

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF THE LATE

DONALD FRASER, D.D.

And a Selection from his Sermons.

WITH A PREFACE BY

J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D.

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PREFACE.

It was natural that when Donald Fraser's busy life was over, his friends should think of preparing some memorial of it, at once more complete and in a form more permanent than the notices which had appeared in due course in the religious journals.

This natural wish, however, was held in check by a hesitation no less natural. The even tenor of a pastor's life rarely affords material for a book of interest, unless a good deal of the inner man can be without impropriety revealed; and in this case the usual data for self-revelation, such as private letters or diaries, were known not to exist.

In these circumstances, the unexpected discovery among Dr. Fraser's papers of a MS. volume containing, in his own handwriting, a fairly complete Autobiography, was felt by his family to be decisive as to their course of action.

No doubt the publication of a narrative so artless as the one to be found in the following pages, was not a step to be resolved upon without consideration. The state of the MS. showed that it had been composed in haste, with a rapid pencil, and for the greater part

during a sojourn abroad in search of health, at a distance therefore from documents which might have aided or corrected the Writer's memory. There was nothing to prove with certainty that it had been drawn up with a view to ultimate publication. At the same time, there was nothing to forbid such an idea, but a good deal to suggest it. It was found carefully divided into "chapters" as it is now printed. Though begun abroad, it had evidently been gone over with some care after his return home. It was a record not of private but of public life; and certain of the reflections which it offered on public matters might be supposed to contemplate a wider circle of readers than that of his intimate friends. Nor was it found to contain a single word the publication of which could either pain the living or cast discredit on the memory of the dead. On the whole, therefore, it was judged advisable that it should be given to the public as it stood; the rather because, if it were suppressed, no memoir could take its place which would not simply reproduce its facts without any of those personal and characteristic touches which have ever been felt to constitute the charm of an Autobiography. This brief sketch by his own hand is beyond doubt the best memorial of its Author. Unpretending as it is, it seems to me engaging through its very simplicity. It records with unreserve cherished opinions to which observation and reflection had led him. To those who knew him it will possess such interest as belongs to a friend's confidential talk. Even readers

who did not know him may find something to attract them in its unconscious self-disclosure of a man well worth knowing, and in the picture which it offers of quiet and solid work faithfully performed. Such lives are spent and such work is done, not always with the same publicity, in many a Presbyterian manse.

The few remaining years since 1884, when Dr. Fraser's record ceases, offered little of fresh interest to tell, and in the closing chapter, appended by his Widow, she has exercised the utmost self-restraint. It is a bare chronicle of facts and nothing more.

The Sermons which occupy the latter portion of this volume have been selected as specimens out of a large pile of similar MSS. The selection has been made by the same loving hand, aided by Cecil D. Robertson, Esq., and other friends.

Dr. Fraser was characteristically a preacher rather than a writer of sermons ; and he has himself told us how he habitually avoided the "elaboration" of discourses, in part, as he owns, from constitutional dislike of the trouble, but in part also from a conviction that a "finished style sounds overstudied in a public speaker." It is obvious that when the rough and sometimes well-nigh illegible jottings, prepared in this way to be made free use of in the pulpit, are afterwards deciphered and put in type, very scant justice is done to their Author. Had he himself revised his MSS. for the press, he would no doubt have given to them a literary finish which it would be unpardonable for any other editor to attempt.

The present editors have confined themselves to prefixing titles where these were wanting, to completing citations, and to correcting the more obvious slips. For the rest, the discourses have been reproduced with close fidelity. In the transcription and general editing of them, Mr. Cecil Robertson has taken the kindest and most willing pains.

It is with a tender affection for the memory of one whose loss is more keenly felt as the days pass, and in the hope that through these pages his voice, though still for ever, may yet speak for the Master, that this volume is laid as a humble wreath upon the grave of DONALD FRASER.

J. OSWALD DYKES.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY.



INTRODUCTION.

AT Palermo, sitting on the terrace of the Trinacria Hotel, above the calm blue sea, I note that it is the fifth day of January 1884. In ten days I shall be fifty-eight years of age. Why not use my unwonted leisure to write down some short account of myself, such as my children, and perhaps my friends, may care to read after my departure? Nothing of the kind can ever be made up from papers left by me, for it has always been my custom to destroy such materials as are required by biographers. I shall leave no diary. I have been very careless about letters and other self-revealing documents. I have not even a list, far less have I copies, of the communications to newspapers and magazines, the printed speeches and pamphlets, in which I have uttered my views and opinions at various stages of my career. But I have

such memoranda as are sufficient to aid my own reminiscences, though they might be of little significance for other eyes. So I shall try to give some sort of unpretending account of my life as I now look back on it. God knows that it gives me no ground of boasting. I know that it has furnished to me ever-increasing evidence of His loving-kindness and His truth.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

(A.D. 1826-1851.)

I WAS born at Inverness on the 15th January 1826, when George IV. was King. One of my very earliest memories is that of asking my father why he had put crape on his hat, and being told that it was for the King's death. A general mourning had been proclaimed.

My father, John Fraser, was a merchant and ship-owner, as his father had been before him. From his youth he had been of a devout spirit, and firmly attached to Evangelical doctrine. So he became at an early age an elder of the Church of Scotland, as, I may repeat, his father had been before him. He was also a citizen of great public spirit, and wielded much influence in the burgh. Politically he used to describe himself as a Whig of the Old School; and it was at some of the "Reform meetings" of the period that he first revealed to his fellow-citizens his remarkable powers as a public speaker. I can recall the enthusiasm with which we lit up our house in the illumination which celebrated the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832.

Soon after this my father became Provost of the burgh. With what childish pride did I see his tall figure moving down the middle of Church Street, with the Bailies on either hand, as they marched on Sundays to the High Church, preceded by the town's officers bearing halberds, and attired in scarlet coats, plush breeches, and cocked hats. I have seen the like in later years, but my eyes had lost the power of admiration.

My mother was Lillias Fraser, daughter of the Rev. Donald Fraser, M.A., Minister of the Parish of Kirkhill near Inverness. Of her I cannot say much from personal knowledge, for she died when I was little more than a child; but there stands full and clear in my memory the figure of a tall and graceful woman, bright, thoughtful, and always sweet and kind. Her early death, which was caused by some sort of fever was a heavy blow to her husband and a woeful loss to the six children who survived her. (Only two of us now remain!). What a stupor of grief fell on us! I remember it still, and all the incidents of the funeral. There were no coaches; the street was densely crowded, and citizens of all classes pressed forward to carry the bier. My father could not bear the publicity, so his three sons represented him; and in such attire of woe! According to the fashion of the time and place, we had new suits of black cloth. Our little hats were covered with crape, with long ends falling behind. Our cuffs were covered with white linen "weepers." We wore white neckerchiefs, with white

things called "hangers" depending from them, and almost hiding our waistcoats. All this added to our misery; but I think that it also imparted some sense of family importance, and so helped to dry my tears.

Names in our house followed a definite routine. The first daughter was called after her paternal grandmother, the second after the maternal. The first son was named after the paternal grandfather; I, being the second, got that of my maternal grandfather. Having the name, I was often exhorted to walk in the steps of my Grandpapa "Kirkhill." It was the custom to designate a good parish minister by his parish, as it is to name a Scottish laird after his estate. Now my grandfather "Kirkhill" was a man of eminence in the Church, and a preacher of great repute. The feeling that I was expected to be like him, instead of firing my ambition, rather crushed it and nursed an aversion to the ministerial office which clung to me for many years.

My father had his misgivings about such public schools as were within our reach, and provided us with private tutors. I must have been rather an apt scholar, as I always kept pace with my elder brother, and began my Latin at the age of six, and Greek at ten. Before I had completed my twelfth year I was actually a student of the University of King's College at Aberdeen. But this was almost absurd. My father had gone to Canada, as Commissioner of the British-American Land Company, and our home at Inverness was broken up. With my two brothers

I then went to the boarding-school of Dr. George Tulloch at Bellevue House, Aberdeen, and during the winter sessions went to college. At the school we were but indifferently taught, and for the college classes I was far too young. Some fair figure I made no doubt, and took some prizes in Greek, Latin, and Philosophy. I also did pretty well in the Mathematics, which I liked. But, as I have said, I was too young for University studies, and wasted much of my time in sheer boyish levity and fun. Yet I did not drink or play cards, as our wild fellows did. A good many evenings I gave to the theatre, which was then held in Marischal Street, Aberdeen, with Mrs. Ryder as the principal attraction; but beyond a waste of time, I do not know that this did me harm, or led me into any bad society; and I have never to this day judged so severely of dramatic performances as most of my religious friends appear to do. My course at Aberdeen finished in 1842, when, having passed all my examinations, I was dubbed Master of Arts at the age of sixteen!

Now for the choice of a profession. I knew that my father would be pleased by my taking to theology; but some of the influences under which I had lived were not favourable to religious sentiments, and I would not even try to become another "Donald Kirkhill." I had some desire to become an advocate, or as they say in England, a barrister; and to this day I never hear a case in court without wishing to go into the arena and plead. But this found no

favour in the parental eyes, and it must be remembered that my father was three thousand miles away from me, and there was no possibility of conversation *pro* and *con*. Then I said to myself, let me go into business, make money, and at the same time cultivate literary tastes and pleasures. For my age I was quite devoted to the "belles lettres." I had made a pretty complete study of the English classics in prose and poetry. I used to rise early to read Virgil's *Æneid*, book after book, and to sit up late over Shakespeare, Pope, Walter Scott, Coleridge, and the early writings of Bulwer (afterwards Lord) Lytton. As for business, I had no idea of it or liking for it, but I hoped that it would give me the means for pursuing literary work.

Accordingly I went out to Canada in the autumn of the year 1842, starting from the house of my maternal aunt Isabella (Mrs. Black) at Glasgow. Never can I forget that first voyage! The *Retrench* was only a brig and under 400 tons. There was one cabin passenger beside myself, and there was one steerage passenger. The captain was a good man and knew his duty; but the first mate was a drunkard, and the second a landsman who had not been at sea for years. The ship's company was quite a scratch crew. At one time there was an attempt to mutiny, which the captain, showing a pair of loaded pistols, put down, backed by no one but myself. The ring-leader we put in irons. Besides all this, the ship encountered heavy storms, lost her bulwarks, and

sprung a leak. Yet by steady pumping and the good skill of our captain we made Quebec in about seven weeks. On her return voyage the *Retrench* was lost with all hands. I note this the more pointedly because no fewer than seven ships and steamboats in which I have crossed the Atlantic were lost on the very next voyage.

I went to my father, who lived at Sherbrooke in Lower Canada, now called the Province of Quebec. He had married again, his wife being Selina, daughter of John Torrance, Esq., of Montreal, whose memory I cherish with affectionate regard. My father had not seen me since I was a curly-headed boy of eleven, and now he found me at the age of sixteen almost a young man. I was tall, active, and fairly strong, though not athletic. In company I was shy, from the want of a domestic and social circle during my University course. I had in me, however, a love of society as well as of books. Happily I had not learned to drink or swear or gamble. I remember that my father was quite pleased to find that I did not smoke. Like him I have had a life-long aversion to tobacco in every form.

For a few months I learned what is called "business" in the employment of a firm near Toronto, drawing no salary. Then I went into a commission-merchant's office in Montreal, where I soon rose to be bookkeeper, and was even admitted as a junior partner; but this proved unfortunate for me, as the firm was in a shaky condition, and in the end I lost

a few hundreds that my kind father had paid in for me, and went out of business never to return.

Some advantage no doubt accrued from this disappointing experience. I gained knowledge of men and of affairs and an early insight into the difficulties and temptations of commercial life. It was also made quite plain to me that I could never addict myself to business with any sort of enthusiasm. What I enjoyed during the early years I spent at Montreal was the leisure for literature after business hours. It was then, too, that I began to make speeches. Having joined a "Mutual Instruction Society" of young men, I read essays and took part in debates. I can recollect that I wrote out my earliest speeches and committed them to memory. Even my replies in debate were prepared. I thought over what might be said on the other side, and put what I should advance in reply into language as pointed as I could command. I left spaces for extemporaneous effusion, and so gained what I regard as the effective oratorical art of combining studious preparation with the spontaneousness of an off-hand address.

At the request of the Mercantile Library Association of Montreal, I even delivered one or two public lectures about this time. They were crude productions, but were kindly received by my audiences. Under a *nom de plume*, I also contributed to a magazine called the *Literary Garland* some trifles both in prose and verse.

During this period the grace of God firmly appre-

hended me. I was all the better of the good example of my elder brother, Alexander, who was now my room-companion, and who loved the Lord and was zealous in Sunday School and similar work. But there fell on me a more definite spiritual anxiety at the time of the death of a good physician in whose house we boarded. I shall set down here no details of the inward exercise of my spirit. I fell down helpless before God, and His free grace saved me through faith in the Lord Jesus. My thoughts now took a new direction. My life was changed. I then became a communicant, and on my brother leaving the city, I succeeded him as superintendent of the Sunday School, and tried to promote other religious works. Somehow I obtained, as my brother had done before me, the confidence and sympathy of older Christians, and was greatly encouraged thereby.

At the age of 22, notwithstanding all my early promotion as a student, I found myself disenchanted about business and without a profession. The thought occurred to me that the Lord, whose service I had been unwilling to enter, meant through the disappointment in other directions still to employ me in the Gospel. I scrupled a good deal about it, lest any should allege that I turned to the ministry for a livelihood, and I began to plan for myself to become editor of a daily newspaper; but the pleading of some Christian friends, and especially an earnest appeal made to me by a Methodist lady, carried me over my scruples, and I resolved to take a course of theological

study with a view to minister in the Presbyterian Church.

There was for me no question whatever as to the Church which I should serve. Not only was I born and bred a Presbyterian, but I had already studied the grounds for that form of Church polity in Scripture and history, and was thoroughly satisfied with them. Yet I had been brought up without any prejudice against other modes of administration. My father was a very large-hearted Christian. At Inverness he was on the best terms with the Rev. Mr. (afterwards Dean) Fyvie, of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and always attended his service on Christmas days. Well do I remember going with my father to that service in a small Episcopal chapel in Church Street, now to be seen no more, and being delighted with the white surplice, the organ, the frequent change of position, and the responses. In those days, even in a Scottish Episcopal chapel, the clergyman preached in a black gown though he prayed in a surplice, and the reason for the substitution of black for white puzzled my little brain. There are many things in the Episcopal service which please me still as they did when I was a child—but of this more by-and-by. Congregationalists there were also at Inverness in my youth, and I learned quite early to hold them in respect. There were Wesleyans also, but I never knew a Methodist till I went to Canada. There I found “the Connexion” quite strong.

But, as I have said, I was out and out a Presby-

terian; and I will add that I do not know of any collective Protestant Church so catholic in its spirit and teachings as the Presbyterian, or of any from which one obtains a more just and charitable view of Christian society at large. There are prejudiced and narrow-minded Presbyterians, but they are so through inherited obstinacy or ignorance or the influence of a mean social environment. They are not made so by their Church, which, while strongly asserting its own position, does not unchurch other Christian communities or dispute the value of their rites or the sufficiency of their "holy orders."

In pursuance of the plan which I had now formed, I entered the "John Knox" Theological College at Toronto in the autumn of the year 1848. I had Greek and Latin enough, but had now to learn Hebrew too. The classes in Divinity and Church History were taught by Dr. Michael Willis (the Principal) and Dr. Robert Burns. During the vacation in the following summer I preached pretty regularly, as was the custom with the Canadian students. I can remember that my earliest texts were Deuteronomy xxxiii. 26-29, St. John xii. 32, Ephesians vi. 24, and St. Matthew xxvii. 51-53. The sermons were written in full, and spoken memoriter. I found it easy to carry a discourse of forty minutes' length in my memory, and to add or alter passages at the moment. A second session at Toronto was followed by a second summer of preaching as an apprentice. At this period I had a little

experience of "bush life" in Canada, and of log-built school-houses as places of worship.

At my father's earnest desire, and at his expense, I took my third session in Theology at the New College, Edinburgh. It was the winter of 1850-51. Drs. Cunningham, Bannerman, Duncan, and Black were my teachers. The class-fellow whom I found most congenial was Robert G. Balfour, now of the Free New North Church, Edinburgh, who was a distinguished student. He introduced me to the Theological Society, in which I found some topics searched more thoroughly than in the class-rooms. An essay which I contributed had for its theme "The Gospel, and Human Inability," and led, I can still remember, to an animated discussion. Probably the paper was not worth much, but it served at all events to clear my own mind at the time of haze and confusion. The manuscript is still among my papers.

At the period now indicated, the Free Church pulpit in Edinburgh had many living ornaments, and Sunday was a doubly instructive day to a student who was intent on being a preacher. What lessons in the holy elevation of Dr. Gordon, the quaint but thoughtful power of Dr. Bruce, and the picturesque eloquence of Dr. Guthrie! I must also mention with gratitude the fervour of Dr. Tweedie, the point and pith of Dr. Charles J. Brown, and the searching subjectivism of Dr. Moody-Stuart. All of these I criticised of course, after the manner of students, but at the same time honoured and admired. Yet I

firmly settled, after hearing them all, in Free St. George's Church, and "sat regularly under" Dr. Candlish, to use a common Scottish phrase. It seemed to me that no one whom I had seen or heard combined so many of the highest qualities as a public teacher and preacher. During the winter now referred to, he delivered in the mornings his lectures on the lives of the Patriarchs, and in the afternoons expositions on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. For me he could hardly be too expository, as I enjoyed above all things to hear the sacred text well interpreted. The prayers offered by Dr. Candlish in public service have been much lauded, and they certainly were remarkable effusions of a powerful and somewhat peculiar mind. But they seemed to me to be Dr. Candlish's prayers, and not such as a congregation of devout hearts would be at all likely to utter. On the difficulty of common prayer produced by an individual minister afresh at every service I have pondered long, and cannot satisfy myself. The majority of ministers of the Word in our non-liturgical churches are really incapable of such a feat. They offer up prayers with almost as much repetition as attaches to a liturgy, and with very much less propriety and accuracy of expression; or they produce reasoned and didactic prayers—what I once heard well stigmatised as "sermons in the vocative case;" or, worst of all, they make prayers of studied eloquence with fine phrases and ambitious metaphors, which attract attention to themselves instead of

indicating a holy awe before the Lord. I have known but very few who could pray extemporaneously "common prayer," *i.e.*, prayer in which the congregation of the faithful may properly and fervently unite. Still, it was often wonderful to hear Dr. Candlish pray, and always helpful and stimulating to hear him preach.

Both at Toronto and at Edinburgh I read hard and read widely. It has been of immense advantage to me in the busy career which has followed, that I laid in a good store of theological and general lore in those early years. And far from concurring with those who think a technical theological training superfluous, I am firmly persuaded that one who desires to be a consistent and useful religious teacher can scarcely be too much of a student, or devote too many thoughtful hours early in life, first to the Holy Scriptures with helps critical and devout, then to the History and Harmony of Doctrine, to Christian Ethics and Psychology. I can listen with pleasure and profit to a Christian brother who does not profess to be a theologian, but utters what the Holy Spirit has taught to him from Scripture and confirmed to him by experience; and I can also listen with pleasure and profit to a well-trained divine and skilled exegete, who has the same Spirit. But I cannot listen to a half-educated teacher who does not understand the balance of truth, or the historic lines of controversy, and even when he knows the right doctrine, does not know where to put the accent and the emphasis.

And now that popular education is everywhere advancing, there are few things more likely to provoke scepticism than the admission to pulpits of what I call half-educated men, who are apt to be very assertive and dogmatic at the wrong place, and imagine that they are triumphantly brushing away difficulties which they do not even understand.

Of course I do not forget that every effective teacher must be a student all his life long, and I have tried to act on this conviction. But my experience leads me to lay stress on the necessity of much reading before one ventures on a career of public teaching in the Church—not mere reading of prescribed text-books at the dictation of professors or tutors, but patient spontaneous study of the great divines, didactic and polemical, who have appeared at different Christian epochs.

A proposal was made to me regarding license by a Scottish presbytery, and the acceptance of a pastoral charge in my native land. But I did not wish to have my name put before the General Assembly as a “special case,” which would have been requisite; and I had resolved and promised, before leaving Canada in the previous autumn, that I should return in spring and enter on the ministry in the Canadian Church. Indeed I knew that I would be invited to take charge of that very congregation in Montreal, with which I had formerly been connected, and in the very founding of which I had taken a somewhat active part. Accordingly I only remained in Edinburgh after the

college session closed long enough to see the General Assembly of the Free Church in the old Tanfield Hall, which was its original meeting-place. Dr. Duff was Moderator. Unfortunately one remembers trifling incidents longer than words ever so wise. The Moderator no doubt said much that was good and godly; but what I recollect is his breaking out in terms of immoderate reproof, because he saw some of the students in the gallery reading a newspaper during some formal procedure—I think the reading of the minutes. I was one of those students, and the newspaper was the *Witness*. No doubt it was a rather disrespectful act, but it came of mere thoughtlessness, and the Moderator need not have waxed hot about it. I know that the severity was due to the excitable temper of good Dr. Duff; and I only revert to the incident in order to remark that I have observed in some elderly ministers a strong propensity to scold and censure students, and that it seems to me neither just nor generous.

Counting as “early years” all those which led up to the completion of my professional education, I find that they were twenty-five. At the time I felt vexed at what seemed to be a sheer loss of four or five years between my graduation at Aberdeen and my theological course. But after-reflection has shown me that the interval was not lost time. It gave me from the outset of my public career a knowledge of men and of affairs which cannot be obtained under the ordinary conditions of a student’s life, and enabled

me to bring some degree of mental maturity to my theological studies when I reached them. Many Presbyterian ministers gain experience by taking subordinate positions as assistants, or quiet positions as pastors of small rural or village flocks for a few years after ordination, and so are fitted for subsequent promotion ; but I had to gain my experience before ordination, as it was my destiny to enter at once on a city charge, and even to undertake a good deal of general Church business. So far the Lord's good providence had for me ordered all things well.

CHAPTER II.

CANADIAN MINISTRY.

(A.D. 1851-1859.)

IMMEDIATELY on my return to Canada in 1851, I was licensed as a preacher by the Presbytery of Toronto; and a few weeks later I received and accepted a call from the Free Church, Côté Street, Montreal.

Thus I had no experience of a probationer's life, and I never was a candidate for any charge or position whatever in the Church. Heartily do I wish that the system of candidature, now openly avowed, not by probationers only, but by settled pastors, had never been heard of. A student is a candidate for, or an aspirant to, the ministry; but that preachers of the Gospel, and even ministers bound by pastoral ties, should ask to be heard as candidates in particular pulpits, and flourish forth what they deem their best sermons and pray their best prayers, in order to find favour with this or that congregation, seems to me a mean business altogether, and quite out of harmony with the old principle that the people who give a call are in the true position of candidature for the services of a minister of Christ.

It was gratifying to me that those good people at

Montreal, with whom I had associated for years before I entered on my theological course, and who therefore knew my faults as well as my acquirements, asked me so heartily to be their pastor. It was not an easy post. Leading officers and members of the congregation had come to it from other churches in the city, seeking a lively evangelical ministry, and hoping to obtain this from the Free Church of Scotland. A number of ministers had gone out from that Church, by appointment of its Colonial Committee, to serve, each for about half a year, at Montreal. Among them were such men as the late Dr. John Bonar, Mr. Arnot, Dr. Lewis, and Dr. Coupar, as well as Dr. Somerville and Mr. (now Dr.) Burns of Kirkliston, still among the honoured veterans of their Church. It certainly could not be easy for any young man, fresh from the Divinity Hall, and without any accumulation of homiletic materials, to fill a pulpit which had been occupied for years by picked men, preaching doubtless their picked sermons. But there is something to be said on the other side. The people were weary of change, and tantalised by the long delay in settling a pastor. I therefore felt sure that they would try to be satisfied with what I could do, and the result proved that they were not only reasonable but most kindly appreciative.

My ordination by the Presbytery of Montreal took place on the 8th August 1851. It was a time of much heart-searching with me, and I humbly trust that I did ardently and unfeignedly give myself to a

life-long service of Christ and the Church. A custom prevails of having a minister of experience to introduce a newly-ordained pastor to his flock with some words of commendation. Principal Willis, my old professor at Toronto, did me this service on the Sunday following my ordination. His text, as I still remember, was, "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation"—Philippians ii. 29. This was kindly meant, though Epaphroditus, as the remainder of the sentence shows to every reader, was to be rejoiced over because of his recovery from some illness, and I was almost blooming. In the evening of the same day I began my settled ministry with the words of St. Paul, "We preach not ourselves," &c.—2 Cor. iv. 5.

It may be mentioned here that no word had been spoken or written about stipend, and the sum paid to me during the earliest years of my ministry was only 1000 dollars, or about £210 sterling, per annum. I believe that the congregation generally did not know this. There was a debt on the church building of 15,000 dollars, and some of the office-bearers had fallen into a sort of feverish anxiety to have this burden removed. So it was resolved rigorously to keep down expenses. The pews filled and the revenue greatly increased from the date of my settlement; but this improvement was turned almost wholly into the channel of gradual debt reduction, and brought no personal advantage to me. In this way the debt was actually paid off during my

incumbency, but I do not think that my stipend ever rose above 1600 dollars, out of which house-rent had to be paid. I mention this matter, trifling in itself, because it illustrates a practice which, in many cases, involves serious wrong to the ministers of young charges in England and elsewhere. A congregation erects a larger and better edifice than it is able or willing to pay for. The consequence is a serious debt. A minister is then sought for who is likely to attract public notice. He is found, and his labours produce an increase in the numbers, and so in the revenue, of the congregation. But he is paid at the lowest figure possible, on the ground that there is a church debt, the interest of which, as well as its gradual reduction, must be a first charge on the revenue. In this way the congregation puts its burden in some considerable measure on the pastor's shoulders, and in fact uses for the payment of its own debts revenue which ought to be devoted to ministerial stipend and the proper appointments for divine service. My own experience in this way was slight, but it was sufficient to enlist my sympathy in after years for younger brethren whom I have seen treated in similar fashion for many years, and, as it has seemed to me, with downright injustice.

Some one had said to me that if a minister is indeed God's minister, he will be sure to have evident fruit of his labour within six months after his ordination. This thought weighed upon my mind, and influenced both my studies and my prayers. How I

rejoiced when I found that, not only the believers were fed and confirmed, but that some who had been unconverted were turned to the Lord! Not many, however, so far as I knew. And in all my subsequent course my ministry has been more successful in the instruction and comfort of saints, and in the guidance of those who had been undecided or perplexed, than in the direct conversion of sinners.

Another saying of an experienced friend had taken hold of me. It was to the effect that a young minister, taking a city charge, should "not put up all his sails at once." In other words, he should keep some of his resources in reserve, otherwise the people assume very soon that they have seen all that he can do, and no longer regard him with the interest of curiosity or expectation. Accordingly, I confined myself to two services on Sunday, and a more brief service on Wednesday evenings, and tried to visit the congregation from house to house. I wrote out my sermons, and even my briefer addresses, and then spoke them from memory. As my memory was quick, I easily acquired this method; and being self-collected, I could interject extemporaneous additions and explanations without losing the premeditated thread of discourse. This plan, however, was discontinued after two or three years, because I was too much occupied to give even the short time required for committing a sermon to memory, and perhaps because I grudged the labour. I then began to take my manuscript to the pulpit, and to read from it freely. Such has con-

tinued to be my practice till now. I do not assert that it is the best method. The most effective preaching discards manuscript altogether. But the plan I follow suits me best. When I speak from memory I have a feeling of unreality. It seems to me as though I were taking credit for an extemporaneous eloquence, which is not extemporaneous at all. Again, if I do speak extempore, I become desultory; whereas a manuscript enables me to speak with clearness and precision. At the same time, I have never bound myself simply to read from the written page, nor have I allowed myself to write sermons in a finished and elaborate style, which sounds unnatural and over-studied in a public speaker. It is not well to "talk like a book."

But I soon had to put up "more sail" at Montreal. The exigencies of my position compelled me. Church business fell into my hands. We had a very small presbytery, with many vacant charges and preaching-stations scattered over a vast area. The Clerk of Presbytery, a man of mature experience, died suddenly very soon after my ordination, and the Presbytery gave the office to me. I was also appointed Convener of the Home Mission Committee for the eastern section of the Province; so that I was at once compelled to learn the practice of Church courts, and also to occupy myself with the appointment of preachers, the nursing of mission-stations into charges, the erection and opening of new places of worship, and the adjustment of those local difficulties which are so

apt to clog Church progress. Thus in a few years I acquired a degree of practical experience which I could scarcely have gained in twice that space of time in my native land.

In other directions too I was much occupied. The comparatively small Protestant community of Montreal was at that period remarkably zealous in the support of united societies of a religious and missionary order; and I began to learn committee business on the committees of these institutions, as well as to develop my powers as a platform speaker at their Anniversary Meetings. The Anniversary week in January was looked forward to with the keenest interest. Night after night the large Wesleyan Church in St. James Street was crowded, for it was always chosen as the place of convocation on account of its size and its convenient position. There in succession came the Religious Tract Society, the Sunday School Union, the Bible Society, and the French Canadian Mission. The chairmen in those days were Joseph Wenham, Hon. James Ferrier, Dr. Holmes, and Lieut.-Colonel Wilgrass. Sometimes a special orator was brought in from the United States. I remember a very felicitous appearance of the Rev. E. N. Kirk, of Boston, obtained in this way. But usually the speakers were local men, and I had more than my due share of the speech-making. I believe that both in the pulpit and on the platform at that time I gesticulated too much; but I never did so for mere effect. It was natural and unstudied. The only study I have ever given to

manner has been the effort to subdue exuberance. I still remember the comment on my style made by a Scotch elder who was devoted to me, and meant to praise me—"Oor minister lets it aff wi' baith his hands."

It was of great advantage to my early ministry, that I was placed among a group of ministers of various Churches, who were singularly bound together in brotherly feeling. The usual hindrances prevented close intercourse with clergy of the Church of England, but some of them, *e.g.*, Mr. Bond and Mr. Bancroft, were examples to all of us. I am glad to think of the one as now Bishop and the other as Dean of Montreal or more correctly, of the Church of England at Montreal. The brethren with whom I was most intimate were John M'Leod, of the American Presbyterian Church; Henry Wilkes, D.D., Congregational; and William Taylor, D.D., United Presbyterian. The two former of these are still living, and I feel for them an unabated regard.

