most capable of giving a report concerning Him. And let us be sure that it must always be so. Faith must pierce through the robes of His visible Majesty, as Faith did pierce through the robes of His Humiliation. We must know what He is in Himself, His own pure, essential Nature, otherwise there can be no delight in

His presence. If the adoration is not paid to the Lamb that was slain, it is not the adoration of the saints about the throne. And is it not still more certain that this is the difference between the condition of those whose garments are made entirely white in the blood of that Lamb, and those whose garments are still stained with earthly foulness, that the one will trust absolutely,—that the trust of the other is mixed with doubt and suspicion? Some say that they have an assurance of attaining the bliss of Heaven, and that without this assurance none can live the true life of a man. I would rather look for the honest sense which may be wrapped in such words, than for the hideous use which has been and will be made of them. If Assurance means Faith or Trust in a God Who has reconciled the world to Himself, and has said to us in Christ, *“I will be to you a Father; ye shall be to Me Sons and Daughters,”* I cannot doubt that the more we hold to that Faith, and fight with all that assaults it or undermines it, the more clear, healthy, manly our minds will be. We shall be able to do the works which God has given us to do, because we shall be sure that they are His, not ours. And since the bliss of Heaven, I conceive, must consist in the entire freedom from that unbelief and suspicion which have been the great hindrances to all sound action and to all comfortable intercourse, to all inward serenity here, I cannot question that such a Faith, the more continually and vigorously it is exercised, must be the right induction to such a bliss; in fact an entrance upon it. But doubt, infidelity, temporary despair, would be a good and blessed exchange for such assurance, if it is grounded on any notion of a privilege conferred upon us which the Incarnation and Death of Christ have not made the common inheritance of all; or if we think that inheritance can be anything else than a full discovery of Him, Whom our want of Faith and Trust, and our wish for some felicity of our own, have prevented us from beholding.

Let us believe then, with St. Paul, that Faith must abide always with us, if we are to be blessed creatures. No distinction which belongs to God’s divine order can be abolished. Faith and Sight may both be

perfected; the invisible things may become more real and certain to us than the things of sense. We may be sure that they are the substances apart from which the others would be mere shadows. Hereafter, this world, which has been so full of unfathomed secrets, may disclose them and their deepest signification to the purified searcher. Every sense may put forth its fullest energy. The glorified body may be fit to understand the glorified earth. Faith and sight may be the divinest allies, instead of being, as they so often are with us, murderous antagonists. But neither will usurp the other's place. There will be no confusion in their functions. Such confusions are the effect of our twilight; they will be scattered in God's perfect Day.

II. It has not been possible to speak of Faith without alluding to Hope; seeing that Faith is said to be "the substance of things hoped for." And I have had occasion lately to connect Hope with the glory which Isaiah says is to be revealed, and which all flesh is to see together. What can be those things hoped for, of which the Apostle tells us? Are they the same with the glory of which the Prophet discourses? If so, consider, I pray you, how far the fruition of such a Hope can be said to extinguish it. Is not the Hope of the glory of God the Hope of that which is infinite, which must be always unfolding itself more to him who is in communion with it, which must therefore always be kindling fresh Hope? Suppose for one moment that a man ever reached a Hercules' Pillar on his voyage of discovery; suppose it could ever be said to him, "Now you know all; there is no further depth to fathom, or height to ascend;"——would not the hope he had dared to nourish be frustrated instead of realized? And would not he become at once a dwarfed and stunted creature, returned once again to the self-sufficiency out of which God had delivered him? Oh, be sure the Hope which maketh not ashamed, the Hope which purifies, cannot be of this kind! That has Faith for its substance, because it has God for its substance, God for its end. That comes from Him, and can only be satisfied in Him.

Not, indeed, that because He is the ground and ultimate satisfaction of Hope, it disdains any inferior objects. All things shine in His light; all things glow with His life. But for that very reason the pettiest man, the pettiest insect and reptile, must be beyond the comprehension, not of us, but of saints and angels; they must have given over the ambition to comprehend; they must be ever filled with the Hope of apprehending a little more of the divine secret, which God sets before them for their endless inquiry and admiration. Surely it is in this babyhood of an existence that we dream of grasping the waters in the hollow of our hand, or of finding the end of the rainbow. When we come to our manhood, and begin to see things as they are, we shall cry out, not with terror or shame or discouragement, but with awe, thanksgiving, Hope, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

III. And thus, I conceive, we arrive naturally and in order at the Apostle's conclusion: "The greatest of these is Charity." If he had said, as some say, "The only one which will abide is Charity," he would have adopted, it seems to me, the Pantheistical doctrine, that the creature is to sink and be lost in God. For this assuredly is his reason for exalting Charity above Faith and Hope, that he regards them as pointing to His Being and Nature, and Charity as constituting His Being and Nature. That must be greatest, without which the other two could not be. That must be greatest, without which they could have no object. A Being who is not altogether Charity does not ask Faith or Trust of His creatures. He bids them distrust Him, tremble at Him, shrink from Him. A Being who is not altogether Charity does not bid His creatures hope in Him. He bids them despair, because He has the power to destroy them, and at any moment he might loose His power. A Being who is not perfect Charity is no object on which Faith can rest. It must always be seeking some other; it must always be flickering and uncertain, while it is directed towards Him. A Being who is not perfect Charity is no object for Hope. As long as it lasts, it must look some day or another to escape from the atmosphere which surrounds

Him, into some clearer, warmer region. Therefore, if Faith abides, if Hope abides, Charity must abide. Because that is the fixed eternal Substance, they have substance. Because that cannot fail, they are not to fail.

Perhaps it may strike you that this is a perverse application of the word on which St. Paul has been dwelling throughout this chapter. It must have the same meaning, you will say, in the last verse as in the first. But in the first, he says, “Though *I* speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” Then human Charity must be his subject. How can it have been converted into divine Charity here?

A most important question! What we want to know is, how we can have that Charity without which St. Paul says that we must be tinkling cymbals, how St. Paul himself became possessed of that treasure. You know that he speaks elsewhere of our being saved by Faith, and being saved by Hope. He spoke from his own experience. He knew that he was lost in his own selfishness till he began to believe in God, till he began to hope in God. Faith and Hope lifted him out of that abyss. But Faith and Hope in what God? —In a God of absolute Love or Charity. This was the God Who revealed Himself to him on his way to Damascus. This was the God Whom, from that time, he sought to serve by preaching to all men the Gospel of Christ, Who was His perfect Image. *Then* first, he, who had had much knowledge,—yes, and a Faith (of gloomy kind) that could remove mountains,—began to have Love working in his heart. For these saving powers of Faith and Hope brought him into fellowship with that which was greater than themselves. He found them to be the conductors of its shocks, the unseen wires whereby the life which was in the Father passed into those whom He has formed to be one body in His Son. He found that God brings men into that body,—not that they may speak with tongues, not that they may remove mountains, not that they may give their bodies to be burned, though He may perchance call upon them to do any one of these things, and may endue them with strength to

do them; but for this end, says St. Paul, are we all baptized into one body, have we all one Faith, one Lord, that we may receive that one Spirit which is the Spirit of Love, and that He may stir us to do the works which Love would have us do.

This is our teaching for the Sunday before Lent. What then, brethren, should be the subject of our confession during Lent? We shall all, I think, be ready to own: The Love which bears all things, hopes all things, which never seeks its own, has been weak enough in us—if we can say that it has had any hold of us at all. But what good is there in owning this? We cannot make ourselves loving towards God by thinking how heavily He will punish us hereafter if we do not love Him. We cannot make ourselves loving or charitable to our brother, by thinking how much we may gain hereafter by cultivating such affections. It is when we bring our ordinary religious motives to *this* test that they fail so utterly, and prove themselves to be as unpractical as they are coarse and grovelling. But if Faith and Hope have that relation to Love of which I have spoken in this Sermon,—if Faith and Hope are substantial and good for men because Love or Charity is the Eternal Substance of God,—then we may begin to look upon ourselves more humbly, less despondingly. We may give over the proud and idle dream that we can work ourselves into Love by any artifices or calculations. We may discover that without Faith or Trust in God's Love it is impossible, by the laws of the Universe, by the relation in which the creature stands to the Creator, that there should be any Love in us. We shall discover also that this Faith must itself be the gift of God; that it could not be in us if His Love did not awaken it. And that thought, instead of creating uncertainty, will be the beginning of all confidence. If God desires Faith in us, He must plant it in us. By every act of His discipline He *is* planting it in us, He is bidding us trust in Him. That voice is never clearer than when it reminds us of failures, neglects, heartlessness, selfishness. Every conviction of our own want of Charity is a call to turn to His infinite Charity. The more hollow we are, the more we need that which can fill the hollow

in us. The more cause we see for despair in all we are and in all we do, the more are we goaded and impelled to hope in the Living God. So our confessions become sincere; our repentance one that is not to be repented of. We do not complain of God for having left us bare of that without which we cannot please Him, or live. We complain of ourselves for not having understood His invitation to unbounded trust, His promise to make all which most threatens to destroy Hope work together to keep it alive. We complain of ourselves that when His Spirit of Love has been about us, working upon us, seeking to enter into us, we have permitted another Spirit, the Spirit of Self-seeking, to possess us and rule us instead of Him. And such confessions will not lose themselves in vagueness and infinity. It is the round of daily life, the omissions of acts which might have been done, and which might have added to the wellbeing of our fellow-men, the careless thoughts and habits which hinder us from helping them, the reckless words and deeds which lower their moral life and ours—it is these which God brings to our mind; it is through these we learn the mysteries of our Nature and of His. Through these we are driven to the sense of a separation between us and His Charity; through these we are led to understand how the Atonement between us and Him must have been His work and not ours; through these we are led to feel that He can only be satisfied with us because He sees us in that Son Who perfectly reflects His Charity, Who believed in it, hoped in it, in the days of His humiliation, and so was able to endure the burden and agony of our sins and death; Who believes in it and hopes in it now, and so is able to present the Sacrifice of all His redeemed creatures with the incense of His own perfect Sacrifice to the Father. Through those sins which torment and perplex our life from day to day, we learn what the cause of all sin is, in others as well as ourselves. That it springs from suspicion of God; that it spreads and multiplies in suspicion of each other; that the Spirit of God makes us aware of it, because He is fighting with it in each of us; that if we yield to Him He will drive out of us those great enemies of men, and will endue us with those three choicest blessings,

Faith, Hope, and Charity, which are to abide with us, and to make us one with God and with our brethren for ever.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 1, 1857

(MORNING)

*“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”—1 PHILIPPIANS iii. 20, 21.*

ST. PAUL had just been speaking of some members of the Church whose god was their belly, who minded earthly things. It is a plausible opinion, that in the passage I have just read he intended to contrast with their state of mind his own and that of the persons who strove to imitate him, as he imitated Christ. Our translators probably adopted that notion, or they would scarcely have rendered πολιτευμα by “conversation.” That word had undoubtedly a more extensive signification in the seventeenth century than it has in ours,—it included the whole course and habit of life, and had no special reference to intercourse through the tongue. But it never can have denoted what a word derived from City and Citizen does most naturally denote, a condition and privilege which belonged to certain men, whether they made use of it or forgot it.

That natural sense, I apprehend, St. Paul gives to the expression here. He does not contrast *his* heavenly temper with the earthly temper of those concerning whom he speaks with so much sorrow. But he blames them for that temper, because he and they had both alike a divine πολιτευμα, because a state had been claimed for them, and of right belonged to them, and was implied in their acts, with which such a temper was wholly at variance. The opposition is not between them and him; it is between them and themselves. It is not again (as we sometimes state it) between them and their *professions*; as if they boasted

of a high citizenship, when in fact they were only metics or aliens. They had too low, not too high an appreciation of their status and of their rights. They would be raised above their grovelling tendencies, yes, and above the conceit which no doubt accompanied these tendencies,—if they could once really understand what they were; what honours and estates were legally theirs, only waiting to be claimed; under what title these honours and estates were to be held.

Still the words *in the Heavens* stand out in manifest contrast to the earthly things in the former sentence. Have then the translators committed another and far graver mistake than the one to which I have alluded? Should they have supplied a future tense instead of a present? Should they have made St. Paul say, “Our Citizenship *will be*, not *is*, in the Heavens”? Here, I think, every reasonable person, every person the least conversant with the writings of St. Paul, or even with the common sense of language, will allow that they were right. They must have destroyed the meaning of the passage, all the moral effect of it, if they had been tempted to make this change. The men who minded earthly things might have answered with great justice, “We are upon the earth; we must have actual good things; we cannot take up with possibilities. You may be content with shadows if you will. Give us that which is substantial, even if it is to last for ever so short a time.” They would have spoken so, and I believe St. Paul would have been estopped by his own most familiar language, still more by his own deepest convictions, from answering them. All his exhortations to men were to leave the fantastic and hold fast to the real. All his life was spent in setting forth to others and to himself a present Saviour, Who could set them free from a present bondage, Who could sustain them under the pressure of an immediate death. And that part of this passage which obviously and unquestionably points to a future manifestation of this Saviour—to a complete redemption from bondage—would, I believe, be quite as much emptied of its signification as the rest, if St. Paul’s readers fancied that they had not now, but only were to have hereafter, a citizenship in the Heavens.

But how can such a thought as this ever be brought within the range of men's ordinary conceptions? How can it ever become a practical thought for you and me? Perhaps we had better consider for a moment how it became such a one for him who gave this expression to it. St. Paul was a Roman citizen; we have proofs that he valued the privilege. It stood him in good stead more than once. When he asked himself what it meant—why it had been so dearly prized by the old families of the great city—how Italians, how distant provincials had become partakers of it—how it had associated itself with dominion over the world—what answer can he have found? Will it have been this? "It has been won by men such as these I see in the palace of Nero, whose whole soul is set upon animal enjoyments, who care for neither the past nor the future, whose god is their belly, whose eyes are always upon this earth. Did Rome grow up under their fostering care? Has Roman citizenship become precious and mighty because they boast of it? Is not its power and splendour due to men of just the opposite character to these,—men who could cast aside and scorn the things in which they delight,—men who held fast the reverence for ancestors which they have lost—men who believed in some invisible protector of their land whom these have forgotten or exchanged for a visible idol, or the horrible phantom of a fatal tyrant ready at any moment to crush them? Were not the true citizens, to whom Rome owed its rise, different from the false citizens who were hastening its downfall, in this—that they minded earthly things less, that they had a dream, however confused a dream, of a citizenship in the Heavens?"

But St. Paul, besides being a Roman citizen, was an Israelite, a child of Abraham. When he considered what this citizenship signified, did not similar facts present themselves to him, only in far greater clearness—only so as to throw light upon the others? He saw in every city whither Jews had scattered themselves—he saw in Jerusalem—men vain of their origin, clinging to the traditions of their fathers, but, in the fullest sense of the word, minding earthly things,—set upon gain, money-getters by profession and in heart, men who made this

pursuit the key to the interpretation of their divine records, who unconsciously read “Mammon” wherever they found “Jehovah.” Were these like the men whom those records spoke of? Very like indeed those whom prophets denounced because they forgot the Everlasting Covenant—because their hearts were set upon their covetousness—because they were drawing down God’s wrath upon the land—because they were hastening the destruction of the city. Very like these; and therefore just the reverse of all those heroes who had done great deeds upon the earth, who had proved themselves fit to live upon the earth by the mastery they had had over it. These emphatically did not mind earthly things; these believed that they were citizens of a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God: these lived and died in that faith. They had their citizenship in the Heavens while they were upon earth; they could hope to understand more what was implied in it, and what numbers besides themselves were inheritors of it after their eyes were closed upon earth.