In the closing months of the year 1852, I had two sorrows. My youngest brother, Edward Ellice Fraser, a child of remarkable beauty and intelligence, and rendered doubly attractive by the grace of God which was on and in him, died at Kokouna, a watering-place on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Not only both his parents, but my dear sister, Jane Torrance, and myself were present at his calm and untroubled departure. It took a brightness from us. My father went back to London in Ontario with his dead for the burial.

Only a month or two passed, and he was himself suddenly removed by being thrown from his carriage. He fell on his head, and never spoke more. But there was no need of death-bed words. No one who knew him doubted that he had gone to a blessed home.

Before his death, my father had known and approved of my engagement to marry Theresa Eliza Isabella, fourth daughter of Lieut.-Colonel (afterwards Major-General) Gordon, then commanding the Royal Engineers in Canada West. The marriage took place at Kingston on the 28th April 1852, according to the rites of the Church of England, the officiating minister being the Rev. R. V. Rogers. My children know how good and true a mother they have had. Our many friends, and the three congregations which I have served, know how prudent and conscientious has been the minister's wife. I only know to the full the help and solace brought into my life by the helpmeet God has given to me.

In July 1855, my eldest son was born, and named Edward Gordon; but after six days he was seized with convulsions, and died. Nothing that has befallen me has given me so keen a pang of sorrow as did this loss of our baby. I learned the meaning of the emphasis laid in Scripture on mourning for an only son, and for a first-born. In the following year, however, we had another son.

In the public work of the Presbyterian Church I took year by year a more active part; but the pro-

ceedings of presbyteries and synods of that time are now of little interest. I remember one debate of importance in which I moved in favour of Presbyterian Union against the late Dr. John Bayne, of Galt, who was a man of great name and much ability, and I carried my motion by a large majority. In the committee which was appointed, I acted as secretary, and have somewhere among my papers the rough draft of the Basis of Union on which our Synod and the United Presbyterian Synod in Canada coalesced. Subsequently the Synod connected with the Church of Scotland came into union; and now, to all intents and purposes, there is only one Presbyterian Church throughout the Dominion.

The authorities of Knox College being in need of funds to purchase new buildings, requested the late Rev. Dr. Burns of Toronto and myself to visit the Churches in the mother country and solicit their aid. This was in 1857, and the Synod of that year confirmed their action. I have always disliked the solicitation of money, and felt my unfitness for the proposed mission; but I did not feel at liberty to refuse it, as I had myself been an alumnus of the college. The result was fairly satisfactory. Dr. Burns, who loved work, took the field in Scotland and Ireland, and I raised a considerable sum in England. Two incidents are stamped on my memory in connection with this time: (1) I formed my first acquaintance with the late Dr. James Hamilton of fragrant memory, and preached in London in both Regent

Square and Marylebone churches; (2) I joined Dr. Burns in Scotland, and made my first appearance in the General Assembly of the Free Church. The Assembly then met in the Music Hall, George Street. It was the evening devoted to Colonial and Continental matters. M. Pilatte made a most telling speech on the state of France; and when he had finished amid thunders of applause, the members began to leave the house in troops, as the manner is. At this most difficult moment, I, whom no one present had ever heard of, was called up to speak, and it put me on my mettle to make the members wait and hear me. I did not speak according to my preparation, but compressed my strongest matter into the space of twelve minutes, and was comforted by the result. Then Dr. Burns, who was of course welcomed as an old friend, spoke at length.

The French Canadian Missionary Society had, at the instance of my valued friend, the late Mr. James Court, requested me to visit Switzerland, with a view to obtain, if possible, one or two preachers for French Canada. Accordingly I made a short trip to Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, and Basle. I did not succeed in my errand, because of the great scarcity of evangelical preachers for France and Switzerland; but I had the benefit of becoming acquainted with three of the most remarkable men then living in Geneva, viz., Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, Professor Gaussen, and Dr. Cæsar Malan. The last-named had a most impressive personality — spoke of spiritual things, chiefly of the

assurance of faith—and gave me some of his small treatises, which I still possess.

Prior to my return to Canada, I went down to the Highlands to see relatives and old friends, and go over long familiar ground. This circumstance I mention here because it had an important influence on my future career. A Sunday occurring while my brother William (then of Gourock) and I were at the Free Manse of Kirkhill, he preached in the Free High Church of Inverness, and I, after preaching at Kirkhill, took an evening service at the Free East Church—the building in which I was baptized. When the Free High Church was thrown vacant in the following year, some of the people who had heard me at the Free East spoke of me as suitable to the charge, and I was called.

But nothing of this sort was in my thoughts. I resumed my duties at Montreal, including the co-editing of a monthly magazine entitled *The Canadian Presbyterian* which my co-presbyter, the Rev. A. F. Kemp, and I had started. I also attempted a little bit of authorship. Writing out a series of brief papers on sacred topics, I called them "Leaves from a Minister's Portfolio," and had them published by James Nisbet & Co., of London. This was not well considered. I did not put enough into the book to make it succeed on its own merits, and I had no name in England to help the little volume into notice. It might have gone off in Canada, if I had stayed there, but my departure hurt the sale. The result of all this was that only about a third of an edition of 1000

copies was sold, and I lost about £50. I do not complain, for this is the only loss I have ever made by literature.

Towards the end of the year 1858 my mind became unsettled in my work. A numerously signed call came from Inverness. I did not wish to leave my people, among whom I had been very happy. But I had begun to feel the strain of more than seven years in one charge, and that a first charge. I believed that my native air would do me good. I also had a persuasion that, if I was to be of use to the Presbyterian Church at large, I could be so on British much better than on Colonial ground, and that, if I refused this call to a position in the old country, I might never get another opportunity.

After the best and most prayerful consideration I could give to the subject, I decided to accept the call. It was on the 9th December 1858 that the Presbytery of Montreal sanctioned the translation; but we did not leave the city till the February following. Our kind people, though vexed with my decision, made us a handsome presentation. The Ministerial Association and the religious societies expressed the most cordial feelings, and our last morning in Montreal was signalised by a public breakfast, at which Principal Dawson (the now celebrated geologist) presided. If I could have foreseen the amount of feeling which was evoked by our departure, I doubt whether I could have torn myself away. But I am quite satisfied that it was the Lord's hand that led us forth.

Canada has never lost its interest for me. I have watched its progress carefully, and been especially gratified to see how the development of its religious and educational institutions has kept pace with the increase of settled territory and the growth of population. A few years ago I read a paper before the Colonial Institute in London on "Canada as I first saw it."

CHAPTER III.

AT INVERNESS.

(A.D. 1859-1870.)

A COLD and boisterous passage it was from Portland to Liverpool in February. Besides our little son, we now had a new-born daughter. It was near the end of March when we reached the Highland capital.

The title "Free High Church" perhaps needs explanation. More than once I found English Evangelical folk shocked to find High Churchism unblushingly avowed by Presbyterians. The simple fact is, that in almost every Scottish burgh there is a High Church as well as a High Street, and as the Free Church congregations were formed from the Established Church, and were arranged and named on the old lines, there are Free High Churches.

At Inverness the congregation so named was the more influential and intelligent, on account of its public services being exclusively in the English language. The Free Church was and, I suppose, continues to be, very strong in Inverness—having as many adherents as all the other churches taken together. But the other congregations of the Free Church held morning service in Gaelic, with the inevitable result

of throwing the young people and the more educated townsfolk into the Free High Church.

How well I remember the "induction service" which made me pastor of that congregation! The Free Presbytery made a rule of assigning such duties to the clerical members in rotation; and on this occasion it fell to the Rev. Archibald Cook, of Daviot, to preach and preside. The good old man, whose eccentricities were the theme of many stories then current in the Highlands, occupied two or three hours, sometimes striking one's conscience with pithy solemn words, and sometimes diverting one's humour exceedingly by his grotesque illustrations. The text was Acts xx. 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock." This was on 24th March 1859, and on the following Sunday I was introduced by one whom the congregation held in great regard, and who undoubtedly was a godly man and a most fervent preacher, the late Rev. James Munro of Rutherglen, near Glasgow. I then went at once into my work, and had the joy to find myself surrounded by a sympathetic people.

My occupation was the ordinary routine of ministerial duty in town, with a good deal of extra preaching in neighbouring towns and country parishes. But occasions of a more special nature soon arose. I found, on my arrival at Inverness, that, through the visits of the late Mr. Brownlow North and others, a measure of new religious interest had been awakened. A good many young people had begun to believe with their hearts, and wished to confess with their mouths, the

Lord Jesus. But their zeal was accounted presumption by not a few Christians of the old school, and there was some danger of a breach between the young spiritual efflorescence on the one hand and the Church usages and authorities on the other. In these circumstances, I trust that my intervention was of some lasting service. I encouraged the young Christians, gave a good deal of time to conversation with inquirers after the way of peace, received those who had believed through grace to the Holy Communion, employed them in Sunday School teaching, called on them to lift up their voices in meetings for prayer, and strongly favoured the habit, then introduced, of singing hymns at district meetings and open-air services. I often preached in the open air—sometimes on the Castle Hill of Inverness, sometimes on the Links at Nairn, sometimes at the great “gatherings,” which were held in those days at Arndilly and at Huntly. Itinerant preachers of approved character and orthodoxy I welcomed to Inverness, and gave them every facility in my power. I may mention as examples, Mr. Brownlow North, Mr. Grant of Arndilly, Mr. John Fraser (my brother), Mr. Reginald Radcliffe, and Mr. Duncan Matheson. At the same time I was glad to have the help of such ministerial brethren as H. M. Williamson of Huntly (now of Belfast), the late H. Cobban of Braemar, and others, and so did what I could to keep the fresh religious life which broke forth among us within the lines of Church fellowship and sympathy. In this manner was I happily and

busily occupied for two or three years after my settlement in Inverness.

In taking part so decidedly with the young Christians and the party of progress, I do not think that I lost any ground with the true Christians of older growth. None of them forsook me; many of them helped me greatly by their prayers.

It was also striking to see how our congregation grew in local influence. When I assumed the pastorate, only two members of that church held seats in the Town Council, and the entire municipal influence was aloof from us or against us. Within a few years it came about that the Provost and the Magistrates and a clear majority of the Town Council were not only Free Churchmen, but officers and members of the Free High Church: this too, without any intervention whatever on my part in the local politics.

Not even in questions of ecclesiastical policy, or in the conduct of ecclesiastical business, did I find in those days much interest or occupation. I attended the Church courts as a simple piece of duty. The Presbytery was small and usually dull; the Synod was little better. At the first General Assembly of which I was a member (1860), I was appointed by the Moderator to preach; but otherwise I held my peace. In after years I spoke occasionally in the General Assembly, and had no cause to complain of my reception there. But I must say that, after I learned "the ropes," and perceived how successive Assemblies are managed by a few expert persons, I

ceased to pay them much deference. They are too big, too hurried, and too liable to a sort of gregarious passion, to be of much deliberative value. No conclave or convocation whatever can have such value which will not listen quietly to unpalatable truths; and my observation has been that those who speak such truths in the Free Church Assemblies are apt to be howled at by an impatient throng. There is a great deal of vigorous speaking, but the Assembly too often resembles a mob cheering a favourite, or jeering at an unpopular opponent, rather than a convocation of grave and reverend men deliberating together over the things of the Kingdom of God.

One of the early proofs of the attachment of the congregation at Inverness was its resolution to build a manse for the use of its minister. In the manse so erected we spent many happy years; and there were born to us two daughters and three sons. The daughters however, God took to Himself—one of them (Helen Millicent) a child of rare attractions and of spiritual life and intelligence, at the age of four years, the other in infancy.

Two other proofs of congregational prosperity followed. It was found necessary to enlarge the Free High Church, in order to accommodate the applicants for seats. Happily for us, a fire broke out in a photographer's establishment in the rear; we bought a part of the space which the fire had cleared, and so lengthened the church and threw out shallow transepts, improving the proportions and aspect of the building. The other

incident was the erection of a mission-church in a poorer part of the town. This project met with some resistance in the Presbytery, but could not be hindered. I well remember the terse and telling speech delivered on the occasion by Archibald Cook of Daviot, already mentioned :—

“ Moderator, at one time the Church of Scotland had only two congregations here, the High Church and the Gaelic Church. Early in this century a chapel-of-ease was asked for, and *it was opposed*. But it was built, and was filled, and is now the East Church. Then another was asked for, and *it was opposed*. But it was built, and is filled, and is called the North Church. Then came the Disruption. The East and the North became Free Churches ; but an English Church was asked for, and *it was opposed*. Yet it was built, and we hear that the Free High Church is full. Now they ask for a mission-church, and *it is opposed*. But who can tell what may be in the secret purpose concerning it ? ” .

When these words were spoken, I felt that my point was gained. Such an exposure of narrow-minded resistance to church extension could not fail of its effect. So the building was erected in the year 1863, which is now known as the Free West Church. Both before and after its erection, I gave much of my personal attention to that neighbourhood ; and, after two services in the Free High Church, was in the habit of holding an evening service among the poor. I used to preach to them without notes, and often

enjoyed great liberty of spirit in those informal addresses. When the Free West Church got a separate pastor, I changed the hour of the second service at my own church from the afternoon to the evening of the Lord's Day.

In some respects my ignorance of the Gaelic language limited my opportunities of usefulness in the Highlands. The poorer people in town and the peasantry of the country parishes were beyond my reach. But the most urgent thing, after all, was to give right direction to the thoughts and aspirations of the young people of both sexes, and this was best done in English. I believe, too, that the English addresses of one who speaks English only, are more intelligible to those who have but little knowledge of that language, than the English sermons delivered by their own Gaelic-speaking ministers. The former speak simply and directly, while the latter are apt to use circuitous and cumbrous expressions.

It was my rule at Inverness, as indeed it has been all through my public life, to fill my own pulpit, with very rare intervals of absence, on the Lord's Day, and to render what services I could to other congregations on other days of the week. But I had two long spells of absence.

The first was in the early months of the year 1867, when I had the joy of paying my first visit to Italy. It was thought desirable by the Free Church Continental Committee that the Rev. J. R. MacDougall, of Florence, should be relieved at that post for a short

time, in order to begin some evangelical work at Venice and elsewhere. I was requested to take his place; and it is no more than right to add that the expense of this was voluntarily borne by one whose deeds of thoughtful kindness cannot be counted, Mr. H. M. Matheson, of Heathlands, Hampstead. For three months I resided at Florence and took the services in the *Chiesa Scozzese*. It was a curious circumstance that two of the elders there had come from Inverness, viz., the late Dr. Roderick Fraser, who had been in my own session, and the Rev. John M'Nab, whom I had seen in my boyhood acting as tutor to the young laird of Culloden. My work at Florence was full of encouragement, and led to some friendships which I greatly prize. Nor shall I ever forget the charm of that delightful city alike in its natural beauties and in its treasures of art. At the time I indicate, Florence was the capital of Italy. King Victor Immanuel resided at the Pitti Palace; and I saw and heard him open Parliament in person. Though his features certainly were plain and almost coarse, the *Re Galantuomo* bore himself with sufficient dignity to be impressive as he read in tones almost too masculine the speech which was handed to him by the Premier, Baron Ricasoli.

In the year 1867, the evangelical work among the Italians was feeble, but the Waldensian Theological College was in existence under Dr. Revel, and considerable congregations were drawn to the Waldensian Church to listen to the teaching of Dr. De Sanctis.

Before returning home I visited Venice, Rome, and Naples, accompanied by my eldest son. At the first-named city we were so happy as to meet with General Garibaldi, who was on a visit to Venice at the invitation of the Municipality. I have never seen such popular enthusiasm as his presence excited, or such calm quiet dignity as enveloped the brave hero. At Rome we saw Pio Nono, as king as well as pontiff. He had a portly figure and a fine bearing, but a keen cruel eye, and I should have been sorry to fall into his power. We were near the High Altar in St. Peter's on Easter Sunday when he celebrated mass, and also heard him chant forth his benediction "to the city and the world" in a far-resounding voice from the portico.

The effect of this visit to Italy was to rouse in my mind an interest in the social and religious future of that splendid country which has never left me.

The second long term of absence to which I have referred was occasioned by a visit to my old flock and friends in Canada during the summer of the year 1869. Nothing could exceed the kindness with which I was received or the urgency with which I was solicited to return to Montreal. It is one of my happiest recollections in connection with that period, that I had once more the pleasure of staying with my beloved sister Jane (Mrs. James Torrance), who was then, though we knew it not, near the close of her bright career. I can never think without emotion of that clear mind and beautiful soul.

During the years covered by this chapter, my range of acquaintance and influence greatly increased. Several calls and proposals for calls from important congregations in the three kingdoms came to me, but I had no attraction towards them. One of the most interesting was a call from Free St. John's Church, Edinburgh, after the resignation of the late Rev. Dr. Guthrie. Dr. Hanna and others came down from Edinburgh in the summer of 1865 in support of it; but neither then nor at any other time have I felt the least drawing towards Edinburgh. I had more inclination to remove to England, and try to strengthen the Presbyterian Church there; and so, when the Rev. Dr. W. Chalmers and others came down from London in July 1868, with a call from the Church in Marylebone, I was in much perplexity about the path of duty, but deemed it on the whole safer and better to abide by my Highland sheepfold. But this did not end the matter. In the year following, on my return from Canada, this call was renewed, and various circumstances led me to entertain it with favour. Among them was a conversation which I had with Dr. (then Mr.) Oswald Dykes, who was about to be called to Regent Square Church in London, and who indicated to me in generous terms that it would help to decide his course in favour of that call, if I would at or about the same time go to Marylebone. Though I expressed myself in favour of an acceptance, the Free Presbytery of Inverness decided to retain me, and refused the translation. The English Commissioners of course

lodged an appeal to the Synod; and, as that step threatened to keep the matter open for five months, I explained my view of duty to my kind flock at Inverness and induced them to acquiesce in the resignation of the charge, which I tendered to the Presbytery. In this way the difficulty was overcome. The Presbytery loosed me from my charge and gave me a minute of transference and commendation to the Presbytery of London. I continued my ministry, however, till the end of January 1870, and at our departure from Inverness, as formerly from Montreal, my wife and I received many tokens and assurances of affection. I do not mention them in detail, because I feel that, on my part at least, they were little merited.

As to the growth of my mind and ripening of my views at Inverness, I have not much to say. It was a period of great activity. I was more occupied in what is called evangelistic work than either before or after. I wrote sermons regularly, but seldom with deep study. Dr. Guthrie once urged it on me to prepare but one sermon a week, and so do my best. I put the advice aside, because I never could bear to elaborate the materials of a sermon or address. To this day I cannot take pains. But I went over large tracts of Scripture, and widened the range of my thinking and teaching. In regard to what may be called my religious views, I was led by the circumstances and traditions around me to fight against a fatalistic application of the doctrines of predestination and moral inability, but never wavered from the doctrines of

grace, which have always been, and to this day are, the strength of my ministry. I think also that I began to see more clearly than before the true character of the Bible as a progressive historical revelation; that I learned caution in regard to the popular idea of future conscious endless suffering as the doom of all the unsaved; and that my mind opened more fully than before to the true constitution and calling of the Church of God, and the blessed hope of our Lord's glorious appearing.

Authorship at this period was not attempted. I can remember a small tract on "Assurance," which is now out of type; a pamphlet on the Free Church Principle ("Concerning the King"); being a sermon preached on the first occasion of a collection for the pre-Disruption Ministers' Fund; another pamphlet on the claims of the Scottish Episcopal Church, of which I have not preserved a copy; and a third on "Comprehensive Union" in Scotland, which attracted a good deal of attention at the time. A project of union between the Free Church, United Presbyterian Church, and Reformed Presbyterian Church had been launched with great zeal by leading men in these several communities. In my pamphlet I pleaded for a union of the entire Presbyterianism of Scotland as far preferable to a partial union, and quite as feasible. Many persons who could think only as they were bidden cried out against this as quixotic, and predicted an early accomplishment of the union as then projected. Sixteen years have passed away. The partial union, so con-

fidently anticipated, has not taken place, except in so far as concerns the absorption of a large portion of the Reformed Presbyterian by the Free Church. Every one who studies the subject without prejudice now sees that comprehensive union is the thing to be sought. Some hold that disestablishment is necessary to bring it about; others (among whom I range myself) think the contrary; but the only worthy policy is to unify the Presbyterianism of Scotland as that form of Church has already been unified in our Colonies.

It seemed to me, as far back as 1859, that the Free Church was rapidly acquiring the tone of a sect, and was being actuated by something very like a jealous fear lest the Church of Scotland should popularise herself, and so render the grounds of separation from her less obvious. Such a temper appeared to me deplorable, and not far from contemptible. And the impression that it existed, and was not discouraged by leading men in the Free Church, made me the more willing to change my sphere of labour. I could not concur in the policy which the late eminent Drs. Candlish and Buchanan pressed upon the Church. Nor, on the other hand, could I to any great extent co-operate with the late Dr. Begg, who sought simply to maintain the *status quo*. It was thus, in an ecclesiastical point of view, rather a relief or a happy escape for me to be shaken quite free of the vexed Church politics and what I may call the unworthy internecine Presbyterian jealousies of these passing years in Scotland.

I find that my first Sunday morning text at Inverness was, "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up." My last was taken from the same chapter (St. Luke iv.), "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also."

CHAPTER IV.

AT MARYLEBONE.

(A.D. 1870-1884.)

IT is always at considerable risk to himself that a Scottish Presbyterian minister abandons a good position in the north to undertake a charge in the metropolis. The reputation and the measure of public confidence which his previous labours may have gained for him in Scotland are left behind, for Londoners as a rule know nothing whatever of our Scottish clergy; and it is quite problematical whether a style of preaching or reading sermons, which would be fairly acceptable in a Scottish community, may not prove a complete failure in England. The experiment is all the more perilous if the minister who makes it is over forty years of age, and therefore unlikely to make much change in his modes of preaching and of action. I have felt this so strongly that I have, when consulted by brethren, almost invariably discouraged Scottish ministers who had passed their fortieth year from venturing on an English charge, while I as strongly encourage young men, who have not yet fallen into

stereotyped ways, and who are not afraid of hard work, to throw themselves into the English Presbyterian ranks.

True, I was myself just forty-four years of age when I went to London ; but my case was in some respects exceptional. The very circumstance that I had been so long at Inverness had made me known to many English people, for the crowd of autumnal tourists used largely to worship in my church in the Highland capital year after year. To this day, in many parts of England, ladies and gentlemen often accost me, saying that they heard me preach when they were at Inverness sixteen or twenty years ago, and even repeating the text of my discourse. Then I had preached several times in London, and had friends among all the religious communities there. I knew therefore that I should not have to contend with absolute obscurity ; and in point of fact I had an excellent start from the very first.

It was on the 4th February 1870 that the Presbytery of London met for my induction. The church in Upper George Street, which had been built for my esteemed predecessor, Dr. William Chalmers was a square structure without the least pretension to beauty, but with accommodation for eight or nine hundred people. It had a heavy gallery round three sides of the building, and a second gallery above. Light was admitted from the roof. The apartments beneath, which were used for the Sunday School and for vestries, were very uninviting. And on the

building there still rested a debt of about eight hundred pounds.

On the night of my induction I remember that the sermon was preached by Dr. (then Mr.) J. Oswald Dykes, who had been settled over the church in Regent Square a few months previously. I note this with satisfaction, for it has ever since been my happiness to be associated with Dr. Dykes in uninterrupted friendship and in the general business of the Presbyterian Church in England.

From the outset of my career in London, I proceeded on the rule of preaching with almost unbroken regularity in my own pulpit on the Lord's Day, with the exception of five or six Sundays in August and September. To this rule I have steadfastly adhered, preaching and rendering other services to other congregations on week-days only.

The Marylebone Presbyterian Church filled up at once, and soon became inconveniently crowded. Before two months had passed, the question of an enlargement of the building was mooted; and negotiations about adjoining property were begun which occupied us and tantalised us for years.

While gathering and trying to consolidate my own congregation, I found myself called upon for almost daily services in other quarters; and this has been my experience ever since. I have preached to or otherwise addressed very many of the Presbyterian congregations in England, and officiated at the opening of the new churches at Hammersmith, Gravesend,

Nottingham, Forest Hill, Ipswich, Clapton, North Shields, Gloucester, (St. Andrew's) Woolwich, Bowdon, Bournemouth, Hebburn, Ramsbottom, Victoria Docks, Barnet, Norwich, Bow, Jarrow, Woolston, Blyth, Waterloo (Liverpool), Streatham, Whitby, Aberdare, York, Leeds, Reading, West Hartlepool, Canterbury, Harrington, Walsall, Brockley, St. Leonard's on Sea, Richmond.*

If I were to note the re-opening of churches which have been enlarged, and the opening of Wesleyan, Congregational, and Baptist chapels in England, as well as of Presbyterian churches in Scotland and Ireland, during the years of my London ministry, the list would be made twice as long as it is.

I have spoken very often at Exeter Hall and elsewhere on missionary and cognate topics. These efforts have always been well received. My custom has been to speak to the subject in hand, avoiding all pompous parade of words; to prepare the substance of my speech in writing, but not to adhere very closely to the written words in speaking, and to confine myself to fifteen or twenty minutes. I consider it an ugly piece of selfishness in a public speaker to occupy so much time as to put all who follow to a disadvantage. Not only have I often spoken and preached for the missions of my own church, but I reflect with satisfaction that I have had the honour of preaching the anniversary sermons of the Wesleyan Missionary

* After this list was written, there have been added the names Harrogate, Oldham, Blackheath, Bournemouth, Brondesbury, and Cambridge.

Society in London, Liverpool, Bristol, Manchester, Sheffield, and Leeds ; of the London Missionary Society in Manchester and London ; and of the Baptist Missionary Society in London and Birmingham. For the British and Foreign Bible Society, of which I am a vice-president, I have preached and spoken, both in the Metropolis and in other great centres of population. And I have often taken part in the conferences at Mildmay Park and elsewhere for special Christian intercourse and edification.

On the death of the late Dr. Candlish I was appointed the Presbyterian Hon. Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, and I have taken some part in the proceedings of that body. It does not nearly satisfy my ideas or aspirations regarding Christian union, but in so far as it fosters the consciousness of unity and fraternity it does well. My connection with the Alliance has led me to go abroad three times.

In September 1874 I went to Canada and attended the Conference of the Evangelical Alliance at Montreal. I greatly enjoyed this renewed opportunity of seeing old friends and old scenes, and preaching in my former pulpit, as well as other pulpits of the city. I also saw once more my elder brother at Coburg, who "fell asleep" last year, and my brother-in-law, Colonel Haultain, who also has finished his course, having fought a good fight and kept the faith.

In November and December 1877 I formed one of a deputation from the Alliance to the Evangelical

Churches and missions in Italy. My colleagues were the Hon. and Rev. E. B. Bligh and the Rev. William Arthur, M.A. The last-named was the only one of the three who could speak Italian, but we managed to ascertain with impartial care the actual condition of the evangelical work in all the chief cities, and even in some smaller places, and endeavoured to draw the various workers into more cordial mutual relations. My own attention was especially drawn to the reconciliation of the two indigenous Presbyterian Churches of Italy—the Valdesi and the Chiesa Libera; and I rejoice in the evident signs now appearing of a real *rapprochement* of their communities, as well as of a strong desire for a consolidation of all the Evangelical forces in Italy. I do not despair of a junction of the Evangelical Methodists with a native Reformed Church. Probably the Baptists must live apart, but a friendly understanding with them may be obtained. It is foolish and suicidal to exhibit the diversities of Protestantism in separate and rival churches at or near the very headquarters of the Latin Unity.

In September 1879 I attended the General Conference at Basle. On that occasion I preached an English sermon by request in the French Church, taking for my text Zech. iv. 6 and 7. But as the proceedings of the Conference were, for the most part, conducted in German, I was rather “out of it.” O this linguistic disability! How it has restricted both my enjoyment and my usefulness on the Continent! I can read and understand French very fairly, and

Italian tolerably, but I have never been compelled to speak any language but my own, and so have been kept dumb by my indolence or shyness, when a little exertion and practice would have sufficed to make me at least intelligible to friends in France and Italy. I am much vexed with myself about this, and feel most desirous to see a greater number of our students and young ministers practically proficient in some of the Continental languages. It is very important, in view of the increasing intercourse between countries and churches.

My wife accompanied me to Cologne and Basle. At the latter city we were most kindly entertained by M. and Mme. Burckhardt. At the close of the Conference we made a little tour in Switzerland. We ascended the Righi by the Fell Railway, and stayed at the Kulm Hotel on the summit. The view of sunrise, to which we were summoned forth by horn-blowing, surpassed all my expectation. The sky flushed with the growing dawn, and then the sun seemed suddenly to roll his disc above a snowy mountain-top in the east, and peak after peak caught the golden light, while soft clouds still rested on the valleys. We saw night and morning together—night at the foot of the mountain, while it was morning on its summit. We spent a Sunday there, and worshipped in the hotel with a small company of English travellers, including Mr. Bligh, my companion in Italy already mentioned, and Mr. Fowler, M.P., afterwards Lord Mayor of London [1884]. I joined in the Communion rite of the

Church of England. Though I dislike the mode of administration, I could not separate myself from the little band of English Christians in such circumstances.

From the Righi we went to Giegsback, and thence to Interlaken and Berne. After a short stay at the Swiss capital we went to Geneva, and so home through Paris.

In the courts and councils of the Presbyterian Church I have been much occupied ever since I settled in England. Both in Presbytery and Synod I have had an active, and perhaps I may say, without presumption, a prominent place; and I count it no small distinction to have held such a place in a Church which has in its ministry a large proportion of able and enlightened men. It would serve little purpose to recount the many cases of local difficulty and delicate negotiation in which I have been engaged, but I may set down some of the chief matters which I have tried to promote.

1. *The support of the Christian Ministry.*—When I entered on my English ministry the propriety of establishing a General Sustentation Fund was under keen discussion in Presbyteries and Synod. The influential elders in general opposed the project as a perilous change, and urged adherence to the system of grants-in-aid to the weaker congregations. But the ministers and other representatives of those congregations described that system as insufficient and humiliating, and the Synod of 1872 gave effect to their wishes, and instituted the Sustentation Fund

under a standing committee, of which I was appointed convener. It has been to me a profound source of satisfaction that an equal dividend of £150 *p. a.* was at once obtained, and after three years this figure was raised to £200, and has so continued year after year till now. It has also been a great pleasure to me to have some of those who hesitated most about the wisdom of instituting the Fund co-operating heartily in its management. Nay more, when the union of the United Presbyterian Synod with ours was effected in the year 1876, the whole Church was put on the Sustentation Fund, and I received as a colleague in the convenership the Rev. Dr. M'Ewan of Clapham, a most genial yoke-fellow. Though our Committee of Ministerial Support is now charged with two other important funds besides that of Sustentation, I find my labours in recent years reduced to a minimum by the extraordinary efficiency of the General Secretary, the Rev. John Black, and the good business administration at our Church offices in the city.

2. *Protest against error in the Church of England.*
—The Synod of 1873, on my motion, seconded by Dr. Dykes, expressed its concern at “the alarming progress in the Established Church of such teachings and practices as involve some of the most fatal heresies of the Church of Rome,” and appointed a special committee with instructions to prepare and issue an address to congregations on “the serious dangers which now threaten the cause of divine truth and the highest interests of this realm; and also to com-

municate with Evangelical Christians and Churches faithful to the principles of the Reformation with a view to concerted action for the preservation of our common faith, and in the direction of delivering the nation from complicity with the maintenance and propagation of disastrous error."

It was not difficult for me, as Convener of the Special Committee, to prepare the address which was issued to the Presbyterian congregations; but to form a combination of Conformists and Non-Conformists in the Protestant interest proved an impracticable task. We had some remarkable meetings however—especially one held at the National Club on 10th July 1873, which was influentially attended. A committee was appointed with a view to rouse the country, and the Rev. Dr. Jacob (author of a candid work on the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament) and I were named hon. secretaries; but it came to nothing. The only Episcopalians who really faced the question were those (like Lord Ebury and Dr. Jacob) who desire a Protestant revision of the formularies. On the other hand, some of the Nonconformist leaders seemed to care for no remedy but disestablishment; and rather than draw our Church into political agitation I was obliged to advise the Synod in 1876 to drop the subject. If the Evangelical and Protestant party in the Church of England cannot sketch a policy of reformation or set their battle in array, it is impossible for outsiders to help them.

3. *The Union of Presbyterian Churches.*—For many

years before my removal to London, negotiations had been proceeding for a union of the United Presbyterian congregations south of the Tweed with our Presbyterian Church in England; but the end, natural and reasonable though it appeared, could not be reached. I recollect that Dr. Dykes, being with me on a Sustentation Fund deputation at Liverpool, proposed to me to hold a private conversation over the difficulties in the way of union with Mr. S. Stitt, J.P., an influential United Presbyterian elder. Accordingly, we conferred with that gentleman at the office of the late Mr. Bryce Allan, and in a very short time saw our way to a probable solution of those difficulties. From that hour the project moved forward. Dr. Dykes took charge of the negotiations on our side as Convener of the Synod's Committee; and I took no further part in the matter than to aid and support him to the best of my power. The Union was effected in the year 1876.

I have been anxious to draw the English congregations connected with the Church of Scotland into union also, and on one occasion visited their Synod, along with Dr. Edmond, as a deputy. Some of the brethren met us very cordially, but the late Dr. John Cumming, who was present, was only drily courteous. The Doctor, having been ordained in England, never was a minister of the Church of Scotland in Scotland, but he talked of its name being graven on his heart, and influenced the court adversely to our aspirations.

This union, however, would have come about ere now had it not been for the agitation about dis-

establishment in Scotland. This has hardened the hearts of some leading men in the Church of Scotland, and made them regard it as politic to keep up a separate flag in England. In my view the very opposite course would be good policy. By a full Presbyterian union in England, such as now exists in the Colonies, the unbroken front would be brought up to the very border of Scotland, the land which has generated our divisions, and a powerful moral influence would be brought to bear on that reconciliation of the Scottish Churches which alone can give us in the future a worthy "Church of Scotland."

My own Free Church objections to the Church of Dr. Flint, Dr. Charteris, and my good friend the late Dr. Norman M'Leod, have been greatly modified by recent legislation and history. To say that the Act of Parliament which has abolished Church Patronage and recognised the jurisdiction of the Church over the settlement of ministers makes no difference and does not at all affect the grounds for Free Church separation seems to me to be trifling with plain facts and fighting for discord. In the proposal to disestablish the Church of Scotland I see nothing but an ignoble sectarian temper. A year or two ago I expressed my views pretty fully and freely in a letter which appeared in the *Scotsman* newspaper, and which has been widely copied and circulated. It gave much umbrage, I understand, in certain Free Church circles; but it has brought to me many gratifying assurances of sympathy.

No doubt, a large majority of my brethren in our English Synod are in favour of disestablishment everywhere, but happily we have decided to keep the question out of the Church courts. It was not easy for our United Presbyterians to assent to this course, accustomed as they had been to speeches and resolutions of a different description in the North; and I had to bear the brunt of a pretty keen debate on this point with my valued friend Dr. Edmond at Newcastle; but the policy above stated was approved by a very decisive vote, and had the support of a large number of United Presbyterians, young and old.

In the promotion and formation of the General Presbyterian Alliance of Reformed Churches I bore a willing part. Appointed by our Synod one of its representatives to the preliminary Conference at London in 1875, I attended its meetings, which were held in our College Hall in Queen Square. I was also one of the delegates, chosen by ballot, to the first Council at Edinburgh, where I delivered an address on "the Relations of the Presbyterian with other Churches." This year I was invited to address the third Council at Belfast on "the Lessons to be learned from other Churches;" but my state of health has not permitted me to do so.

4. *Reconstruction of our Doctrinal Standards.*—When this subject was mooted in our Presbytery of London in the spring of 1883, I moved the overture which was carried; but in the Synod which followed, though Dr. Dykes was so good as to say that I had the right

to lead, I gladly waived any such right of precedence, and from that time have advised and co-operated with him in the conduct of that delicate and important business, which has already made good progress in his hands.

I shall not say more on this, as the Committee has not completed its work. That work, as I believe and hope, is in the real interest of doctrinal steadfastness, not at all in that of latitudinarianism. The only modifications will be in the degree of minuteness with which doctrines are to be asserted, and occasionally in the tone and touch of the expression.

The subject of practical importance which comes next in my judgment is that of the conduct of Public Worship, which sorely needs some rubrics for order and dignity, if not also the provision of optional liturgical materials. But it is a question whether it is wise to begin reform by overtures in the Church courts.

While I am writing down Synodical recollections, let me record that I was chosen Moderator of the Supreme Court in 1874, and again (after the Union) in 1880. In the former instance the Synod met in Regent Square Church; in the latter, in my own Church in Marylebone. On the latter occasion my office-bearers and friends entertained the Synod to dinner at St. James's Hall, when excellent speeches were delivered by the late Earl of Kintore, and by my eloquent friend, Canon Fleming.

I reflect with pleasure on some of the suggestions originating with me which have been adopted into

Synodical usage. One of them is the annual selection of the new Moderator by a board consisting of the ex-Moderators and the representatives of Presbyteries on Synodical Committees. This works well. Another is the observance of the Lord's Supper, which was introduced in the year 1874, in compliance with an overture which I had moved and carried in my Presbytery.

In all this rehearsal of general Church work, I must not forget my local duties in my own particular charge. Our experience for year after year was one of blessing and enlargement. Our numbers grew, our funds flourished, and our energies in Sunday School and District Missions were much developed. I failed, as I always and everywhere have failed, in what may be called pastoral attention to individuals and families. My mind goes out to great subjects and to my fellow-creatures in the throng, but somehow fails to interest itself in individuals. Of course I care for my relatives and personal friends, but I am not good shepherd enough to call my sheep by name and watch over them one by one. Such a minister as I am should have active visiting elders to take the detailed oversight of the flock, or should have a pastorally disposed curate.

After four years spent in weary and fruitless search for a new site, and negotiations for an extension of the site which we occupied, we began to remodel and enlarge our church in the year 1874. The memorial stone of what is virtually a new building, was laid by the Lord Mayor, Sir Andrew Lusk, Bart., M.P.,

a member of our congregation. During the progress of the work we worshipped in Allen's Riding-School, Seymour Street. On every Saturday afternoon a boarded floor was laid down on the tan, and a thousand chairs were placed in order upon it. Every Monday morning these were removed, and the school prepared for riding-lessons by nine o'clock. It was an expensive plan, but it was a great object to keep our congregation from being dispersed, and there was no public hall in the district adequate to hold us—except indeed the Metropolitan Music Hall, which had a reputation too incongruous with our object, and was therefore reckoned out of the question.

It was on the 23rd May 1875 that we opened our new church, in situation obscure as the old church was, yet central for a West-end congregation. The building itself is now a handsome Gothic church, with sittings for sixteen hundred people. On the opening day, Dr. Dykes officiated in the morning, Dr. Saphir in the afternoon, and I myself in the evening.

The only drawback to our happiness was that, although the church was not dear, expenses connected with the new ground acquired and the extension of the ground-lease enormously increased the cost, so that we found ourselves £12,000 in debt. We have gradually reduced this large sum, and are now making an effort to extinguish the debt. We might perhaps have accomplished this before, had not the congregation kindly considered their minister's comfort so far as to buy a manse or official residence in the vicinity of the

church. I could not afford to hire a house in the expensive district where I now live; and residence at a distance from the church began to be felt as involving an irksome waste of time and strength, especially on Sundays. The manse in Cambridge Square therefore, though not yet free of debt, and therefore not free to me, has greatly promoted my comfort.

Another heavy pull on our resources has been our District Mission in Bell Street, where we have a paid resident missionary and a Biblewoman. The support of the mission has required between three and four hundred pounds annually, and we are at present rebuilding our premises on an enlarged scale at a cost of nearly £4000.

During the last two or three years we have suffered many severe losses by death, and the congregation has scarcely maintained its numerical and financial strength. Whether this is due to faults and defects on my own part or to other causes it is not easy for me to ascertain. Things may take a favourable turn again; but I am growing old, and it is not easy to counteract a gradual decline.

Since I settled in London I have published a good deal. My chief work has been my "Synoptical Lectures on the Books of Holy Scripture" in three volumes. The materials were first prepared for the pulpit, and the book was brought out in three series at dates extending from 1871 to 1876. This was a disadvantage to the work; but it has sold pretty well and run through three editions. I am now contem-

plating a new and cheaper edition, adapted to the Revised Version, so soon as that version of the Old Testament comes into my hands. I have had the satisfaction of receiving many acknowledgments from reverend brethren, both in England and America, of the help they have obtained from these Lectures; and, at the instance of R. A. MacFie, Esq., who gave to the Religious Tract Society a donation of £50 for the purpose, the Lectures on the New Testament were, with my cordial consent, translated into Italian by the Rev. F. Sciarelli, and published by that society at Rome for the benefit of Italian evangelical students and preachers.

It may be mentioned here that, in the year 1872, after the issue of the first series of the Synoptical Lectures, I received my diploma as Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen. For this honour I had made no application. Unexpectedly I received a letter from one of the Professors at St. Andrews (Dr. Roberts) intimating that such a step was contemplated at Aberdeen, and shortly thereafter I got an official letter from the *Senatus*. No fees were charged, not even the expense of preparing the diploma.

Since that time I have repeatedly been asked to join in recommending particular persons for University degrees, and have declined to do so. The official parity in the Presbyterian Church probably tends to excite a craving for a title, which gives a sort of precedence; and I would not judge harshly of any minister who hungers for a doctorate. But the

degree in divinity should either be given for proved attainments under examination, like the Bachelor's degree; or, if conferred in a free and honorary fashion, should be bestowed on men who are sufficiently known as scholarly divines, without any solicitations, direct or indirect.

Soon after the first series of my "Synoptical Lectures" appeared, I contributed a series of papers to a magazine on Ephesians iv. 4-7. These were soon re-published in a small volume; and, having a paper on 2 Thessalonians ii. added, took for a title, "The Church of God and the Apostasy."

Two other small works have appeared subsequently. The one is a brief life and estimate of Dr. Thomas Chalmers, prepared by request for Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton's series of "Men worth Remembering." The other is a volume in the Household Library of Exposition, and is entitled, "The Speeches of the Holy Apostles." It was made up from Sunday morning pulpit lectures.

Other uses I have found for such materials in my contributions to the *Sunday Magazine*, which have been pretty numerous, and in the Homilies on 1st Samuel and on 1st and 2nd Corinthians, supplied by me to the "Pulpit Commentary."

Among minor productions have been a few articles in the *Catholic Presbyterian*, and the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*; also separate lectures on "Superstition," on "The Ritualistic Claim to Spiritual Independence" (1877), and on "The Com-

parative Effects of Judaism and Christianity on the World" (1877). I have avoided as much as possible the publication in pamphlet form of single sermons. One or two, however, I may mention. "A Time to Weep," was published on the occasion of the death of H.R.H. the Grand Duchess of Hesse, Princess Alice. A copy of this was conveyed to Her Majesty by the Countess-Dowager of Gainsborough, who at that time regularly attended my ministry, and it was graciously accepted by the Queen. Another sermon had a less satisfactory reception. It was on "The Lord's Day," and broke away from the traditional Puritan doctrine, which tries to identify the First Day with the seventh-day Sabbath of the Jews. For this an elder (formerly a member of my own session) complained of the sermon to the Presbytery of London. There was a crowded attendance to witness the opening of a new heresy hunt. But the affair collapsed. I made a statement to the Presbytery which was held to be satisfactory without a dissentient voice. I could not admit that the Lord's Day is the Sabbath, but I held that the Christian institution rests on the pre-Christian ordinance as on a pedestal; and, having regard to the fact that the sermon was hurriedly constructed and was an inadequate treatment of a large subject, I offered not to re-issue it. The first edition of 1000 copies had been exhausted.

In the summer of 1881, steps were taken by Mr [now Sir] G. B. Bruce and a few other spirited Presbyterians to institute a weekly newspaper. A paper called

the *Weekly Review* had for many years dragged out a feeble and rather peevish life at the price of threepence. It was regarded as a Presbyterian organ, but was the property of the printer, and came somehow to be conducted in a manner offensive to all our leading men. To myself it was habitually insolent. The Church became ashamed of the *Weekly Review*, and its circulation died away. The new paper was started as *The Outlook, and Journal of the Churches*. By request of the promoters I wrote the prospectus, and advised with the editor, Dr. Japp. On one important point indeed I differed from them. Convinced that the English Presbyterians, on whom we had mainly to rely, are too few in numbers to support a penny newspaper, I wished the price of the *Outlook* to be twopence. But the penny was resolved upon, with the result which I foresaw. It was none the less my duty to try to make the venture a success; and very soon the work fell on my shoulders to an extent for which I was scarcely prepared. The editor suddenly retired in ill-health after a few months, and I was obliged to take his place. The work was congenial enough to me. I enjoyed the lively exercise of the pen which a newspaper requires; but I was obliged to do everything in a hurry, owing to the pressure of my other engagements, and had constant solicitations at home to "give up the paper." I continued at my post till the illness which came on me last year compelled my retirement for a few months from all public

work. In my absence the paper was well conducted by the Rev. Robert Taylor of Upper Norwood ; but its capital being exhausted, the proprietors transferred the ownership and goodwill to other hands, and it was metamorphosed into *The Presbyterian*. The *Outlook* had a steady subscription list of between five and six thousand.

During the fourteen years already passed of my life in London, my domestic circle has been unvisited by death. My five children have grown up, and two are honourably supporting themselves in the public service—my eldest son in India and my second in Queensland. I have been what some would call an indulgent parent ; but I do not regret it, and so far I have had no cause to be ashamed of my children.

The circumstance of my having begun this brief autobiography at Palermo, which I am now continuing in my library armchair at home, leads me to mention that I have twice been obliged to travel in recent years for the recovery of my health. In the spring of 1881, suffering severely from lumbago and general depression of the vital system, I had a trip to Madeira, accompanied by my wife. My good friend, Sir Donald Currie, M.P., generously franked us in one of the steamers of his company trading with the Cape of Good Hope. On that occasion my recovery was wonderfully rapid. We were driven down Channel by a hard easterly half-gale, which seemed to put new life into me. My lumbago, which quite crippled me

when I embarked, had disappeared before we had crossed the Bay of Biscay. Madeira was charming, but I soon had enough of it, and hurried home again. On a small island one has the feeling of imprisonment. My trip in the present year (1884) has also been on the score of health. In the beginning of last winter I not only was very weak, but suffered from sciatica. Again my recovery has been remarkable. Accompanied as before by my wife, I went round by sea to Gibraltar and Malta. Thence we crossed to Sicily; and at Palermo the sciatica left me, and has not returned. I then took my wife to Naples and to Rome, from which city she returned home by land. Then I pursued my way alone to Corfu, Athens, Constantinople, Smyrna, Beyrout, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Port Said, Alexandria, and Cairo, returning from Egypt by sea to Marseilles. I gave some account of my brief stay in Palestine to my congregation last summer, but do not think what I had to say worthy of print. From my own memory the scenes which I have visited can never be effaced. An English gentleman whom I met *en route* remarked very truly that, before one has been in Bible lands, he reads the Scriptures by gas light, but after he has been there he reads by electric light.

Shorter holiday trips I have made to various resorts, both inland and on the coast. Nothing is better than a visit to dear old Scotland; but I do not go there often, because I am beset with applications for pulpit

service. About the virtues of seaside resorts, I have grown sceptical. For me, at all events, the air of an elevated inland tableland, as at Harrogate, is more lifting and exhilarating. It is the fresh air of the heights that is good for both body and soul.

[*Note.*—The MS. narrative is interrupted at this point, and seems never to have been resumed.]

CLOSING YEARS.

(A.D. 1884-1892.)

SINCE the foregoing autobiographical notes were written, eight years have passed.

Of his occupation, achievements, or matured thoughts during these closing years of his life, my husband has left no record.

I shall attempt briefly to state a few facts in connection with his life and work, but I cannot give his views or thoughts.

In vigour and energy my husband remained as remarkable in his latest years as in those earlier times of which he has himself written. He worked incessantly and unsparingly in the service of his congregation, his own Church, and the Christian Church in general.

He occupied his pulpit in Marylebone Presbyterian Church very regularly, preaching twice every Sunday; and his sermons seemed to many to improve in matter and mode as time matured him.

In general Church work he took as keen an interest as ever, and gave much of his time to the business of

the Synod and of its committees as well as to the College, of which he was Convener of Committee from May 1888 till his death. The care of vacant Presbyterian charges sometimes devolved on him, and to such congregations he gave freely of his help, advice, and time. In the "May Meetings" of religious and charitable institutions, he continued to take a part, and also in innumerable other meetings and conferences. His journeyings about England to help his brethren were so frequent, that the weeks were rare which were unbroken by a run down to the provinces.

To the revision of the Westminster Directory of Public Worship he devoted—along with his colleagues—much time and attention. In literary work he prepared and published volumes on "Metaphors in the Gospels" and "The Seven Promises;" and, at the request of the late Lady Kinnaird's family, wrote her Biography. After the Synod had given its approval to the new "Articles of the Faith," he prepared a small handbook in the form of a commentary upon them, under the title of "Sound Doctrine." The manuscript was just ready for the printers when the writer ceased to write. The volume has since been published, Principal Dykes having kindly edited and prefaced it.

With so much miscellaneous work devolving upon him, and age advancing, my husband began to feel that he should obtain assistance or relief in his pastorate. Within our own circle, partial or total

retirement from his charge at Marylebone was urged upon him; but this had no result except a temporary engagement of Dr. J. Smith as assistant-minister in 1891. After six months, Dr. Smith returned to America, and no successor was appointed in his place.

The Bell Street Mission continued to be maintained by the congregation until the winter of 1891, when it was amalgamated with the Shaftesbury Institute. But my husband's interest underwent no change in consequence, nor his assistance to the mission work any diminution. He looked upon it as still connected with his own flock.

In 1891, when the *Review of the Churches* was projected and started with success, my husband was one of its founders, and became the special editor of the Presbyterian part of the *Review*.

In his private life one very heavy sorrow fell upon him in 1887, when his brother, the Rev. William Fraser, M.A., died suddenly in his pulpit at Brighton. This was an intense grief to all of us. My husband felt it very keenly. William was his last surviving full-brother, and this sudden bereavement left Donald the sole survivor of his mother's family. Within our own circle we have experienced unbroken happiness. By 1888, our third and fourth sons had followed their elder brothers abroad, and started upon their own careers. In the autumn of that year my husband accompanied our only daughter to Madras, and gave her in marriage there. Our daughter and son-in-law

visited us in 1889, and our grandson was born in the manse in the early spring of 1890.

In the autumn of 1891, I accompanied my husband on a tour in Scotland. Country air, and especially the air of his native Highlands, braced him up as nothing else could. We visited Edinburgh, Loch Awe, and Oban, and then proceeded by the Caledonian Canal to Inverness, where we made some stay. Inverness brought back many pleasant memories and associations, and we were welcomed back by many true and cordial friends. On the morning of Sunday, 16th August, by request of Dr. Black, the pastor, my husband conducted the service and preached from his old pulpit in the Free High Church. In the evening we worshipped in the High Church (the Rev. Dr. Norman M'Leod), to which as a boy he had regularly gone on Sundays with his father and brothers—that was before the Disruption. My husband was superlatively happy that Sunday. He also preached in the Free West (the Rev. Mr. Connell) on a week night, a church which he himself had founded.

Returning southward, we visited at Nairn and Rossie Priory, passed a few more days in Edinburgh, and broke our journey again at York in order to visit the Minster.

I look back with great satisfaction to that Highland tour. I feel sure that no more beneficial trip could have been devised for his bodily, mental, or spiritual health. In every way it was a tonic.

During the winter that followed, no marked change

or weakness appeared to warn me of his failing strength, until after the 8th December, when he sustained a shock to his whole nervous system from a fall on the steps of the Presbyterian College, after attending the usual monthly meeting of Presbytery. Although at first it was not thought a serious matter either by himself or others, I am under a strong impression that, when illness attacked him two months later, his vitality had been reduced by the accident, and little power was left to resist or grapple with such a disease as pneumonia.

Still he fully contemplated visiting Canada in the autumn of 1892, as one of the elected delegates of his Church to the Council of the Presbyterian Alliance; and he continued to attend to his study and his work in London with his usual assiduity.

A cough troubled him towards the end of January, but seemed to leave him in the first week of February, whilst the sprained wrists, the results of the fall, had become more painful.

He preached twice in his own pulpit on the 7th February, and dispensed the Communion at the evening service. I am not aware that any of the worshippers observed signs of unusual weakness at these services.

On the following evening (Monday the 8th February), the annual business meeting of the congregation was held in the lecture-hall of Marylebone Presbyterian Church, and the minister as usual presided. Next morning he complained, on awaking, of

acute pain. The doctor on arrival pronounced his case to be congestion of the right lung, which spread quickly to the left, and became a very serious and critical attack of pneumonia. On Friday night the 12th February 1892, my beloved husband was taken away from us, calmly and gently falling asleep in Jesus.

The honour and respect shown to his memory took very marked shape. The kindness and sympathy manifested to me in my unlooked for bereavement, with the letters and minutes of condolence which have reached me, show how widely his loss was felt.

My husband had often expressed his dislike to the metropolitan cemeteries, and said he wished he might be laid to rest beside our two little daughters, and near his mother, in the family plot of ground in the Chapel Yard at Inverness.

The office-bearers and congregation of Marylebone held a funeral Memorial Service in the church on Thursday, 18th February, at the conclusion of which the coffin, attended by a large cortége, was taken to the Railway Station, King's Cross. A deputation of office-bearers accompanied the remains to Inverness, where they were met by the minister and office-bearers of the Free High Church, and conveyed to the church. On the following day a solemn service was conducted in the Free High Church; and at its termination numerous friends carried the remains of their townsman on a bier down the snow-covered High Street, the bells of two of the churches solemnly

tolling, and the Provost and Magistrates of the burgh walking at the head of the sad procession. Thus his mortal remains were laid where he desired they should rest, in the Chapel Yard at Inverness.

“ His life is hid with Christ in God.”



SERMONS.



I.

SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”—1 COR. ii. 1-7.

ST. PAUL explains and vindicates his ministry at Corinth, and in doing so gives us the clue to what an effective Christian ministry should be in every city. Many things have changed since the Jew from Tarsus lifted up his voice in ancient Corinth; but the exigencies of the human soul have not—the provision for those exigencies in the Gospel has not—and the Power which carries the Gospel into the hearts of men has not. He who is now called a minister of the Word cannot do better than follow the lead of St. Paul, and all the more if he is placed where much is made of worldly wisdom and of showy eloquence.

I shall reopen my pulpit discourses by preaching this morning mainly to myself.

I. Of a preacher's *temper*, or mood of mind. It is one of self-distrust, and yet of firm determination.

At Corinth the Apostle was in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. We need hardly say that this was no fear of man. St. Paul was not afraid of the Corinthians, or nervous about speaking in their presence. Some audiences are rather pleased to see a speaker somewhat abashed before them. It is a tribute to their importance. But Paul was far too much engrossed with his theme to be concerned about his public appearances, and had addressed too many congregations to feel nervous before a new audience.

It was under the weight of his responsibility to God that he shook. It was the fear of not doing justice to his sacred theme which troubled him. And perhaps he was the more concerned about it, because he had gone to Corinth from Athens, and at the latter city he had been baffled by the frivolous mockery of the Greeks, and, though not without one or two conversions, had gone away somewhat disheartened. Was a similar experience awaiting him at Corinth? God forbid. And yet we know of circumstances at Corinth also that distressed him, and of his reassuring vision there. (Acts xviii. 9, 10.)

I have no doubt that St. Paul felt himself weak everywhere at the very time when God was going to work in and through him mightily. All noble minds have a certain self-searching and self-distrust before an effort; and all spiritual minds feel themselves weak and inadequate for the use to which God puts them. Very often, when the preacher is full of prepared matter, and at his ease, vigorous and self-possessed, he is without fruit. Whereas, when he seems

to himself to do very ill, God works out through him a great spiritual result.

Let us distinguish between timidity and sensibility. The former is not creditable to a Christian witness. We ought to speak boldly, fearing no face of man. The latter is the property of a refined mental constitution, and all the more when it is touched with spiritual fervour. This explains the thrill of self-renunciation in such a man as St. Paul—the throb of a strong nature that still pressed on and on against all discouragement, like the modern steamship that has a throb and a quiver throughout all her bulk when her engines work their best, and she holds her course right through the surging waves.

The resolve was in Paul as well as the sensibility. At Athens he had not the opportunity to preach as he would, but was taken to Mars' hill to answer for himself in the public court. So, from the moment of his arrival at Corinth, he made up his mind what to do—how and what to preach. He was quite aware that he was not taking the line most likely to be popular; but he had never studied or sought popularity. He was a messenger from Christ to that city, and had nothing to do with consulting the tastes or courting the favour of the citizens. Think of the resolution of that much hunted and persecuted man, arriving at this great city with inward fear and trembling, yet saying to himself:—Christ has sent me to preach the Gospel. I will not humour these Greeks in their love of argument, and of specious rhetoric. I determine not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and for success I will trust to the power of God.

So far of the temper in which a minister of Christ should address himself to his work.

II. Of the preacher's *theme*, "Jesus Christ." This included His power as God-man—His offices as Redeemer and Mediator—His declaration of the Father, and His relation to believers as their righteousness and strength, the light of the world, and the life of all who truly live. Not Christianity, but Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Friend. There are other truths, but this is central and indispensable; just as there are many planets and moons in our system, but it is the sun in the centre that keeps us alive and warm, and covers the earth with life and beauty.

No doubt we live in a favoured country of Christendom; and some appear to think that there is little need to preach Jesus Christ, for all have heard of Him. What people want to know is, what can Jesus Christ do for them in their lives. Can He give them less work and more pay? Or, others would ask, Can He help them in any way to solve problems in science, or to win triumphs in art? And if the pulpit is to lay itself out to answer all these demands and occupy itself with all these mundane affairs—farewell to the Gospel. But we preach Christ to meet deeper wants than these. We are persuaded that even in such a community as this there are many who have no real knowledge of Christ as a Saviour, and there are none who have as much knowledge as they ought to have; and as He is the all of the Gospel, we hold it our first duty to preach Jesus Christ.

"And Him crucified." Paul had not been able to speak of this at Athens. He made amends for it at

Corinth. It was no doubt a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks ; but the Apostle knew that to preach on the life and doctrine and example of Christ would not effect much, unless he put before the people Christ crucified. Here is redemption ! Here is love ! Here is the putting away of sin, for He was crucified for us ! Here is deliverance from sin, as we are crucified with Him. Nothing has such a peace for the human conscience, or such a power over the human heart, as the setting forth of Christ crucified.

With this, St. Paul began at Corinth. By this preaching he won his converts there alike from Judaism and from heathenism. It is always the Gospel that wins converts ; it is Christ lifted up on the cross who draws all to Himself. You may alarm men, and convince them of their sin and misery by pressing the law of duty and the authority and claims of God on their conscience ; but you never convert them without Christ and Him crucified. This is the word that wins the heart, and reinforces the Church, and gives to all Christian ministers their conquering energy.

The Greeks thought it folly because it did not at all sound like the teachings of their philosophers ; but St. Paul none the less recognised in it a higher wisdom than they had conceived—the wisdom of God. He therefore resolved, not merely to proclaim it to those whom he wished to convert, but still to teach and unfold this Gospel wisdom among the “ perfect.” These are not persons whose faith or charity was absolutely without flaw or defect, for there were, and there are, no such persons on the earth ; but the mature believers, the “ spiritual,” as distinguished from the

"babes" or beginners. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 1). And the Apostle still spoke among them the same Gospel: only unfolding more fully, as his hearers were able to follow him, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in Christ, and the sanctifying as well as justifying power of the Cross. We know that he took a wide range in his written teaching, and do not doubt that this was characteristic of his spoken instructions also. Paul was not the man to repeat a few elementary statements till every one was tired of hearing them. He taught to the more confirmed Christians many things, but nothing that did not in some way connect itself with the Cross on which the Lord of glory died.

III. Of a preacher's *power*. It is not in him, but in God.

No sensible preacher has any objection to the inferior wisdom which the world admires in its own place; but it is not the best wisdom. No sensible preacher has any objection to persuasive words and oratorical skill; only he will look to a higher source for soul-convincing, soul-saving energy. To quote an expression from the second epistle, "The excellency of the power is of God and not of us" (2 Cor. iv. 7).

Alas for the eloquent preaching that passes as a mere well-modulated sound, and the intellectual preaching that holds no man by the conscience, and the vociferous preaching that shouts, and signifies little! Let us do our best; but power belongs to God.

Some one may ask, Why so much insistence on power? Great is truth, and it will prevail. Now there is a reason. To teach to men the truth that is in Jesus is a very different thing from teaching one of the arts or sciences. In the latter case one may have to encounter dulness or lassitude of mind—nothing worse—and this a skilful teacher may overcome. But in the Gospel, though the theme is one of heavenly wisdom, it is met not with dulness and lassitude only, but with moral resistance and spiritual obtuseness, which no skill of teacher or preacher can remove. The Holy Spirit must demonstrate such truth to the hearer's conscience and with power impress it on his heart.