This was St. Paul’s education respecting the nature of citizenship; this was his preparation for believing that there was a city in which Jews and Romans, Greeks and Barbarians had equal privileges, and that that city must be in the Heavens; and that that city was, on that very account, one of which the gates were never shut day nor night to the inhabitants of earth if they chose to enter into them. In other words, he discovered that there is a human society—a society for men as men—and that the foundation of this society must be spiritual; that men become members of it, not because they have bodies, but because they have spirits; that they become free of it because the Father of Spirits has declared in His Son Jesus Christ that He is their Father, and that therefore they are brethren. He mourned therefore that men having such an origin and such a patrimony, should regard themselves merely as sons of earth, and should live as if their fellowship with each other depended upon earthly accidents, and not upon that relation in which they all stood to the unseen world. So far as they did that, He was sure that their intercourse with each other would be capricious,

liable to continual interruptions—not of any depth or fruitfulness while it lasted—not sufficient to overcome the gravitation in each of them to grovelling, animal, separate indulgences—not going beyond the reciprocation of good-natured words or acts, and the pleasant excitement of vanity. And, on the contrary, just so far as any traced the attraction which they felt for each other to a higher and diviner attraction; just so far as they believed the bonds of friendship to be as little fortuitous, or merely formed by self-will, as the bonds of what we call natural relationships; just so far as both were referred to God's eternal Love and to the relationship which there is between us and Him,—just so far he was certain that their associations would be genuine and permanent, surviving circumstances, surviving death.

To say, brethren, “Our *conversation* is in the Heavens,” would be a bold thing for most of us. If we ventured to use such language, I think our consciences would sting us with many terrible remembrances. There would come to us thoughts of solitary hours, when we might have been conversing with the most exalting, beautiful objects, and when we have been possessed with miserable speculations about ourselves, about the judgment people formed of us, imaginary honours we might attain, or imaginary foes we might encounter, or imaginary injuries we might have to bear. There would come to us thoughts of social hours, when we had the opportunity of receiving wisdom or learning gentleness from lips that are silent and from eyes that are closed,—thoughts how these hours were spoiled by carelessness and selfishness. There would come thoughts of hours when with our lips we were drawing nigh to God, and there was no converse with Him in our hearts. But when we say, “Our *citizenship* is in the Heavens,” then need we no such faltering of the tongue, no such timidity in the spirit within. That confession belongs to Lent; that is declaring God to be true and us to be liars; that is affirming, “He has not made our lives to be insincere in solitude or in society, our friendships to be poor in quality and to be shorter than the existence which they glorify. All that is fragile and transitory belongs to us; we have failed to recognize

the stamp of His eternity which He has assuredly put upon us and upon all our human attachments. We sever by our sin and unbelief links which He has fastened. Our noise has disturbed the quiet deep of memory which His Spirit broods over. But His blessed order stands firm, however little we abide in it. The affinities in the world of human beings, like the affinities in the natural world, have all been constituted by Him, are all maintained by Him. The unity between the different parts of the frame in each man is not so mysterious as the unity between the different members of the body politic. The latter is certainly indestructible, whatever may happen to the former. And this, because our polity is in the Heavens. We are made one in Christ.”

Therefore it is that the dream which each man dreams, that he is the centre of the world, and that he can refer all its movements to himself, is so monstrous and ridiculous. Therefore it is that no affection or friendship which ever existed between men can have its origin in mere choice. Therefore it is that any one who will own his friendships to be derived from Christ, and to have their fulfilment in Him, may have them restored to him. Each of us may have the youth of old loves renewed. Years of famine, during which the canker-worm of selfishness has been preying on his heart, may be followed by years of plenty, in which he shall find that there are inexhaustible stores in the treasury of God’s love, if we only seek them from Him, and not from the earth or from ourselves.

When we give the Apostle’s words this signification, you will feel that they must concern us as much as they did the Philippians; that by their very nature they can have no local or temporary application; that it is for our humiliation, not for our pride, to accept them in all their fulness. If we did accept them in their fulness, what a meaning they would give to the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ! That is saying to us all: “Because you are hard-worked, warring citizens of earth, encompassed with all its infirmities, beset with its temptations, doomed to its death, *therefore* may you claim your citizenship in the Heavens. For One Who is ascended into the Heavens had an actual

body, and offered it on the Cross, and raised it from the dead, and carried it to God's right hand. In Him you are united to your fighting brethren on earth, to the generations of old, to every man who has passed out of your circle into the nearer presence of God. In Him you may confess all your cold, hard, selfish acts, your forgetfulness of holy influences, and cherished resolutions, and noble aims." The confession will bring forgiveness, and freedom, and new life. For it is the Will of God that we should cast off the burden of past neglects and sins, of self-reproaches and shame, of loves unrequited and duties unfulfilled. It is His Will that we should believe constantly and daily that He does regard us, not as poor separated creatures such as we have taken ourselves to be, but as a body united in Christ, justified in Him, presented by Him as a pure and holy sacrifice. It is His Will that we shall go forth quickened to every work which is before us, with the assurance that the whole family of God and each member of it is working with us and cheering us on, and that the veil which divides us from them will one day be withdrawn. For if our citizenship *is* in Heaven; if our denial of that truth has made our lives here bewildered and inconsistent; if this slavery to earthly things renders us incapable of understanding earthly things, or of discharging rightly the obligations which our intercourse with earthly things lays upon us then assuredly we have a right to expect a day when laws shall be asserted and anomalies swept away, when we shall see ourselves and all the creatures of God as they are in His sight, not as they have appeared to us through the mists of our lower world.

And so the latter part of St. Paul's words is a clear and safe warrant of Hope as to that which shall be, as the former part of them was a warrant for Faith as to that which is now. "From whence," he says, "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." If we stood in no relation to this Lord—if He was not the Head of a body of which we are members,—if He had not come upon earth to save that body from its separations and divisions, and to make it one in Himself,—if he had not ascended into the Heavens that he might raise it above its visible,

temporary bondage, and give it the eternal life which is with the Father, I do not know what this expectation could mean to any of us. To expect that a person who was born at a certain period in a village in Judæa, should come again at some uncertain period into that same part of the world, or into some other, would be a poor consolation for those who are groaning under the miseries and sins of themselves and the world, a very feeble terror to those who are causing these miseries and committing these sins. It signifies not what wonders we suppose Him to have wrought in His first advent, or what power we suppose He will possess in His second. While we regard those wonders as the peculiar incidents of a certain age, they only stand out in cold, clear contrast to all our present experiences; the conception of that future power of which we see no resemblance and feel no effects now, is altogether too vague, too much mixed with the dream that it may be exercised indulgently, or that we may find some escape from it, to overcome any great temptation which stands directly before us,—still more to move our flagging spirits for any painful duty. But to believe that He Who gave signs, when He was upon earth, of that dominion over Nature and over the wills of men, which has been His always; which He is putting forth over us who are here—over all men in every section and corner of God's Kingdom,—shall vindicate that dominion against all which defies it, and would establish a tyranny that is hostile to it; to believe that He Who claimed us for members of a Family in heaven and earth, of which He is the Head, shall not suffer us to act for ever as if earth were separate from Heaven, and as if the death which He consecrated as a new and living way into the presence of God, were a barrier between us and those who are about His throne; to believe that this body, which he has given to each of us, shall not always hinder the exercises of our spirits, but shall be their helpful minister—shall not always cut us off from fellowship with each other—but shall bear clear and authentic witness to the necessity and the permanence of that fellowship; this is agreeable to reason, though it may be difficult to sense. This belief will prove its truth to us the more we cherish it by

its influence over our lives, by the victory which it enables us to win over the earthly things that would persuade us to worship them.

It was natural for St. Paul, after rebuking those who minded earthly things, by telling them of their polity in Heaven, after pointing them to their ascended and invisible King, to express his undoubting conviction that He would change the body of our humiliation, that it might be like to the body of His glory, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue even all things to Himself. It was natural because, without such an addition, his previous words would have been incredible; if it was false, they could not have been true. If men are not spiritual beings possessing bodies—if a man is only a body into which some vital spark, some intellectual nature, something called a soul has intruded itself—then there can be no polity in Heaven, the notion is a fond dream, an outrage upon fact. But if they are spiritual beings, their bodies must suffer wrong, and degradation, and death; they must be incapable of their free and proper exercise till the Spirit has fully asserted its own proper state—till it has been united to its proper Lord. All through our pilgrimage here we are learning very slowly, amidst continual perplexities and relapses, what the true state of our spirits is, who the Lord of our spirits is, what their redemption is. The most various instruments may be necessary for this schooling. Nature may impart a portion of it; sorrow a larger portion; weakness, temptation, the sense of sin, the necessity of deliverance, far more. By the little we know of the education of others, we may judge of the method God is using with us; by the experience of those methods we may be certain that He is carrying on a work in them. But bodily humiliation, bodily suffering in general forms so large a portion of this discipline—so regular a means of bringing the spirit to feel its wings and aspire after its native freedom, that we know the Redemption of the body must be intended for a later stage of the process. These are continual prophecies of it; the very pains to which it is subject are such prophecies; the loss and decay of strength and beauty, as well as the unwonted endurance of both, and the look that remains on the

corpse, are prophecies. Surely they shall be all fulfilled! Surely there is no energy which shall not have its perfect development, and which shall not bring that to pass for which it was created! Surely there is no loveliness in infancy or in manhood of which Death shall be able to say, "I have crushed it." For He shall make it like to His glorious body. That is the declaration of St. Paul; that is the pledge of the Sacrament of Christ's body. While we eat His flesh and drink His blood, let us say boldly, "This we will believe for others and ourselves, not because it is for our comfort or theirs, but because it is for His glory Who gave up His soul to death, and Who brought His body through Death, that Death might have no dominion over us; that we might rise above it and above earthly things, and might be inheritors of His divine and eternal life." Yes, brethren, and there is another blessing included in this. The meaning of that grand Hymn<sup>1</sup> we have had to sing to-day shall be accomplished. Winds and waves, lightnings and storms and green things do even now praise the Lord! A few are privileged to understand the harmonies of Nature, to hear God's voice in them all. How will the souls and spirits of the Righteous, when they are entirely purified in the blood of the Lamb, when their bodies are redeemed from corruption, lead those songs of the heavens! how will they teach all things to bless and magnify the Lord for ever!

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<sup>1</sup>The *Benedicite*.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 1, 1857

(AFTERNOON)

*“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”—*

ST. MATTHEW vii. 6.

CHURCHMEN in old times and in our own have been fond of this precept. Maxims and practices have been grounded upon it. “Holy things for the holy:” therefore let the Altar be hidden from the public gaze; let there be a careful reserve in alluding to sacred mysteries.

Englishmen have, in general, little sympathy with *these* methods of applying the text. They denounce them with considerable vehemence. But they have their own way of applying it. They learn very early to feel that the things which are most sacred to them must be kept from the vulgar, must scarcely be spoken of among friends. The schoolboy with the strongest impulses to communicate, yet is taught by instinct or experience that there is something which he had better not throw down among his companions, lest it should be trodden underfoot. The habit of reserve grows and deepens in many. The words which denote it—the very words our Lord uses here—become familiar even to those who do not appear as if they had any very holy possession to watch over. “Dogs” and “the swinish multitude” are terms which we understand as well as most, and which affect our minds even when, for any motive, we abstain from using them. Candidates at elections, in the very depth of their servility, show that they have learnt them by heart. This is one of the precepts in the Sermon on the Mount which does not repel us by its severity, and which, in our own way, we practise before we preach.

But when we begin to think of it as a precept of our Lord, difficulties beset us. Some of them belong especially to us clergymen. The maxim about giving holy things only to the holy may have a long tradition in its favour, may be worked into ecclesiastical forms and habits. But what are we sent into the world for? Is it not to proclaim that which is holy to the unholy? Was not our Lord continually asserting that the physician is for the sick and not for the healthy? Was not His own work among publicans and sinners? Did He keep back the most divine wisdom either from them or from the dogs who compassed Him about, among the Scribes and Pharisees? How are we to fulfil His trust, to follow His example, if we only speak His message to those who we have ascertained are *not* dogs or swine?

And there is another question which belongs to you as well as to us. By what skill are we to ascertain who *are* dogs and who *are* swine? The words are part of a discourse. Will the previous part of it assist us? Let us read the verses which stand in immediate connection with this. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote which is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye." The text follows immediately upon this sentence. They would appear to present the most violent contrast to each other. I may not hope to rid my brother of faults, or even to discern them in him, until I rid myself of greater; and yet I am to treat certain persons as if they were dogs or swine.

But perhaps these precepts may illustrate one another more than we think. Perhaps by acting upon the first we may be taking the right way to discover the reason of the second. Supposing it were true that the moment I begin to judge my brother I am casting the holy thing to the dogs; that the moment I begin to look for motes in his eye I

am casting pearls before swine? At first the notion seems monstrous, incredible. And yet, if the connection favours it, it may be worth while to consider whether nothing else—no experience of our own mind—favours it also.

Take the very instances which are before us. I detect in a man whom I meet what I may fairly call a snarling, savage, currish nature. He barks and growls at his neighbours generally, but most of all when they speak to him of anything noble, graceful, holy. It seems as if he disliked to acknowledge the fact of goodness,—as if he were trying to persuade himself that no such thing were possible. Observing this, I proceed to judge him. I describe the man by this evil nature of his. He is one of the Dog species. I do not choose to reckon him in any other. Or I see a man not with his surly, disputatious temper, but with one that is much more odious. He is gross, animal, sensual. He seems to delight in what is unclean. Seeing this, I judge him. He belongs to the Epicurean sty. I refer him to the species Swine.

Now in this act of mine, just ground as I appear to have for it, I am, in fact, giving the holy things to the dogs, and casting pearls before swine. For there *is* a holy thing in that creature whom, for his snapping, biting temper, I have reckoned among dogs. There is a man beneath all that which is so disagreeable, even so morally offensive; and that holy thing I have given up to its worrying tormentors. I have not only given it up in my classification, I have done my best to surrender it to them in fact. For just so far as I admit him to be only that which they are making him to be, I am doing their work. By denying that there is a better, truer being in him, I am confirming his own worst unbelief, I am strengthening all the habits to which he has yielded, I am persuading him that he can do nothing else than yield to them.

Is it different in the other case? There are pearls, precious pearls, within the heart of that wretched victim of his lusts. But I do not choose to see them. I see only the swine which are trying to trample them under their feet; and so I leave them to their mercy. I even exasperate them to fresh violence. I shall have my reward. When I see

him next I shall find fewer pearls; and the swinish propensities will turn upon me, and prove how much mightier and fiercer they have become.

And how has this happened? Because in my eagerness to judge these poor creatures,—to fix them once for all in their proper classes,—I have never asked myself whether none of these canine and swinish characteristics may be found in me; whether I do not carry about that bestial nature which, in these different forms, has been seeking to obliterate God's image and superscription in them. Oh! how terrible the revelation, when such a nature does make us know that it is in us,—when the judge is judged, when the measure we have meted is measured to us again! For now we begin to suspect that there is nothing in us besides this evil nature; that there is no spirit lusting against the flesh; no holy thing which has not been given to the dogs,—no pearls which the swine have not trampled upon and made utterly worthless! It is not true; may God convince us that it is not! May His Spirit, Who convinces us of Sin, convince us also of Righteousness! May He show that the dogs would not pour out such howls if there were not a holy thing which irritates them; that the swine would not rend the ground if there were not pearls that they were seeking to tread down! But the discovery that this is so, and how and why it must be so, grows more and more difficult in proportion as we have not done the justice to other men which we owe to ourselves as well as to them.

It may seem to you as if I had wholly changed and subverted the ordinary interpretation of this passage, and had carried it to an altogether different ground. I should suspect myself if I had done so; for ordinary interpretations have a great value, even when they are likely to lead us wrong. In general they are rather superficial than positively false; if you find a foundation for them, they may still be maintained, at least to a great extent, and so maintained that they shall not contradict doctrines which all confess to be true. I hope this may be the effect of what I have been saying this afternoon. I fully admit that the command not to give the holy things to dogs, and not to cast

pearls before swine, has a direct reference to our mode of preaching the Gospel, and to our ordinary conversation respecting the highest truths. *What* reference it has we shall learn, I think, best, if we begin by getting rid of the painful doubt whether our Lord's practice was not at variance with His Divine words.

The more earnestly we consider what is told us by the Evangelists of His discourses to the multitude, to His disciples, to His enemies, the more, I think, we shall be convinced that His practice was the sublime and perfect illustration of those words. He spake to men who might be called, if any men could be called, dogs, such as those which are described in the twenty-second Psalm,—such as those which yelled at Him as He hung upon the Cross. And He never kept back from these persons any one holy truth, any revelation of God's character, any one announcement of God's reconciliation. But He never gave the holy thing to dogs, because He always spoke, not to the dog in the man, but to the man in the man. He told how God was as a Shepherd, seeking that which was going astray; how He was as the Woman who had lost her money, sweeping the house diligently till she found it; how He was as a Father recovering the prodigal who was feeding upon husks. He said, "Come unto Me, ye that are weary." He said, "Ask of Me, and I will give you living water." These messages were not to the evil nature which carps and cavils, but to the spirit which cries for deliverance and hungers for righteousness. If the message of peace met only a warring temper, the peace, He told His Apostles, would return to them again: it had not been wasted. The Kingdom of God had come nigh to those to whom it was preached; it had borne witness of itself in their consciences; they had been treated as men, and not as dogs; the dog-nature might be enraged, but the holy thing was taken out of its teeth, not thrown to them.

So again He found men and women who had yielded to swinish lusts and appetites. To them likewise He preached a Gospel of deliverance, not a law of condemnation. From them He kept back no holy or heavenly promise. He said to the sinful woman, "Go in peace, thy

sins be forgiven thee.” But He said so because His love had called forth her faith. That had saved her from herself. That had raised her out of the bestial nature. The merchant had found the goodly pearls; the swine could trample upon them no more.

But there were woes mixed with His blessings the most tremendous woes ever pronounced upon nations or upon men. These were addressed to the dark, disputatious, filthy nature in nations and in men, in Pharisees and in Publicans, in you and in me. They were announcements that the fan was in His hands, and He would purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable. They were especially denunciations of that judging and condemning hateful temper which was making the Jew an enemy to God, an enemy to all mankind, an enemy to himself. The more seriously one reads them, the more heartily one believes them, the more sure one is, that they belong to all time, and not merely to that time; the more the fleshly tendencies which make us akin to the dogs and the swine, tremble and are confounded, the more the Spirit, the holy thing which they have imprisoned, the pearl which they have trampled upon, lifts itself up and gives thanks to God, because in these curses upon its tyrants it hears the voice of the Deliverer, the assurance of its redemption.

Such is the example which our Lord gives us in this matter. How may we follow in His steps? How may we commit that great error of which He here warns us? How may we escape from it? We commit it, I think, whenever we try to present the Gospel of God *to* the disputatious, quarrelsome dispositions in man. How prone we are to do this, most of us know; how continually we have fallen into the sin when we have charged others with it, most of us must confess with shame. We speak what we think are truths, perhaps what we know are truths. Other people reject them, or at least do not understand us. We say, “It is stubbornness of heart; it is unbelief; God has hardened them.” We are somewhat angry for their sakes, and for God’s sake; much more for the affront that has been put upon us. The dog-nature in us is roused; it

encounters the dog-nature in them. The holy thing is cast to the dogs; noisy debaters fight for it;—gnaw it as if it were not the least divine, but a very coarse earthly material indeed. It signifies very little which has the victory; the thing for which they are contending has perished, or been reduced to a dry bone, in their strife about it.

I think we commit the sin of casting pearls before swine, when we appeal to the motives which influence the lower nature, on behalf of those truths which are to raise men out of it. When we leaven the Word of God with carnal and idolatrous conceptions, under pretence that a carnal and idolatrous generation can only receive it in that form;—when we say that we must speak to men of sensual rewards in a sensual paradise, for what can they know of anything higher?—when we say that we must speak to them of outward, material punishments hereafter, for what can they understand of a worm in the conscience, of exile from a Father's presence?—when we use a single phrase to the poorest, most ignorant man, which we do not in our heart believe, and which we cannot ask the Searcher of hearts to justify as His truth,—then are we casting pearls before swine; then are we cultivating, stimulating, making mighty that which God hates and curses, that from which He sent His Son to deliver us, that which shall be cast into the lake of fire. And so surely as the laws of God cannot change, so surely as Christ spoke words which will not pass away when Heaven and Earth pass away, will these swine which we have fed and fattened turn again and rend us. There is not a pious fraud which a pious man has ever invented for the prosecution of pious ends, which has not served to the purpose of impiety; which has not done something to weaken the faith of mankind; which has not been a weapon in the hands of those who oppose it. There is not an unworthy inducement which has ever been urged upon men to make them good, that has not helped to make them wicked. Woe to the world, woe to the Church, because of these offences! May God teach us that it is better for us to have a millstone about our necks, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea, than that we should be the cause of this!

Here then is an ample justification of the Churchman's reserve, of the Englishman's reserve. There is a danger of bringing holy things to the unholy; there is a danger of profaning that which belongs to the inmost sanctuary of the heart. But Churchmen and Englishmen are both liable to do this, in spite of their ecclesiastical theories, in spite of their constitutional haughtiness, if they do not reverence their fellow-creatures more than they are wont to do; if they do not respect themselves more than they are wont to do. Stiffness, and dignity, and airs of pretension will not prevent us from giving the holy things to dogs, and casting pearls before swine.

How may we be saved from doing it? Only if we recollect that there is not a man in the wide world who has not a holy thing in him, to which we *can* speak, and who has not also that dog-and-swine nature to which we *may* speak. Only if we keep the thought constantly before us, that the holy thing is not his own, that it is no part of his individual self; that it is his because he is Christ's, and Christ is God's; because Christ is the head of every man; because so long as he retains the marks of a man, so long he must be related to Him who took on Him our nature, who was not ashamed to call us brethren. Only if we say each of us to himself day by day, hour by hour, "I live only because He lives; I am righteous only because He is righteous; that which divides me from Him, divides me from my kind—that is earthly, sensual, devilish. That which unites me to Him is that which He bestows upon us out of His own fulness, that we may be true men, and therefore true children of His Father."

While we hold fast this faith, we shall be able to avoid the sin of casting the holy thing before dogs, and Christ's pearls before swine. We shall be able to confess this Lent how often and grievously we have committed this sin; in how many ways we have lowered the Gospel to our own baseness and the baseness of those we have been addressing; and how God has punished us by lowering ourselves and by making us unable to elevate them. The evil nature in ourselves, if not in others, has again and again turned and rent us; it has gained the mastery over

us, because we did not confess Him Who has gained the mastery over it. And so another confession, as deep as necessary, will go along with this. We shall own how much we have judged our neighbours; how quickly we have detected any evil propensities in them, how eager we have been to cast them out before we knew at all what answered to them in ourselves. It may not be always that we have judged open sinners, those who are manifestly yielding to their swinish inclinations. On these we may have bestowed a lofty compassion, feeling that we were at a safe distance from them. But contempt for those who are nearer to ourselves, with whom we can compare ourselves—contempt especially for them as inferior to us in gifts and insight—has not this been the easily besetting sin of each of us? We need not then reproach ourselves for having spread God's Gospel too freely abroad; for having drawn the lines too carelessly between those whom we claim as God's children, entitled to hear of His reconciliation, and the dogs and swine. Our fault has been of the opposite kind. We have kept back from them that which might have raised them into men, because we would not understand that to be in the purpose of God towards them. And so we have not attained the true standard of men ourselves, we have sunk to the level on which we deemed it safe to pronounce that they were standing. May God give us hearty and true repentance for this transgression of His Commandments, and may He endue us with that Holy Spirit which will overcome the flesh in ourselves, and will enable us to claim fellowship with whatever is His in our brethren!

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 8, 1857

*“I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”—GALATIANS v. 16, 17.*

WHEN I spoke to you last week on the interpretation of the words, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, and cast not your pearls before swine,”—my object was not merely to relieve that text of some dangerous inferences, which I thought had been drawn from it, and to reconcile it with the command, “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” which precedes it. I desired still more to fix the thought upon your minds, that there is in every one of us a holy thing,—that there is in every one of us a bestial nature,—and that we are never more likely to give up the holy thing to the bestial nature in ourselves, as well as in our brother, than when we only see the worse in him, and refuse to give him credit for the better. The lessons which that passage suggested are therefore a fitting introduction to the one I have just read to you. I know none that is more full of instruction in itself, or that belongs more strictly to this season.

Few persons, I apprehend, would justify our version of the last clause of the 17th verse. Since there is nothing in the original but the subjunctive mood of the verb ποιεῖν, preceded by the conjunction ἵνα, it is surely most natural to render the words, “So that the things which ye will (or purpose), those ye do not,” instead of “So that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” I make this remark at once, because I propose to reverse the order of the Apostle’s words, and to begin from those with which he concludes. In these he declares what is the paradox and contradiction of our lives; in the middle clause he gives

an interpretation of it; in the opening sentence he tells us how we may act freely and rightly in spite of it.

I. If we retain the language of our translators, St. Paul would indeed be announcing a paradox and contradiction. But he would be declaring it to be a hopeless one. He would affirm that, by a fixed necessity, by an eternal law of the universe, our acts and our wills must be in discord, every purpose must be defeated in the attempt to execute it. A strange Gospel surely; a strange purpose to a Gospel! His object, I believe, is just the reverse of this; to show us that there is *no* such necessity; that the monstrous anomaly can be removed. But first of all we must state what it is, and bring it home to our consciences. We form grand conceptions; grand, but, at the same time, such as seem strictly right, such as we could not limit or reduce without giving up some principle, without falling below a standard which we have reason to think is intended for us. But when these conceptions are to bring forth acts, they are found to be addled. The results are not like them, perhaps they are positively unlike,—the one the exact contrast to the other. How has this come to pass? How have we exposed ourselves to the just ridicule of others,—to a self-contempt which is more painful and bitter than that? “Henceforth,” we say, “we will lower the pitch of our thoughts. We are of the earth, earthy; we will not talk of aspiring to the stars.” But how far down shall we go? What resolution can we make which shall be so moderate, so adapted to the humblest view of our circumstances, that the act shall match with it? There is no such point to be found. We may give up all seraphic contemplations, all dreams of doing higher and better things than the most worldly man we know of. But on his ground the same puzzle meets us. We do not avoid unfulfilled projects, unrealized speculations, because we sell ourselves to Mammon, and determine that we will have no god except him. In his kingdom we find ourselves just as we did when we were most affecting to despise him; plotting and scheming much, realizing little, only at rarest intervals doing the thing which we would. To give up willing would seem as if it were the only resource. If we

can absolutely throw aside all purposes and all hopes, we may have the comfort of not seeing our purposes become abortions, our hopes ending in disappointment.

These remarks may suffice to show us that it is not only to *good* purposes that this experience applies. It is not only those who will to be high and noble, and accomplish brave deeds, who have to mourn themselves, and excite the scorn of others, because so little comes of their experiments. The man who meditates a crime is as often baffled. Something crosses his intention, or mars the execution of it. It may be some outward impediment; it may be something which he cannot account for in himself. But so it is. He does not the thing that he would. The world sees, if he does not see himself, that he is weak, that he has been defeated. The king is resolved to keep his slaves; but it ends with his begging them to go out in haste. The prophet is hired to curse, and has a disposition to curse; but words he does not wish come forth; he blesses in spite of himself.

II. This is the fact. What is the explanation? Evidently it cannot be satisfactory if it only tells us why our honest intentions are feeble, and not why our bad intentions are also feeble. St. Paul looks at both parts of the problem. "The flesh," he says, "lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Two powers are struggling within us. Whichever is to be the conqueror, the battle is going on. Whichever at any time is the uppermost, the inferior is still able in manifold ways to disturb it and supplant it.

Such a combat had often been described. Mythologies had embodied it in living forms; schools of philosophy had done their best to bring it under analysis; had even tried hard to extinguish one of the parties, or to make peace between them. Many had been content to call it a struggle between Reason and Appetite; where Reason often means little more than prudence, the foresight of consequences, or at best, self-control. Such a representation by no means accords with the one which St. Paul gives. He speaks of a Spirit and a Flesh, each with strong appetites; each impatient till it finds the food that will satisfy it;

each willing to sacrifice the other, in its eagerness to supply its own wants. The Spirit, according to the Apostle, is anything but a cool calculator of probable results, anything but a mere overseer or dictator. It is fervent and aspiring. It is as little self-contented as its rival.

As the flesh of the glutton will subject itself to tortures rather than lose its luxuries, as the flesh of the miser will starve itself rather than lose its gold, so the spirit will lose itself in its quest after the righteousness for which it hungers and thirsts. The difference between them therefore is in the nature of their lusts, not in the moderation with which they are pursued.

That a man in whom such powers are contending should be irregular and inconsequent in a majority of his acts, that what he determines should often have the smallest possible resemblance to what he accomplishes, is surely not surprising. Suppose he allows his animal inclinations to govern him habitually, suppose a great part of his time is spent in nourishing these and stimulating them, there will come unto him, at certain moments, lusts of the spirit, a desire to be like some friend whom he knows or whom he once knew; to be the man his mother prayed that he might be; to be at least as free and faithful as the horse he rides or the dog that caresses him. Such lusts of the spirit cross and counteract the lusts of the flesh. They lead to dreams, faint and bewildered they may be, of some better state, of some other home. Apart from all the punishments which the indulgence of the flesh may be bringing after it, these instincts and yearnings break unawares on the coarsest animal existence, and make it uneasy; and when the bodily pains come, they make them sharper, binding them to thoughts of the past. Suppose, again, one whose pleasures are to a great extent intellectual, who is proud of his superiority to the mere servant of sense, who knows how much he may permit, how much he may refuse, to his appetites. A time comes when the resources for which he gives himself credit, and for which others give him credit, fail; intellectual objects are cold and abstract; he wants what is actual. He begins to seek for visible and palpable enjoyments; by little and little he

finds that they are more to him than the others; the value of the others, he thinks, is chiefly that they are means to the attainment of these; the lusts of the flesh become supreme; he does not the things he once willed to do; he does not the things he wills to do now, for he cannot heartily relish what he perceived long ago to be poor and grovelling. Or again, take one who has much more deliberately overcome his bodily inclinations, because they interfere with his wish to govern his fellows. Outward things shall not pull him down to their level; he will be just as little made effeminate by any fancies or cravings of his own. How long can he maintain that position, before he discovers that to rule human beings he must sympathize with them, before the sympathy, restrained towards the mass, is directed towards some one or two, perhaps the least worthy, before it becomes subjection; before the tyrant has been turned into the slave of others and of his own desires?

Once more: a man is roused to think of his soul as something altogether different from his intellect, as something which is to be saved or lost, to live or die for ever. He cares no more for dominion over other men; the enjoyments of the flesh appear to him utterly insignificant. At first he has thought much of the struggle between the evil nature which holds him down, and that within him which cries to God for deliverance. But by degrees he acquires the title, and becomes settled into the condition, of a religious man. The lusts of the spirit he thinks he has satisfied; or he keeps that upon a regular, not very generous, diet. Then the lusts of the flesh, which were overcome by the activity of those that were opposed to them, assert their rights again. *They* are not content with the bare imagination of a feast. *They* grow by what they feed on. Soon they occupy the man almost wholly; any stray moment suffices for the others.

I wish you to feel, from these instances, that the Apostle's account of this struggle does not apply to a few particular cases,—that it explains what is passing in all men, however different their circumstances and states of mind may be, however little they may be conscious of a struggle at all, nay, whatever pains they may have taken that there

shall be none. So long as you are conversing with human beings on this earth, so long you are encountering a flesh and a spirit which are lusting against each other, one of which will not leave the other wholly at peace. And the more this is confessed, the more each of us understands this to be his condition, and adapts himself to it, and dismisses the thought that he can take his ease or escape from this strife by one arrangement or another, the more manly and true his life becomes, the more intelligible and necessary those events and accidents seem, which at first looked to him utterly incoherent and bewildering. For then arises the question, "*Whence* do those lusts of the spirit come? *Who* awakens them in me? Whence the lusts of the flesh spring up, I can guess with tolerable accuracy. However wild or lawless they may be, they have a natural enough origin. I can trace the influences which call them forth in myself. I have no right to wonder at them in any one else. But *these*—who brought *them* into a region where they appear at first such strangers, moving about in such quaint costume, sometimes looking like modest exiles who may be safely tolerated, sometimes as troublesome inmates whom it would be prudent to expel, sometimes as lords of the soil come to assert their dominion, and to dispossess the old inhabitants? Lusts of the spirit, who sent you hither? What report can you give of yourselves?" This, at least; that but for their presence, all that makes the world a habitation fit and endurable for men would have been wanting to it. Without them there would have been no love of country, no care of children, no reverence for parents, no confidence between man and man, no tenderness and honour between man and woman. Without them, the flesh would have lusted, but would have had nothing wherewith to feed its lusts but wild fruits; since even beasts of chase would not have been hunted for, or fish drawn up in nets, far less sheep tended on the hills, or seed sown in earth that had been ploughed to receive it. Those foreigners have taught us all arts; have made us dream that there could be arts, that all is not left to the dominion of chance. It would seem as if they had more to do with our own selves, with our proper manhood, than those

lusts which look so natural to us; it would seem as if we should never know what we ourselves are, till we have entertained them and got some light concerning their race and derivation.