No doubt such a man as Paul could have made some impression on the Corinthians by the cogency of his reasoning and the force of his powerful personality; but, it would have been to little purpose. Short-lived and feeble would have been a faith which stood in human wisdom, and not in Divine power.

We want the presence of God. The words and usages of Christianity have become familiar to us. The habit of church attendance is formed, and with it that of listening to religious discourses, though quite possibly without much thought or feeling; but where is He who can banish the dulness of routine, and break the force of prejudice, and overcome the habit of procrastination? Who can impress the frivolous and abase the proud, arrest minds that engross themselves with trifles, and elevate minds that crawl after earthly gain? Who can wound and heal, warn and win, kill and make alive? Who is sufficient for these things?

Let us rely on God, and preach Christ in the

Spirit. Hear, and your souls shall live. Men speak the Gospel. God gives the power to preach and the power to believe. He can make your conscience start and your heart melt within you, expose your sins, shatter your excuses, cast you down at the Saviour's feet, give you peace in believing, kindle in you desires and hopes, create in you a clean heart, lift you up, and lead you on in the steps of Jesus.

The teaching of God is not in word, but in power.

II.

IN THE MIDST.

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. . . . And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.”—ST. JOHN xx. 19, 26.

SOME truths are central, and some are circumferential. Some persons are central, and others form groups around them.

In Christian thought, the Gospel is central truth. In Christian life and fellowship, the Christ of the Gospel is the central personality. Distrust a theology that is not Christo-centric, that has not Christ for its Sun of righteousness in the midst, from whom grace and truth radiate, and to whom homage and faith return. Avoid any Church connection which is not Christo-centric—which is content to have the Lord somewhere within reach on an emergency, but does not form itself around Him as the indispensable Saviour. His proper place is in the midst, in the heart of the service and of the sermon, central in the assembly of the saints, with all the prayers and praises and all the joy of faith circling and twining round Him.

There are two classes of statements in the Scripture on the Lord's centrality. One of these shows Him in the midst between the saved and the unsaved, making a difference; the other shows Him in the midst of the saved, for their union and strength and gladness.

I. Between the saved and the unsaved. The Lord divides and judges.

1. Remember the escape of the tribes of Israel from the house of bondage. With war chariots and cavalry Pharaoh pursued the fugitives, and was close upon their rear when, with knit brows and anxious steps, they went down into the channel of the Red Sea. The Egyptians followed on, sure of their prey. But lo! the pillar of cloud which had preceded and guided the Israelites moved to the rear and came between the pursuers and the fugitives. "The one came not near the other all the night." "And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians" (Ex. xiv. 24). So the Lord came between for weal or for woe. On the one hand men perished, on the other men were saved.

The Book of Revelation recalls this scene as a sign and pledge of the victory which the Lord will give to His Church over the beast and his image and the number of his name. The faithful have simply to go forward, and the Lord will bring about the discomfiture of the adversary. Then the victors, owing all to Him who shielded them in the night of danger, shall stand above the crystal sea, having

the harps of God, and sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

2. Remember the day of our Lord's Crucifixion. At Calvary, behold Him in the central place between the representative of the saved and of the unsaved. "They crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (St. John xix. 18). Both were evil-doers. Till that hour both were profane. At first they both reviled Him. But compunction pierced the heart of one as he saw how the meek Sufferer on the central cross rendered not railing for railing; and probably he was able to read above that cross the superscription which Pontius Pilate wrote and refused to alter, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Then he prayed to the King, and found mercy. It was with the two robbers as it may be with two sinners here, equally near to Jesus Christ when He is preached. One is saved, and the other unsaved. One is taken, and the other left.

3. Remember our Lord's great picture of the Last Judgment in Matt. xxv. 31-33: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." Indeed, the whole chapter, consisting throughout of His words, may be described as the prediction of judgment in three divisions and under three aspects: (1) The trial of watchfulness; (2) The trial of service; (3)

The trial of kindness. In each, the Lord Himself is central and predominant: (1) as Bridegroom, (2) as Master, (3) as King. He takes counsel with none, but decides every case as from Himself, and assigns reward or penalty severally to the wise or the foolish, the diligent and the slothful, the kind and the unkind.

All these instances combine to show how vain it is for men to think that, by keeping Jesus Christ out of their thoughts, they can rid themselves of His control and judgment. God has placed Him in the midst, and given Him authority to exercise judgment. You may put yourself on His left hand instead of the right, but that is all.

II. In the midst of the saved.

1. Remember Paradise. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden. And this is repeated in the Book of Revelation: "The tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Access to that tree was lost through man's disobedience, and the man was driven forth as a creature gone astray, like some world that had broken loose from its orbit and knew no central sun. But times of grace began. The Lord would recover the lost. So He drew near and communed with men; then took a whole nation apart to be His witnesses, and made His abode among the tribes of Israel.

2. Remember the encampment in the wilderness. When the people rested, lo! in the centre of the tents, the royal pavilion, the Tabernacle, which was the palace of the King in Jeshurun; and above it a luminous cloud, as in all countries palaces throw out a royal or imperial banner when the sovereign is in

residence. Jehovah dwelt in the midst of His people. And the very police law requiring cleanliness in the camp was enforced by the words, "For Jehovah thy God walketh in the midst" (Deut. xxiii. 14).

When the tribes marched strict directions were given to have the parts and vessels of the tabernacle posted between the divisions of the great national army; and in the heart of the moving host, the priests and the Levites bore the Ark of the Covenant, where was God's throne or mercy-seat. They came at last to the River Jordan, and in the critical passage of that river, the Ark was the very pivot of their safety. First the priests who bore it entered the bed of the stream, and "stood on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, while all Israel passed over." Then the Ark brought up the rear, "and the waters of Jordan returned to their place." The Lord went before them, and the Lord was their rearguard.

3. Remember the language of the Psalms and Prophets. It was the profound sentiment of Hebrew piety that Jehovah was in the midst of His people, and that of this fact the central sanctuary, whether at Shiloh or at Jerusalem, was a sign. The poet sang of the City of God, "God is in the midst of her;" "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!" The prophet Jeremiah in prayer took this comfort, "Yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us." And Zephaniah encouraged the people with one of the sweetest assurances in all the Hebrew books, "The king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy

God in the midst of thee is mighty ; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy ; He will rest in His love ; He will joy over thee with singing " (Zeph. iii. 15-17).

4. Remember Christ among the disciples. He was always the central figure of the group. Think of them at the Last Supper, the Lord Jesus presiding, all looking to Him, listening to Him. He rose, saying, " Let us go hence," and they gathered round Him. Then He said, " I am the vine, ye are the branches." The life-giving stem is central, the branches go out on either side. Behold them on that night when they were assembled in an upper chamber, and the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. The disciples were in a troubled and bewildered mood. And lo ! He Himself in the body, risen from the dead, in the very midst of them, reassuring them by His salutation of peace. He showed the traces of His wounds, and then, repeating the salutation, gave to the Apostles their high commission and prerogative, and breathed on them the Spirit of power for their great enterprise. " Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It is a happy sentence. And truly it is the joy of the disciples in every age, to see the Lord ; and that not merely in the historical testimony of others, or in some far prospect of a glory to be revealed, but in the midst of His people always, the Prince of life and Prince of peace.

On this account forsake not the assembly. Why Thomas was absent on that night we know not. But well for him that he was not absent on the next Sunday evening. If a disciple be needfully absent, the Lord may come to him in his chamber. But if need-

lessly absent, he has no right to expect that the Lord will reward his negligence. And especially is it needful for a man with a brooding heart like Thomas to be with his brethren. There best he may see Jesus and fall at His feet and worship Him.

5. Remember the promise of our Lord in Matt. xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." It is this which is fulfilled continually in the assemblies of His people. That calm Presence is the whole secret of the Church's life and usefulness. Lo! He is with us always, and central among us, the central light that gladdens all, the central life that quickens all, the central power that moves all, and the central love that comforts all. And so He becomes central, even in the great and complex circle of human life and history. At the heart of true civilisation and progress lies Christianity. And at the heart of Christianity is the Christ—the life and light of men—the Saviour of the world.

6. Remember the visions of St. John.

He saw the glorious Redeemer standing, and the Lord described Himself as walking in the midst of the seven golden lamps, which were symbols of the seven churches in Asia Minor. So is He still among the Churches, inspecting and inspiring, knowing their works, checking their faults, strengthening their endurance, kindling and fostering what light they shed on surrounding darkness.

It is a universal truth; for the perfect number seven suggests the Church universal. He is the great unifier and peacemaker. Dissensions are not healed, nor prejudices removed, by ever so much discussion of

Church principles or assertion of Church claims. But let us lift high the name of Jesus Christ. A great central admiration will leave no room for paltry jealousy. An absorbing devotion to the Lord who bought us must surely soften our temper towards one another, and make sectarian strife odious. Let us rally round Him who has in Himself all fulness, and to whom God has assigned the pre-eminence. Let the thought of the one Master teach the servants to be brotherly, and not to dispute which of them shall be accounted the greatest. His name, His presence, a bond of love and concord, as well as the gage of victory.

Another vision was given to the Seer. A door opened in heaven, and lo ! the central Christ was there also ! "In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. v. 6). "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" (Rev. vii. 17). The Lamb in the midst of the throne ! The mention of a throne suggests dignity, authority, and sway. That the Lamb is in the midst thereof intimates that He who suffered for us, the spotless Lamb of God, is now exalted as Ruler over all. And round about are the saints and angels in their bright array.

Be well assured that there is no homage you can render of which He is not worthy, no confidence or love too intense to be fastened on Him. Give to Him not merely admittance to your hearts, but the throne within—all your faculties and affections, all your desires and impulses grouping themselves round Him, and receiving tone and direction from Him.

A religion which does not exalt Him in the midst is not of much use either to sinners or to saints. Redemption is by the blood of the Lamb; holiness is in following the Lamb; safe-keeping is by royal providence of the Lamb. Oh come, let us adore Him! And let us rejoice in the thought that the best affections of a great multitude in all the earth are drawn to that central and paramount One.

Samuel Rutherford exclaims, "How sweet is the wind that bloweth out of that airt where Christ is!" But He is not in this or that airt or region of the airy space; He is in the midst of us, and the wind always comes from the centre. It is a sweet wind, the same blessed Spirit that He breathed on the Apostles at Jerusalem.

Oh joy to think of the ever-increasing circle round Him! The admittance is free: yet there is room for you to see His face, hear His voice, touch the hem of His garment. From whatever airt or quarter you come you are welcome. Only you must give yourself entirely to Him, abide with Him, find your all in Him, the central, all-attracting, all-forgiving, all-renewing all-satisfying Christ. He has said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

III.

CONQUEST.

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”—2 COR. x. 5.

FOR some reason, St. Paul was fond of military metaphors. He was a captain of the Church militant. His calling was to fight a good fight. Everywhere he had a conflict to maintain; and he gave thanks that in every place God gave him success and even triumph.

But he would not be misunderstood as though he used carnal weapons, or warred according to the flesh. Every kind of warfare needs its own appropriate weapons: for the battlefield, sword and spear, to which we add cannon and rifle; for conflicts of opinion, weapons of argument and intellectual force; for religious work and warfare, spiritual weapons, “mighty before God.” The Apostle had not merely to preach the Gospel at Corinth, but also to correct a party spirit in the Church, which was not spiritual but carnal, and to deal with certain persons who in his absence had disputed his authority; but he would not hurt a hair of their heads. His warfare was in the region of imagination and thought. Yet it was a

real and not a mock warfare. When he should come again to Corinth he would not spare.

He thought of himself as laying siege to the Church, because it had hearkened to those hostile teachers. He would cast down the strongholds and lead away many captive. It has been ingeniously surmised that this language was suggested by the war which had recently raged in the Apostle's native province of Cilicia. After long resistance to the authorities, the Cilician pirates, who were the pest and scourge of the Levant, were subdued by the Roman general Pompey. Many strongholds were pulled down, as many as one hundred and twenty hill forts; and ten thousand prisoners were taken captive.

Whether or not St. Paul had these events in mind, he vividly described the resolute course which he would have to take at Corinth to re-establish confidence and order. It is the conquest which the Gospel of Christ achieves now also in the conversion of sinners, and more and more evidently and completely as the convert is corrected and sanctified.

I. *Demolition of strongholds.* With this object are weapons of spiritual efficacy brought to bear on the individual as well as on the community. And this is the interpretation of "casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God." The hindrances to the belief and obedience of the Gospel are in the form of intellectual pride and moral prejudice; and he who would convert a sinner must lay his account with strongholds of resistance. Let him resolutely lay siege to them, and not give up the siege till he

has taken and pulled down the strongholds. It may take time and try patience. A breach is made in the wall at one point. There are convictions, misgivings, relentings, almost persuasions; yet the castle is not taken. Pride rallies, the heart hardens, new reasonings block up the breach with vain excuses and haughty objections. So the stronghold holds out, and the baffled preacher cries, "Who hath believed our report?" "Who will bring me into the strong city?"

God is able to subdue. Those barred gates of obstinacy, those walls of enmity to the truth, those beetling towers of pride are bound to fall before the power of God, and so before the weapons of our warfare. The effect of our victory in the Spirit is, that he who counted himself wise discovers himself a fool, and he who thought himself good confesses himself a sinner. The self-justifying God-resisting imaginations of the heart are cast down. At conversion there is always a breaking down of vain confidence. And at every time of special blessing afterwards there is a stripping of the soul, and a yielding of the will, and a lowly submission to the righteousness of God. It is a pulling down of strongholds. At first the guns of the fortress are silenced. Then they are dismounted, and the ramparts are cast into the ditch. The rebel flag is lowered. Oh that there may not be left one stone upon another, but the whole edifice of self-confidence and vain boasting be razed to the ground!

II. *Arrest of the garrison.* These are the thoughts which hold the fort against the Apostle or preacher, and maintain a resistance to the Gospel of God. As in ancient warfare, the garrison of a captured strong-

hold were led away to swell the conqueror's triumph, so must these thoughts of our minds be led into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And in this will be found one of the most searching tests of our continuance in the Christian faith. The discipline and government of the thoughts—this cuts deep into the evidence and experience of a living Christian. One may manage his words and take such heed to his good conduct as to win great credit for himself among the servants of God, and yet, tried by the tenor of his thoughts, hardly pass for a Christian at all. On the other hand, one may be exposed to misconstruction by men, but is happy if he can make this appeal to God, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24).

The mind is so constituted as to receive material of thought from all that comes within its range of cognisance, giving to all things its own colour, and cherishing whatever it finds congenial to its mood. There is indeed nothing more characteristic of a man, or more his own, than the tenor of his thoughts. Many persons do not see this. They allege that thoughts are unaccountable and irrepressible. They flit to and fro, now skimming by the gates of heaven, now diving into the pit of sin. They are involuntary, and cannot fix any grave responsibility upon us. But this is a very insufficient and rather hazardous estimate of the relation of man to his thoughts. Suggestions, whether of good or evil, that rise incidentally and flit before the mind for a moment, then pass, may not

infer much. But a man is seriously responsible for the thoughts on which he dwells, the fancies which he humours and detains, and the reading or interests by which his mind is fed and exercised. Nay, even when a thought seems to be simply transferred from a book to him who reads, or from a speaker to him who listens, it is never simply transferred. It becomes what the mind which accepts it chooses to make of it. It takes shape and colour, according to the moral condition of the mind. Thus to the pure all things are pure. Suggest to a clean-minded man some coarse thought, and to some extent it is refined as it enters his understanding. On the other hand, communicate an innocent thought to a coarse-minded man, and it is debased as it passes into him and takes a vile aspect. To him nothing is pure, for his mind is coarse and defiled.

As a man thinks, so is he. As a man is, so are his thoughts. Whatever be the predominant influence which controls his mind, that his thoughts follow and serve. A proud man idolises himself and indulges his own thoughts, his proud presumptuous thoughts; a frivolous man, his vain thoughts; a gross man, his licentious thoughts. Whatever is most characteristic of the man has and holds the direction of his thinking, imaginations, reveries and desires. Out of the evil heart proceed evil thoughts; out of the pure heart, thoughts that are pure.

We are speaking of the victory won by the Gospel of Christ. Strongholds of resistance are overthrown, and lo! the very thoughts that flash through the mind are led entirely captive to the new Master whom we obey. The captives, who in ancient times

were forced to march in the triumphal procession of the conqueror, must have inwardly resented the humiliation, and cursed the baleful day; but it is otherwise with the conquest and triumph of Christ and His Apostles. The captivity is not of constraint but of love. The captives are in a new liberty, and their hearts cleave joyfully to the Christ who has redeemed them. The meaning of this conversion is that they are henceforth to be His, entirely His, and to yield hearts and lives to Him in willing obedience.

Happy are they who have a very decided Christian character from the first. The most of us only learn by degrees what it is to be an out-and-out follower of Jesus Christ. And this is specially true of the consecration of thoughts — unspoken, but not unimportant thoughts. We are not bidden to have no thoughts but thoughts about Christ. That would be impossible. We have to think of one another, of our work, of our rest, of our risks, of our engagements, and of a thousand things in which the speculative intellect or the practical understanding may lawfully take an interest. But however widely thought may range, it is to be subject to the obedience of Christ, to recognise His law, and to take no license which may be displeasing or dishonouring to Him.

To carry out this principle you must put on yourself a vigorous restraint. A certain book has for you an injurious suggestion. Put it away. A certain person puts into your mind profane ideas. Drop his acquaintance. You may have to pass through places of temptation; but, so far as it is possible, avoid them. Then when the ordeal cannot

be avoided, you may trust in the Lord to preserve you from sinning, even in your thoughts. You may pass through the fire and not be burned. Or sparks of evil may fall around you, and produce in hearts that receive them a great conflagration; but you are not inflammable. The sparks only scar the surface of your soul, and do not set your thoughts in a blaze, because you are in your mental habits and affinities consecrated to Christ, and subject to Christ. The errant mind, the swift working brain, the whole activity of the intelligence within you, you have yielded in captivity to the obedience of your God and Saviour.

We exhort you to the watchful governing of thought and desire. But still more we exhort you to the direct occupation of your mind with Christ, and the things of Christ, so that it may be quite incompatible and impossible for you to engender or to admit thoughts that are contrary to Him. Let His continual presence with you, and His dwelling in you be so valued and cherished as to keep your mind in tone and touch with His mind, your thoughts in harmony with His thoughts. Then evil surmises and proud imaginings will take no hold of you, or if they do you can shake them off in the name and strength of Jesus, turning to what is good. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8).

IV.

HOW CHRIST LIVED IN PAUL.

“I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”—GAL. ii. 20.

THE life of Saul the Pharisee was one thing, that of Paul the Christian another : between them came a great event of experience—death unto sin, then life in Christ ; or co-crucifixion with Him, followed by a rising again into the life of righteousness, co-resurrection with the Saviour.

When we survey the life of Paul as it was seen of men, we find it such as only some very powerful mainspring of motive and strength can explain. Its outward conditions were difficult and painful : “afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, fastings.” These are his own words. He has also spoken of “labour and travail, watchings often, hunger and thirst, fastings often, cold and nakedness.” In the midst of these sufferings he carried in his heart a great solicitude for all the Churches ; and for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, he bore the reproaches of his own nation and the scorn of the Gentiles. To the Jews he appeared to be a renegade ; to the Greeks a fanatic. But he held on his way, unwearied and undeterred,

revealing in all his career a strength of purpose, a reach of sympathy, a meekness of wisdom, a wealth of affection, a brave and patient devotion to duty which cover the name of Paul with more than honour—with veneration.

What was the spring of invisible strength in the living man? It must have been within him, for there was no outward advantage, inducement, or incentive in the least sufficient to yield such a result. Paul was what he was, did what he did, endured what he endured, by virtue of some power or influence that dwelt and operated within him. It was not even the strength of his inner man, but strength in the inward man. He himself makes no secret of it, for he wished that all men were as he was, except as to his chains. He accounts for all by this short formula, Christ lived in him, and so inspired, guided, upheld, comforted him and wrought in him and by him the blessed will of God. It was the Apostle's safety that he was a man in Christ; it was his strength that Christ lived in him.

This in-living of Christ in Christians, is it not the distinct glory of this dispensation? To this all its forms and ordinances are tributary. A new life is imparted, an energy above our own operates within the human breast. We live, yet not we, but Christ lives in us.

Some men are inclined to resent the suggestion of another Being working in our own, as though it derogated somewhat from human dignity. But stolidity is not dignity. All living things and creatures are open to influence; and the more open, the more

finely they are organised, or the more nobly endowed. Trees and herbs are open to and affected by the influence of climate as stones and rocks are not. Animal life is liable to influence in proportion to the perfection of its organisation and the quickness of its sensibilities. And so man, being the most highly organised and endowed of all God's creatures on the earth, is the least self-sufficient. He lies open to a thousand influences, and sheds forth a thousand.

Shall we say that the living of Christ in Christians is to be explained simply as an instance of the moral effect which one good and great man may exert over many? Such an explanation comes far short of the meaning and experience of St. Paul. But let us take it with us so far as it goes. Undoubtedly, of all kinds of moral influence, that which we call personal is the mightiest in moulding character. Hereditary tendencies, surroundings, circumstances of climate, occupation and customs, the conditions of wealth, comfort, or poverty, all play their part in making and shaping the inner man. But the higher the style of man, the less is he the creature of conditions and circumstances, and the more is he moulded by those subtler influences which are personal, the power of superior minds and stronger wills. It is life that meets life, spirit that touches spirit, thought that supports thought, fire that kindles fire.

It is the poet's experience in the *In Memoriam* :

“ Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine.”

—*Stanza LXXXIV.*

So one man may live in another—in many others. A father lives in his child, and transmits his own characteristics of body and mind, not merely by the physical law of heredity, but also by the mental and moral influence which he has exerted over his child through many years of nurture and intimate association. A teacher lives in those disciples to whom he has communicated, not merely his ideas, but his way of thinking, or his methods of observation and deduction. A statesman too lives after he is dead in younger statesmen who were trained to public life under his eye, and who, being imbued with his spirit, continue his methods of handling affairs and grappling with difficulties.

Now this kind of personal influence has been exerted by Jesus Christ, to an extent, and for a length of time perfectly marvellous, in view of the facts that His life on earth was so short, that the sphere of His teaching and public usefulness was limited, and that He left nothing written to sustain His power over His followers. Never was there such an influx of One into many, lasting through centuries, and travelling out into all nations.

Great objects in nature project themselves, or their emanations, to vast distances. See how the great orb which we call the sun holds the earth as in its grasp—illuminates, warms, fertilises. It is the centre and source of every kind of energy which men put forth. So the Lord Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, is the most powerful personality, the source of the strongest moral influence known to mankind. He mastered and permeated the soul of Saul of Tarsus and others of that generation who had not even seen Him in the days of

His flesh, as thoroughly as He had possessed the souls of Simon and James and John, His companions and friends. And so they made Him known to others. The early preaching of the Gospel was not an elucidation of texts of Scripture, except in so far as it was shown to the Jews that Old Testament oracles were fulfilled in Jesus and that He therefore was the Christ. In addressing Gentiles, it was useless to refer to Scripture which had for them no interest or authority; and New Testament Scripture was not yet written. But the preachers told men what they knew of Jesus, what they had found in Him as a Saviour, a Master, and a Friend, whose peace filled their hearts, whose wisdom guided their way, whose hand defended them, whose love solaced them, and whose very life suffused their lives. He was life, and the life was the light of men. And men believed, and lo! the same experience became theirs. Jesus Christ made Himself a commanding influence in their hearts also, made everything new to them, and raised them out of and above themselves into a sphere of communion with God and things eternal, which, apart from Him, the loftiest human spirits had never reached.

There is no parallel to this in the annals of mankind. A Man of sorrows, who was despised and rejected of men, and was actually crucified, has exerted a wider and more blessed influence over men than any other. The noble army of martyrs praised Him. Resolute men have borne hardships and fronted death as His witnesses; and tender women have endured threatening and cruelty for His name. Captives and slaves have felt that He made

them free indeed. Men of all climes and races, in north and south and east and west, men of all ranks and degrees, old men and maidens, young men and children have owned His spell. Some of the rich and noble have cast themselves at His feet. Many of the poor and wretched have found in Him consolation and content. Princes and day-labourers, recluse students and busy artisans, traders and farmers, soldiers in the camp and sailors on the sea, ploughmen in the field, statesmen in the senate and shepherds of the plain, all alike have felt the heavenly charm, the attraction of Jesus Christ, His penetrating and enthralling influence.

Yet, so far as we have gone, we have not entered into the fulness of the Apostle's thought or given the explanation of the phenomenon which he gave to the Galatians. We must rise above these illustrations which may be taken from the present or the posthumous influence of illustrious men.

There is by faith a union to Christ which gives to the believer not only forgiveness of sin and acceptance in Him, but a separation from sin as by crucifixion with Christ and a transition into newness of life with Him, that, having died unto sin, we may live unto righteousness. Now it is of this new life that He is the source, the support, the security, and the joy. Christ lives in us. How? By the power of His resurrection, so that now His Spirit enters into us, and actuates our thoughts, desires, projects, impulses, sympathies. In Rom. viii. 9, 10, you will find that, to have the Spirit of God dwell in you, to have the Spirit of Christ, and to have Christ in you, are

synonymous and convertible expressions. Therefore the Spirit of Christ which He communicates to His followers is not the influence which, as a good and holy man, He may exert, nor is it the human spirit which He dismissed on the Cross, commending it to His Father's hands, but it is the Holy Spirit who descended on Him at His Baptism, and rested on Him during His earthly life, and was as the Spirit of holiness efficient in His resurrection from the dead. This Spirit is imparted to all who are baptized into Christ; and so Christ lives in them, or as John the Evangelist puts it, God dwells in them and they in God.

It is not enough to think of a Divine salvation or redemption of men. There is a Divine possession and inhabiting of men. And thus it comes about. On their part there is faith, that is, a looking and clinging to Christ as set before them in the Gospel. So our Apostle told the Galatians that he lived by the faith of the Son of God, and prayed for the Ephesians that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. It is as true to-day as it was then. When we believe in Christ crucified and raised up for us, lo! He is with us, takes hold of us, pervades us. His Spirit enters into us, and suffuses our spirits as with a sweet light and love. This is life indeed, sublime, indestructible. Into our faculties and resolutions flows the vitality of our risen Lord. He is more than the support and guide of life: He is our life, life for evermore.

Paul did not count for much in the eyes of Roman society: a Jewish teacher in custody of a soldier awaiting his trial! Yet he was really on a far higher plane of being than the emperor who was to try him, or any of the patricians in their palaces, for Jesus

Christ lived in Paul. There was no glitter in his surroundings, but the Spirit of the Lord was in his heart.

All thinking people hold that nobility lies in character, not in circumstances. It may appear in any rank or station where you find gentleness and integrity, courage and sympathy, patience and purity, kindness and truth. So every moral teacher will say. But we go a step higher, and teach that the noble type of human life is at its noblest when actuated by faith in the Son of God, pervaded and upheld by His abiding Spirit. Those are the best of men, the saints, whom Christ's life inspires, His light illumines, and His love constrains.

Do not receive this as a doctrine of vain and superstitious piety. Christ so dwells in all genuine Christians, although He does not put forth the same spiritual energy in all. This leads to the most practical results. It defeats temptation: Christ will not share the human heart along with sin indulged. And it sustains the efficiency and endurance of the Christian life; as St. Paul puts it, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

It should make querulous Christians ashamed to read of the sufferings which befell the great Apostle, and of the temper in which he bore them. Of the Jews five times received he forty stripes save one. But Christ, who was scourged at Jerusalem, lived in him, and helped him to endure the lash. Thrice was he beaten with rods, and once was he stoned; but as Stephen, to whose death by stoning he had once consented, was comforted by the Saviour, so also was Paul. He who had dragged saints to prison was

himself cast into prison as a Christian; and at midnight, in the dungeon at Philippi, he and Silas sang praises to God, for their faith in the Lord Jesus was strong, and the love in the Spirit made them glad. Thrice he suffered shipwreck—a day and a night he was in the deep; but his faith suffered no shipwreck. After a singular spiritual ecstasy, a trouble came on him which would not depart. He calls it a thorn or stake in the flesh. But while the rough stake tore and galled the tender flesh, the grace of Christ rested on him, and he was none the worse, but all the better. When he was weak, then he was strong.

At last the hour for his departure came. They led him out beyond the walls of Rome to die. He must leave the brethren whom he loved and the Churches for which he had prayed and written and laboured so ardently. That head from which so many wise thoughts and words had come must be laid on the block and struck off by a Roman executioner. A sad day for the Churches, but one that brought no terrors to the Apostle. What though Cæsar condemned him? The King of kings accepted him. What if the swordsmen should kill the body. He had no more that he could do. No weapon ever formed and wielded by man could reach the inner life of Paul. And he who had been able to say years before, "To me to live is Christ," now found that to be true which he had written in hope, "and to die, gain."

Oh, joy indeed for all the dying saints! "Christ liveth in me;" and over Him death has no power. He said at Bethany, "I am the resurrection, and the

life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (St. John xi. 25, 26).

Would you lead a useful life? Would you die the death which is great gain? Receive Christ. Let Him live in you, work in you, rule in you. The new life begins with regeneration. You must be born again. You must be united to Christ in the power of His resurrection. And this is not by toil or effort on your part, but by believing the Gospel, and so admitting into your heart the Living One who was dead but is alive for evermore. Admit Him! He has knocked at your door, and you have not risen up to open it. He has called and you have not hearkened to His voice. God grant it may not be too late. The Prince of life still waits, still knocks, still utters His voice.

"Yes, the piercèd hand still knocketh,
And, beneath the crownèd hair
Beam the patient eyes so tender
Of thy Saviour, waiting there!"

V.

"ONE THING."

"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not : one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."—JOHN ix. 25.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."—PSALM xxvii. 4.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."—PHIL. iii. 13.

THE first text is of perception and cognition, the second of liking and aspiration, the third of attainment and advance. The first is of the sight of the eyes, the second of the longing of the heart, the third of the path of one's feet.

One thing at a time is a good old rule, for lack of observing which many lives disappoint and fail. There are men who can never do anything with their might, because they fly from one object to another, gaining nothing, settling nothing, doing justice to nothing. They disperse themselves till they become incurably desultory. It is not that they are wicked or unprincipled, but that they have never acquired that secret of success which lies in concentration of thought and effort on a definite object worthy of pursuit until it be attained.