And it is just this light which St. Paul, the Jew of Tarsus, declared that he could bring to the Gentiles of Asia and of Europe. He said he knew whence these lusts of the spirit in man came; that they came from the Spirit of God; that they were awakened in each human being by Him; that He watched over them to give them strength and victory over their enemies. He said that the Eternal Son of God was also the Son of Man; that He had taken upon Him man's nature; that He had wrestled with man's enemies; that He had claimed publicans and sinners as the children of His Father; that He had given them power to live and act as His children—as spiritual beings—whom the flesh and its lusts should not be able to separate from Him, and reduce again into bondage.

III. So we are brought to those first words of the Apostle, which I have taken last, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." This is not like that miserable "cannot" which I was speaking of just now; it sounds like a Gospel; it is full of encouragement and hope. But we have need to look carefully into the words, lest they should beguile us like so many we have heard. The man who became solicitous about his soul, and adopted a religious course for the sake of securing its salvation, might, it appeared, surrender himself at last more ignominiously even than others to the lusts of the flesh, because he supposed that they had been subdued, and was not the least aware how near they were to him. In what aspect is the Apostle's doctrine different from that which a multitude of sad proofs daily before our eyes show to be so practically ineffectual?

It differs in this, that he never for one moment allows any man to suppose that he is safer than his neighbours from the assaults of that flesh which lusteth against the spirit. They may take different shapes at different times of his life. Lusts that belonged to youth may be burnt out in age; lusts that possess the poor may be displaced by others in

the rich; lusts which the rich gratify may be never awakened, or may die from want of nourishment, in the poor. New circumstances, new acquaintances, may change the direction of the lusts, but they remain essentially the same. The easily besetting sins of childhood will often start up before the full-grown man, and astonish him with the thought of his own identity. Others will come, called forth by opportunities and a knowledge which were wanting in earlier days, and yet which have an evident family likeness, which must have the same origin. The wisdom of experience may have been gained; the wisdom too which has been learnt from books and from the failures and triumphs of other men. It may be of mighty use if it makes us more on our guard against the lusts of our flesh; it is of no use if it is a snare and danger, if it makes us think they are not there and do not need to be watched. Least of all does what is called religious wisdom offer a security that we are out of the dangers which, if it is good for anything, it will continually remind us of.

Here is one difference between St. Paul and many who have used his language and seemed to tread in his steps. Another is, that he believes there is a spirit in every man, to which he can speak, and which he can call to arise and walk, be it never so palsied and bedridden. This explanation of the facts of our condition is universal; his message to men is universal. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," is the interpretation of a puzzle which belongs to one as well as to another. "Walk in the Spirit" can be spoken to one as well as to another. There is no respect of persons in his Gospel, because there is no respect of persons with God.

And this is the great difference of all. It is not, according to him, that men have souls which they in some way or other are to save. It is that God has created them to be spirits, and that all the course of His dealings with the race and with each individual member of it is directed to the accomplishment of this purpose, and to the overthrow of those lusts within and temptations without us which are conspiring to defeat it. When St. Paul says, "Walk in the Spirit," he says, "Be men

such as God would have you be." He says, "Be men such as God by His Spirit is working in you continually to become." He says, "Do not resist that mighty Will which is acting and energizing every hour upon your wills; do not set yourselves in mad strife with it. Do not thus make your own wills feeble even when they are most resolute; incapable of producing consistent acts, even when they are most impatient of all that hinders action. Live in the habitual recollection that these lusts of the spirit which you have often sought to stifle, which you have often supposed to be strange aspirations after the distant, the fantastical, the impossible, are gifts from the Father of your spirit, monitions from Him of your own glorious origin and high destiny,—pledges that He wishes you to inherit the substantial treasures of His own Truth and Goodness."

And then, he says, "you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Be as intellectual, as determined, as religious as you please,—if the intellect, the determination, the religion mean something that is yours, something that sets you above your neighbours,—you *will* fulfil the lusts of the flesh; they will be too strong for you; if you cast out one kind of evil, seven that are worse will take its place. But to walk in the spirit is to be dependent, self-distrustful, seeking help and satisfaction in One Who has all that you want. A spirit must be ascending above itself; it becomes devilish when it sinks into itself. Therefore is the spirit rightly described as desiring or lusting; therefore is communion with a higher Spirit the only way of appeasing its lusts. By such communing it wins a victory over these other lower lusts. God reduces them to order and submission when we put ourselves into His hands, and ask Him Who knows what we want, to give us that; Who knows what is not good for us, to keep us from that.

Such a walk in the spirit must be silent, deep, unknown to others. Yet all the open and public ordinances of God impart strength for it, and show the man that it is not a solitary walk because it is an invisible one. There cannot be a more fatal error than that, nor one from which God in His mercy has done more to protect us. It is the

servant of his own impulses, the victim of fleshly lusts, who is of necessity alone; working for himself, seeking others as his tools, not as his fellows. The spirit in its inmost exercises is establishing a fellowship with multitudes unseen, unborn; entering into their temptations, bearing their burdens. It is always breaking through the shell which shuts each creature from every other, through the bristles which make each creature formidable to the other, to find that which is social, responsive, communicative. Therefore those ordinances which give to each man most the sense of his own distinct and personal relation to God, are those which most denote His equal relation to all. "Child, I baptize thee *with* this name, which shall denote thee henceforth, *in* the Universal Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." "Take and eat this bread, for Christ died for thee;" this is the formula of our participation with each other in the death which was for the whole world.

And so, when I say that this lesson which we have been learning this afternoon about the flesh and the spirit is especially a Lenten lesson, I mean that it is so, because the forty days of Lent explain the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year; I mean that it is so, because I know that you are not going to pass this Lent, or any other, in closets or hermitages, but in the dust and noise of the world, in the midst of professional business and party strifes. In these you have to be taught—by these most assuredly you will be taught—that St. Paul was not telling his dreams, when he spake of a flesh that is fighting against the spirit. That part of the doctrine you will get by heart, if you have not got it by heart already. Every day that you mix with your fellow-men of any class, of any school, of any vocation, will tell you how much there is in them that is fleshly, ignoble, selfish, and that may be made more fleshly, more ignoble, more selfish, by your arts and solicitations. Oh! will you not profit by the other side of the truth likewise? Will you not believe that in every poor voter at an English hustings, there dwells a spirit for which the Son of God poured out His life, that it might not be sold to corruption and falsehood, that it might be capable of

all true desires, that it might be like His Father, and not the father of lies? Will you not believe that every candidate who does anything to degrade that spirit, to make it more insincere by the use of canting phrases, more incapable of higher lusts, by stirring up those which are of the flesh, and which are destroying that, must meet with a righteous recompense in the loss of whatever is sincere and pure in himself, besides all the evil that he lays up for his country, now and in the days to come, by the habits which he has cultivated in the rulers and the ruled? Is it hard and wrong for us to utter such warnings, if these are not our special temptations; if there are others as great to which we may and do yield? Oh, brethren, warn us of them; set them before us as earnestly as you can; tell us how they have injured you; how they have lowered your standard; how they have furnished excuses for your deflections. Do not let us think it is a mercy in a fellow-creature to withhold the most solemn denunciations of wrongdoing, because it is his duty to abstain from judging the wrong-doer. Let us believe that the more our consciences are probed, the better it is for us. So the All-Merciful deals with us; so the Judge of the whole earth prepares us, that we may not be ashamed to stand before Him when He appears. He shows us how mighty the lusts of the flesh are in us, that we may ask Him to keep alive the higher lusts in us, and to fulfil *them*. He gives us repentance for having lived as if we were only a higher kind of animals, doomed to eat and drink and die, that we may walk in the spirit, and assert for ourselves and for all that higher life which is ours, if we remember in manhood the words we were told in infancy, that we are members of Christ and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 15, 1857

*“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”—GALATIANS i. 4.*

LENT reminds us of those three enemies whom our Godfathers and Godmothers renounced for us in our Baptism. I asked St. Paul to tell us last week in what sense he spoke of the *flesh* as our enemy. Let us consider to-day what he means by “this present *evil* world.”

We have most of us some notion, more or less vague, of what he must have meant. Each notion may be worth something. We may be obliged to cast it away as insufficient, even as immoral; but it may leave us hints which we shall not have to cast away, which may be helpful for the practice of our lives.

I. First comes that opinion upon which the Church and the conscience of mankind have each fixed an anathema; and yet which is continually hovering about both; the one that is known as the Manichæan. “This visible world,” it says, “is accursed, the work of an Evil Spirit; almost given up to him. Christ came into it that He might deliver His elect out of it. While they dwell in it, they are to regard it with suspicion, with a kind of horror. Its beauty is worse than its deformity; ‘touch not, taste not, handle not’ any of its treasures. The devil told our Lord that they were his, that he gives them to those who worship him.”

I say the conscience revolts at these doctrines, and the more it is illuminated by God’s light, the more vehement, I believe, will that revolting be. Since Lent has been often made into an excuse for fostering this doctrine, a wholesome practice is adopted in some Churches of making Lent especially a time for protesting against it, by singing throughout it the *Benedicite*, which declares that every part of Creation

praises and magnifies the good God for ever. It is not a mistake in feeling, though it may be in fact, to connect that song with the martyrs who would not bow to the image which the King of Babylon set up in the plain of Dura. Those who have purged their hearts of idolatry, who will bow to no visible thing, must have the rich reward of seeing that all visible things are good and do homage to the Eternal King. And conversely, wherever idolatry prevails, there will be Manichæism, the belief that some part of the Creation is evil, and that its author is at least partly evil. But though this is true, it is also true that Manichæism is a confused and left-handed witness against idolatry. It says to us: "These visible things are not your masters; all their beauty cannot satisfy the cravings for beauty in you; all their order cannot satisfy the craving for order in you; all the knowledge you can have of their secrets cannot satisfy the craving for knowledge in you. If you exalt them into your gods, they do become curses to you; this glorious world does become an evil world to you. For you are in it, but not of it. And you will not be truly its minister and interpreter till you understand that to be so. You will not enter into its harmonies till you have listened to a deeper harmony, and have had your spirits attuned to it."

II. Churchmen have been very apt to fall into this interpretation of St. Paul's words, though the Church so vehemently denounces it. There is another, which they suppose can be liable to no exception, which must be orthodox and Catholic. "Christ," they say, "has built up a Church, has endowed it with various gifts, has pronounced it altogether good. And the world sets itself up as a rival to this divine body, is jealous of its prerogatives, wishes to enslave it or to destroy it. The outward world of trees and flowers may be good enough; the things of the world, its silver and gold, may be turned to high purposes. It is the world of men from which the Church is separated, against which it exists to protest. In baptized nations she has a right to claim these men as her own. But her power over them is disputed by kings who want them as their citizens, by parents who want them to transmit their names. With these the Church finds herself in conflict.

She may enter into terms with them; may make use of their services, may consent, for her own ends, to receive their honours or their wealth; but they constitute a world-order; they belong to this earth: her polity is celestial. She must always be suspecting their maxims, always devising means for exalting her own in contrast to them.” Such are the outlines of a doctrine which has been proclaimed under various modifications through every portion of Christendom; which some, here as elsewhere, repeat with serious conviction; which many think that we ought to receive and believe thoroughly, if they cannot.

I will tell you why I think that, because I am a Churchman, I am bound not to receive and believe this statement, but to reject it and denounce it. The Church to which I belong, the Church which I read of in the Bible, is baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. This name is its foundation. But if I adopted the report of the relation between the Church and the world which this theory gives, I should be obliged to suppose that the Church had nothing to do with this Name, that it existed to contradict all which that Name expresses. For it is written, that the Father loved the world, and sent His only begotten Son into it, that He might save it. It is written, that the Son came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. It is written, that the Holy Ghost the Comforter comes to convince the world of Sin, because it believes not in Christ its Saviour; of righteousness, because he is gone to the Father; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. The Father loves the world, the Son dies for the world, the Holy Ghost convinces the world that it has a Deliverer and a Righteous Lord, and that He has taken it out of the hands of a usurper; and the Church, which is sealed with His name, is not to love the world, not to save the world, not to convince the world, but to set itself up as a rival competitor to the world, to plot against the world, to undermine the world!

This contradiction is broad and patent; it also goes down very deep. These words of Christ can be explained away; but I shall be

judged by them, and not by the explanations men give of them, which are far more difficult to understand than they are. If you say, "But there are other words such as these in the text, which speak of the world as evil;" I admit it of course. I am seeking for the force of that language. And here is a great and terrible help in the discovery of its force. History tells me that when the Church has set itself up in this character, it has plotted, lied, murdered; that it has exhibited the worst qualities of a heathen society in greater concentration and intensity. I ask how this can be; and the answer presents itself all too readily. St. Paul speaks of the Church as a Family in heaven and earth, as united in its ascended and glorious Head. But that the Church may realise itself as the earthly antagonist of the world, it must renounce this glory, this unity. It must substantiate itself in some earthly head; it must substitute him for its Divine Head. Otherwise how can it meet and defy what it calls the world? And what then does it call the world? The nations which God has established, each under its own proper ruler, with its own distinct head; the nations which are the witnesses of an unseen and righteous Kingdom; the families which God has established, and which are the witnesses of His Fatherhood. These the Church, boasting that it is called of God, tramples under its hoofs. These it dares to defame, as if they were of the earth earthy. And all that *is* essentially of the earth earthy, the gold which patriots have been able to despise—which men that love the domestic hearth have cared little for—this holy body seeks for with inextinguishable hunger, and heaps up for itself against the last day.

We sometimes fancy that the Latin Church has fallen into these sins, because it aims at universality. We ought rather to say that it has fallen into them, because it has contracted the idea of a Universal Church into the idea of a Latin Church. I believe that we shall never escape the like sins—that we shall always be copying them on a small scale and have a secret desire to copy them on a large scale—till we acknowledge that the truth of a Universal Church is hidden beneath that false and apostate notion of one; and till we confess that true

Universal Church to be implied in the existence of each particular and national one. The Universal Church, constituted in its Universal Head, exists to protest against a world which supposes itself to be a collection of incoherent fragments without a centre, which, where it reduces its practice to a maxim, treats every man as his own centre. The Church exists to tell the world of its true Centre, of the law of mutual sacrifice by which its parts are bound together. The Church exists to maintain the order of the nation and the order of the family, which this selfish practice and selfish maxim are continually threatening. And as the Church, following man's guidance, and reconstituted according to man's conception, has been enslaving, corrupting, destroying the world, and misrepresenting its Creator; so the Church, under God's guidance, obeying the principle upon which He has formed it, has been the instrument of freeing and renovating the world. The Church, exalting itself, has raised the selfishness of the world into a law, and has stamped it with divinity. The Church, humbling itself, has borne witness to the world of One who gave up Himself that He might take away its sin.

III. The experiences to which I have alluded have made another theory plausible and popular, especially in Protestant countries, though certainly not only in them. The Church, it is said, if you regard it merely as a collection of baptized men, is not better than the outlying world, it is one of the most corrupt portions of the world. But there are, in different parts of Christendom, men with religious views, honouring and serving God. These constitute the true body of the faithful; these can meet and act together; these maintain a continual witness of God's coming judgments against a world lying in wickedness; these assert His laws and ordinances against a world which is forgetting them.

St. Paul was certainly not ignorant of this theory. He had been brought up in a religious circle of this kind, one which undertook precisely this function which was a witness against the world precisely in this sense. After the straitest sect of his religion he was bred a Pharisee. He profited in the Jews' religion, as he tells the Galatians

in the very chapter from which my text is taken, above his equals in his own nation; he was more zealous for the traditions of his fathers. But, strange to say, this very letter is written to show why he did not maintain that position; why he utterly and for ever abandoned it; why he incurred the hatred of this select religious body by becoming a witness of God's love and redemption to all nations; why he believed that the Galatians would abandon the faith of their baptism and would deny Christ, if they listened to the preaching of those religious and exclusive men with whom he had once been associated. It is on the very threshold of these statements and warnings that he speaks of Christ having died for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world. He can scarcely, therefore, have intended to give that force to the word which it had in his mind when he was a pupil of Gamaliel. He had seen enough of the Pharisees to know, that if covetousness in its most refined and in its most gross forms is one of the notes by which the world is to be recognised, the sect, as a sect, belonged to the innermost portion of the world. His deliverance from the maxims and habits of that sect was a part, a very principal part, of the deliverance from the world for which he gave thanks.

And yet, under this Pharisaic definition of the world, and of their own separation from it, there was latent a principle into which Saul of Tarsus entered fully, when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. To his nation he appeared a greater separatist now than ever. When he became all things to all men, that he might by any means save some, he was set in opposition to both the Jewish and Gentile worlds. Each hated him, because he was breaking down the barriers between them, because he was the witness of that Lord in Whom they were made both one. And so he testified to Jews that the votes of a Sanhedrim, the shouts of a multitude, the traditions of a series of Elders, do not constitute truth, or an opinion which can stand against the truth, when it is spoken by the feeblest voices of fishermen and tentmakers. So he testified to Romans that an empire which was identical with a world, and had legions of armed men to defend it, and the laws and

prescriptions of centuries, could not withstand a message concerning a crucified Man, who had died for the monarch and the slave. So he bade all in every time go forward in the path he trod, not waiting to ascertain how many agree with them or dissent from them, but being sure that if only two or three renounce all party ties, that they may claim fellowship with the family of which Christ is the Elder Brother, He will be with them, and will enable them to tell the world of Him, and of His Father who sent Him.

IV. Once more: our text, strictly taken, suggests another sense of the word *world*, which has been and is very widely recognised. Αἰών, not κόσμος, is St. Paul's expression. Why may it not be construed literally? Why may we not say that it is the evil *age* against which he warns us? Accordingly, people *have* said this in every age. Setting aside Solomon's warning, they have inquired why the former times were better than theirs; they have convinced themselves that their lot was cast in an especially evil generation. Earnest men have said this, one after another. No arguments about improvement and progress could hinder them from saying it. Those arguments have never been used with greater eloquence and skill than in our century. On many they have a powerful effect, but not on all; not always on those whom the authors of them most care to affect,—not always on those whose thoughts are deepest and are most likely to be remembered. Many of these retain the old habit. They are quite unconvinced; or if they are convinced for a moment, they fall into their complaints again, and are never without plausible justifications of them.

For our purpose it might be sufficient to remark that the age of St. Paul was the age in which the Son of God took flesh and dwelt among men,—that Apostolic age to which we look back with such admiration and longing. If that was an evil age, which shall we select out of the course of history which was not evil?—to which should we wish to transfer ourselves? Surely, if we read the Scriptures faithfully if we believe God,—neither to that nor to any other. St. Paul's age was the *best* there had ever been, for it was the latest. The ends of the

periods were gathering up into it. The disciples were to reap where others had sown; their eyes were blessed, for they saw things which prophets and kings had desired to see and had not seen. The age of St. Paul was the *worst* that had ever been. It was the age of Judas and of Nero; it was the age upon which all the sins of former ages, and all the punishments of former ages, were to come. The new age,—the Christendom age which emerged out of that,—was, if Apostles do not deceive us, more to be desired than theirs. Every century, as it has revealed something more of God's purposes, and has been nearer the final development and consummation of them, has been more to be desired than the one that went before it. And yet, in each century, those who have lived the best in it have been obliged to talk of the present *evil* age; for they were not wrestling with the evils of a foregone time, but with the evils of their own. They knew those as they could not know the others. They had a right to say, "they are worse than those of any earlier time," because, as the light is stronger and clearer, the darkness which it exposes must be thicker and deeper.

And so, I believe, we are come at last to the real signification of the text. The world is seen in each age. It is embodied in the various customs, habits, fashions of that age; it is a series of shifting, dissolving views. It always *implies* something permanent, but that permanence is not in it. And it is always trying to separate itself from that which is permanent, trying to make itself self-sufficient, trying to make us live in the transitory, the momentary. You know that this is so; you know that such a world, however hard to conceive of, is no fiction. It is about you, acting upon you, insisting that you shall believe in it and in nothing else. Yes! these are its terms. Apparently you may have a considerable choice. There is a fashionable world, a political world, an art world, a literary world, a religious world. But the first alone has an honest and intelligible title. The others become, to all intents and purposes, worlds of *fashion*. The literature must be a fashion, the art a fashion, the politics a fashion, the religion a fashion. Try to make any of them more than that,—try to connect them with the past,—

try to discover some roots for them in the nature of man or in the Being of God,—try even to bring them into correspondence with the plainest facts, and a battle begins, a battle which you cannot escape from, which must be fought out.

What St. Paul tells us here is, that our Lord died for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this world of fashions and phantoms,—that He might bring us into fellowship with the Unchangeable and the Eternal. This was the will, he says, of God and our Father, that the children whom He had formed in His own image should not be the sport of all changes and accidents; should not be shut up in a little time-circle; should not be divided from Him Who is, and was, and is to come. Their sins had cut them off from Him. Each creature had sunk into itself, had lost communion with its Lord and Father. This was his sin; this constitutes sin. Christ gave Himself to destroy sin; to take away the separation which selfishness had produced; to make the perfect Atonement. That Atonement not only restores the union between men and God, it restores the union between men, whom time and space had put asunder. Each man may live and work joyfully in the age to which God has assigned him; need envy no other man his condition. But he is not limited or shackled by that age; he is a freeman of God's universe. He has no cause to fret against the rules and conventions of the society around him: they are as good as those to which his fathers submitted in other times, possibly better; but if they interfere with principles and everlasting laws, he is to tear them from him as tow. The Clubs of the earth may pass bye-laws for the management of their own little affairs: the laws which govern the course of human history, like those which govern the course of Nature, were passed long ago; the Clubs must obey them, or be crushed by them.

My brethren, I should not have cared to consider such a question as this at the present moment, if I did not believe that it bore directly upon the events with which you will be occupied, and upon the conduct which is demanded of you. If I should say to you, "I am sure you are going to think far too much about politics in the next

few weeks, let me beseech you to think more about religion or Christianity," I might utter what would sound a proper and professional sentiment; but I believe it would be an ungodly, immoral sentiment, and one which could only do mischief, if it had any effect at all. I am satisfied that you are not going to think enough about politics; I wish you would think more about them; I wish we could all think about them more earnestly: I believe we should be much more religious men, much better Christians, if we did. What we have all to fight against is indifference and trifling; what we have to cultivate is, a sense of responsibility, a feeling that all which is passing about us concerns us; that we are in God's kingdom; and that we cannot do any acts that may affect the well-being of His subjects, for which He will not call us to give an account. I am afraid some of the opinions which are current respecting the world have a very great tendency to weaken this feeling, and so to make the evil world of which St. Paul speaks, in very deed our master.

The Manichæan notion that the devil is in some sense the lord of the earth and of its outward economy, is not yet cast out of our minds. A General Election is a time which is sure to awaken it if it is sleeping in us. Here is some abuse which greatly interferes with the physical comfort, and therefore in all probability with the moral condition, of a number of persons, our fellow-citizens and countrymen. This man and that has a strong interest in supporting the abuse. If I give way on it, this and that vote may be obtained for a friend, or for my cause, or for myself. After all, what does it signify? It is a secular matter: it does not concern the conscience. Oh! dismiss that sophism at once. It is not a secular matter at all. It does concern the conscience. Speak it out. It is a bargain with the devil. It is something to be given up to him, as an acknowledgment that the things of this world, including those things,—whatever effects they may produce on the health, life, purity of men, women, and children—may be fairly surrendered to his mercy. It is an evil world indeed; you are helping to make it so and keep it so.

But there are other questions of a different kind from this; questions that are, according to the approved classification, not secular, but belonging to the Church or to religion. I do not want to speak of them by their names, or to express any opinion about them. Respecting every one of them probably there may be honest opinions on each side. But is there not oftentimes a very zealous determination on each side that there shall *not* be an honest opinion upon one or the other? Are not candidates urged and coerced into promising that they will do what they think it is not right to do? and is it not true that there are those who will submit to the coercion, and become legislators with a consciousness that they are degraded as men? Surely every churchman, every religious man who is a party to this kind of influence ought to know that for a temporary end, for the promotion of what he calls an ecclesiastical or religious object, he has been committing a sin against Almighty God. He has been working, so far as in him lies, that his country may be governed by unprincipled men, by men who speak with their mouths what they do not intend with their hearts. He has brought a curse upon the land; and surely it will not avail him much that he has done what is well pleasing in the sight of a religious coterie, if it is abomination in the sight of his Maker and his Judge. I say this to all persons whomsoever, who take up the strange and monstrous heresy that the cause of the Church can be separated from the cause of Righteousness and Truth, and that therefore whatever interferes with Righteousness and Truth need not injure the cause of the Church. I say it especially for those who are as eager as I think we ought all to be for Protestantism. Beyond all question, every one who resorts to any baseness, any violence, any misrepresentation which he would condemn as Jesuitical in an opponent, for the sake of advancing what he thinks the interests of Protestantism, is the best friend and ally of its adversaries; is doing their work with a success which they could never hope for from any efforts of their own; is helping to diffuse and to establish this tenet, that evil means are lawful for a good end, and that faith is not to be kept with heretics; is guilty of undermining the

faith by secret arts, of which he wishes the world to consider him the champion.

These are remarks which, however obvious and old, need to be repeated on every such occasion as this. If they fall dead upon the ears of most, one here and there may lay them to heart; and I would, brethren, protest solemnly in the name of honesty and of England against the folly and crime of which we are continually guilty towards our younger men, when we send them tied and bound to Parliament, with promises concerning certain measures, the nature and bearing of which they can have but very imperfectly studied; so committing them hereafter to the necessity of changes which shake the morality of their country and their own, or else to a mad persistency in the course they have once fixed for themselves, which is more dangerous and even less conscientious. Does not this cruel bandaging of limbs, which should be free if they are to be of any use, proceed from our confusion between measures, which must vary with time and circumstances, which may be right one year and wrong the next, and principles, which are not of to-day or yesterday, but are fixed as the throne of God? Do we not make unjust exactions respecting the one, because we have a most inadequate belief in the reality and sacredness of the others?

It is this unbelief which is the characteristic of that evil world whereof St. Paul speaks; that world which as much undermines the life of the household and the life of the Nation, as the life of the universal Church; that world to which we should assure every man, however much he may have caught its colour and its habits, that he does not of right belong. There is worldliness enough in all of us; but I am certain there is not a man who is simply a worldly man, who has not that in him which rises against the confession that he is, and claims to be something higher and better. Just as I said last Sunday, that in every man there is a spirit that lusteth against the flesh, so I say to-day, that every society has in it an element of the Church as well as of the world, that every member of every society may believe, and is

bound to believe, that the Church-element is stronger than the world-element, because God is sustaining it, God is fighting for it.

If we cherish that conviction, the greatest danger of our age may be overcome—that listlessness I mean, that despair of truth and good, that readiness to let the current carry us whither it pleases, because there is no striving against it, which we see in others, which we feel in ourselves. With this, in God’s strength, let us strive mightily. Do not let us complain that the age is weaker or worse than others, because men are no longer satisfied with their opinions, because they cannot find any opinions upon which they may cast anchor. Thanks be to God if they are making that discovery! For as long as there is any resting upon opinions, so long will the Apostle’s words, “Other foundation can no man lay than is laid” (or, is lying), “which *is* Jesus Christ,” be but dead letters to us. We shall think that it is our notions about Christ, not He Himself, who is upholding the pillars of Heaven and earth. We shall believe in our belief about the Trinity, not in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Thanks be to God, I say again, for making our age better in this respect than any age that has gone before, as St. Paul’s was better than any which went before it; because the real ground of all Divinity and all Humanity is nearer to its complete manifestation; because we shall be less able than ever to hide it from men by any of our conceits. But this, this is the reason why our age may be worse than any which has gone before it, as St. Paul’s was worse than any which went before it; because we are all so ready to take its maxims as our guides, rather than to suspect and challenge them as our foes; because we have not exchanged our trust in opinions for a trust in God, Who has promised that He will guide us into all truth; because we have retained a certain lazy acknowledgment that Christ gave Himself for us, without understanding that He gave Himself to deliver us from this present age of passing fashions and opinions, to give us a portion in that age which is everlasting and unchangeable because it rests on the unchangeable Will of our God and Father.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 22, 1857

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”—1 PETER v. 8, 9.*

I HAVE heard divines say that it is very hard to convince men of the existence of a devil, that they scarcely know whether they are convinced of it themselves. I think they are mistaken. I believe they may give their people credit for having *that* belief, whatever other they have not. I am satisfied that they themselves acknowledge a devil. I wish I were as sure that we or that you were always believing in God.

The name, we all know, is never long absent from human discourse. It is used in jest by those who do not use it in earnest. That is one sign. An opinion, a fear, a fancy,—call it what you will,—must have prevailed long, must have taken possession of men’s minds, before it could find its way so readily to their lips. Are there no other signs? Does not each man complain of some burden, some incubus which he wants to throw off? One may find it outside of him; if he could have better or less stupid beings to work with, all would be well. Another feels as if it were altogether within him. He finds the enemy in his chamber; he carries the enemy about with him in his heart. It is a miserable solitary strife, of which no one knows anything, in which no one has any interest but himself. Standing at these two opposite poles, these men are nevertheless at one, as to the fact of there being that which acts upon them just as some subtle invader or tyrant, whom they could behold in an outward shape, would do. Christians and atheists may often agree that the language of Scripture is unsuitable to our times. But they agree also in this, that they fall into it unawares when

they seek to describe what they are feeling and suffering. Intelligent travellers and zealous missionaries know that in barbarous countries the difficulty is not to convince men of this doctrine, but of any other.

Perhaps this reflection may relieve our minds of a very painful suspicion. Scholars often affirm, with an air of great confidence, that our Lord was only conforming Himself to a Jewish habit and tradition when He spoke of evil spirits, and attributed to them the plagues from which men are suffering. Considering how large a portion of His acts and words express or imply this doctrine, no one who believes that He is the Truth, and that He was born into the world to bear witness of the Truth, can accept this statement as it is ordinarily propounded. But we may admit it to this extent. We may acknowledge that our Lord's words were none of them directed to prove the existence of evil spirits. He found their existence acknowledged. Sickness, Pain, Death, were the demonstrations to the hearts of men of their presence. The conscience of wrong committed mixed with the experience of suffering to invest them with a very awful dominion. The belief of a One Evil Spirit was far less distinct and popular. It was a natural, almost necessary generalisation of the intellect to the cold speculator; it was a dark vision to the actual fighter, one which lay far in the background while he had strength to work and to pray, but which in hours of bodily and mental feebleness might become overwhelming.

What has been said of Christ's words is true also of His acts. He Who encountered sickness, madness, death, was certainly not setting forth the *power* of evil spirits. He was proving their weakness. He was, say the Evangelists, "casting them out." That is their language; and I believe it is true and honest language. It is disagreeable to refined men, to those who wish to be different from their kind, and therefore it was the most fitting for the *Son of Man*, Who came to us as members of a kind, Who came to break down the barriers which separate us as members of a kind. Suffering isolates us from each other. My sickness, if it is ever so like yours, is yet felt by me as if it were entirely my own, as if it had nothing to do with yours. Even epidemic complaints—those

which by their name and all their incidents testify of our common nature—are yet just as special, as individualizing, as those which are most peculiar. Only if One appeared, Who sympathized with all suffering as if it were His own, and yet treated it as entirely alien from the body and soul which it had taken—as an unlawful invader and intruder,—could this isolation be overcome. Such a Deliverer as the Gospel declares our Lord to be, *could* not set at nought the old doctrine, that Evil had marred a creation which was perfectly good, and that that evil was not natural, but voluntary; He must endorse that opinion; He must give it a form and a definiteness which it had not before. What had been an anticipation of the human reason becomes a reality—a reality which for the first time it can dare to face.