No doubt there are very busy men with very active brains, who pass so swiftly from one matter to another that they seem to themselves and to others to do many things at once. But if they are really efficient, and not mere fussy nobodies, they know how to keep one single object in view in the midst of ever so many others held subordinate. Sir Walter Scott thought that he had two currents of ideas going on in his mind at once. And he says in his *Journal*, lately published, "I always laugh when I hear people say, 'Do one thing at once.' I have done a dozen things at once all my life." But this was only the apparent simultaneousness of a mind very full and fertile. Few men had more than he of steady application to the work in hand till it was accomplished.

Concentration of thought and purpose is of immense value in religion. Let it be remembered that a Christian grows in grace and spiritual knowledge by observing the same rules which lead to success in other directions. Those hazy minds that cannot fasten on any truth, or commit themselves to any decided course, are quite as unsatisfactory in religion as in other pursuits. We have seen too many of those viewy, fickle, impressionable people, of fluid rather than solid minds, who evince a transient interest in many things, but go heart and soul into nothing. The wisdom which they need is the straightforward simplicity of one thing at a time, with especial reference to sacred knowledge and experience.

I. So God began the ordering of the world. He said, "Let light be," and light was. Let the opening

of the blind man's eyes suggest that spiritual enlightenment with which all personal religion must begin.

The rulers of the Jews tried hard to entangle the beggar at Jerusalem in a discussion. They evinced no joy at his recovery of sight, but cavilled at the alleged fact that he had been born blind. They also insisted that, if this wonder had been wrought, the man who performed it must be a sinner, because He had done it on the Sabbath. The beggar, however, refused to be drawn into the discussion, and very wisely rested on his sound honest bit of fact, "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (ver. 25). The cure which they maintained to be incredible had been wrought upon him; he knew it, and could not be mistaken. For the first time in his life he saw his fellow-men. He saw the persons who told him that such a thing could not be. They might allege what they thought proper against Jesus on their own responsibility; but they could not dislodge him from his stronghold of personal conviction. "He put clay on mine eyes, and I washed, and do see."

You or I may or may not be compelled to engage in controversy about the possibility of spiritual enlightenment in the things of God; but the chief point is that we know the fact in ourselves. We see, and are sure that we see, what at one time we could not see—the heinousness of sin, the righteousness of Christ, the force of truth, the beauty of holiness. Let who will allege that the thing is impossible, you cannot be moved if this one thing you know, that the eyes of your own understanding and heart have been opened,

so that to your inward vision all things are made new.

Some one has said that a man of one idea is dangerous. Perhaps he is, but at all events he is not insignificant. He cannot be. A man counts for something—cannot fail to make some impression—when he is possessed of even one strong and true idea, or better, when one such idea has possession of him. But we are not here to talk of an idea. We assert the advantage of having one decisive fact in your soul of which you are sure. It gives definiteness to your expression and force to your testimony. At that point you are invincible. It was so that our poor man baffled the rulers and Pharisees in Jerusalem; and it is so that any poor man here who has passed from spiritual blindness to spiritual vision can, on this one thing which he knows, baffle all the disputers of the world and put the gainsayers to silence.

But adhere to the one thing which you know, and do not append to it conjectures or inferences of which you cannot be so sure. One can easily illustrate this danger. Suppose that the beggar whom the Jewish rulers so sharply interrogated had added to his short statement of fact a general inference, to the effect that it was the rule and custom with the Healer from Galilee to put clay on the eyes of blind men, and thus to open them. Had he said so, and stepped beyond the one thing that he knew, he could and would have been refuted. For there was no such rule. Jesus Christ gave sight to the blind in various ways: to some with a word, some with a touch and a word; to some with an application of clay, some without; to some on the instant, to others after the obedience to a

command, as in the case before us, when the blind man groped his way down the steep to the pool of Siloam, and when he had washed there, returned to the city "seeing." In like manner does He bestow spiritual enlightenment in divers ways. Therefore when you speak of it, lay the stress, not on the method which is variable, but on the blessed fact, if fact it be in you, that whereas you were blind, now you see, and that you owe the opening of your eyes to who is called Jesus.

II. How does the second text follow the first? As feeling follows perception. He who wrote the 27th Psalm had had his eyes opened. He begins the poem with the words, "The Lord is my light." He wishes for more and more of that light, that he may see more clearly. He concentrates his wishes in one strong desire for the presence of his God: "that I may behold the beauty of the Lord!" It is the same longing of soul which we express in the hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

I take the Psalm to be the voice of King David. Now he was no dreamy sentimentalist, but a man of affairs, prompt in action, and when occasion arose, a strenuous man of war. But he delighted not in war. His predominant wish, through all his years, was to commune with God and give free scope to his devout spirit in the sanctuary. His utmost conception of happiness was to "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Remember One far greater than David, his Son and his Lord. Jesus Christ showed a deep horror of soul at being forsaken of God upon the Cross. He

held it to be His chief joy to have the Father always with Him, to be so near to Him day by day as to speak His words and do His works. So should all Christian souls thirst for God, and seek to dwell day and night in His pavilion. It is there that devout spirits breathe freely, and find it joy indeed to behold His goodness and His beauty, being enriched with His favour and enveloped in His love.

Very different from this is the fleshly mind which is enmity against God. Very different is the disobedient heart which tries to hide from His presence among His own gifts, the very trees of the garden which He planted. They who have a spiritual mind and an obedient heart seek to draw nearer and nearer to Him who is their light and salvation. And this is not a mere occasional wave of feeling which comes across them when the soft south wind of gracious suggestion blows. It is a well-sustained desire. This one thing they pray for, and this they seek after.

It may well be so, for this carries with it or draws after it everything that a good man need wish for. It is by such communion with God that he becomes godly. It is by looking to Christ that he becomes Christlike. By beholding the glory of the Lord he is changed into the same image. By meditating in the sanctuary he becomes patient and hopeful. By staying his mind on the Saviour evermore, he gains security and strength.

III. How does our third text follow the second? As action follows desire. The three are in a chain. In the first, see a man standing and testifying to the Healer who has opened his eyes; in the second, see

him on his knees pouring out his desire towards the Lord, who has lightened his darkness; in the third, see him walking or running in the way of obedience. And in the third, as in the first and in the second, all is summed up in "one thing."

Fifty things may claim attention, but there is an object which, amidst and above them all, the Christian man must hold paramount. It is the accomplishment of the race set before him, the attainment of goodness, righteousness, and truth.

In this time—indeed, in all times—it is needful and profitable to keep before the mind St. Paul's illustration of the Christian life as a race for a heavenly crown. Evangelical teaching has always included this; but ill-trained and ill-balanced preachers have been afraid to mention any human effort in religion, lest they should feed self-righteousness. So men hear that all that is needful has been done for them by Christ; and they infer that they have only to believe this and then shout "Hallelujah!" Now it is true that the work which God gave to His Christ to be accomplished on our behalf is finished. True also that by grace through faith we are saved. True also that one may be rapidly converted, and brought into a state of salvation. Far from questioning this, I believe that a rapid conversion is more Scriptural, and in itself more reasonable than a lingering dawdling conversion. But let those who are converted, whether slowly or quickly, be taught that they are only converted or turned to God, and that thenceforth the serious obligations of a Christian life lie upon them. They have to form new habits, and this cannot be done suddenly. They must pursue a new course, walk

worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, run in the way of His commandments, learn to do well.

If ever a man on this earth knew the grace of God in truth, the grace which brings salvation, it was Paul of Tarsus; and it is he who, both by example and by written exhortation, lays emphasis on the obligation of the Christian race, and shows the need of concentrating the mind upon it and doing this one thing—pursuing on and on and on, and onward to the goal.

Alas! how rare this intentness! I see everywhere the professing Christians, but where are the running Christians? The Church of God in the land is hindered, not so much by hypocrites within or adversaries without, as by languid ineffective officers and members. They mean well enough, but in a feeble uncertain way. They seem to have no idea of self-denial. The loins of their minds are ungirt. They do not aim at any definite thing in religion. So the Churches have a faint life and a restricted influence, because half-full of vague, semi-worldly, irresolute, unenterprising, unprogressive, almost useless Christians.

For the way in which we have tried to speak to you, we claim some support from the teaching method of our Lord. With what point He spoke of “one thing!” Take two instances, one of a young man, the other of a young woman.

1. A young man came to Him with an inquiry about eternal life. The Lord at once tried him on the point of obedience, and he answered without hesitation that he had kept the commandments from his youth up. Wonderful young man! What a moral character!

and at the same time rich! No doubt the disciples were charmed with the prospect of such an accession to their company and anxious that his way should be made easy. In almost any Church, a young man of good character and great possessions will find an easy examination and a ready welcome. The Lord said to him, “One thing thou lackest!” Perhaps the disciples and he himself thought this to be full of promise. Surely he could get over one deficiency. But lo! the thing required was the disengagement of his affections from treasures on the earth. “Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow Me” (Mark x. 21). The condition was virtually the same as that on which the fishermen had been received, for they left their boats and nets; and the tax-gatherer, Matthew, left his lucrative post in the inland revenue to follow the Nazarene. It had a hard sound when proposed to the rich young man; but it was necessary to break down his self-confidence, and show him that earthly things had more value for him than that everlasting life which he professed such eagerness to inherit. The word about the “one thing” touched him like Ithuriel’s spear in Paradise, and brought the real man to view:

“up he starts,
Discovered and surprised.”

Farewell, O Prophet of Galilee! Farewell Christ-life! “He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.”

2. Two sisters lived in the village that nestles below the Mount of Olives—Bethany. On a certain

day Jesus Christ entered their house, and sat down. One of them made a hospitable stir to entertain Him ; the other sat quietly at His feet to listen. So far well. But Martha was one of those people who think that nothing is done unless in their manner. She regarded her sister as idle, and expressed a wish that she should be bidden rise up and help her. Then the Lord noticed Martha's anxiety about many things. "But one thing is needful." The essence of human welfare lies not in the many things over which the mind may spread its solicitude, but in one thing, central, indispensable—a heart that rests, as Mary's rested, on the Son of God. That Jesus Christ knew this so well, caught the ultimate secret of all souls, and uttered it on the spur of the moment in one short compact phrase, which has become familiar as a household word, shows Him to be the greatest seer and sage in history. But more. That He can not only point out the universal want, but also supply it in and from Himself, shows Him to be higher than seer or sage, the Divine All-sufficient Saviour.

If any of you are strangers to Christ, it is due in all likelihood to "one thing." Many obstacles may have appeared to hinder you ; but the fatal obstruction is at one point, one secret sin, or one proud imagination. Search and see. There may be many cobwebs woven across the closed door of the heart ; but draw the bolt, and everything else will give way. Draw the bolt, and the Lord who is knocking at the door will enter.

And if He come in, what shall we have ? "One thing" : but it is everything. It is the good part which shall not be taken away, the enduring treasure

which will never waste away. It is unsearchable riches, unspotted righteousness, unfaltering peace, unspeakable joy. One thing—always one thing! One pearl of great price. Sell all that you have, and buy that pearl.

VI.

SPIRITUAL VIGOUR.

“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail : but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint.”—ISA. xl. 30, 31.

THERE is a natural life and there is a spiritual life. The one is temporal, the other eternal. Each has its proper birth, nurture, food, exercise, discipline, and growth. There are many and most instructive analogies between them. But there is contrast too, and the contrast is marked in our text. To the strength of the natural life there is a limit soon reached. To the capacity of the spiritual life, which leans on God, such a limit is unknown.

What is called in the world longevity is, after all, of very brief duration, and even this is reached by few ; the many have their lives shortened by hereditary disease, by epidemic plagues, or by persistent imprudence and excess. But take the finest and best preserved constitution, and it is scarcely come to its full strength before it begins to decay. Even in youth there is a measure beyond which you cannot with impunity push or strain the vital energies. Youths faint and are weary. The choice ones, the flower of

he youth, "grow weak, grow weak." Indeed, a great many lives are cut off by some over-exertion in youth, involving a permanent injury which no after care can remedy.

But there is a life that triumphs over decay, for its springs are in God. It is life in the Spirit, the result of regeneration. As years roll on, they bring no wrinkles to the soul or coldness to the heart of those who live in God. Though this life were a thousand years old, it would keep the bloom of youth. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps. xcii. 12).

It is of this inner life we are especially to speak; not of the first reception of it—for we suppose its existence—nor of its hindrances and depressions through unbelief, but of spiritual life as it ought to be.

I. The secret of its sustained vigour.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The strength of the life is not in man, else he would soon squander it. It is in the Everlasting God, who faints not nor is weary. And He imparts it to those who wait on Him as the God of their life, and wait for Him to know and do His will. Theirs is the habit of soul which finds so much expression in the Psalms—"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." "I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope." And this, too, is the New Testament piety according to the clearer light and more abundant spiritual guidance characteristic of this dispensation. It is the state and habit of the soul given to prayer and patience—the prayer of faith and the patience of hope.

In this is the secret of spiritual strength. Through unseen channels flows into men the life divine, the quickening Spirit. Have you not seen a man of strong natural character enslaved by sins, and a man of comparatively feeble constitution and will resist sin, and even rebuke it openly, abandon evil courses, and become a steadfast, high - principled Christian citizen, perhaps a pillar in the Church of God? What has made the difference? The first was self-confident, and fell; the second was confident in God only, and rose. The first demonstrated that sin is too strong for any power of resistance that lies in the natural conscience or in self-respect. The second reveals that, by the grace of God, the feeble may be strong enough to resist the devil and overcome the world by faith.

“Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” Grace triumphs in the contest between the soul’s constancy and the body’s decay. Nay, grace uses the enfeebling of the outward man to further the inward man’s strength; and, in ways hard to flesh and blood, confirms faith, conveys comfort, and stirs devout affection.

There are special seasons of spiritual discipline and acquisition, marked and memorable days of duty or trial, for which marked and memorable supplies of strength are given. The day on which a youth, purely and modestly nurtured, hears among others of his own age filthy conversation, or is urged by them to share their riot and excess, and in which he has resolution enough to brave their ridicule and rebuke their vice and leave their company, is an era for the inner life, and one for and in which special grace is imparted by

Him who is the guide of our youth. The time when a poor man sees a career of prosperity presented to him, provided he will trample on his conscience and wink at some injustice, and in which he calmly turns away from the lure, and prefers his poverty with truth to riches with dishonour and deceit, is an era also; and for such a time he who waits on God gets strength sufficient. The sad year in which you, O tender woman! nursed your child or your husband, and sat up many a long night alone and prayed and feared, and hoped and feared again, and saw the life ebbing away, and could not stay it, and felt the dim conviction at your heart, and could not fight against it any more, that he would die—yes, and you saw him die, and through it all were calm yourself, and quiet, and self-possessed, so that others marvelled, and you yourself marvelled at the stillness of your spirit: that sad time was one to be ever memorable in your life; and because it was a time of spiritual exigency, the Lord gave to you for it and in it supplies of special strength.

But the power in our text is not for great occasions only; it is for every day. Thus shall it be with those who wait upon the Lord day by day. They shall have the strength which is daily exhausted, also daily restored. It is impossible that every day can be remarkable, but each day applies its own tests to the Christian. There is a labour to perform, a temptation to overcome, a trial to endure, a self-denial to practise, or a lesson to acquire. And God's help comes to us on this principle, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Indeed, it is quite mistaken to hold that Providence is more kind or grace more divine on great and rare

occasions than in the daily course of life. To a reflective mind the daily order of this world is far more impressive than any miracle or prodigy; and the usual exhibits the power and goodness of God more than the unusual. So it is with this daily maintenance of life in the regenerate. This "holding the soul in life" is really a greater thing than any exceptional and extraordinary blessing which they may at long intervals receive. This is the perpetual prodigy: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

II. The manifestation of the vigour of that inner life under three figures of speech.

I. "They shall stretch the pinion like the eagle." We are not to force the figure, and find in a bird of prey the illustration of a Christian mind. The one point to be considered is the strength of the eagle's wing, and this was spoken of by God Himself as a figure of the power with which He raised His people out of bondage in Egypt, and conducted them to Horeb: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself" (Exod. xix. 4).

There are some professing Christians who seem to have no wings, or to have had their wings clipped by discouraging doctrine, so that they are timid and servile in spirit, and go about with their eyes on the ground picking up their food. Others have wings, but they seem no better than wings of a titmouse or a sparrow. They are so trifling, doubtful, and uncertain—now here, now there, as fancy seizes them. We know that God takes care of sparrows; but He would not have His children like unto them.

In a time of trouble, David said, "Oh, that I had

wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness" (Ps. lv. 6, 7). But the Lord gives not wings of a dove wherewith to escape, so much as wings of an eagle wherewith to smite the air and soar above. He will not, indeed, have His people mount up in vain conceits, or irreverent curiosity, or with a heart that is haughty to deal in matters too high for us. But He will have them, while cherishing a lowly temper of mind, as conscious of a thousand faults, at the same time to soar in heavenly desires and affections.

There are no feathers of the carnal mind that can raise to the study of God, or to any sustained delight in His character or word. For this we need the eagle pinions of the spiritual mind ; and the power to stretch and move those pinions, and seek the things above, is given to those who wait for the Lord. When you are alive unto God, we know that you have cast your old feathers and left your old nest. You have new wings of faith and love, a new nest high up in the "munitions of rocks ;" and you will mount, not as by constraint, but because it is your new nature to rise towards heaven.

2. "They shall run and not be weary." The words Christian course, Christian race, are familiar. David has this thought in Ps. cxix. 32 ; and it is frequent with St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 24-27 ; Heb. xii. 1, 2). The race denotes progress in knowledge and holiness, and so in happiness and usefulness ; and it requires the training of self-denial, the laying aside of weights and besetting sins, with a persistence of purpose, a steadiness of Christian principle, to continue to the end.

One may commit himself to the Christian race, and set out at high speed and begin to do many things gladly, and even put older Christians to the blush by the freshness of his zeal. But lo! he is entangled in a snare, or diverted into some bye-path, or he wearies of so long a course, because his ephemeral impulse is spent. Indeed, there is no one who can run and not be weary, unless he has his strength renewed as it is exhausted; and this is not according to nature, this is the promise of grace. The secret of continuance in the race is waiting on the Lord, looking unto Jesus.

Gideon picked his three hundred men; and in his energetic pursuit of the flying Midianites, he came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, "faint, yet pursuing." The youths fainted and were weary, and their leader had to ask the men of Succoth and of Penuel to give them loaves of bread to renew their strength. But our Leader and Commander has all fulness in Himself for us. He is our bread of life, our strength and shield. Nature faints, but grace revives; and they who follow Jesus have such life and consolation in Him, that they run and are not weary.

3. "They shall walk and not faint." It seems an anti-climax—fly, run, walk; but more closely examined, it is a more and more thorough manifestation of spiritual vigour. It is well to soar on eagle's wings in devout thought and meditation. It is better, as a test of Christian life, to run on unwearied feet, pursuing with alacrity the race of Christian attainment set before us. But the best of all, the greatest of all proofs, must be found in a man's steady daily walk. Tell me how a man prays or praises; tell me

how he outruns in eagerness of piety all his fellows ; but tell me most of all how he *walks* in common life, how he bears and conducts himself from day to day.

There is mention in the Bible of a man who pleased God for three hundred years, and of whom no evil whatever is recorded. Mark in what emphatic terms Holy Writ describes his career—"And Enoch walked with God." So ought we to walk and to please God. Are you in family life ? That need be no hindrance to your piety. "Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters." Are you in the flower of your youth, and do you think it too soon to begin the walk with God, too much to be religious for your whole life, enough to get it in good time before you die ? Away with these mischievous thoughts ! Religion is not a mere thing to die with, a talisman against perdition ; it is the duty, solace, and ornament of life. If you have many years before you, so much the better ; if you had three hundred years before you, Enoch tells you to begin at once to walk with God. Walk in the truth, walk in the light, walk in love, walk in good works, walk in the Spirit. As ye have received the Lord, so walk in Him. It is no drudgery, but the noblest exercise in which the powers of the human soul can be employed. Sometimes, no doubt, the way is hard to flesh and blood. The walk is up steep ascents, or over dreary wastes : all well, if it is a walk with God there. The waiter on the Lord has his strength renewed ; therefore he walks, and does not faint.

"Oh for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb !"

It is a very pleasant duty this, to tell God's children where their strength lies, and to admonish and exhort and comfort. But we must speak to others also—others who have no reconciliation to God, faith in God, harmony with God. Your outward man perishes. Time passes, health fails, life ebbs away, and there is no spiritual or eternal life in you. The outward man perishes, and the inward man perishes too! What will you do when your heart faints, and mere buoyancy of spirit can no longer brace you up amidst the woes of life and thickening fears of death and judgment? What will you do—what will you do?

If you consider the matter, you will be ready to-day with your question:—"Men and brethren, what shall we do? How can we do anything who have no strength in us?" Hearken: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). Your first and urgent duty is not to fly or run or even walk, but to cast yourself down beneath the cross, repent, believe, and live. Do not make it a difficulty in the way of your coming, that you must get the help of the Holy Ghost. That is not a difficulty, but an encouragement and a facility. It is the office and the pleasure of the Holy Ghost to lead sinners to the Cross, and then lead redeemed sinners to the crown.

"Just as thou art, without one trace
Of love or joy or inward grace
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come!"

VII.

BY LITTLE AND LITTLE.

“Here a little, and there a little.”—ISA. xxviii. 10, 13.

THESE were words of mockery. The wicked priests and prophets, over their cups of wine and strong drink, found fault with the word of the Lord that came by Isaiah. It was, they said, full of commonplace repetition—

Trav-la-trav, trav-la-trav ;
Kav-la-kav, kav-la-kav ;
Zëir sham, zëir sham.

The prophet retorted upon them their own language. Yes, this monotony should continue; and if they refused the word thus repeated to them, they would stumble backward and be broken and snared and taken. But such as received its teaching should have rest and refreshment in the Lord.

We also take up the word of the mockers, and think it important to mark God's use of repetition in teaching His will to men. The revelation which He gave in old times was conducted with marvellous patience and consideration. It was not flashed upon the minds of men, but unfolded by degrees, as they were able to receive it. When they lost it through unbelief and disobedience, it was brought back to

them by fresh messages from Jehovah, accompanied by strokes of chastisement from His rod. Laws were rehearsed; precepts were repeated; prophets spoke, and spoke again. One prophet was sent after another; and the impression made by the message or testimony was deepened, as by stroke upon stroke, and line upon line.

Every reader of the Old Testament must be struck with the fact that it is full of this kind and gracious repetition; for it is the record of the Divine training and instruction of a people who were stiff-necked, and too often proved themselves uncircumcised in heart and ears. At sundry times, and in divers manners, God spoke to the Hebrew fathers in the prophets. Now there was a Moses with his grand meekness of spirit, giving them laws, with appeals and exhortations to obedience repeated again and again; now a David, with the sweet reiteration of the Hebrew poetry, teaching them in songs the fear of Jehovah; now an Elijah, summoning all to repentance as with the sound of a trumpet, blast upon blast; now it was an Isaiah in the king's court at Jerusalem, an Ezekiel among the captives, or an Ezra or a Zechariah among the restored. Each generation had the record of words spoken to their ancestors, and words added for their own learning. Because God loved this people, He allowed for their slowness to receive and their slackness to retain instruction; and so He gave them line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little, and there a little.

Obviously, the same principle runs through the New Testament revelation too. Jesus Christ did not deliver His message or doctrine once for all in a

studied manner, but spoke to His followers as they were able to receive, reserving some matters for later teaching of the Holy Spirit. And what He did utter was on the principle of "here a little, and there a little." He used parables and illustrations which half concealed and half disclosed His meaning. He encouraged men to ask questions, and gave them unexplained answers, that reached beyond into deeper truth. On one day He dropped an incidental saying, and on another day repeated, perhaps enlarged, the thought. He recurred to His great themes again and again. Thus He showed His Divine wisdom as a teacher, embedded His doctrine in human minds and hearts, and fastened it into the memory by line upon line and precept upon precept.

The Apostolic Books are full of the same wisdom; and so the perfection of the Bible for its Divine purpose is built up. We are not to take a fragment here or there, and say, Because this is Holy Writ, it must be the consummate utterance of God. Perfection is in the completed whole. And we never rise to the proper conception of what the Bible is, or construe and use it as we ought, till we get a glimpse of its marvellous combination of very various hints, suggestions, and disclosures to form one Book of God, and till we enter into the progressive character of its teaching, as advancing by line on line, precept on precept, here a little and there a little, towards its consummation in the "truth as it is in Jesus."

Shallow minds are apt to think more of bold and rapid effects; but those who have observed most widely and reflected most deeply, know well that Omnipotence works slowly, and with a quite marvellous

patience in combining many influences and activities towards a determined result. It should, therefore, be expected that the Supreme Wisdom of God will, on the same principle, carry on the work of human enlightenment in the truth.

This earth on which we dwell was not built up suddenly. In its history, as inferred from the records which science can trace on its caves and its sea-shores, there have been some sudden changes, but far more generally long, long processes, small in detail, but working out immense effects. Land slowly sank beneath the water, slowly rose again. Ice patiently rounded off our mountains and shaped our valleys. Strata deposited themselves during vast periods of time. Innumerable plants and trees flourished and died, and after death prepared our vast treasures of coal. Innumerable tiny creatures worked in the basin of the sea, and their shells built up our chalky cliffs and downs, these shells themselves being first built up of small crystals of carbonate of lime. By ancient fires, by patient processes of evaporation and condensation, were formed the solid rocks. By erosion and decomposition came fertile soils. Various influences of heat and cold, of light and gloom, of accretion and dispersion, of evolution and vibration combined in ways which men are faintly conceiving, but which are all known to the Creator and were all designed and governed by Him, to make this old, yet not finished, but ever-changing earth.

Look how a man is built up, body and mind, heart and character. Is it not by little and little? The frame grows from its first beginning by repetition of natural processes—a little sleep, a little food, a little

exercise ; and again, a little sleep, a little food, a little exercise. There are no great strides of increase, but a little more height, a little more breadth, a little more strength, an enlarging of the tissues, a hardening of the bones, until the child becomes a mature man. So also grows his mind : by observation, by comparison of objects near him, by asking questions and remembering the answers ; if they are forgotten, asking again ; by trying little experiments, then larger ones ; by learning a little lesson, then repeating it, then adding a little more. One hour for reading, another for writing, another for counting ; here a little and there a little, the boy becomes intelligent and informed. Pursuing the very same course, the boy becomes an accomplished and educated man.

In no other way can moral culture or spiritual advancement be obtained. There are some moral natures stronger from the outset and more healthy than others ; but take men on the average, and you will find that ripe moral power, including both the discernment of right and the will to do it, is a thing which requires long and various discipline. To shake off the blinding influence of passion ; to hate evil when it offers advancement, as much as when it offers risk ; to be always and toward all men fair and true and upright—this is not acquired in a day. Those who attain to it—and they are not many—have to go through struggles and inward wrestlings not a few ; to examine their motives, correct their mistakes, learn many a lesson painfully and learn it again, take a hint here and an admonition there, till at last they gain habits of self-control, and integrity becomes inseparable from their life. Thus, line on line, precept on precept, here

a little and there a little, are needed to form an honest man—that noble work of God.

Why should it be thought that grace makes men spiritual on any other principle? It is to our thinking delightful to trace the same great modes of working under all departments of Divine action and government. How is a Christian made, taught, nourished, advanced in faith and holiness, but by a process to which the words “here a little, there a little” may well apply?

Let us develop this inquiry. It is full of practical importance. But bear in mind that we do not speak of gradualness in the commencement of the spiritual life. “Ye must be born again.” There is a decisive regenerative act of God, although the evidence of the regeneration may be gradual and cumulative.

1. How does a Christian receive the truth by which he is purified? Not by one lesson, but by many. He sees the way of pardon and peace. By-and-by he sees it more clearly. He is humiliated on account of sin. Then another line on this line, and his conviction is deepened. He perceives the beauty and all-sufficiency of Christ. Anon he perceives this far more clearly, and is more engrossed with the Saviour. Then he discerns the way of holiness and follows it, but blunders sadly. But he gets precept on precept. Further truth is shown to him, and he rejoices in it and is sanctified thereby. So he grows in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything is in that fine Biblical idea—growth in all things into Christ. And I doubt if any Christian gets all his knowledge in one way, or under one and the same human teacher. A sermon here, a

book there, a sentence in a letter, a hint in conversation helps him on. A little here, a little there, as God sees best.

2. How does a Christian get rid of indwelling sin? By little and little. We speak of the fact, without at all denying the obligation to be rid of all sin at once and for ever. Such was the promise to the redeemed nation Israel: "Jehovah, thy God, will put out those nations before thee by little and little." So is it with His redeemed people now. It is the Lord who drives evil out of their hearts; no power less than His own can do it; but He does it through their resolution, and so He does it by degrees—a little help here, a little success there. The course of the war is not uniform; there is not a steady unbroken advance on the side of righteousness with a constant weakening and defeat of sin. The warfare is much chequered, but the Lord gives recovery here and deliverance there; and in the end He will utterly drive out foul thoughts, evil desires, and all things that defile from the hearts of His people, and they shall be holy and without blemish.

3. How does a Christian learn wisdom and sobriety of mind? Certainly not at a bound, as by a miraculous infusion into him of another mind. He is made wise by repeated exposures of his own folly. Here a little stroke of censure, and there a little encouragement, or reward of discretion. And so by reproof, by sorrow, by discipline, by all the minute lessons which are contained under the large word "experience," do men reach the higher wisdom. They ask it from God, and it is thus He gives it to them, forms it in them, so that they cannot altogether lose it again. There-

fore, keep sound wisdom and discretion, for these are life to the soul and grace to the neck.

4. How does a Christian gain likeness to Christ? By little and little. Have you seen a painter at work—say a portrait-painter? After the main outlines of the picture are placed on the canvas, have you noticed how gradually and how minutely he produces the likeness? A touch of the brush here, then a pause, then another touch and another. Then, at another place, a gentler touch, a little deepening here, a little lightening there, a little lengthening here, and a little shortening there; and so by countless and, to the unskilled observer it might seem, uncombined applications of the brush, the likeness at last is perfected. There is something analogous to this in the production of the likeness of Christ on His people's hearts and characters by the Divine skill and patience of the Holy Ghost. It is not done as with a photographic suddenness. There is a progressive assimilation of the Christian to Christ, as by line upon line, touch after touch, here a little and there a little.

It is a poor thing to look at—a half-finished portrait. No one but the painter can tell how from that raw and inexpressive commencement to make a perfect work. So Christians in their present stage of progress are but poor objects to look at. You can hardly discern in them the lineaments of Christ. But the Spirit of the Lord knows how to perfect that which concerns them, how to correct their errors, reduce their excesses, develop their energies, mould their dispositions; and by a pressure here and a fine stroke there, by touches of His Divine grace, ever so various and so delicate, He can conform even the

dullest and roughest of us all to the image of the
Son of God.