Still more certain was it that, if a Son of God could not contradict the witness in the heart of man, that Evil, however multiform, however broken up into different shapes, however opposed to all unity, yet exists completely and essentially in some Will,—which must be spoken of as *the Accuser, the Tempter, the Adversary*—the revelation of a Father was the revelation of a Will that is opposite to this. Evil and good are so mixed in this world of ours, that it is a most natural thing for us to suppose them mixed by an eternal law. So soon as we begin to confess a Being of perfect goodness, that thought becomes blasphemous and incredible. There is still the refuge of supposing Goodness to be something abstract and impersonal; a blessing to be attained by fortunate seekers, not a Power which is drawing creatures towards itself. When this vision dawns upon us, we may suspect for awhile that each of us in his own dark and solitary self is the source of the evil which is threatening to overwhelm us. It may be well to rest for a moment in that conclusion, for as long as will enable us to realize the truth that it *is* our self-will which resists the loving Will of God, that this is the hindrance to His purpose of blessing us. But since we cannot shut ourselves up in the contemplation of our own sin without sinking into despair and the deepest sin; since the sin of other men, the sin of the world, must be that very sin which is crushing me, the thought of a Self-Will which

is acting upon us all, which is drawing all away from the true Will, grows, I believe, with the growth, and strengthens with the strength of that conviction which the preaching, the life, the death of Jesus Christ imparts to us. Take away that conviction; say that we are Fatherless creatures, or that we have no Elder Brother in Whom all the nature of the Father is manifested, and in Whom men are united to Him; and I admit at once that the feeling of a common foe, whom each separately and all together have to watch against, if it cannot be shaken off altogether, becomes utterly hazy and vague. At all events, this may be set down as a fact which every one may ascertain for himself, by comparing the Old and New Testament. The language of the latter on the subject of the Devil cannot be resolved into a vague tradition from the former, which a higher wisdom could not wholly dispense with and discard. It is so immeasurably *more* broad, distinct, and personal than anything in the earlier record, that if breadth, distinctness, personality, are signs and proofs of superstition, the Jew and his law may be nearly acquitted of a superstition which the Gospels must have the credit of establishing, almost introducing.

I have alluded specially to the records of our Lord's life upon earth. When the Apostles went forth to preach of His resurrection, they too had no occasion to persuade men of the existence of evil powers. That was assumed; the Jews and Gentiles were agreed so far. Their theories were different; the witness which the facts of this world and of their own experience bore to their consciences was essentially the same.

Can there be a deliverer from these evil powers? that was the only question which it was important to get answered. The Apostles went into all lands to proclaim that there was such a Deliverer. They affirmed that the Son of God was the Author and Upholder of the true Order of the world, and that He had come to fight against its disorders. They said that He had overcome the diseases of men here upon earth; that by death He had overcome Death; that He was every hour overcoming some principality and power in high places, which was claiming men as subjects and captives. This was their Gospel.

Having such a one, they spoke of necessity concerning these principalities and powers. They did not begin with saying, “You have no such adversaries; it has been a mere fancy and delusion of men in all parts of the universe to suppose that they have.” If you asked me how this worked—whether it did not ratify and increase the dread which Jew and Heathen felt already of dark places that might be haunted or possessed by these evil spirits; whether it must not have increased enormously their disposition to conjure up visible shapes, and impute to them monstrous principles and designs? I should answer, I believe that if any language could teach men that they were never to dread dark places on the earth because they had continually to dread the dark places in themselves, that *nothing* material should be accounted mischievous or accursed because evil is spiritual and voluntary, this was the language. Imagine the Ephesians after they had seen St. Paul in peril from Demetrius the maker of shrines for Diana, in peril from the conspiracies of his countrymen the abjurers of all goddesses—when they knew that he had been stoned at Iconium, hardly rescued from a mob at Jerusalem, imprisoned by the Emperor at Rome—imagine them reading a letter of his containing the words, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood.” He, of all men, to say that! And yet he said it in solemn, sober earnest. These flesh and blood men were not his enemies; either because they had flesh and blood, or because they were men with spiritual capacities and energies. On both grounds he claimed fellowship with them, both were signs of their relation to the Son of Man. But it was the spiritual wickedness which had enslaved their spirits, which had separated them from their true Lord, to which they were rendering an unlawful and base homage, it was this which cried out in them, “What have we to do with thee, preacher of a Son of God? He is come to torment us and to make our victims impatient of our yoke. His voice must be stifled or ours will be stifled.” These principalities and powers were actually all that he feared. All else was to be revered, to be loved. The earth was redeemed. He held it a lie to say that any portion of creation was not God’s. Man had been

redeemed. It was a lie to say that Christ was not the Head of every man. The whole realm of nature and humanity had been conquered for the righteous King. But was not St. Paul tempted just as much as Demetrius to doubt and deny this redemption, to believe himself sold to evil, to believe that he must succumb to it as his necessary and appointed lot? Did this temptation mean nothing? To say so, was to say that the crimes and corruptions which were destroying the souls and bodies of men meant nothing. Or were these temptations only echoes of his own bad thoughts and fancies, or the suggestions of other men? To say so was to solve the problem in a way that could satisfy no resolute thinker, still less any resolute doer. St. Paul spent his life in fighting with these enemies; if that fight was not real, his life was not real. Those who did not fight could describe the battle as they liked; to him it was one with principalities and powers; he could give it no other name which would not have been a false, because a feebler one.

Temptations so diverse and contradictory as those to which he was exposed himself, and which he saw besetting the various Churches he had founded, must be denoted by those phrases; to have rejected them would have been to misrepresent the most perplexing and yet the most serious passages of his own, and of human experience. Why is it that no invitation to evil takes exactly the form to-day which it took yesterday? Why is it that any temptation of to-day may be exactly to the opposite evil from that which allured one yesterday? Why is it that no one can measure the effect of any word that is spoken or object that is presented to another, by its effect upon himself; that an argument which falls dead upon one may fill another with endless doubts; that one may be urged to the direst crimes by motives of which his next neighbour is scarcely conscious? Is it not right to speak of principalities and powers? Such language may seem unnecessary and inconvenient to those who are formalizing human life: to those who are in the agony of life, it is indispensable.

But the Apostles, like their Master, used the singular number as well as the plural. They too were obliged to speak of *an* Adversary,

of a Tempter. They were forced, I say, to do this; because they were bringing a message concerning one absolutely good God, Who was manifested in one perfect Image, Who was baptizing men into one Spirit; because they were bringing this message to all different races of men, who had split the Divine Being into a thousand different portions, who had confounded Good and Evil, Light and Darkness. The moment the complete unity of the Divine Nature was proclaimed,—the unity of the Father with the Son in one Spirit; the moment that men had been baptized into this perfect, loving, all-embracing Name, they must be told, “There is an adversary of this Name, a self-seeking, self-concentrated, self-worshipping adversary, who is seeking to draw you out of communion with it, and therefore out of communion with each other. You must be sober, for he seeks to make you drunk with the pleasures of this life, with your own self-conceit, that you may lose all thoughts of your Father’s house. You must be vigilant, for he seeks to stupefy you with opiates, to keep you asleep.” The language in which this adversary is described must be simple, coarse—if you like to call it so. There must be no idle generalizations which might make the reader think the danger not substantial. Men who knew something of the distant howl of wild beasts; who knew the hunger of which it was the sign; who had heard, if they had not seen, the actual creature start from some thicket, when the watch-fires were low and most of the caravan were asleep,—they were told that even so was this adversary giving a low note of his approach, which, if it was not heeded, would be followed by a spring; and that the claws would not play with their victim, but tear him; that the purpose was not to hurt, but to devour.

St. Peter felt that a picture as living as this was necessary, that his next words might not be idle words: “Whom resist steadfast in the faith.” Once believe that you have an adversary—that the conflict is not a sham one, and you can repulse him. You have not to win a position, but defend one. You belong to God. You can tell the adversary that you owe him no allegiance; that you scorn his promises and his threats; that it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you His

Kingdom of Heaven, and that you do not choose to exchange it for the Kingdom of Hell. But this command and exhortation would, I suspect, have been quite useless, if they had not been sustained by the recollection which follows: “Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world.” The members of the Christian Church were very likely to take up the notion that they and the world around them were under quite different laws; that they were not subject to the passions which other men were subject to; that they were out of the range of the influence of the Evil Spirit. A more plausible delusion, or a more perilous one, cannot be imagined. An Apostle had no higher duty than to shatter it by every testimony drawn from his hardily-won experience, as well as from the falls of his predecessors and contemporaries. He was to assure his disciples that the privilege of their brotherhood in Christ exempted them from no assault which threatened those who had not asserted that privilege. The same—precisely the same motives and arguments to evil were about them as about Heathens and Pharisees; the ones were not in themselves the least stronger than the others. The brotherhood were to know the nature of their enemies, and to know their own feebleness;—that was their first advantage. Men who did not think that Christ had taken their nature, and had been tempted as they were, met the evil in some of its complicated appearances. *They* encountered it in its first root. The world might fancy it could vanquish obvious evils by some tricks of fence, or could subdue evil with its own weapons. The member of Christ’s brotherhood was to understand the force of the paradox—

“Sola salus illi nullam sperare salutem.”

His hope lay in his despair; he could overcome, because he was obliged, from the impossibility of saving himself, to stand still and see the salvation of God. And this advantage too he had, that being one of a Society, of a Brotherhood, he felt that his enemy was the enemy of his brethren, and the enemy of that world which he wished to claim as part of his family. He was fighting for all men when he was

fighting for himself. The flesh might contradict the spirit in him; the world might strive to draw him into its vortex. But in regarding the devil as the adversary from whom the flesh and the world derived all their malignity, he could not be a champion for himself without being a champion for all men, however they might hate him, however they might try to seduce him.

What I said, then, at the beginning of my sermon, I repeat now. No one need be told to believe in a devil, for he does it, whether he confesses it or not. But every one should be told and urged to believe in God, and to trust to Him as a living, personal Deliverer and Helper; then he will know what enemy he has to be delivered from and to be helped against. Every one should be told that he has a Father in Heaven, whose name he is to hallow; and then he will discover that there is a father of all the evil deeds he has ever thought, the father of all that is dark, superstitious, foul, in the universe; the father whose name he must hate, that he may love God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself.

I said that in the Gospel physical evils, as well as moral, were traced to this source. I know how great a dread good people, perhaps the best people, have of adopting this language in this age. They appeal to the doctrine so beautifully set forth in our service for the Visitation of the Sick, that Almighty God is the God of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness. They ask whether, if we believe this, we can say that weakness or sickness has in any sense its origin in an evil spirit. I avow that I do stedfastly believe this assertion; that I think the Evangelists believed it much more stedfastly than I do; that I think the writers of the Visitation Service learnt it of them. The life of Christ, and the death of Christ, are the grounds upon which this confidence and comfortable assertion rest. And yet the Evangelists and Apostles, with the fullest confidence respecting this life and death, and all that was implied in them, did speak of the devil as holding a palsied woman bound for eighteen years, did speak of Christ as delivering men from

plagues and evil spirits. I hold therefore that these two statements are consistent; that we are bound to suppose that Almighty God has turned physical diseases into an instrument for the discipline and cure of moral diseases, and that those to whom they are sent are to use them as if they were sent for that end, and to be sure that they are in the hands of a merciful Father; that we who are free from them are to honour sick people as those who are suffering for our good, and for the removal of our evils; and yet that we are most distinctly and solemnly to aver, that health as such is divine, and according to God's order; that disease as such is of the devil, and contrary to God's order. Which opinion, so far from being superstitious, is the great remedy against that most mischievous superstition which looks upon plagues and sicknesses with a kind of tenderness, as if, because they are God's visitations, it is not His will that we should fight against them with all the resources of science and human art; which permits all the causes that nourish disease to increase, as if the good God did not regard them as His foes, and would not enable us to put them down, supposing we have really faith in His wisdom and power.

But I care much more that we should not shrink—through any shame of an old and vulgar opinion—from the acknowledgment that there is an adversary of Righteousness and Unity, who is plotting against us all. I fear greatly that unless we are on our watch against such an adversary, we shall not look upon God as altogether good; we shall unawares invest Him with some dark qualities, or we shall not feel that He is a Person in Whom we may trust, a refuge to Whom we may always resort. I fear that there will be mixed with our notions of the serving Him a number of petty quibbles and qualms of conscience, because we do not set before our minds the great alternative of worshipping Him, or of worshipping in our inmost hearts that which is directly the opposite of Him. I fear that we shall look upon Sloth, Cowardice, Insincerity, not as hideous monsters from which we are to cry that we may be saved, but only as unhappy conditions of mind which we may safely tolerate. I fear that we shall accuse each other of

faction and party spirit, and delight to fix these charges on opponents; never suspecting that the same fiend is at work upon us all, to fill us with the same low and venomous tempers, and to make our country the sufferer by them. I fear that our young men will cry out that they see no longer any great distinction between one political or religious school and another, though each retains its spite against the other, and therefore that the safest course is to be equally indifferent and contemptuous to all. I fear they will say that they can as little choose between men as between principles; that one is to be trusted as little as another; that each man must do that which is right in his own eyes. Oh! surely there is another moral to be drawn from what is passing around us and within us. Party distinctions are disappearing, that the eternal distinction between Right and Wrong, Light and Darkness, God and the Devil, may be fully manifested. We *have* been doing that which is right in our own eyes; we *have* been choosing leaders according to our own tastes and fancies. We can do it no longer. We are to elect henceforth between higher chiefs. We must commit ourselves to the spirit of Self-Will, to be drawn by him into what pits of darkness he pleases; or to the Spirit which dwelt in the Son of God, to be made His faithful and obedient servants. It is not a question about this special occupation or that. In politics, in trade, in what we call our religious services, we may, we must, yield ourselves to the Spirit of Truth or to the Spirit of Lies. The Kingdom of Hell is not far off, it is about us. Each one of us at each moment may be doing the work and earning the wages of its ruler. The Kingdom of Heaven is not far off, it is about us. Let us repent and turn to the King of it, for when all temporary guides fail, He is saying to us, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me. I will guide you by My counsel here. I will receive you to My glory hereafter."

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 29, 1857

*“Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.”—PSALM cxliv. 1.*

ON the last Sundays I have been going over the lessons we teach our children, and have been trying to show you that they are not so unsuitable as we sometimes think to the condition of grown men. I have spoken of the adversaries whom we have to encounter if we live upon this earth, whom we can encounter if we are, as the old formulary says we are, members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. I have reversed the order in which the Catechism presents these enemies to us. I have taken the sinful lusts of the flesh first; the pomps and vanity of the world next; the devil and his works last. But I have adhered strictly to the ancient language, which must have been carefully considered, and cannot easily be improved. The flesh, as such, is not an enemy: if it means the body, we believe in the redemption of the flesh, in the resurrection of the flesh. But the lusts of the flesh, the desire of the flesh to be supreme—to make the man its subject,—this involves *sin*, or separation from God; this involves the degradation of both spirit and body. The world in itself is not our enemy: it is loved by God; it has been redeemed by Christ. The world of nature is precious in God’s sight, and should be precious in our sight. The world of human beings is more precious to Him, and should be more precious to us. But the pomps and vanity of the world, those mere outside phantoms which dazzle our eyes and hinder us from looking into the heart of nature, from knowing her substantial worth and secret loveliness; the fashions among human beings which shut them up in a little circle of time and place, and cut them off from all that is essentially human, from all that unites them to each

other and to God; these are the signs of a *wicked* world, of a world which chooses to exclude the sun, and to dwell in its own darkness. And because these distinctions were necessary respecting the flesh and the world, because it is a dangerous and inhuman and ungodly thing to count either as evil in itself, as having anything but a derivative evil, we were obliged to speak of an evil spirit or evil will; of one who is to be treated as *the* Accuser, the Tempter, the Destroyer; of whose works the world and the heart of man are full, because the world is full of disease and death, and the heart of man of suspicion and insincerity; whose works are simply these: there being in him no creative energy; he having no right to claim anything or any person as his; it being our own part and duty to vindicate ourselves and all creatures from him; utterly renouncing his dominion; proclaiming that we are, one and all, the property of Him who is absolutely good and true.