“Blessed hope ! that we, the sinful,
May be like to Thee, the Lord—
Purified, renewed, remoulded
By Thy Spirit and Thy Word !”

VIII.

REST UNDER THE YOKE.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”—*MATT. xi. 28-30.*

INIMITABLE words of Jesus ! They always sound to us like silver bells ringing out a message of good cheer. No man ever yet listened to them seriously but felt that they meet a deep want in the human breast.

Jesus saw men just as they were and are, and likened them to jaded hard-pressed oxen toiling under the yoke. Some are working for daily bread ; some toiling to be learned, some to be rich ; and all laden with care, some with fear, and some with sorrow. Alas ! religion itself is made an additional burden. The people in the days of Christ were heavy laden by the traditions and prescriptions laid on them by the scribes and Pharisees ; and the people in our modern world are made weary by the heavy yoke of false religion, or by superstitious appendages to true religion, or by the teachings of those who know not the Gospel of free grace.

Think of the Man Jesus Christ, Himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, calmly surveying

the troubled world of men around Him, and saying, "Hither to Me! I will give you rest!" It is quite evident that He did not profess or promise to relieve men from labour, or to give them immunity from pain and sorrow. He speaks of an inward rest which the heart may possess even in the midst of labours and tribulations.

He had it Himself. His heart was calm because He knew that the Father was with Him, the Father heard Him, the Father loved Him. Therefore you trace in Him no fret or fidget, no petulance or pique, no moodiness or discontent in the most trying emergencies. Hated without cause, forsaken by all, betrayed, seized, unjustly judged, and exposed to cruel ignominy, He never murmured. If you would go to an artist to learn art, and to a scientist to learn science, and to a linguist to learn languages, come to Jesus, the Man of Rest, to learn the precious secret of serenity.

Nay more: He says not, I will *teach* you, but "I will *give* you rest." He is more than a seer or a counsellor. He can impart a restful spirit to such as come to Him. This is human, but also superhuman. He who could make this offer to mankind, and who soon after said at Jerusalem, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink"---was beyond doubt the Son of God.

I need not dwell on the condition of the people of Judæa and Galilee when Jesus spoke these words. Let us think of the world and time in which we live. Perhaps there never was a period of greater intellectual and spiritual unrest. There is debate all around. Everything is questioned. Life is full as

ever of trouble and vicissitude. They say that there is no rest but in the grave. And religion itself is turned into drudgery; and men cry in discontent, "Who will show us any good?"

In some places, even the Atlantic Ocean is calm; and so there are nations and tribes who seem tolerably calm and contented. It may be the result of ignorance or of submissiveness of mind; but they have an inertness which may be mistaken for rest. But the great mind of the world, like the great spaces of the ocean, is far from calm. Winds sweep over it, and the waves swell. Even the firmest minds feel it like the staunchest ships, and fickle minds are tossed like so many fishing boats on a rough day in the Channel. The restless world wants such a one as Jesus Christ, for "the winds and the waves obey Him."

There is great danger at such a time of hastening to accept some fallacious guide, when he promises peace and safety. For instance, in such a country as this, where so many are ill at ease and the teachers do not lead them straight to Jesus, priests glide into the confidence of the unwary, professing to be the only authorised pilots to guide human souls into the harbour of peace. That harbour is the bosom of the Holy Roman Church which cannot err, and which has power to make an end of all controversy. There never was a greater imposture; yet it has much plausibility for a certain order of mind, and this promise of rest in the Church is one of the most successful wiles by which souls are drawn away from the Gospel. Rest, in submission to the Church; quiescence at the feet of the infallible Pope or his representa-

tives ! Most important if true ! But most hollow if not true ! Now, is this the way of peace taught by the Lord and His apostles ? Is this their doctrine of rest ? Plainly it is not.

But we are told that it is proved true by the happy experience of those who have surrendered themselves to the Latin Church. Perverts often sing this song to lure others into the same delusion with themselves. No doubt a kind of rest may be reached by ceasing to think or inquire, and simply accepting as truth what is dictated to you ; but is that the rest which Christ promises to give, and is it just to our own minds, or glorifying to God ?

Even if not the very noblest thing, it is very comfortable, they tell us ; it is such a satisfaction not to make up our minds, but to have them made up for us, to have no haunting doubt, and to have the priest to answer for us in case of any mistake, for he assumes all the responsibility. Ah, foolish one ! What if the priest should have more than enough to do in answering for himself ? And what if the Judge of all should reckon it to you as a fault and a sin that you tried to shuffle off your own responsibility and transfer it to a priest ?

Our text reveals a way of rest historically prior to the Church and to all Christian priests. It must have been that He meant to give rest to the troubled people around Him without such help or agency. And why should it be assumed that He cannot now give us rest but through the authority, instruction, and guidance of orders of priests of whom the New Testament says and knows nothing ? Hither to Me, the Saviour cries. He is accessible to us, and we

have but to comply with His call, move towards Him as a friend, fly to Him as a refuge, close with Him as the Saviour, trust in Him as our all in all.

From what comes our deepest dispeace? Not from our circumstances, but from our unsatisfactory relation to God and His eternal righteousness. And Jesus only can remedy this. We are ignorant of God, and He shows us the Father. We are guilty before God, and He is the propitiation for our sin. We are estranged from God, and in Him we are reconciled. We are vexed by indwelling sin, and He gives us renewal by His Holy Spirit.

But it is not good or safe for us to be at ease. The children of peace continue in labours, and have their full share of difficulties and sorrows. The Prince of peace even lays His yoke upon them, that so they may the more fully learn of Him. This is to take up our cross and follow Him, who pleased not Himself, who doubted not His Father's love, nor disputed His Father's will; for He was meek and lowly in heart. It is to keep Christ's commandments as He kept the Father's commandments. And as He found the yoke when He bore it in the Spirit, so should we find it: easy (*i.e.*, kindly, not galling but congenial), and the burden light, for His commandments are not grievous to a meek and lowly heart.

The yoke which Christ bore was one of constant unselfish labour. The burden which He carried was made up of the sins and sorrows and sicknesses of mankind. And under both He was calm and steadfast. Such is the profound lesson for Christians. You cannot have rest to your souls in a wilful or a selfish life. Enter into the obedience of faith, take

up the burden of Christian service and sympathy, and you will find a blessing which is not to be reached in any other way—rest to your souls. If I have rest in my soul, I have it in everything. If I have it not there, I have it nowhere.

When we begin to think of this text, it seems to be a simple gracious word of welcome, such as children may love to hear, and fit to be repeated to sinners when anxious for salvation. But as we proceed, we discover it to be of grave and comprehensive import for all saints. It shows not merely how Christian peace is to be had by coming to Christ, but how it is to be sustained and prolonged through following Christ and wearing His yoke. We must keep both of these aims and applications in our view as we preach and teach.

We preach Christ to restless sinners. The wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest. The lovers of the world are never satisfied. The proud and wilful are always meeting with some vexation, or chafing over some grievance. Ho! every one that is weary or unhappy, come to the Saviour, and have your sins forgiven, and be at peace with God. He has promised it: "I will give you rest."

We also teach the will of Christ to all who take the name and place of His disciples. Harken to His commandments, that your peace may be as a river. Take upon you His yoke, and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart. You may have little rest in the press of your duties. The Master had no leisure—sometimes hardly time to eat or sleep—but He had rest in His soul; and so will you also have it in your souls, when constrained by His

love, conformed to His example, and comforted by His Spirit.

“ In a service that Thy will appoints,
There are no bonds for me ;
For my secret heart is taught the truth
That makes Thy children free,
And a life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty.”

IX.

MEMENTOES OF THE DEAD.

“And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.”—2 KINGS xiii. 20, 21.

A STRANGE story, but not on that account to be quietly treated as a fable. It is simply told as a fact of this period, well and publicly known; and it was a period of great signs and wonders in the land of Israel. If any would put it aside on the ground that the resuscitation of a dead body is impossible and incredible, he will have to go much farther, and deny the upraising of the Shunammite's son in Elisha's lifetime, and that of the widow's son at Nain, of the daughter of Jairus, of Lazarus at Bethany—nay, of that fundamental fact of our religion, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the sepulchre. For our own part, we find it not at all incredible that God should raise the dead. Having given life once, why should He not, if it seemed good in His sight, give it a second time? True, the instances are few of the restoration of men to a mortal life. The only ones known to us are those which occurred in answer to the prayers of Elijah and Elisha, the three cases

in the time of Christ already mentioned, and that of Tabitha or Dorcas, raised under the ministry of St. Peter. It could not be that such a resumption of mortal life should be granted save in a few exceptional cases. The better defeat of death and of the grave is to be the resurrection to honour and immortality.

We are not bound to discover and state the sufficient reason in each of these exceptional cases. The reasons of Divine action or interposition are not fully declared to us. And as a famous living preacher has said, "A humble and reverent Christian does not consider himself a sort of private secretary to the Master of the Universe." Yet in the present case, the historian in the context plainly enough suggests some reason for the prodigy which occurred at Elisha's sepulchre.

The wonders wrought by both the prophets Elijah and Elisha in their lifetime were meant to exalt their authority and give emphasis to their words, at a time of great moral and religious depression, when the kingdom of Israel had almost wholly lost the fear of Jehovah. At the end of Elijah's grand career, there was a sublime prodigy to put on his past ministry the stamp of a heavenly authority. He returned to his native region on the east of the Jordan and, without tasting death, went up in a chariot of fire into heaven. Elisha, whose ministry, while full of power, was less terrible, fell sick at last, and died, and was buried. But in his case too a sign was given that he had been a prophet of the living God, and that though he was dead, Jehovah lived to give effect to the word of His servant.

The last prediction of Elisha, delivered from his

death-bed, was of three victories to be gained by the king of Israel over the Syrians. It is likely enough that the assurance given seemed too good to be true, and that, after the prophet's death, a cowardly willingness to accept the Syrian yoke began to spread among the people. In the beginning of the year following his death, as the corn was ripening, the time chosen by eastern tribes for predatory incursions, bands of Moabites began to overrun and ravage the country. Then came the wonder at the prophet's tomb, to assure the king and the people that the God of Elisha yet lived, and was able to deliver them, not only from Moabite freebooters, but also from the yoke of the powerful king of Syria, as Elisha had foretold. And so it soon came to pass. "The Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast He them from His presence as yet. So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel" (vers. 23-25).

The incident suggests two lessons :

I. *Of caution.* Let not this passage be cited to support the veneration of relics. It is so cited by Cardinal Bellarmine, in his defence of that practice ; and it really is the only one of his instances from Scripture which has any bearing on the point : the others being such as these, that the bones of Joseph were carried

by the children of Israel to be buried in the land of Canaan, and that cures were wrought by the hem of Christ's garment, by the shadow of St. Peter, and by handkerchiefs or aprons which had touched the body of St. Paul. It is hard to see what these instances have to do with a practice of preserving real (even if they could be proved real, not spurious) bones and clothes of long-departed saints, displaying them to the faithful at solemn seasons, as is done in Roman Catholic churches, and encouraging the people to trust in their wonder-working power, as if our religion conferred benefits by charms and talismans. All this is superstition, not New Testament faith.

The people of Israel, even in a time of blindness and confusion, had more judgment and more genuine reverence than the superstitious Church which has spread over Europe and America skulls, bones, nails from Calvary, pieces of the wood of the Cross, holy coats and handkerchiefs, even little parcels of hair, and toe nails, to be gravely and piously venerated, that through these cures may be wrought and prayers answered. The people of Israel knew that one of their nation had been restored to life when his body touched the dead bones of Elisha; but they did not then rifle the tomb in order to show the dead bones of the prophet and obtain a succession of miracles from them. There were not even processions to the sepulchre, that the sick might be healed and the dead restored at the spot. No further miracle was wrought in this manner, nor does it appear that any was asked for or expected. It seems to us that those Israelites compare faovurably with the prodigy-craving relic-mongers of Latin Christendom.

II. *Of admonition.* This incident suggests the influence of the past, especially of the great and good men of the past, upon the present. It has been said of our sages and heroes that they "rule our spirits from their urns;" and this is true at all events for such as have a knowledge of and reverence for antiquity. What we wish to urge in this place is that the prophets and saints who are with God, not only "being dead yet speak," but even give us new life and impulse as from their very sepulchres.

It may be that the Latin Church has spoilt the principle of veneration by its invocation of departed saints and its silly preservation and exhibition of relics; but, on the other hand, we very probably make too little of the past, too soon forget saints and teachers in the faith, and so are indeed "of yesterday and know nothing."

Disregard of the past conduces largely to shallowness and unwisdom in public affairs. History is neglected, or treated as a sepulchre full of old bones which have no life in them. It would do our nation good sometimes to touch the bones of the great departed. It is something if we know who they were that were great and wise; and if we cannot touch their bones, we may at least remember their words and deeds, so as to catch something of their spirit. But if we exalt into national heroes men who were at heart false and ignoble, it is nothing but harm that we get from contact of spirit with those unworthy dead. The point we urge is that a judicious regard to its past is a vital element of a nation's wisdom and power. If, in any emergency, it is tempted to despair, the deliverances and triumphs of the past breathe into

it new courage. If it is tempted to act unworthily, the memory of noble men forbids. If it loses heart and would play the poltroon, it is re-animated by touching the bones of departed heroes.

In like manner does the Church learn wisdom and increase courage. That Church is most fit to occupy the present and to lead forward into a better future, which keeps in remembrance the past, treasures its lessons, and knows how to touch, not in a childish veneration of relics, but in the power of a spiritual sympathy, the bones of those saints and martyrs who have gone to be with the Lord. And as the time runs on, the number of them is being constantly increased. There are recent graves which in spirit we do well to visit, as well as ancient sepulchres. There have been men of God whom our own eyes have seen and our ears heard, whose bones would that we could touch with such inward effect on ourselves as was produced on the body that touched the bones of Elisha !

Nearly all the eminent men that I used to look up to in our own and other Churches are gone. Nor can I omit a tribute to one, my junior, who has quite lately fallen on sleep. Adolph Saphir was a great Biblical scholar, and a very prophet of the grace of the Gospel. His apprehension of the truth was vivid ; and while his physique was feeble, his spiritual life and energy were singularly strong. At such a time as this, he is a man that will be missed. It is a time of weak convictions and hazy beliefs ; and he had convictions and beliefs clear as sunshine and firm as rocks. Let us not forget him ; let us touch his bones and live and testify for Christ as he did, and not

forget the nation to which he belonged and of which Christ came.

In his sermons and in his books, Dr. Saphir never ceased to show the connection between the Lord Jesus, Israel, and the Scriptures. He dwelt on the unique position and election of his own nation, more particularly on their unbelief. He searched and honoured all the Scriptures, and with fervent iteration declared them to be "full of the goodness, sweetness, and beauty of the Lord." We shall always think of him as a chosen vessel for our Lord's service, and pray God to raise up many such children unto Abraham.

Let me speak of individual character and life. How shallow is the man who never looks back, but assumes that the past is a closed and rather stupid book, and that wisdom begins with his own generation! We should prescribe in such a case a severe course of reading in the great epochs of history and in the lives of illustrious men. For his worst lesson we should inquire of this devotee of the present: Are you so unfortunate as not to have known or met any one whose life gave you a good impulse, and whose very memory has for you a certain charm and inspiration? Is there not a departed parent, counsellor, or friend whose very bones give you new life and impulse when you fall back on them? The poet says—

"That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

But he also speaks well of the wisdom to be gained

from remembrance of, and communion with, the dead, or "those we call the dead," for they

"Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends."

Have you no friend who sleeps in Jesus, who lives in God? Do not forget him. That memory may guard you from much evil. As by touching the bones of the dead, you may get new life, the life of faith and godliness.

Let me teach the highest truth on the subject. You know who is the greatest Prophet, the wisest Counsellor, the most faithful Friend. Jesus was taken down from the Cross, and buried in a new sepulchre. Early on the third day, the women went to the place where the Lord had lain, but found the sepulchre empty. He had lain under the power of death, but could not be holden under that power so long as to see corruption. He is risen. A few years ago I saw the pilgrims at what they suppose to be the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. They kiss the stones and see nothing. The Lord is not there. But the women who went to honour His body on the first day of the week, got from Himself new life and joy. And so are all generations of believers quickened by Him and together with Him.

In the Old Testament story, the prophet was dead and continued dead. Only one man got life at the tomb of Elisha, a man of whom, beyond this fact, we know nothing. But Jesus Christ lives; and because He does so, thousands and tens of thousands live also, and because they live by Him and are imbued with His Spirit, they live unto God.

“If I may but touch Him, I shall be made whole.”
If I may but be crucified with Him, and buried with Him, I shall also live with Him. For this end were we “buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. vi. 4).

X.

GOD IS LOVE.

“God is love.”—I JOHN iv. 8.

“God is.” We do not propose here and now to argue this point. It is our response to the affirmation which Moses heard—“I am. I am that I am.” We reverently accept it and say, “God is.” No one whose opinion is entitled to consideration will contradict the statement. The fact is, that in England and America at all events, there are now scarcely any educated atheists. There are agnostics and sceptics; but atheism and blasphemy are left to a lower class of mind altogether. What men say is, not that there is no God, but that we cannot see God; that we do not know, and are at a loss to perceive how any one can know, whether God is or not. Such a state of mind we must regret; but we can treat it with patience and even with respect.

For ourselves, it is as sure as anything we know that God is. It is inconceivable by us that the universe should be as it is without any supreme, intelligent, controlling Force or Power; and equally inconceivable that there should be moral life and a moral system, such as we see and know, without any Moral Perfection or Supreme Goodness.

The question of questions with us is not, Does God exist?—for that is past question—but what God is, what is His nature or character. And this is the question of questions, not so much because it is the highest on which the human mind can be exercised, as because it is the most commanding in its practical influence on our life and conduct. There cannot be a greater mistake than is involved in the notion that theology is rather theoretical than practical. Nothing makes so great a difference as it does in a man's whole way of thinking and living. Nothing gives so high a sanction to duty, so strong an inspiration of hope, so deep a well-spring of comfort as a true theology or knowledge of God.

It is sometimes made a charge against the Churches called orthodox that they present a side of God which is repugnant to the healthy moral sense—the idea of a despotic being, jealous, ruthless, and arbitrary. Now we shall make two concessions in view of this serious charge: (1) That the revelation of God in the Bible and in the history of Israel and of the Church, has been on the progressive principle. In the Old Testament He was thought of as the Almighty God, the Maker of all, and the Ruler of all. His power was conceived of in contrast with great powers of nature, like the force of a tempest or the waves of the sea; with the great despotisms under which men were crushed, as of Egypt and Assyria; and with the unseen powers or gods which were worshipped by the heathen, and were looked on by them as givers of strength and victory. He was also regarded as glorious in holiness, or in separation from

evil, which other gods were held to sanction. But He was also known as pitiful and of a tender mercy. The Old Testament said that God pities as a father, comforts as a mother; that He is kind; that He delights in mercy. At the same time we acknowledge that ancient Israel claimed the sanction of God for deeds which speak more of their own passionate nature than of His perfection. In such cases the character of the people is reflected on God, instead of the character of God being inflected on the people. This, however, would have done little harm to our modern theology had it not been for that which is our second concession—(2) That many teachers and preachers, not understanding the historical progress of theology, have dwelt on imperfect views of the Divine character, so as to represent God partially and unworthily. Thus, we do not blame the prophets of Israel when remonstrating with that people against any conformity to the idolatry of the nations, for making much of Jehovah's jealousy for the honour due to Him and to Him exclusively; but we do not admire the discretion of a modern teacher who should put this forward without explanation, that "the Lord our God is a jealous God." Nor do we wonder that, at the time of the Reformation, that great constructive theologian, John Calvin, so much emphasised the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. All Christians had been subject for centuries to the sovereign Pope, who assumed a Divine throne on earth, and issued decrees which hardly any one dared to dispute. The theologians of the Reformation threw down this usurped sovereignty by filling men's thoughts with the sovereignty of God and the absoluteness of His decrees. It is the grossest

ignorance to allege that such teaching was slavish. It was the very emancipation of the human conscience and human life, personal and national, from the Papal tyranny; for the sovereignty of God will be found to be the supreme protection of the just liberty of man. And all that is sound and valuable in modern human freedom we owe, not to infidelity, nor even to men with light and pleasant theories of God, but to men of deep religious conviction, and of strong and even stern belief as to the absolute sovereignty of God. But it does not follow that the prominence which Calvin and others gave to this is always to be maintained. In Protestant countries, at all events those who believe in God at all believe that His will and power cannot be frustrated by any, and may not be assumed by any creature. What is more to be urged now is the moral perfection of God. Grant that He is the only God and the sovereign Power; we covet to know also that in those attributes which we call moral, and which we reckon the highest, He is supremely worthy of our confidence and worship.

The New Testament satisfies us on this point; and all that our best modern theology knows is gathered from the completed canon of Holy Scripture, with such helps and corroborations as may be gained from conscience, from reason, and from the signs of God in history. If there still are men who ascribe to Holy Scripture, and to the Church, unworthy conceptions of God, saying that "His ways are not equal," or that His eternity of self-contemplation, or His severity against all who are not continually praising Him, is what in a man we should certainly not admire, these men must demand answers from those, if there be any,

who teach such dishonouring theology. But the Bible, fairly and comprehensively studied, is not open to such imputations; and all competent modern teaching in the Church goes to impress the moral perfection of God—His goodness and His beauty. "God is love." And the profound value of this aphorism, which dropped so long ago from the pen of the Apostle John, may be seen in this, that, whereas coarser and less thoughtful natures will either turn away from the study of God altogether, or will dwell on what are known as His natural attributes, as of omnipresence and omnipotence, the most refined and thoughtful natures pause here, acknowledging that this is indeed a Divine revelation. This, if true, is indeed what a human heart wants to lean upon in such a world as this. God is, and God is love.

It is not alleged that this explains everything. We do not pretend in our religion to explain everything, and must not be charged with failing to do what we never professed or promised. If you should have everything explained to you, where would be your faith? There are hard facts in nature and in history which we know not how to reconcile with either the justice or the mercy of the Supreme God. But this does not seriously trouble us. We see that there are great analogies running through even these hard and terrible facts. There are storms in history that sweep away many who had as good a right as others to live out their days; and we see the analogy in storms on land or sea, that sweep away hundreds to sudden death, we know not why. There are sore struggles and competitions in life, in which some are pushed aside and almost trampled

down; and we see the analogy in that pitiless process of nature which is spoken of as natural selection, in which certain forms of life are superseded and others reign in their stead, on the principle of a survival of the fittest. Why should such things make us doubt whether God is love? Which of us can tell what is consistent with the dispositions and designs of a supreme love moving all things with a supreme wisdom towards the highest and worthiest issues? Whether you believe in God or no, you cannot get rid of the perplexing facts in nature and in history. If you like to ascribe them to a blind and pitiless fate what the better are you? What relief or satisfaction does that notion carry to your mind? Does it not make the facts more dismal than before? How much better to take the saying of the Apostle that God is love, and interpret facts so far as we can in harmony with that truth. Then, when we cannot go farther in the interpretation, lay them down in silence before God. We do not for a moment say that everything is spread before us as on a level plain. We recognise chasms and precipices, immeasurable depths and yawning caverns; but faith also sees shed abroad over all a good and quiet light from God. It does not take away all the terror, but it gives the heart some hope that Love is king even there, and that all will yet be well.

But we must be sure that God is love. And we are sure of it, as the Apostle John was sure, and on the grounds which he has stated. The 9th and 10th verses of this chapter give the convincing evidence. He has shown His love, not in words only, but in a gift, the most precious that even the resources of God could supply. We were far off from Him; we knew

Him not ; we were dead to Him—dead in trespasses and sins. Then He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him—live to God, and live for ever. He did not abide in His glory as sufficient to Himself, ready to pardon those who might return to Him with due submission, but letting the rest perish through their own fault. Whatever is meant by God's being sufficient to Himself, He did not hold aloof from this sinful race of ours ; but self-moved, not because men sought Him, but because He loved them, God drew near and sought those who sought Him not, stood on the earth in the person of Jesus Christ, looked on men with human eyes and spoke to them with human lips, called them to repentance, assured the weary of rest, and raised the spiritually dead to a life everlasting.

Nay more ; for we do not get all the lesson till we come to a place called Golgotha, and behold the Just One on the Cross for the unjust : “ God sent forth His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” As our sins were violations of the law of righteousness, and so of the moral order which God's government must maintain, they had to be atoned for. And Jesus Christ atoned for them by dying for the transgressors. Such is the aspect of the Crucifixion towards the righteousness of God, towards law and government : an aspect which, notwithstanding some difficulties that beset so arduous a conception, is steadfastly to be maintained in our theology. As our sins were marks of our enmity against God, so the dying of Jesus Christ for us was a surpassing proof of the love of God, even to His enemies. And this is the aspect of the death which is here emphasised by the Apostle John, as elsewhere

by the Apostle Paul: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8).

Is it asked, Why did not God proclaim an amnesty for all penitent transgressors, to take effect on the simple condition of the sincere submission of the sinner to His authority? There are profound reasons in the justice of God and the order of His moral government why this could not be. Depend on it that, if atonement could have been dispensed with, God would have spared His own Son. But there is another thought. An amnesty, were it possible, could neither have given such peace to the conscience as the blood of the Cross, nor have so strongly assured the heart of the love of God. There would have been no redemption from our sins, and there would have been a mere proclamation of God's leniency, not a gift in which love gloriously shines.

Let me urge the great truth of which we have spoken on the present attention of every one who hears me. Rid your mind of unworthy conceptions and hard thoughts of God. He is always just, never harsh; always patient, never weak; always wise, never hasty; always strong, never tyrannous. "God is love," and His love is proved and consummated in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Draw near to God in the name of Jesus, and prove how good He is, how merciful, how faithful; what a support in the hour of weakness; what a stronghold in the time of trouble. The call of the Gospel is to you—to every one of you, and it is a call of love. We pray you, be ye reconciled to God.

Then you will know Him, and only then. You

may have a serious mind and a love for lofty themes, and you work hard on the metaphysical idea of the Absolute, or the ontological problem of a self-existent God ; but your brain is only wearied with subtleties—your heart is not touched or purified. Draw near to God revealed in Jesus Christ. Behold in Him the consummate moral Perfection which your moral nature can admire and implicitly trust. Recognise Him in His loving-kindness, seeking and saving sinners, not because they deserve it, but because He loves them. And love Him because He has loved you. Continue in His love. As the earth is born daily into the sunshine, and baptized with the dew, and so made fresh and fertile, so let the spirit that is in you be daily revived in the love of God, and refreshed by His Spirit, that you too may love God and man. And may this faith and love be glad and gentle, and patient and pure and Christlike.

XI.

QUIET AND ASPIRATION.

"I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."—Ps. lv. 6.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles."—ISA. xl. 31.

THERE is an old Greek fable of Dædalus, who wished to escape from Crete, and, unable to do so by sea, resolved to fly through the air to Sicily. For this purpose he made wings, which he attached to his body by wax, and did the same for his son Icarus, that he might accompany him. Dædalus succeeded, but the youth flew up so high that the heat of the sun melted the wax, and he fell into the sea and was drowned.

It is a great mistake to think to reach any moral or spiritual object by means of wings that are merely attached as by wax. The only wings that are safe and useful are those which are our own, and grow out of the inner man of the heart. And, strange as it may seem, these may be in one view of the Christian life the wings as of a dove—in another, the wings of an eagle. The desire of the former suggests the love of quiet, that of the latter the strength of aspiration.

It is worth while to observe that no one in the Bible wishes to have the wings of an angel ; and for very good reasons. First, angels in the Bible have no

wings—these are an invention of poets and painters; and second, no redeemed man should wish to be an angel. He has a kind of service to render to God in this world which would not at all suit an angel; and he has the hope of a place hereafter, nearer to Christ than angels can occupy. But, using the terms metaphorically, he may sigh for the wings of a dove, or soar on the wings of an eagle.

I. *The Love of Quiet.* “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”

Is this the voice of David, that hero of stirring adventure, that mighty man of war? Does he sigh for rest? What should make that valiant king wish to fly away like a dove?

But surely it is a mistake to think of David as a lover of tumult and conflict. His early piety, as well as his poetic genius, had been nourished in retirement among the hills of Judah; and, through even the most agitated periods of his history, he had his places of shelter, where he could muse on life and commune with nature and stay his mind on God. Nay, one may say that soldiers, and men who endured hardship in their youth, are as fond of rest as any men can be.

When David wrote this Psalm, he was in a mood of sorrow and indignation over some ungrateful treatment which he had received. It shocked him, as ingratitude always shocks a generous soul; and he longed to escape from the voice of the enemy and the oppression of the wicked. Tired for the moment of the battle of life, harassed by collision with unworthy and ungrateful men, he longed to be somewhere at rest.

Often had his observant eye marked how the wild

dove fled from the tumult of men and the shout of battle. It betook itself to the rocks far off in the wilderness. He could recall the easy movement of its wings. There is a fine passage in Virgil's *Æneid* (v. 213-217), on the escape of a startled dove from her nest. The poet takes note of the easy action of her wings :

“ Her pinions poised, through liquid air she springs,
And smoothly glides, nor moves her levell'd wings.”

So the King of Israel wished that he could fly away gently and swiftly. He was weary of contention, chafed with injury, and longing for peace.

A desire of this sort may lead one into unwise devices. Some Christians have given up the battle of life almost before they knew what life is ; and in a mood of disappointment or a fit of misguided enthusiasm, have, in their early years, devoted themselves to conventual retirement under rigorous vows. They have in fact cast themselves into prison and slavery, rather than face ordinary conditions of human life. It is cruel, because it cuts across the natural affections ; it is cowardly, because it is running away from the battlefield, instead of fighting a good fight ; and it is inept, because, whatever the unnatural peace of the convent may be, evil thoughts, base passions, bitter envy and animosities cannot be shut out. These bid defiance to walls ever so thick, with locked gates and double doors and windows barred with iron.

One has more consideration for the weariness of men and women who, after many years of toil and struggle, feel unable to bear the strain any longer, or lose heart, and flee away to a monk's cell or hermit's cave. We

do not judge them. It is not the noblest thing to do. St. Peter or St. Paul would not have done it ; but every one is not a Peter or a Paul. We need not expect every one to act up to the highest standard, and do the noblest thing.