If these are merely technical doctrines, parts of an anthropological or theological system, I cannot with any reason ask you, who are busy men, to care about them. If they speak of an actual fight in which you are engaged, and must be engaged every hour, you have a right to say to me, "What have you to tell us about that fight which we do not know already? Are divines better acquainted with the science or practice of this warfare than other men? Are they not commonly more ignorant of both? Are they not occupied a good part of their time with twining ropes of sand in their studies, with the preparation and delivery of harangues in pulpits, and with a certain prescribed routine of duty? Which of these pursuits is favourable to the acquisition of that knowledge of human beings which can alone qualify them to speak of the struggles and temptations of human beings?"

There may be great justice in such remarks as these; perhaps no one knows so well as the clergyman *what* justice there is in them; how much he has failed, and does fail continually, in appreciating the strength and nature of other men's difficulties, because he has first failed in appreciating the strength and nature of his own. If he tries to tell his hearers how they should comport themselves in such and such

circumstances, he is likely to discover, the first time that he is placed in any such circumstances, how little he recollects his rules; how little they would serve his turn, supposing he did recollect them. One main part of all the experience he has must consist, I should conceive, in such humiliations; they must be more needful for him even than those which he obtains from ascertaining that he has mistaken the maladies of his fellow-men, and that he has aggravated rather than healed them. Well for him, if by either lesson or both together he is driven to meditate upon the text I have just read to you; well for him if he is instructed that all the help he can impart to any, or can receive himself, lies in it.

I do not know what that “Book of the Wars of the Lord” was which is referred to once or twice in the Old Testament; but I apprehend the Book of Psalms was such a book to the Israelites, and that it has been such a book to Christendom. We may call it a collection of prayers, hymns, thanksgivings, what we please,—but a record of fights it assuredly is. And this sentence, which occurs in one of the latest portions of it, is a fit summary of its contents, and a kind of moral to be drawn from the whole of it: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, Who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight!”

I am far from thinking that this sentence applies exclusively to what we designate *spiritual* conflicts. I should suppose that David, or whoever the writer of the Psalm was, gave thanks that he had been able to fight with the Philistines and Ammonites. Nay, I should think he gave thanks that he had been *obliged* to fight with them; that he had not been allowed to rust in the ease which he would have chosen for himself. It was in strict harmony with all the teachings he had been most familiar with, to speak thus. The Book of Judges, which he must have read continually, will have told him how the Lord God of Israel sold the people into the hands of their enemies when they followed idols and provoked Him to anger, and how then He stirred up the spirit of some champion to break the strange yoke. Was the statement puzzling and contradictory? Not to one who was himself an Israelite—who had known the habits of his people, and shared in them,—

who had felt those same quickenings of heart which were recorded of Gideon and Samson. He knew that the torpor and death into which a people falls when it gives itself up to sensual worship is worse and more hopeless than the most galling outward tyranny, that such a tyranny does arouse, as nothing else does, old memories, and shame, and a cry, if it be a faint one, for deliverance,—that the man in whom this faint cry becomes a strong and earnest one, is the sign and pledge that a better day is approaching. Therefore he could not but refer the bondage, the bitter sense of it,—the wish, effort, resolution, to throw it off, all to the same source. The Lord God, the King of Israel, had appointed the punishment, had made the punishment salutary, had taught the hands of the future leader to war, and his fingers to fight, that the proud oppressors whom He had used as His scourges might be laid low as soon as their work was finished. This was the often-illustrated principle of Jewish History: of Jewish only, because it is the pattern and explanation of all history. No one who had learnt it by heart—who had become thoroughly penetrated with it—would attempt an artificial division between national wars and spiritual wars. The first supposed the last; the visible enemy was permitted to put forth his strength, that the spiritual strength which was dormant might be called forth to withstand him. So the law, exhibited in certain cases, was proved to be universal. Man is made for battle. His inclination is to take his ease: it is God who will not let him sink into the slumber which he counts so pleasant, and which is so sure to end in a freezing death. “Blessed be the Lord God, Who teacheth the hands to war, and the fingers to fight!”

I. I have spoken of this thanksgiving as one of universal application: there are some cases in which we shrink from using it, and yet in which we are taught by experience how much better we should be if we dared to use it in all its force and breadth. There are those who feel much more than others the power of that first enemy of which I have spoken. To withstand the lusts of the flesh—not to be completely overpowered by them—is with them, through constitution,

or education, or indulgence, such an effort as their nearest friends may know nothing of. How natural it must be to complain that this is so! to envy those who appear removed out of this especial danger! to plead temperament or circumstances as legitimate excuses for succumbing! Excuses, no doubt, they should be to the onlooker, who has not the same burden to bear,—excuses to all who are wisely dreading lest they should also be tempted. But to the man himself, who feels and knows that to yield is to sink lower in the scale of creation, to be more of an animal, to be less of a spirit, such should be arguments of no worth. His conscience rejects them; only his lower appetites listen to them. And yet, if it is a solitary conflict, if no one but his own soul is engaged in it or aware of it, how difficult is it not to feel that, by some terrible accident of his nativity, he is doomed to serve the impulses which more fortunate men may be able to guide! Oh, what help then may be drawn from the words “Blessed be the Lord God, Who has taught my hands to war, and my fingers to fight!” There is One Who does know exactly what I am, and what I can bear. The constitution, the circumstances, are understood by Him; He has ordained them for me. And yet He is not tempting me to sink; He is tempting me to rise. He has allowed me to enter into this conflict that I may come out of it a humbler, sadder, stronger man. He does not desire me to fall in it. If I commit myself to Him, He will not suffer me to fall in it. And the falls I have had are all so many motives and goads to put that trust in Him which they show me that I cannot put in myself: and every lust of the flesh may be the instrument, in His hands, of awakening a stronger lust of the spirit to overcome it; and that temperament which I have murmured against, when I despaired of directing it by my own wisdom, if I leave it in His hands, may prove to be the fittest for the purposes to which He has destined me. It may be of a more fiery quality, because He has services for me which one that is chiller and colder would not perform; and, at all events, the battle in which He has made me understand where I am feeblest, where my easily-besetting sin is,—that must be meant for my good. Of what kind it shall be, He must be the right Judge, not I:

all I have to do is to go through with it,—certain that He is on my side, —certain that I shall know more of His mercy hereafter, for having been forced to throw myself upon it here.

II. Violent desires or passions remind us of their presence. The fashion of the world is hemming us in and holding us down, without our knowing it. A web composed of invisible threads is enclosing us. It is not by some distinct influence that we are pressed, but by an atmosphere full of influences of the most mixed quality, hard to separate from each other. How natural it is to yield to these influences! how very mischievous the effort to resist them often appears,—yes, and is! For how many a man becomes impatient of the habits of that particular society in which he is born; fancies that the habits of some other must be better in themselves or be better for him; flings himself eagerly into it, and finds that the chain which bound him before is more closely about him now. If it galls him, that is something to be thankful for. Too often it does not gall him; he hugs it: all moral energy perishes within him. How often again do we see men protesting against their local customs or the customs of their time, merely because all restraints are irksome to them, because they are determined to do only what pleases themselves. They struggle for independence and not for freedom, and the result is a more cruel service to a worse master. How often again do we see a man setting at naught the maxims of the people around him, only that he may publish a new code of his own; that he may erect himself into the tyrant who enforces it; that he may become the lord of a narrow little world, which has all the follies of the great one, and a pride of superiority which is worse than any follies!

Yet there are signs in these irregular movements and abortive experiments, that men cannot be at ease in a world of shows and outsides,—that they belong to another order, and must discover it if they perish in the search. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Who stirs the hands to war and the fingers to fight,” for this divine order which He has established, and not man! Blessed be that Lord God for not allowing His creature, His child, to lie buried under the weight

of opinions, maxims, traditions, which is crushing him! for giving him visions of a city which has foundations, of which He is the builder and maker! for giving him the assurance that he may and that he must beat down all obstacles that hinder him from possessing its glorious privileges! Blessed be the God of Israel for this! since surely it must be He, and no other, Who shows us that we do not want to be loose from government, but to be under a stricter and a more righteous government than that of accident and convention and the floating opinion of an age; that we do not want to be more but less under the yoke of our own fancies and conceits; that self-will and vanity have been the great destroyers of all freedom and manliness in us and in our race; that these have built up that false world which has become our prison-house. Blessed be the Lord God for this! since to such awakenings of the conscience in men we owe all great and earnest reformations, all victories over desperate abuses which private interests established and sustained. Not the restless, disorderly men who would have their own way, and who fretted against all the ordinances of man and of God, which told them they could not and should not have it; not to these were those hard-won triumphs owing; but to those in whom the desire of order had grown to be a passion,—to whom disorder, if it had the prescription of centuries and the sanction of all existing authorities and opinions on its side, was intolerable,—who went off in the name of the Lord of Hosts against it. Probably they had no fiercer antagonists than those who said they were not of the world, but of the Church. But they knew that that profession was false. They knew that all who worship Customs and Traditions instead of God must be of the world; and that the Church against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail, exists to withdraw men from the one worship and to fix them in the other. Blessed be the Lord God, Who has not left it to preachers or doctors of the law, or reformers, to fix that conviction in the hearts of His servants; Who writes His law Himself in their hearts, and then gives them hands to war and fingers to fight for it.

III. Least of all is there any natural energy in us to contend against that enemy, who is described in Scripture as going about seeking whom he may devour. There is, as I urged last Sunday, a natural, and therefore a very general impression of his existence; there is a sense in all men that in some form or other he is not far from them. But the impulse among rude people is to conciliate the adversary who, as their consciences tell them, has had and still has such dominion over them. He is a god, whom it is worth while to persuade with litanies and sacrifices that he will spare his victims. By degrees, if there is no counteracting force, he is certain to become *the* god: he will demand all services for himself. Among the civilized it is otherwise. They are inclined to regard the devil as a fiction of the nursery; it is the shadow of a name which cannot be banished from conversation, nor quite from the thoughts, but it means nothing. Yet something steals over these refined people which they know not exactly how to describe. Apathy, loss of power, despondency,—these are some of the names which they invent for it. The symptoms are carefully ticketed and noted by physicians of the body and of the soul; the patient merely suffers from them, without being able to give any clear report of them. They spread over a period. We talk of it as one in which there is less of gigantic crime and less of heroism than belonged to other times. And then our confidence in *this* characteristic of an advanced age is shaken. Very dark and hideous crimes indeed come forth into light. We discover that the poisoner and the assassin have not less to do with us than with other generations. Only there is less of excitement and of passion in the acts; they are done more deliberately, with accurate calculation and foresight about the means which are most likely to attain the end, and to involve the least risk of detection. Vengeance is much less the motive to them than the thirst for gold; that is to say, if we use the old nomenclature, our temptations are less of the flesh and more of the spirit. It is the energy of the spirit which is undermined. It is some terrible infusion of inward wickedness, not some great outward force or attraction, which leads to the deeds that darken our history.

Is it not true then that the time which boasts to have outlived the evil spirit is the one which is most directly exposed to his assaults? May it not be that our progress, which is not to be denied, and for which we are to feel all gratitude, has brought us into a closer conflict with the spiritual wickedness in high places than our forefathers were ever engaged in?

Our progress!—cause for thankfulness, if this is the result of it! Yes; blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Who teacheth our hands to war, and our fingers to fight. Blessed is He for bringing us into immediate encounter with His own immediate enemies, that so we may know more than others did of His own immediate presence! It is a terrible thing indeed to have the spirits of indolence and indifference and vanity all about us, and to think that they are mere names and abstractions. But it is a glorious thing to be roused up to the apprehension of them as real enemies, from whom none but a real Friend, an actual Captain of the Lord's host, can deliver us! It is frightful to be reading of crimes in a newspaper, and only to feel a lazy self-conceited surprise that people of our nature should commit them, a secret triumph that we are not like these people. But it is blessed to know that we are like the very worst of them; that the evil which is assaulting them may any day assault us; because so we are certain that there is no good, no victory over sin and death which we can lay hold of for ourselves, that is not equally for them. Oh, brethren! may this be our progress! may we long for this, and for no other! Not a lazy drifting into a prosperity which shall demand no effort, which shall go on while we are inert and helpless; but a quick perception of the evils which are encompassing us and our land, that we may brace our hearts to struggle with them and to overcome them. Not a fond dream that all things are somehow to become what they ought to be; but an inward conviction that God means them to be what they ought to be, and that He calls upon us to be His fellow-workers, in getting rid of that which makes them what they ought not to be. This is the progress which we want; if we have it not, we must have continual retrogression. If our young men become

listless and heartless, and merely critical, deeming that manly energy was for other days, not ours,—beyond all question such a death must come over us as no lucky accidents, no series of lucky accidents, can arrest; nay, one which they must accelerate.

But we are not sentenced to this death. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness,” was the riddle which the Israelite warrior propounded to the children of the Philistines. It is still the great riddle which is set before us in our pilgrimage through the earth, and which we also may use to perplex our enemies. They thus may be our ministers, to stir us to life and hope. I know and feel inwardly what this torpor of the soul is which assails our time. I can well understand the cry for the stouter conflicts of another time. But is not the wrestling with that torpor work enough for us? Can we desire a more terrible death-grip than that which it demands of us? Yes, all the seven devils are in that. *We* cannot cast them out. But may they not have been suffered to torment and vex us and get possession of us that we may learn Who can cast them out? Is not this torpor the most decisive of all witnesses to us that we are utterly weak? Is it not then the revelation to us of a God of Strength? If a host of visible angels descended with drawn swords to such a battle as this, what would they avail us? But if the seven Spirits that are about the throne of God come to the help of our spirits against the seven devils; if the Spirit of power and love and a sound mind enters into conflict with the spirit of indifference and coldness and restlessness, is that nothing? Is it not the very thing that we need? So then the riddle is solved. The carcase of the Lion, of the foe which seemed most ready to devour, supplies us with nourishment to sustain us in each future assault. The deadliest foes turn at last to be our teachers respecting the eternal life of which we may be partakers. In the struggle with principalities of which in childhood we knew nothing, we learn to say “Our Father,” with the same faith and heart with which we said it when we first repeated it. And since want of earnestness, coldness, indifference, are the foes which threaten our nation and all nations

with perdition, every victory over them in our own chambers, in the commonest circumstances of our own lives, is a victory for England and for mankind. Nor is the solution of the other part of the enigma less clear and satisfactory. There is a sweetness as well as a strength for him who gives up ease, who seeks for hands to war and fingers to fight with the enemies of earth and of God. The worth of the Sabbath is understood by the toil of the week. It is in war with the world the flesh, and the devil, that we may hope to learn what is that Peace of God which passeth all understanding.

## SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER

APRIL 5, 1857

*“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.”—1 PETER iv. 1.*

I BELIEVE there are many people of religious minds who approach the week on which we enter to-day with a feeling of pain and dread. I do not mean that they are awe-stricken; it is one of the complaints which they make to others or to themselves, that they have almost no impressions, such as they would wish to have, of this kind. Their pain proceeds from the recollection of many like seasons in former years, in which they have made efforts to realize in some measure the nature and the greatness of our Lord’s sufferings, and to be affected by them—efforts which failed, and seemed to leave their hearts drearier than they were before. Their dread is an expectation that they shall find the case the same with them in these next six days. They speak of it as a still week, a holy week, words which would seem to express feelings of rest and quietness, such as worn and restless spirits might well long for. But they do not think that it will bring them any such quietness; far rather they believe it will be a time of struggle and disappointment. If they dealt quite honestly with themselves, they would own that they should be glad to forget it altogether. But they cannot forget it; old associations, the language of the Church, their own consciences, force it upon them; it comes charged with a weight of thoughts which they feel they have not strength to lift, which they are almost sure will oppress and confound them.

Perhaps some one will think within himself, “It is not safe to speak of such perplexities as these. What will infidels or indifferent men say, if they hear that all the reports of the blessing, and relief, and calmness of religious exercises, which Christian teachers send forth, are

delusive? that holy seasons bring turbulence, and not peace? that the most holy are the least strengthening?” It signifies very little, brethren, what inferences one person or another may draw from this confession. It is safe to be honest at all times and in all places; it is most unsafe to tolerate contradictions in the minds of others and our own. How great this contradiction is, I believe will be only understood by those who have experienced it themselves, and have traced in some measure the working of it through the history of the Church. Just when we are brought into contact with the most awful realities, our minds are conscious of being most artificial. We want to be thinking something, feeling something, which we do not actually think and feel; we try ways which have been suggested to us by our teachers or devised by ourselves, for producing the state which we desire; we half persuade ourselves that we have succeeded; we half pride ourselves upon the attempt as in itself meritorious. Then comes a fearful reaction. Our consciences say to us, “This is wrong; in this course you should not persevere.” Our inclinations point the same way. It seems at once a duty and a pleasure to escape from such an unnatural strain. The heart bounds away from the compulsion which it had imposed upon itself; it looks back with shame upon its own weakness in ever having submitted to it. The facts themselves of this week soon appear to it as dim and fantastic as the medium was through which they were contemplated; the excited devotee becomes the unbeliever and the scorner. The story is as old as it is sad; every age, every year repeats it; ecclesiastical records, our own circles, are strewn with such cases. Where then is the danger? Where the provocation to cavils and suspicion? In looking manfully into the meaning of these facts, or in hiding them? In inquiring whether they do not flow from a false notion; which the Bible and the Church witness against, from which and from its evil consequences we might, by heeding their counsels, have been preserved; or in leaving the mischief to grow, and fresh souls to be destroyed by it? I own that we ought not to venture upon this or any subject which touches so nearly the vital part of our being without

earnest deliberation and self-questioning; without despairing of our own wisdom, and seeking all helps that have been provided for us, and the highest wisdom to use these helps. But we must not forget that so much is required of a preacher in all cases; if he trusts in himself at any time, he is a fool; if he forbears to deal with the most inward sores, he should abandon his function altogether.

You must, I think, have felt that no part of the services in which we have been engaged during this Lent, whether drawn from Holy Scripture, or the meditations of holy men who have fed upon it, has aimed at raising our minds to some high pitch. They have had a character just the opposite of this. They have consisted mainly of proofs, instances, confessions, of feebleness and inability. We have been reminded of the necessity of subduing the flesh to the spirit, but it is because the flesh has a tendency to lift up itself, and because there are godly motions which we do not obey while we are inflated by its teachings. We have been told of temptations that may assault body and soul; but it is that we may declare we have no strength to resist them. The Collects for the three last Sundays are set in precisely the same key: to lead us into dependence, out of struggle, out of self-exaltation, is the one purpose of them all. Look at the Epistles, look at the Gospels: you will find that their inmost meaning has been embodied in these prayers; you will find that they have been chosen because they told most of the creature's incapacity to do anything, or be anything, except a dependent upon a higher will, a receiver of a higher life. The lessons have undoubtedly been the records of the redemption of the chosen family, first out of its natural servitude to idols, then out of the bondage into which it had sunk in the land of Goshen. A process of emancipation is always set before us in every part of Scripture. Freedom is its favourite note, its great promise; but the process is one of bringing the slave of a tyrant into a more complete dependence upon the Master he was created to obey,—the yoke which is broken is that of self-will.

How entirely in accordance with the purpose indicated by these prayers and Scripture passages is the whole discipline of this season!

The nature of that discipline is most accurately determined by the end at which it aims. Accuracy in the regulation of its measures there is none, and can be none in any church; where it is attempted most, there is most of digression and latitude. But the principle is invariable—subjection, not exaltation;—a principle as much condemning feats of abstinence,—that rivalry and outbidding one of another in acts of mortification which some foster——as the indulgence of appetite; both having the same root, and tending to the same effect. If fulness of meat is denounced by Sages as well as Saints, it is because those upon whom it is charged are full of pride, they do even what they lust. But those who, like John the Faster of Constantinople, made up for the absence of food by taking in a larger amount of worldly ambition and spiritual self-glorification, are surely giving their evil natures, not a Lent, but a Carnival.

The Collect for to-day is the climax of our Lent teachings. It seems to tell us that Passion Week is to explain the purpose and principle of the humiliation to which they have been urging us. But there is something in its language which may add to our perplexity. It speaks of our following the example of Christ's great humility. That, we say, is just what we have tried to do, and have so utterly failed in doing. We can do anything rather than this. To be humble at all is difficult enough; more difficult even than to be merciful or just. But to ask that we may be humble as Christ is humble, seems mocking God as well as ourselves. I should think so; and I should think St. Peter was guilty of the like mockery when he bade us arm ourselves with Christ's mind, and when he tells us before that He suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps, if it were not for the words which open the Collect, and from which the whole meaning of it is deduced, words which express the very spirit of St. Peter, and of all our Lord's Apostles. These words add no new burdens to Passion Week. They teach us how we may be delivered from the diseased temper which would convert it into a burden,—how we may enter upon the full deliverance which it promises.

I. The words are these: “Almighty and everlasting God, Who of Thy tender love hast sent Thy Son.”

We are not taught here to make an effort that we may realize how great our sins have been, or are; how justly we have incurred the wrath of God by them. We are not taught to ascend from this consideration to the thought of our Lord’s sufferings, of their adaptation to the hugeness of our guilt, of their adequacy to put it away. I do not mean that there is the least denial expressed or implied of this adaptation—the least wish to keep it out of men’s sight; but I mean that the method is altogether different from this, the very opposite of it. The Church starts from the highest ground, does not work its way up to that ground from the lowest. She does not therefore insist upon our taking some measure of this divine love, that there may be in us a corresponding affection and gratitude; that results she hopes will be produced much more truly and certainly hereafter: her first duty is to assert the love of God absolutely, apart from all consequences that may flow out of it, from all contemplation of it or returns to it by the creature. No one can deny that this method is derived from the Scriptures. It belongs to the whole New Testament; to the Epistle of St. Peter as much as to the Epistles of St. Paul. If it comes forth more broadly still in the writings of the beloved disciple, that is because they are gathering up the meaning of all the foregone Scriptures into themselves; because they contain the full and final revelation to which all previous revelations were leading. The passages, “God so loved the world,” “God is love,” are not rapturous utterances of a devotional sentiment; they are the scientific foundation of a Catholic and Evangelical Theology. If we will not acknowledge them as that basis, if we will substitute for the maxims and method of the Bible maxims and a method of our own, we shall find that we have destroyed Christian Theology and Christian morality together.

II. I have not yet dwelt upon the word *mankind*, which stands so prominently forward in the Collect. It is all-important, I conceive, for our present purpose. All admit that Love, if it exists, must come forth,

must find an object. The impatient, sin-sick, self-ridden soul asks in its first confusion, "Am I that object?" The spiritual director makes it his chief object to meet this demand, putting his disciple upon questions and tests by which he may ascertain whether he is interested in this love, or upon ways by which he may realize his interest in it. The Church is as earnest as he can be to bring this love to bear upon the individual heart and conscience, yet knows that she has a higher duty,—the duty of witnessing for God; and that if she fails in this, she cannot perform the lower one. She therefore suspends her reply to this question; she begins with a broader, mightier proclamation: God's truth and love is to man himself, to the whole kind. No doubt such general language sounds, for the moment, unsatisfactory to the particular sinner whose thoughts are all turned upon his own well-being. He may, it is very likely, court the physician who deals altogether with his symptoms for more practical consolations. And yet I think there is a promise in his heart of a greater deliverance, of a more radical cure, coming from these words than from the other. He will feel at least that they bring him more into direct contact with the Bible. For while he has found again and again in it passages which seemed directly meant for his own special case, he has also been disturbed by so much that seemed vague and general. He has wished that he could strip the Old Scriptures of their Jewish history; that there was not so much in the New about Churches. He cannot quite understand how the great proclamation of all should be, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill to men."

III. But those words must commend themselves in their full power to his mind, if he at all takes in the meaning of the next clause: "Who of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son to take our nature upon Him, and to suffer death upon the cross."

Those who start from reflections on themselves and their own transgressions, begin with calculating how much punishment these transgressions must have merited. Then they consider what amount of compensation would be adequate to remove this punishment. Then

they inquire who could offer it. So, by a series of hard efforts of reasoning, they ascertain that only a divine person could satisfy the demands of justice, and that in order to satisfy them he must unite himself to the nature of man.

Look at these cold, dry processes of the understanding, which require corresponding efforts of the feeling and the fancy to bring them into even apparent association with the events of Passion Week, and then consider the language of the Collect. He Who is declared to be Love——He Who has tender love to mankind, is said, for that reason, to have sent His Son. There is One in Whom this love is expressed:—One Who can manifest it,—One Who is with God, and is God. And thus He manifests it to mankind: in taking their flesh; in dying upon the Cross. The mysteries of Christmas Day and of Passion Week are not severed from each other: one as much as the other is presented as proceeding from the Eternal Absolute Love of the Father; one as much as the other as the submission of the Son to that Love,—or an act of willing conformity to it. He is wringing no hard consent from a reluctant Judge, to pardon rebels. He is bringing down into this nature of man that love which had created man,—that love from which man by selfwill had become separated. This love becomes human by acts of simple obedience. The Son of God yields Himself to it,—refuses every temptation to act independently of it. He will be nothing else than a Son; will in all things glorify His Father; will not prove His title to be a Son by making stones bread, or by casting Himself from a pinnacle of the temple, or by taking the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He will assever that He is one on the warrant of the voice at his baptism; will act as if He were baptized with the Spirit, doing what is appointed for Him, suffering what is appointed for Him. By the Eternal Spirit of His Father He heals the sick and casts out devils; by that same Eternal Spirit He offers Himself to God.

Now, brethren, see how this course of thought, in which the Church follows the Scripture, which explains the very meaning of the Gospels and gives them their coherency, which the Apostles are tracing

out in all their discourses and in all their letters; see how directly it appeals to the conscience and heart and reason of man. Do they not one and all testify, "Yes, this is love; herein is love;—if it be a reality and not a dream; if it is to come into contact with me, and not for ever to stand far off from me,—thus, even thus must it declare itself. So, and so only, can I know what it is, or feel its presence, or be reduced by it into obedience"? When the Incarnation and Passion come before us in this way, do we feel any pretext for saying, "They are merely fine ideas, man's dream of the perfection of his own nature, which he feels to be capable of infinite affections, infinite self-sacrifice"? Does not everything that is honest and true within us cry out against such language, "No, verily, I demand realities, not fiction—an actual personal Love coming out to me from above, not a conception of my own, going out from me to clothe itself in some superhuman shape. My heart asks this, my reason asks it—will be content with nothing else. And as for that capacity of self-sacrifice which you talk of in human nature, its reality depends wholly upon the question whether there is a Being to Whom this self can be given up; whether this Being Himself shows me the example and principle of sacrifice; whether I am formed in His Image or not. For if this be not so, I know there is no capacity of self-sacrifice in me; I may talk and dream of it; it may, as you say, be a fine idea, but there will be nothing of it in the practice of life. There you will have the fearful hypocrisy of self-will, of self-gratification, counterfeiting self-surrender."

Brethren, this notion that the Divine is only the apotheosis of the human, not its ground;—that a man is to become a god by thinking himself one;—this philosophical reproduction of all that has been most corrupt, most superstitious in the world's history,—or man's first disobedience,—is at once the natural reaction against a theology which takes account only of man's depravity, and the natural deduction from a theology which begins from man instead of from God. I have used the first part of the prayer as a protest against the method which is common to both. I believe the latter part of it—the prayer

itself—is the deliverance from that self-exaltation and that perpetual restlessness which must be the result of both. Grant that we may both “follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection.” To follow the example of Christ’s *humility* seemed at first an amazing, almost a profane ambition. Does it sound even more amazing, more profane, that we should follow the example of the *passion* itself—that we should imitate this *sacrifice*? Profane and awful indeed, if the Passion were not the simple surrender of the human will to the Absolute Will, the refusal of the Son to be anything except in union with His Father! Profane and awful indeed, if the power of the Sacrifice, the power of the law of God which the Sacrifice reveals, were not this, that it can take away our unnatural, monstrous striving against the Will which we are created to obey; that it can subdue us; that it can deliver us from the Self which has been our curse and torment all our lives through! “In that He died, He died unto sin once.” This perfect giving up of Self was the extinction of that which stood between man and God. He would be nothing in Himself, that God might be all in all. And so we follow the example of His patience, when we are content not to seek for anything in ourselves, not to hope for anything from ourselves; when we resist to the utmost the feverish desire, in whatever form it presents itself, to glorify ourselves instead of God, to climb by any ladder of ours to God. To follow the example of His patience is to receive, in whatever method God sees fit to send it us, the blessing of deliverance from self-willing and self-seeking; to be partakers of His resurrection, is to enter upon that new and true life which He has in God,—the life of trusting Him and discovering in Him whatever we have sought in vain in ourselves.

If this be true, Passion Week need not be to us a time of weary struggle, and darkness, and confusion. We may accept it as a message to ourselves and to the world concerning the purpose of God, and concerning the way in which He is bringing our wills into accordance with it. Its pledges are for all characters and habits of mind. There are some on whom the realizing, imaginative power has been bestowed

in a large measure. It is a precious trust; let them hold it as a trust. Let them remember that their conceptions are worth nothing in themselves; that they are good so far as they bring their minds into closer contact with the verities to which they refer, and that, without great humility, they may be the means of darkening these to the minds of their brethren and to themselves. There are some who feel they have *no* realizing faculty whatever; they bring before themselves no scenes, no pictures; the sight of hallowed places does not bring reverence or delight; memorable seasons in their own lives or the life of the Church do not recall the acts or persons of which they speak. Such persons may turn their weakness to perfect faith, may take the strongest hold of the truths, of the facts, which imagination can the least body forth. They may say to themselves, "Passion Week is given us to remind us that these things are altogether independent of our thoughts about them. I will thank God that they are. I will thank God that in His tender love to mankind He did send His Son; that that Son did suffer death upon the cross. This is real. I will leave my faculty of realization to Him, to do with it as He will." There are some of quick and exquisite sensibility, whom the records of human sorrow and suffering, even without the sight of them, affect mightily, and whose springs of tears are deeply moved when they think of the King of men dying for men. This too is a gift; one for which those who possess it should be thankful, only asking that they may not turn their sympathy into a luxury, and forget that it is to bear fruit in the business of life. There are those who say that they cannot be roused, even by the most pressing sorrow of their own, to seriousness, or melted into tenderness; still less can enter into the sorrow of Christ. Let them confess this hardness. Let them bless God for having made them aware of it. Let them submit to all the bitter mortification of it. And then the deeper sorrow of Christ and His great humility will work in them the repentance that is not to be repented of, the godly sorrow in which there is no effort and no pretence. They may leave God to take care of this sensibility; to give them as much of it, or as little, as He sees good; only asking Him that

they may bear more constant witness of His love, because they know that they have none of it in themselves, and that all which can ever come forth in them must be His.

Thus all may learn the force of St. Peter's words in the text. We want Christ's mind for armour in actual battles. Passion Week, which tells us how His mind came forth in His sufferings, is to clothe us with that armour. It is no time for the indulgence of luxurious feelings. It is a time for mourning over the want of feelings. It is the time to acquire strength for action, for endurance. This great load of self,—of selfish thoughts, of selfish plans, of fears for self, of hopes for self—is crushing us all, individuals, nations, Churches. Passion Week is the message to us that it may be thrown off. Christ bore it for us and the world; at His cross we may lay it down. God will enable us to do so; for if He gave His son for us all, “will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

END OF VOL. I