Our infirmity does not lie in the direction of secluded hiding-places. A recluse life is not our temptation. Most of us are too much in the din and whirl of life, and have too little rest. For some, there are the excitements and controversies of the Church ; for others, the activities and rivalries of the world. We work at high pressure nearly all the year round ; and many take even their holiday in a crowd and bustle. So the mind and heart lack meditation and repose.

But something in us cries out for a still hour. Something echoes Cowper's longing for "the calm retreat, the silent shade." Even in the midst of occupation, and amidst the superfluous activities of a holiday, too, it is well to seize on hours and half-hours, when we can, for reflection and prayer. Then spread the wings of a dove, and hide in the cleft of the rock. Make Christ your refuge. Let the stormy wind and tempest always drive you to Him. "My soul, why art thou disquieted within me ?" And my soul answers, "Oh, had I the wings of a dove, I would fly away to my Lord, my stronghold, and be at rest."

II. *The Strength of Aspiration.* "They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

Think of the golden eagle, as he stretches his mighty pinions and flies to the peaks of lofty mountains. By this noble figure of speech, Jehovah was pleased to illustrate His deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

The tribes were encamped under the shadow of Horeb and Sinai, on which the eagles perched, and from which they flew high above the plain. At such a spot how appropriate and expressive the words, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself." So deeply did this impress the imagination of Moses, who was a poet, that forty years later, when the tribes were encamped under the mountains of Moab, also the haunt of eagles, he reverted in his last song to the figure which the Lord had used in the wilderness of Sinai, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him" (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12).

The manner in which Jehovah delivered Israel, and taught and trained them to move and act as a separate nation, was wonderfully illustrated by the eagle teaching her eaglets to fly. She encourages them to prove their own wings; and, if they begin to droop, glides below them, and sustains them on her own strong pinions, till they gain force and confidence and can fly alone. A few years ago I read the account given by one who is vouched for as an accurate observer, and who in one of the deep gorges of the Himalayas watched eagles teaching their young to fly. Through a glass he saw several young birds on a ledge of rock at a great height. The parent birds then gently swept past them, as if alluring them, and one of the eaglets ventured to follow. It spread its wings, but began slowly to sink. Immediately one of the parent birds glided beneath it, and bore it aloft again. So they persisted till they taught all the birds to fly.

It was so that the Lord bore His people out of Egypt, helped them in every strait, and brought them to Himself in the wilderness of Sinai; then led them about, and instructed them, till He brought them into the Land of Promise. It was a redemption with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

The eagle holds up the young birds that they may fly as eagles. The Lord, "as a mighty man," helped His people that they might be strong and do exploits. And on this principle He deals in all ages with those who wait on Him. He causes their strength to be renewed, and they mount up on wings as eagles. On this principle was Old Testament piety invigorated: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 14). On this principle too, are New Testament believers strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.

This strength is not for mere flying or skimming along the earth's surface, but for mounting up. I call this aspiration; and is it not the right word? It is the Christian "Excelsior." It has been said that "a noble man compares and estimates himself by a higher idea, a mean man by a lower. The one produces aspiration—the other ambition. Ambition is the way in which a vulgar man aspires." I do not vindicate the etymology of this distinction; but the idea is substantially correct. A mean man has a low ideal, a worldly man a selfish ideal, a vain man a trivial ideal. The ambition of such minds is poor and ignoble. But the man of faith seeks the things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. He has a

grand ideal. He aspires to a heavenly mind, a likeness or conformity to Christ, and a sacred friendship with God; and, as he waits upon the Lord, grace gives to him strong wings, as of an eagle, with which to reach high places, fanning the air of thought and desire in regions which, without grace, the human mind can never reach.

Alas! how rare those believers are. As the words of Isaiah transcended the current piety of the age in which he lived, so the words in which we now try to set forth spiritual privileges go far above the ordinary levels of Christian attainment. Nevertheless, we must teach and preach the high ideal. They who know how to recruit their strength by waiting on God, are bound to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. We must also urge them to mount up on wings like eagles; though we look on a good many professing Christians who seem to have no wings at all—more like creeping things—or have had them so clipped by unbelief that they cannot rise above the ground. They never remind one of either the rest-seeking dove, or the strong-soaring eagle.

Some never really wait on the Lord, for they have no heart knowledge of Him. They walk, but not with God; they run, but not to heaven; they aspire, but to nothing beyond earthly power and honour. They have to learn the hollowness of their lives without Christ. And they must come to Him. Let Him cover you with His feathers, and under His wings put your trust. Salvation is not by any force or flutter of our wings, but by taking refuge under the shadow of His wings. Then only will you begin truly to live

and rise upwards. All things will be made new. You will have "the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;" nay more, you will soar as on strenuous wings of an eagle to the clear air above, the sacred heights and heavenly places of harmony with God.

"On those calm heights, the tumult and the noise
Of all our busy cares and restless joys
Has almost in the distance died away ;
And through the clouds, to our rejoicing eyes,
The City's golden streets and pearly gates appear."

XII.

CHRIST A MINISTER TO THE WEARY.

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."—ISA. l. 4.

It is a soliloquy of the Messiah, Jehovah's servant. In verse 4, we have His qualifications for gracious ministry; in verses 5, 6, His patient suffering; in verses 7 to 9, the final stage and favourable issue of His career. Throughout, the Messiah refers everything to the Lord Jehovah, whose servant He was to be; just as, in the New Testament, the Christ refers everything to the Father who had sent Him.

I. *Messiah's preparation for ministry.*

That He may have the faculty of wise and timely speech, He is carefully taught of God. Reference is made to disciples sitting before the teachers listening with wondering ears or alert attention. This process goes on morning after morning, the early part of the day being the best for intelligent reception. So the Messiah was to be taught by the Lord Jehovah. The prophets had ecstatic moments, visions of the night, and special days when the spiritual afflatus came upon them; but the Christ was to be in continual

communion with heaven, receiving the Father's thoughts and directions day by day, morning by morning.

Before the Spirit descended upon Him and His career as the Christ began, Jesus of Nazareth grew up to maturity as a devout Israelite, following the usual laws of human development. He increased in wisdom and in stature. Gradually He rose to the height of His calling, and opened all His human soul to His Father's business. With an eagerness and intentness which we are perhaps hardly able to imagine, He who was so meek and pure learned God's way. He who was of God, heard God's words.

When He was of full age, the Holy Ghost descended and rested upon Him. And this marked an important epoch in His preparation as the Prophet of God. For this was that Spirit of wisdom and understanding which had been foretold by Isaiah, as resting on the Son of David. Thereafter Jesus Christ was perfectly receptive of Divine communications. He could say truly, "The Lord Jehovah has wakened or opened Mine ear."

Some one may be disposed to ask, "What need of this? If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, one and equal with the Father, how should He need to be taught? Was He not inherently omniscient?" Now, we have to do with what is revealed; and it is quite plainly taught in the Bible that Jesus Christ was gradually taught and trained, and that He spoke and acted not from Himself, but according to instructions received from His Father in heaven. It is a mystery how His divinity refrained from illuminating His humanity, so as to give it once for all perfect knowledge of all things. But we simply bring out the

revealed fact that Jesus Christ prayed for and received heavenly direction, and that this was in harmony with the position which He had assumed as delegate from and servant of Jehovah. "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge."

II. *Messiah's ministry.*

"That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (verse 4). This is not all the errand of Jesus Christ, even as a prophet. He was to judge the poor, and reprove with equity on behalf of the meek in the land. But this was very characteristic of Him, that He would sustain the weary, and call the labouring and heavy-laden to Himself, and give them rest. For this the Lord Jehovah gave Him the tongue of one who has learned well, and can reproduce what He has learned. His place was not at the head of the disputers of this world. Indeed, there are important branches of human inquiry on which He entered not at all. For He came on a spiritual errand, and His ministry aimed at unfolding the relations of man to God, and the goodwill of God to man. He spoke, not to excite curiosity or attract admiration or even to satisfy intellectual hunger, but to relieve anxious minds, lighten burdened consciences, and draw heavy hearts to Himself and to God.

A word spoken in season, how good it is. There is a proverb to the effect that a word so spoken is "like apples of gold in baskets of silver." As the beauty of the silver basket gives a heightened attraction to the yellow fruit, so does the seasonableness of a wise kind saying enhance its value and prepare for it a welcome. In our weariness of soul, give to us a word

in due season, apt to the occasion, and not forced or formal.

This exactly describes the words of Jesus Christ. They have an aptitude to the occasion, an unforced connection with actual circumstances of the moment. They are not awkwardly dragged in, but rise out of the conversation in the most natural manner. The Pharisees and scribes murmured at His reception of sinners, and He poured forth on the spot the grand triple parable of the lost and found. In the home at Bethany, Martha asked Him to bid her sister rise up and help her; and at once He uttered some of His most profound words about the good part and the one thing needful. He sat by a well at Sychar and asked water from a woman who came to fill her water jar, and He gave her a word in season about the gift of God, the water of life. So also the incident of a crowd following Him in the hope of obtaining bread that perishes, led on to the great discourse at Capernaum on the Bread of Life which came down from heaven. And in each case, while His word had a tinge of reproof for those who murmured or misunderstood, it was fraught with kindness and comfort to such as were weary.

His strongest words of rebuke, even His most pungent and uncompromising denunciations of hypocrisy and heartless oppression, were words in season to the weary. They found that they had a friend in Jesus, and One who would not speak smooth things to the wicked.

John the Baptist prepared His way, and revived in men's minds the belief that God would yet speak to them by a great prophet. But John was compara-

tively austere. He roused, he reproved, he blew the trumpet of warning; but he did not mix with common life, or heal the sick, or comfort the weary. This belonged rather to the Saviour whose words dropped as the rain, whose speech distilled as the dew on parched and jaded souls. He associated with men, entered their houses, healed their sicknesses, hid not His face from any human want or grief, and was always ready with apt and profitable words. And all His personal ministry, while terrible to the arrogant and self-righteous, was patient and gracious to the poor and the heavy laden.

To this day there are no words so helpful, so consoling, as those of the Lord Jesus. And there is much for them to do. It is a weary world. Many hearts are sick with delay and disappointment. Many consciences are sore with the memory of old sins and the sting of recent ones. Many eyes are dim and hearts faint through losses, chagrins, and a sense of wrong. In such cases there is no teacher like Jesus, no physician like Jesus. A bruised reed He will not break; a fretting wound He will not irritate; a disquieted spirit He will not harass.

“Oh, blessed voice of Jesus,
Which comes to hearts oppress'd !
It tells of benediction,
Of pardon, grace, and peace,
Of joy that hath no ending,
Of love which cannot cease.”

III. *The lesson for Christians.*

There are persons not merely saved and comforted by Christ, but called, after His example and through His grace, to save and comfort others.

For this they must first have their ears awakened and their hearts opened to learn of Him as He learned of the Father morning by morning. It is vain to speak in religion what you have merely learned from men. The only indispensable qualification for Christian usefulness is that you be taught of God, that you have His words in your heart, His wisdom in the hidden part. And for this you must wait on the Lord day after day, learning His will, drawing on His treasures of wisdom and knowledge. One speaks with calmness and power when he does so out of the abundance of his heart; and the secret of a spiritual abundance is to be in daily communion with the Divine fullness, waiting morning by morning on the Lord. Then you have in yourself not a shallow cistern soon dried up, but a well of water; and from you flow rivers of living water. The most eloquent men are not always the most profitable to the Church. The most erudite are not always the wisest or the best. Cherish a docility of mind under the Spirit of Christ. Learn of Him before you teach others; and then you will speak, though not with the tongue of an angel or even of an orator, yet with what is better, the tongue of one who is spiritually taught, and can in season sustain the weary.

What better occupation for a follower of Christ than to be a helper of the weak, an instructor of the perplexed, a son of consolation; to drop seeds of truth quietly into human hearts, to be in the world as Christ was, to speak to the weary as Christ spoke!

So may we best show our brotherly kindness. By a word in season a Christian may help one who is really much stronger than himself, but for the time is

vexed or disheartened. Martin Luther often acknowledged himself aided and consoled by words which fell from friends of his who were not at all such notable Christians. He tells how he was troubled in the year 1535, and disposed to doubt whether God was good, when a comparatively obscure Christian said, "Our Lord God, doubtless, is thinking in heaven, What shall I do more with this man? I have given to him so much, and yet he will despair of My goodness." Luther adds, "These words were a glorious comfort to me, cleaving to my heart as if an angel from heaven had spoken them to me." On another day, Luther spoke of Timothy, Titus, Epaphras, and others as cherishing the spirit of Paul, and added, "The greatest saints have their times of faintness, when others are stronger than they."

How sad the inability of many professing Christians to say a word in season to the weary! They suppose that it is due to a mere want of language. They are no speakers, never had a ready tongue, and so are almost dumb in regard to spiritual things. But the truth of the matter is that they have nothing to say. They are ill off for thoughts, even more than for words. The right thing to be said does not occur to them. The tongue is slow and embarrassed, simply because the ear is not open, and the mind is not fed with spiritual truth. They cannot speak of or for Christ to any purpose, because they do not learn of Christ. In a word, they are dumb because they are deaf.

The good Lord waken our ears morning by morning, and cause us to receive the things of the Spirit! Then, without strain or difficulty, we shall have the

word in season ; and especially in hours of trial the Lord will give us what we ought to speak.

“ Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone. .

“ Oh, teach me, Lord, that I may teach
The precious things Thou dost impart.

“ Oh, fill me with Thy fulness, Lord,
Until my very heart o'erflow
In kindling thought and glowing word,
Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.”

XIII.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 COR. v. 20.

A PRECIOUS Gospel : God's love to the world. A precious ministry : an embassy from Christ.

Great doctrines hang together. When our Lord had taught regeneration to Nicodemus, He proceeded to speak of redemption. So, when Paul has spoken of new creation in Christ, he proceeds to treat of reconciliation through Christ unto God.

There is no obscurity in the language. Alienation, conciliation, reconciliation, are words in familiar use.

Alienation of one man from another implies that they once were friends, but that some discord has sprung up between them. God and man at first were friends. The relation between the Maker and the man He had made was one of perfect peace. But a serious discord began. Man disobeyed, having believed a lie, and God expelled him from the garden of His favour. Mercy began at once to flow to the transgressors, for God delights in mercy ; but the ground of discord only increased as time ran on and the sin of man accumulated. And so the alienation grew, the displeasure

of God being against the workers of iniquity, and the workers of iniquity hardening their hearts against God.

Conciliation is a fine word and a noble thing. One meets another, or a party of others, who hate him without cause, and, by meekness of spirit and kindness of tone, disabuses his opponent's mind of evil surmises, corrects his mistakes, removes his ill-feeling, and gains him for a friend. But the word is not strong enough to express the gaining over of alienated men to God, because in this case there is more to be dealt with than misconduct or prejudice.

Reconciliation is the word. It implies the overcoming of grave difficulties and obstacles, in order to the establishment of new and happy relations, and the turning of aversion into love.

In most cases where there is variance between man and man, there are faults on both sides; but he plays the noblest part who is the first to make peace, and if needful to make amends. In the alienation between God and man, all the fault lies with man; and yet it is God who has approached us, not we who have sought Him. It is He who has proposed peace, and provided for it. It is God who reconciles.

"It was easy for Him to do so," some men cry, "He had only to forgive, and, by the uplifting of His countenance, grant us peace." But this is ignorantly spoken. It cannot be easy for the just God to connive at evil doing, and for the true God to say "Peace, peace," when there is none. It cannot be possible.

Others quote on the subject the direction of our Saviour regarding the reconciliation of brethren. "Confess thy fault, and be reconciled to thy brother." "If thy brother transgress against thee, rebuke him;

and if he repent, forgive him." Why, they ask, should not the reconciliation be equally simple between God and man? Just because it is not a feud between one brother and another, but a separation between God and man, involving the question of righteous government as well as of personal feeling. Therefore the need of the Cross and the Gospel of the Crucified One.

Forasmuch as God, in His just love, resolved to deal not merely with the feeling of enmity to Him in the human heart, but with the great underlying ground of discord, the sin of the world, He saw meet to do something more than speak words through prophets. He would come into the world. He would tabernacle among men. So God was in Christ; and Christ was at once the Son of God and the Son of man, having two natures wonderfully joined in one person. As one with God, He was faithful to all Divine claims, prerogatives, and purposes. As one with man, He entered into man's disability, bore his sin, and carried his sorrow.

The first, the fundamental thing, is the dealing of God in Christ with the sin of the world; for this, and only this, goes to the root of the matter. Christ was "made sin for us," not a sinner, for He was the undefiled, but sin—carried it as a burden, was enveloped in it as in a mantle of shame, made Himself responsible for it, and in death became a propitiation for our sins. On this ground condemnation is lifted off. God imputes not their trespasses to such as by faith obtain the benefit of Christ's death. They are made the righteousness of God in Him.

Men raise a cry that this is all make-believe. But

no ; in the Divine act of imputation there is nothing illusory or fictitious. There was a real and serious laying of our sin on the Lamb of God, that there may be a real laying or conferring of Divine righteousness on us who believe in His name.

Next comes the removal of enmity from the mind, and of prejudice and suspicion from the heart of man, that is, the actual reconciliation of individuals ; and this is effected by the word of the Gospel, or word of reconciliation, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The first truth is, Christ lifted up atoned for our sins. The second is that Christ lifted up draws all to Him, and so to God. The love of God is so manifested to the sinner that his mind is changed, his heart is melted, his pride is broken, his prejudices and enmities are dispelled. Then he casts himself down penitent, thankful, believing, at the feet of God in Christ ; and reconciliation is complete.

Now wherein did St. Paul conduce to this result ? What part in the reconciliation of men is played by the preacher of the Gospel ?

It is quite obvious that the preacher has no part in the propitiation for sin on which the reconciliation rests ; but he is employed to publish peace as one acting on Christ's behalf. And St. Paul felt that he was announcing the noblest function with which a mortal man could be intrusted when he wrote, "God hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

The Apostle used a term of great significance and dignity, "We are ambassadors in behalf of Christ." In another epistle, "In behalf of the Gospel, I am an ambassador in bonds." No doubt the appellation was

specially appropriate to the first preachers of the Gospel to the world, but in a measure it should apply to all who, with clearness and fidelity, announce to men and urge upon them the Gospel of God.

But God's ways are not as the ways of men. A nation sends an ambassador to be its representative and champion at the capital of another nation, to maintain its rights as well as to cultivate friendship. But God sends His ambassadors to His own revolted children, to bring them back to Him. When a modern sovereign sends an ambassador to a hostile ruler with a view to make peace, he may clothe him with plenary power to negotiate with a plenipotentiary from the other side. Then each sets to work with diplomatic art to yield as little and gain as much as he can. But God sends ambassadors simply as royal messengers to announce to men His terms of peace, which are unchangeable, which no possible negotiation could better, for they are terms of free grace. Hear the message, one and all: "God loves you, God calls you, God is ready to forgive and receive you. Be ye reconciled to God."

Our Lord Himself was the original Ambassador for God. Having returned to heaven, He employs apostles and other ministers of the Word, as representing Him, and, so far as the utterance of the message goes, as in His stead. It follows, of course, that they are to take their instructions from Him, and deliver not their own lucubrations, but the truth as it is in Jesus, and as it came from Him. And they should have the Master's name constantly lifted up, and speak of His greatness and majesty, His goodness and beauty, His righteousness and strength. Moreover, they should

never be ashamed of Him or of His word, but speak out fearlessly as the ambassadors of the Great King.

The most wonderful feature of this embassy, as Paul understood it, is its pathetic pleading with sinful men. He who might well take the tone of high command mingled with reproof, takes that of gentleness, and even of entreaty: "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you;" or in the Revised Version, "As though God were intreating you by us, we beseech you." When a man is troubled for his sin he is apt to think that if only he could pray to God with sufficient earnestness, he might perhaps obtain mercy. But here is grace, amazing grace. It is the messenger of God who prays to him. It is as though God did beseech.

At the Mount of the Law, when God spake the Commandments, the people trembled. "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. xx. 19). Lo, now in all places where men know and confess that they have broken this law, God utters the pardoning reconciling word. Let none shut their ears or stand afar off. Let God speak to us, and let us hear, that we may live and not die.

We do not forget that in the Gospel God commands, and every expression of His will claims our obedience. He has also uttered warnings and menaces of judgment. But it is with the persuasive note that He makes a way for Himself into the heart of man. And those of His servants have had most success in their ministry who have known best how to persuade men by the mercies of God.

Hear one of the old Scottish preachers (Halyburton):

"In Christ's stead we earnestly beseech you. We crave no unreasonable thing when we bid you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. What more reasonable than for a captive to accept of a deliverer, a slave to receive a redeemer, a condemned malefactor to welcome a pardon, a sinner to entertain a Saviour, a wanderer to lay hold upon a guide, a poor man to accept of offered riches, a pursued offender to betake himself to the city of refuge?" After further pleading on the excellences of Christ and the tender mercy of God, he cries out with pathetic energy, "Can ye refuse us, O sinners, O rocks, O hearts harder than rocks?"

It puts you all under grave responsibility to have this Gospel of love preached to you. It is not shrouded in ceremony, or marred by any alloy of legalism, but spoken to you in terms which you surely cannot misunderstand. What is the answer of your heart to the God who beseeches you by us, to the Christ for whom we plead?

Can you be at a loss to know what kind of answer is wanted, is expected? Surely one of grateful reception, closing with the Divine proposal of peace. Not effort or struggle, not doing your best, not promising to be good; but the acceptance of what God proffers, acquiescence in what He ordains, hearty belief of the record He has given concerning His Son, and consequent reliance on the Son for life eternal. So are you reconciled.

Too often the embassy is met by trifling questions and by provoking delays. Ah! what a contrast between the straightforward message of peace from God, and the shuffling evasive answers of men. More disrespectful and provoking than a blunt refusal is the

answer of indecision, procrastination, and excuse. O perverse hearer, who will not say Amen when God has spoken to him, but will think the matter over, and perhaps say Amen when some years have passed ! He has his plausible pretext, which, like his own shadow, he pursues and cannot overtake, for he pushes it before him as he goes. All the while he is vexing the Spirit of God that strives with him, and doing his utmost to discourage and baffle that very ministry of reconciliation to which he seems to listen. “We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.’

XIV.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY—WHENCE IS IT?

“And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”—MATT. xxi. 23-27.

THE things which excited the authorities of the Temple thus to challenge the authority of Jesus were, the incidents which had attended His entry into Jerusalem and His banishment of traffickers from the sacred courts. They could not deny that His words were wise and His works good; but, puffed up with vain imagination of their own right to regulate all religious instruction and action, they demanded His authority. What right had He to open His mouth without license from a Rabbinical school or sanction from the Sanhedrim? Now there might have been some ground for this question, if Jesus had claimed to be a scribe or a rabbi. But His true calling was different and more exalted. He was “a prophet mighty in word and deed

before God and all the people;" and prophets had never been subject to the Council of the Jews. They were bearers of direct messages from Jehovah, carrying with them intrinsic authority. In the Old Testament tests were given for distinguishing a true prophet from a false one; but human official authorisation was not among them.

It being so, the Prophet from Nazareth would not seek honour from men, or take authority from them. He had come forth from God, and spoke words of God. So He answered those official persons who thought to overawe Him by their question, by a counter-question which at once embarrassed them. The ministry of John the Baptist was yet quite fresh. Had he submitted his claims to the judgment of the Sanhedrim? Had he derived his influence from any Rabbinical school? What, then, did they say of him? If he had been an unauthorised religious teacher, why had they not exposed him? If he was a prophet, why had they not received and honoured him? It was an awkward dilemma for those pompous officials, and they stood baffled and disconcerted, and answered, "We cannot tell." Out of their own mouths they were proved to be incompetent judges of spiritual authority; and so Jesus of Nazareth refused to plead before them.

Yet the question probably rises in many minds as this passage is read, Why would He not tell them plainly that His authority was direct from heaven? Granted that He silenced them with much adroitness and that He had a good right to treat those Temple pedants with some disdain, would it not have been more worthy of Jesus, more significant of His meekness

and lowliness of heart, for Him to speak plainly to those rulers of the people? When some of the same order had asked John the Baptist, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" he had answered at once, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Why did Jesus not answer in the same explicit way? Was it that He so utterly disdained those who put the question? Was it not rather to put them, if possible, on the only track of thought which could lead them to a right conclusion?

1. He would expose to their conscience their moral incapacity to judge righteous judgment in such a case. It is above all things necessary, in dealing with questions of spiritual authority and truth, to be actuated by an honest purpose. And this was what was wanting to those rulers of the Jews. Their conduct towards John the Baptist had shown it. They had not openly repudiated his ministry, because he was popular; but they had at heart done so, because they were self-righteous and thought they had no need of repentance. And now they brought a prejudiced mind to Jesus Christ, and asked for the source of His authority, when they had already made up their minds to refuse His claims and extinguish His influence. To men in such a mood, no satisfaction could be given. Jesus would not tell them by what authority He acted.

This is an admonition for men in every age who cavil at the Gospel of Christ. There is no satisfaction for those who wish to find fault, or who are not actuated by an honest desire to know and obey the truth. Moral disinclination or prejudice is the chief cause of all the professed intellectual difficulties about the person and work and precepts of Jesus Christ. The Jewish

rulers were determined to see nothing of authority, nothing from God, in the Lord Jesus. So still there are those who profess to investigate Christianity, but are resolved from the first to deny its truth ; and on such minds evidence is really thrown away. Christ does not tell them His authority.

2. He would turn their thoughts from extrinsic to intrinsic authority, with its appropriate evidence.

The rulers thought of such authority as centred in the Sanhedrim. They knew that the Nazarene had no commission from the Council, and therefore inferred that He was an intruder on a sacred province which He had no right to enter. But in reply He laid no claim to the sort of authority which was in their minds. He wished for no sanction from the High Priest or from the Council. Neither as Prophet, as Priest, nor as King would He rest His dignity or authority on any human officialism. He did not want a commission from the Sanhedrim. He did not derive anything from the suffrages of the people. He was from above ; and the authority which He wielded was intrinsic and spiritual.

How was this to be known ? By His works and by His word. Those who had eyes might see ; those who had ears might hear. What need to ask by what authority the sick are healed, the ignorant instructed, the sorrowful comforted, the sinners brought to repentance, the worldly-minded brought to have a spiritual mind ? Such achievements justify themselves, and form a testimonial to Him who performs them which no official sanction is needed to confirm. In fact, the true teacher never needs testimonials. The greatest benefactors of humanity have carried their authority

with them in the very power and will to utter wisdom and to do good. Poets come and sing, and so wield authority over generations of men, simply because the power was in them. Their genius was their authority. A seer asks no one's permission to see further than other men or to utter what he sees. His gift is his sufficient authority. The man who has a strong moral character and purpose shows it, and makes it felt. If all the courts and councils in the world forbade him to do so, they could avail nothing. The man who has a message of good news from God in his bosom and knows something of its value, has, in that very fact, authority to tell the message to others.

Now in Jesus Christ we may recognise intrinsic moral authority at its summit. The rulers of the Jews could not or would not see it, because of their prejudice against Him and their pedantic zeal for official authority derived from men. But the people often had a glimpse of it. After the Sermon on the Mount we read, "The multitude were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (St. Matt. vii. 28, 29). And indeed some of the ruling classes too discerned it, for Nicodemus spoke for more than himself when he said, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him" (St. John iii. 2).

The refusal of our Lord to meet those who cavilled at His authority in any other way than by pointing to the intrinsic power and goodness of His ministry, was characteristic of Him to the last. When He was arrested and brought before the Council, He indicated calmly that He held it useless to plead before judges

who could not or would not recognise the divinity of His word and work. "If I tell you, ye will not believe." When He was questioned by the Governor, Pontius Pilate, He simply told him that He had been born and had come into the world to bear witness to the truth, and then added significantly, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." But Pilate could not catch the grandeur of the statement, or understand the authority which such a commission from the God of truth imparted to Jesus. At a later stage, in much perplexity, Pilate asked his prisoner, "Whence art Thou?" "But Jesus gave him no answer." So resolute was our Lord not to entertain any question of human authority or earth-born jurisdiction.

It is a lesson which has been far too little attended to in the history of the Church. The stress of authority has been laid on official functions and holy orders, which are good and useful in their place, instead of being laid on the possession of spiritual intrinsic power, with the God-given capacity to speak the words and do the works of God.

Look how Christianity prevailed at first. How little of officialism in the Acts of the Apostles, how much of the moulding power of a new spiritual element of thought and life! It has been well said that "Christianity had taken a deep hold on the world before its followers had even got a name: it had begun to leaven the world, and to find its way into the homes of rich and poor, before the powers of the world had observed its advancement; and when they did at last begin to question it, and to say, 'By what authority

dost thou exist, or who gave thee this authority to invade all the departments of human life ?' the time for putting the question was past. It had come and had grown up on its own authority ; it had lived by its own inward vitality ; it had taken possession of the minds and affections of mankind by a force which no earthly power could lend it, and of which no power on earth could wholly strip it" (Watson).

How wonderfully the ages which have elapsed since Jesus lived and died on earth have justified the position which He took up, the claim He calmly made to an intrinsic authority, which could well afford to dispense with all the authority that men could have imparted ! This Jesus sits not only in glory on the heavenly throne, but in commanding influence over mankind, on the summit of wisdom and love, making Himself more and more felt as the light of men and the ruling spirit of human history. They who can and will appreciate the proper evidence of this see it without argument. On others the clearest demonstration is lost. By Him the blind understanding receives sight, the lame in duty walk, the lepers of sin are cleansed, the deaf minds hear, the dead hearts are raised up in newness of life, and the poor have good tidings preached unto them. Is not this the Christ ? What need to ask for His credentials ? Will you demand of Him who has blessed so many generations and gathered so many sons to glory, to satisfy you as to His title to do all this, and the source of His authority ?

"Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ ! Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father !" Oh, speak Thy word to us with power ! Oh, work Thy will ! If there be among us a caviller, convert him by the

glorious process of faith and experience into a witness of Thy saving power!

To some probably a great trouble must come before they can know the Lord. When the sea is smooth, He sleeps on a pillow; but the storm rises, and there is a call for the Master, for some one who can allay the tempest. Then what man is there whom the winds and waves obey? In emergencies of personal history, in sore trials, in hours of strain and peril, there is none that can help as can Jesus Christ by His Spirit and His Word. He is not as those scribes whose pedantic prescriptions can but oppress and fatigue a spirit already torn and weary, or as those rulers in the Temple, who would prefer that men should be lost rather than that they should be saved without their authority. At His feet let us sit submissive, for His words are wise, His Spirit is good, His truth endures, His grace abounds.

When we know Him as our own Healer, Saviour, and Helper, we are past all questions about His authority. We may inform ourselves about the theories which are abroad to account for Christ. Who do men say that He is? But for ourselves we say, with Simon Barjona, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

XV.

THE HOUSE OF MERCY.

“I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens.”—Ps. lxxxix. 2.

WHETHER this Psalm was written in the reign of David, or in that of some of his more remote descendants, it is plain that it celebrated the covenant of promise given to that king regarding the continuation of his children on his throne. The loving-kindnesses spoken of are those which God had revealed to the son of Jesse, called by the prophet Isaiah “the sure mercies of David.”

These included the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and His exaltation to the throne of His father David; and, as we read this Psalm, we ought to let New Testament light fall on it, and praise God’s mercy to mankind in the Gospel of Christ. The revelation of mercy may change its style at different periods, but not its substance. Pass along the line of family portraits in some old historic castle, and, though each occupant of the family honours is dressed according to the style of his own period, you have but to look on the features and their expression, to recognise the family likeness in them all. So the saving mercy of God to man is the same through all the Scriptures, though dressed now in one form of

revelation, now in another, according to the historical stage which had been reached.

Now probability ran strongly against the fulfilment of God's promises to David. Even in the lifetime of that king, it was too plain that his house was not perfect with God ; and many of his descendants forsook the ways of the Lord, and brought weakness and impending ruin on the kingdom. Still faith can smile at improbability. The Psalmist believed, and therefore said, that the covenant of the Lord which He had sworn to David would not fail. His mercies would be established for ever, and His faithfulness would guard them unchanging in the heavens.

Is it not a delightful theme ? Many truths, which we allow to be important, cannot be reiterated without provoking weariness. But this truth is always welcome to the ear and to the heart of those who have any real sense of inward defect and spiritual need. That is a sweet Psalm which has the refrain twenty-six times over, " For His mercy endureth for ever."

One of our best commentators on the Psalms explains the figure in our text as that of " some stately palace, rising ever greater and fairer, stone by stone, before the wondering eyes of men, knowing no decay, never destined to fall into ruin."

Man cannot raise such an edifice. Yet it is one of the glories of man to be a builder. Feeble tribes and uncivilised races have been content with huts, and have even dwelt in caves. It is said that there is a tribe which lives in trees ; but vigorous nations have built in brick or quarried stone, not their family dwellings only, but nobler structures, pyramids, coliseums, castles, bridges, minsters, palaces. These are the monuments

of their skill and patient strength. But of these it cannot be said that they are built for ever. The Tower of Babel, the sumptuous halls of Xerxes, the palace of the Cæsars, the Temple of Jerusalem—where are they? One may find an Egyptian pyramid here, or a Roman Pantheon there, firm and erect through hoary centuries, but to them also there is an end. The tooth of time is slow in certain climates, but it is sure, and it gnaws man's strongest buildings hour by hour. Nay, if some buildings could defy decay, they still are doomed to perish in the day when the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Not so God's Bethesda, or House of Mercy, planned in His all-perfect wisdom, and erected by His all-skilful and all-powerful hand. It rests on righteousness and truth, and the faithfulness of God settled in the heavens covers and protects it age after age.

May we not look at its history? There is nothing about it of confusion or haphazard: it follows a Divine plan, and has a well-ordered progress and expansion. If we think of God's grace as a river, we must remember that a river has its regularity as well as its liberty, observes an appointed course, and increases in width and volume as it flows. And so if we think of His mercy as a building, we must not fancy that it follows rambling capricious impulses. It is constructed on a heavenly plan, enlarging its capacity and perfecting its symmetry as the days and years go on, and as the mind of God, who shows mercy, is more fully and graciously disclosed.

"Forty and six years was this temple in building," said the Jews with a boastful accent. There are

edifices on the earth which it took more than a century to build. And think what this involves. Men could say, In our earliest childhood we saw this structure rising, and yet in our old age, it is rising still. They saw the foundations and low walls of early recollection grow into majestic heights, with noble columns and stately arches and storey piled on storey, when their steps were tottering in old age; and still the work went on—the walls were rising still, new towers and pinnacles lifted up their heads, and the building seemed as though it would go on for ever.

But these things at their best are but poor figures of God's House of Mercy—the shelter of all who have sought His pardon and pity in all generations, and ever revealing higher heights and deeper depths and broader spaces; and however many flee into it for safety, yet there is room.

Well for us that God builds the House, for man cannot build a shelter for himself from the storm of judgment; and alas! so far as he could, he has only marred walls which God erected. Let us show you this from sacred story.

Round our first parents God built the wall of innocence and peace. But it was a wall which man was bound to keep up by constant obedience. He disobeyed; then the wall fell, and could not be replaced. Yet, even in that hour, God joined mercy with judgment, goodness with severity; and before He drove the man from Paradise, gave a promise of restoration through the woman's offspring.

The next Divine step was to build a wall of primitive piety by grace round the descendants of Adam in the line of Seth and Enoch; but through the alliance

of the godly with the ungodly, this also fell down. Misrule increased, and the earth was filled with corruption and violence. Then again judgment came in the destroying waters. And yet again there was salvation : a vessel of mercy rode upon the flood. And then the world began again with men and women, who had a species of resurrection out of the waters of death and burial—eight souls to whom God had showed mercy.

Thus innocence was of God—piety was of God—salvation was of God. Alas ! man now took to building a stronghold of centralized power for himself. “Go to,” said the descendants of Noah, “let us build a city, and a tower, the top of which may reach to heaven.” But after a time of patience and silence, the Lord said, “Go to, let Us go down and there confound their language.” The result was that they left off to build the city. The project of imperial pride was abandoned in confusion. But God again set up a House of Mercy. He called a man from Ur of the Chaldees, placed him in the Land of Promise, and in the tents of Abraham and Sarah built up mercy, preparing a blessing for all the nations of the world.

God built a wall of special laws and institutions round the posterity of Abraham as a holy nation ; but they broke His laws and neglected His institutions, and did all in their power to counteract Jehovah’s purpose. At last He gave them a king, and after the failure of King Saul through wilfulness, established the throne in the line of His servant David. As we have already indicated, the house of David tottered to its fall ; still faith took hold of the word of promise, and said, “The covenant is well ordered and sure.”

Kings might be unwise, governments overthrown, armies defeated, strongholds taken; heavy strokes of the rod might fall on David's house; but God's covenant of promise could not be overthrown—His purpose of mercy stood.

Open the New Testament, and read the first sentence: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham."

Our Lord came from Abraham's tent, and is the greater than Isaac. He is really the heir of all things, and in Him there is blessing for all nations, even to the ends of the earth. He also came of David's house. The angel said to the blessed Virgin Mary, "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David." The apostles Peter and Paul both teach that "the sure mercies of David" are to be recognised in the resurrection and consequent lordship of Jesus. And the last page of the New Testament contains this significant declaration by our Lord, "I am the root and the offspring of David." He was the sprout shooting forth from that ancient root, and He is the offspring—the best embodiment of the race of David, so that to Him the promise of David's throne is secured, and the covenant of peace is sealed.

What an upbuilding of mercy was in Jesus Christ, even in His lowly estate, when He took the form of a servant! His very warnings and rebukes were merciful, and in His dealings with the sick and the sinful, how excellent was His loving-kindness! To lepers and lunatics and demoniacs, to the blind, the lame, and the palsied, He was kind—always kind. It was His delight to heal the sick, to raise the sunken,

to recover the lost. And the end of His life was the most convincing proof of all of Divine mercy. He died to redeem us unto God by His own blood.

The result is that now mercy full and free confronts the sinful, and an open door invites their entrance. It is the true city of refuge—the only tower of safety. For the Divine faithfulness, firm in the heavens as contrasted with the shifting restless shadows on the earth, watches over the House of Mercy, and all who seek shelter there. God will never violate His promise, or disappoint a hope which is built upon His word.

Thus simply speaks St. Paul of his own salvation, "I obtained mercy." Have all of you got what he got? If not, why not, since mercy is free? Have you ever been as much in earnest for it as Bartimæus was when he cried, and when men sought to silence him, cried the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me"? As much in earnest as the humble publican of immortal memory, who, standing far down in the Temple, smote his breast in self-accusation, and said, "God be merciful to me the sinner"? Oh, be in earnest; for though mercy is free, the day of mercy is for each man limited, and it is with many already far spent. Now what hinders you? Is it that you are not worthy to come to God? True—you are not; but He does not invite the worthy. These are His words, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in

fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa. lv. 1-3). Nay, you are worse than poor and needy, you are wicked and unrighteous. But listen further to His words, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. lv. 7).

Some of us, at all events, can bear witness that these sayings of God are true and faithful. We have not at all established our own righteousness, but we have obtained mercy. And now we live and move in it. It is not merely a strong building round about us. It seems to be the very atmosphere in which we breathe and have our being. We think and feel in it, speak and keep silence in it, lie down and rise up in it. We look back and see that it is mercy which patiently followed us, lifted us when we fell, comforted us when we sorrowed, and held us up when we were weary. We look round in the present, and whatever our toils or trials, we see mercy in and above them all. We look forward, and lo! mercy awaiting us, and beckoning us on to the day of Christ. So are we to "keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Oh, glorious love of God! Oh, tender pity! Oh, heavenly faithfulness!

"Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me:
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be."

XVI.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

“ And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,”—REV. vii. 14.

THE Bible can put a sublime meaning into common words. “Blood of a Lamb! What language of the shambles is this!” one might cry who had never heard the doctrine of Christ; but to the ear and heart of the Church it is language of transcendent significance and even sacred sweetness. The Lamb is the Son of God. The blood is His life poured out to death for our salvation. This is everything to us, for, as Vinet said, “Without expiation, and the ideas connected with it, what is Christianity?”

No one who has read the New Testament denies that it is instinct with the sacrificial idea which so pervades the Old Testament, and that Jesus Christ has been described as this Lamb of God with distinct reference to the sacrifices of lambs on the altar of Jehovah, and to the prediction of Isaiah that the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah, would be led “as a lamb to the slaughter.” There are diversities of opinion or doctrine as to the nature and extent of the expiation thus accomplished; but there is no room for question that John the Baptist, and the Apostles of Christ, and

the Church of all ages have looked on our Saviour as the Lamb of God, not so much for the gentleness and purity of His life, as for the death which He suffered on the Cross. St. Peter indeed speaks of the Lamb as "without blemish and without spot," but not as if to lay stress on the innocence and excellence of the living Christ. It is to show that He was the proper antitype to the spotless lambs required by the Law for sacrifice. The reference is to "precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 19). In fact the expression is in keeping with that of St. Paul, that He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

Under all the heathen forms of religion, man, sinful and therefore afraid of the wrath of the gods, is required to bring oblations to appease them, and all impure forms of our own religion relapse into this. But pure Christianity, as found in the New Testament, quite contradicts and overturns this plan for establishing a claim on the favour of God. It shows us the insufficiency of all human devices and offerings to atone for sin, and points to the Lamb provided by God for us, not by us for Him. "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

As much as ever there is variance of opinion regarding the doctrine of the atonement, that is, the exact relation of the shed blood of the Lamb to human sin, redemption, pardon, and cleansing. Our Church has held, in common with all the Reformed Churches, that the death of Christ was a proper sacrifice; and the purpose of it, according to our Shorter Catechism, was "to satisfy Divine justice, and reconcile us to God." The second of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion

says, not quite so accurately, "to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice not only for original guilt but also for actual sins of men." The term "satisfaction" is, however, not to be understood as though the sword of God was thirsting for a victim and had to be gratified. It is that the claims of eternal justice had to be met, and were met and not evaded. But there are many who exclaim against this view of the death of Christ, however carefully expressed. They will not hear of claims of justice in the matter. But they lay all the stress on the exhibition of love in the dying of the Lord Jesus, and on the moral influence which this is fitted to exert in persuading men of the duty of self-denial and self-sacrifice for others. They hold that Christ entered into our very sins as well as sorrows by a strong sympathy; but that there was imputation of them to Him, and therefore a penal element in His suffering, they deny.

Now, these views of the atonement, though often thrown into contrast, are not in the least opposed to each other. One of them need not exclude the other. We strongly hold and highly value the doctrine of the commending of divine love, and the sublime moral influence of the self-sacrifice of Christ. But this does not preclude the other doctrine of the propitiatory character and effect of His death; and without this last we can neither explain the Scriptures, nor meet the case of a troubled guilty conscience. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world by bearing that sin, accepting responsibility and judgment for it, and shedding His own blood or giving His own life for its expiation. Many a good man has had to die for others, and has done so with resignation; but no good man ever took

away the sin of others. This is peculiar to Him, who for this cause is called the Lamb, that as on the lambs of sacrifice sin was laid in a figure to be atoned for, so on Him the Lord laid the iniquities of us all. Thus the sin of the world, regarded as one tremendous pile of accumulated crime, is for ever borne away.

It is the manner of some fastidious folk to shrink from what they call this theology of blood ; but what they really shun is any serious consideration of what Holy Scripture teaches regarding the guilt of sin and the propitiation which it needs in order, first, to the absolution of the offenders, and then to their purgation from its stain and deliverance from its power. The New Testament writers know nothing of this fastidiousness. St. Paul says, "We have redemption through His blood ;" St. Peter, "Redeemed with the precious blood ;" St. John, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth ;" the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

But it is urged that the blood is the life. An eminent English writer, not long deceased, has tried to show that the blood of Christ means "the inmost essence of His character, the self of His self, or else the inmost essence of the Christian society, the life-blood of Christendom and humanity." He then proceeds to show that this is love, and ascribes all salvation and cleansing to the power of love. In accordance with this, the same writer tells us to look for the blood of Christ, not to Calvary merely, but to Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Capernaum, to all Christ's "acts of mercy, and words of wisdom." In other words, men are saved by learning to love and live

like Christ; and thus the doctrine of atonement for our sins is evaporated and lost. Be warned against such mischievous teaching, which, although it comes from professing Trinitarian divines, really prepares for the whole Socinian system. The blood of Christ is His life, is Himself. But its efficacy for our redemption is in the fact of its having been shed for us in order to the remission of sins. Love is good, and has its immense part to play. But we are saved, not by learning to love, but by Him who loved us and gave Himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God.

In vision, the Apostle John saw a great multitude before the throne of God, with palms in their hands, keeping a Feast of Tabernacles, for they had come out of the great tribulation. Their robes were white, like the white and glistening raiment of Christ when He was transfigured. The robes express their condition, as a purple robe expresses royalty, or filthy garments a condition of sin and misery. But it was not in love, or in any moral quality or virtue, that those robes were made white; it was in the blood of the Lamb. The figure of a washing, even of garments, in blood, is indeed a very strong one. In some Eastern countries of old, men who were oppressed with a sense of sin actually plunged their bodies into a stream or bath of animal blood, that their souls might be cleansed. From such gross literalness we turn away. But let us never turn away from the truth which lies under the figure of garments made white by being washed in precious blood. There is cleansing for the soul in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus.

And how? We speak as from the human side of

the question. The Lamb of God on Calvary took or put away the sin of the world regarded as a whole ; but when we think of sins in detail, yours or mine, the pardon of them and the cleansing from them must come through faith in His blood, which is the same thing as the act here described as washing one's robes in the blood.

The atonement was finished on the Cross. The sacrifice was complete. Its value does not need to be heightened by any sacrifice of ours, or even by our faith. It is perfect in the sight of God. But there remains the question of this great propitiation being available for sinners in detail, for you or for me. And it is here that we see the need of "faith in His blood." As the wounded Israelites in the wilderness had the brazen serpent raised on the pole, sufficient to cure them all, yet those only were healed who looked, so is Christ crucified available for a whole world of sinful men, but avails only to those whose hearts look to Him—"Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God." Hence comes the need of preaching the true doctrine concerning the death of Christ. St. Paul calls his Gospel "the word of the Cross," and says of it, "It is to them that are perishing foolishness ; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18, *Rev. Vers.*). And elsewhere, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. i. 16).

Thus we come to press our theme, not on your attention merely, but on your hearts. There is no question of the value set on the blood of the Lamb in heaven. There the entranced Apostle heard a new song which

praised the Lamb, because He had been slain and had purchased His people with His blood. It is here on earth that we have to put and press the question, even in the Church, Is the blood of the Lamb precious to you, or is it counted as a common thing? Have you faith therein as to its atoning value and cleansing power, or have you not? Men do not now-a-days insult the Son of God by hooting at Him openly as the base priests and scribes and rabble at Jerusalem hooted and mocked on the day of His crucifixion; but they treat Him as ungratefully when they put aside the Gospel of Christ crucified, and lightly esteem His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion.

But man's indifference or unbelief cannot alter the relation of the blood of the Lamb to the sin of the world. And because it rejects the salvation in that blood, it involves, in the case of all who hear and believe not, the heavier condemnation. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the ground," said the Lord to Cain, and go where he would, the fugitive and wanderer had that precious blood on him as a heavy burden. The blood of Uriah was on the conscience of David, and testified against him before God. So he cried with a contrite heart, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness." The Jews in the days of the Gospel story tried once and again to seize and kill the Saviour, and on that generation came all the righteous blood shed from that of Abel downwards. And they cried in their blind rage when Jesus was delivered up to their will, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Oh, terrible misuse of the blood of the Lamb! To despise it, and so have it on you as a burden, and

against you as a witness! Oh, wise and humble faith which says, "O precious blood! Let it be on us and our children to put away our sins, to make our garments white, to give our conscience peace, and make us nigh to God!"

XVII.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING NOT MISUNDERSTOOD.

"If it were not so, I would have told you."—JOHN xiv. 2.

SUCH an assurance from such lips sounds superfluous. But it was kindly meant to help the faith of the perplexed disciples. On that eventful night, when the shadow of death creeping over the Master sent a foreboding chill to the hearts of His followers, He not only spoke comforting words to cheer them; but riveted them into their minds by kind and repeated assurances, as by the double Amen, "Verily, verily." Not only so, He bade them believe that He was speaking to them with frankness. He was not keeping anything back for fear of alarming them. He had told them tidings of sorrow; and if there were worse to tell, if the future had no brightness for them, He would have told them, for above all He was faithful and true.

We are going to give this assurance from Jesus Christ a wide application. We start from this, that our Lord watched the effect of His teaching on the minds of His disciples, and took heed not to let them lie under a misconception of His meaning. Some things He said which they did not at once understand, and He gave them time to reach the meaning of them,

or secured that, when the Spirit came upon them, they should know what His words conveyed. But absolute misunderstanding of His meaning He was at pains to remove. As He spoke, He watched their faces, though He knew their thoughts, and was aware of their confused questioning among themselves. He was not troubled at the blunders of other hearers, but to the Twelve He said, "How is it that ye do not understand?"

When Jesus bade them beware of the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees, and they blundered over the literal sense, supposing that He was reproaching them for having taken with them no bread, He took cognisance of their error, and talked to them till they caught the true meaning, that they should beware of the teaching of those sects. When disciples at Capernaum, in the same prosaic fashion, misconstrued His language about eating as bread the flesh of the Son of man, He did not leave them under their mistake, but gave them a clue to the spiritual meaning, "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John vi. 63). When, as they approached Jerusalem, the Apostles were excited with expectation that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear, the Master spoke the parable of the nobleman and his ten servants, expressly to correct their mistake. He was Himself to be rejected, and to go to a far country; and a time of service to an unseen Lord was to intervene before He should return to reign.

Our Saviour took no such pains to correct the errors and confusions of others who heard His word, but hated Him without cause. At times He repelled

charges alleged against Him, turned aside crafty questions, showed the absurd conclusions in which His opponents involved themselves, warned them of the fatal consequences of their unbelief, fatal to themselves and to the nation : but these were not His disciples, and He did not accept responsibility for the forming and guiding of their minds, as He did for those men whom the Father had given Him out of the world to be His witnesses.

From these obvious facts we draw an important inference. Since the Lord Jesus was careful to correct the Apostles when they misunderstood Him, or gave them further teaching which would be luminous to them under the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, and since He took this trouble for them only, we infer that when the Lord saw His Apostles take up His meaning and store up His words and did not correct them, they understood Him aright, and have reported Him aright. Surely this has a significant bearing on the value of Apostolic testimony. On that witness our faith and hope rely. But there are three qualifications which we require in a writer who relates to us words as well as deeds. Let us see if these are fairly met. (1) He must be able to speak at first hand, not second hand—must have been present, and near enough to see and hear. (2) He must be of honest nature and purpose, having no interest in deceiving us and no disposition to mislead. (3) He must be of sufficient intelligence to have clearly apprehended what was said and done, for honest writers sometimes give quite a wrong report from sheer want of apprehension. Now, every one must admit that the Apostles told of Jesus and His Word from direct personal knowledge, and that there

is every reason to confide in their honesty of purpose. To these two securities we now add the third—the Master saw to it that they did not mistake His meaning, and so transmit to us an inaccurate report. Any shade of misconception which clouded their minds at once betrayed itself to Him, and He then brought out the meaning more plainly. If things were not so as He said, and as they understood Him to say, He would have told them.

See how this bears on some of the chief points of faith.

1. On the doctrine of our Saviour's Divine dignity.

Jesus of Nazareth was quite aware that the great problem which He proposed to mankind was Himself. Who was He, and whence? How was He to be accounted for? What was the measure of His authority, and from what source derived? He observed and watched the formation of opinion regarding Himself, the surmises about His being one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead, and the growth of faith and reverence in the little band that followed Him. He suffered Nathanael to say directly to Him, "Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." When He had walked on the Sea of Galilee, He let the disciples worship Him, saying, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." He drew from Simon, the son of Jonas, this confession of faith, and sanctioned it as true, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And after the Resurrection, He had no reproof for Thomas when he cried, "My Lord and my God!"

Now, it is plain that such homage went quite beyond that which might be rendered to Jesus as a

seer or a sage, differing from other Galileans only in the power of His brain and the goodness of His heart. Plainly the disciples had come to regard Him as the Messiah-Prince promised in the Old Testament, and as One possessed of a sublime, unique, filial relation to God. This view of His personal dignity and authority was avowed in His presence and at His feet. And if it were not so, He would have told the disciples. He would never have accepted a mistaken or exaggerated tribute.

Some persons are very ready to applaud the high sincerity of Jesus. Like some of old, they affirm that He was a good man, and there they stop. But it seems to us that they must go farther, or go back. If in a nation pervaded by belief in the unity and exclusiveness of Jehovah-God, Jesus, being no more than man, allowed His disciples to regard Him as more than man and transmit such a conception of Him to future generations, as He certainly did allow them, it is difficult to maintain that He was really a good man, a lover of simplicity and truth. But of His goodness and veracity no one breathes a doubt. Surely we have a right to conclude that the belief of the Apostles, and so of the Church from the beginning, in His Messiahship and unique Divine Sonship, having His own sanction, is well grounded, and that the doctrine believed is absolutely and infallibly true.

2. On the doctrine of freeness of pardon.

Jesus said to the paralytic at Capernaum, "Thy sins are forgiven," and to the scribes, "All sins shall be forgiven to the sons of men." He assured the penitent publicans and harlots of the putting away of their sin. After His resurrection, He charged the

Apostles to proclaim in His name repentance and forgiveness of sin. Accordingly, they trusted in Him for the remission of their own sins, and endeavoured to lead others into the like relief of conscience through faith. The Master knew that they so understood His teaching, and would so deliver it to others. If it were not so, He would have told them. Jesus Christ would never have allowed a fallacious doctrine on such a point to be spread abroad by His followers, sowing false hopes in the breasts of sinners. If forgiveness is to be obtained only in reward for a certain amount and intensity of suffering or prayer or penance, and if the comfort of it is to be had only through a priestly absolution, which may be given or withheld as the priest sees fit, He would surely have said so, and prevented a world of cruel misunderstanding. But He never said so; and therefore we infer that the freeness of pardon through faith in His blood, preached by Apostles with His sanction, is absolutely and infallibly true.

3. *On the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer.*

Jesus Christ emphatically taught that prayer avails to procure the relief of want and the removal of difficulty. He gave His disciples to understand that prayer would not merely relieve their burdened hearts, but obtain for them from their Heavenly Father the things which they needed. He saw that they so understood Him, and that they would transmit to future ages of the Church this estimate of prayer. But what are we to think of this, if, as is now alleged, prayer is useful only as a vent for pent-up emotion, and has no objective value or effect whatever? If the uniformity of nature or anything else precludes real answers to

prayer, either our Lord knew it not, or He allowed the disciples to trust, and encourage others to trust, to a mere pious illusion. If prayer is a mere cry of want or of dependence, and can have no answer beyond what we give to it ourselves, would not the Lord have told His disciples so? Whereas He bade them ask, seek, and knock, illustrating the use and success of prayer by the case of one knocking at a door by night in want of bread, and obtaining by entreaty as much as he needed. And He ascribed His own wonder-working energy to the power of prayer: He knew that the Father heard Him. Must we not conclude that the objections taken from a supposed natural impossibility are mistaken, and that the efficacy of prayer, so inculcated by the Lord Jesus, is absolutely and infallibly true?

4. *On the doctrine of a heavenly home.*

Here too we restrict our attention to actual sayings of the Lord Jesus, for this is essential to our argument. The glimpses of future rest, reward, and glory which He gave to the disciples may be thus summarised. Those who are persecuted for His sake have great reward in heaven; and His followers should lay up treasures, not on earth, but in heaven. At the end of the world, the righteous are to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. At a future day of reckoning and approval, good and faithful servants of Christ are to enter into the joy of their Lord, and be made rulers over many things. On a great day of judgment, the righteous shall inherit a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Those who gave up all that they had for the Lord Jesus were to have a hundred-fold recompense

in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting.

It is immaterial to our argument to determine which of these sayings refer to the state of men after death, and which of them to the state after the resurrection. Enough for our purpose that such language must have produced in the minds of the Apostles a conviction that their Master claimed to know and control the future, and to be able to secure the blessedness of His people in the great hereafter.

Take the instance before us. Jesus spoke to the disciples not only of the Father but of the Father's house. He would prepare a place for them there. The blessed will find many mansions within the precincts of the house, and dwell with God as well as worship Him. For the Father has a vast family, and they are not to be compressed or crowded together, but to find ample range for every one and verge enough—room also for diversities of employment and degrees of dignity, even as there are among them diversities of fitness and degrees of sanctity on earth.

What a lifting word this was to the eleven disciples about to be left in a hostile world, their Master withdrawn! He had gone to prepare for them a better place. And can there be any doubt of this? If the disciples hoped for a home beyond death, and Jesus knew that there is no such place and that death ends all, He would have told them. Or, if there be only a collective impersonal immortality, and they looked for an individual enjoyment of their Lord's presence in the Father's house, He would have set them right. If they looked for heavenly bliss after earthly service, and this was not to be, can any one suppose that

JESUS would have sanctioned the great illusion, with what was almost dying breath? No—a thousand times no. If there is no real Father's house, or if those disciples were never to see it, He would have told them. And we maintain that His authorising and confirming the hope of His disciples puts the hope of the Church as to the world and life to come beyond cavil or uncertainty. It is absolutely and infallibly true.

It may be objected, however, that in this mode of reasoning we can prove too much, and he who proves too much proves nothing. You may argue that all the dogmas and practices of the historical Church have the implied sanction of the Holy Spirit, because if they were erroneous, the Holy Spirit, who continues and enlarges the teaching of Christ, would have guarded Christians against them. This sounds plausible, but is easily answered. We distinguish between the essential foundation of the Church and the variations which have marked its later history. It is built on the Apostolic testimony as a foundation; and it is of vital importance that no flaw of inaccuracy should be there, no element of error or confusion. That was what Christ, and then the Holy Spirit, guarded against. But, whatever the reason, the Lord gave no guarantee against the falling of Christians into error in after times. Such errors began to multiply even before the death of the Apostles, and have never altogether ceased. We are not bound to explain or account for this. We point to the fact; and we remind you of the parallel to this in the history of the House of Israel. It was built on the revelation of God's statutes and judgments:

through Moses, a foundation absolutely sure and for its purpose adequate. But though in after days the Lord sent many prophets, the people were not secured against error; and they did err, as so many Christians err, through ignorance of the Scriptures, or through disobedience to the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost.

What we have spoken of is truth which has been held from the beginning, and about which there is no division of opinion among us, nor any uncertainty. That Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, that there is free pardon of sin through His name, that prayer in that name has a real and mighty power, and that there is a future home for His followers in the Father's house—we are sure of these things, or we are sure of nothing. "If they were not so, He would have told us."

Doubt may be better than apathy; but faith is better than doubt, and with the Bible before us, a hundred times more reasonable. Let us trust to Jesus, the Amen, the True One. For, as says St. Paul, "how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the Yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. i. 20 R. V.).

Let us confide in Him. If He cannot save sinners, He would not have said that He can. If He cannot give rest to the heavy laden, He would not have said that He will. If He is not able to give eternal life to those who believe, and to raise them up at the last day, He would never have made the promise. Let us remember that no guile was found in His mouth. Let us meet His unsullied truth with joyful faith and hearty consent, His Divine yea with the

yea of our unwavering trust. Everything depends on the meeting of His yes with our yes. He speaks from heaven, "Yes." Let us from the earth lift our very feeble but honest "yes." "Yea, Lord! be it unto me according to Thy word!"

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XVIII.

A BELL AND A POMEGRANATE.

“And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about; a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.”—Exod. xxviii. 33-35.

THE high-priest stood at the climax of religious privilege among the tribes of Israel, and this by right of office, for the high-priests were not the most eminently religious men. Samuel and Jehoiada were personally distinguished; but as a rule the priests were not men of such mark as the prophets. But in his office the high-priest was nearest to God, and prefigured Jesus Christ, the High-Priest of our profession.

Not only the appointments of the sanctuary in which he ministered, but the very robes of office that he wore, were fraught with symbolic meanings, which it is our duty to trace. The details of holy places and holy ointment and holy garments are hieroglyphs of Christ and the heavenly things.

Call up before your minds the figure of Aaron in his robes of glory and beauty. Next to his body is an embroidered coat or tunic of fine white linen, with a

linen girdle. Over this is a long loose blue robe—called the robe of the ephod—and all of one piece. Above it the ephod itself, also of linen but shorter, variously coloured and highly ornamented, with a girdle or band of the same material and style. Two large engraved onyx stones on the shoulders of the ephod fitted into golden sockets. A square of the same material lay on the breast of the ephod (therefore called “the breastplate,”) with twelve jewels, and covered—for it was double—a white stone by which oracles were given. The head was covered by a white linen mitre or turban; and on it a plate of pure gold with an engraving, “Holiness to the Lord.” The apparel was ordained by the God of Israel, not merely to inspire the people with respect for the high-priest’s office and service, but to indicate the characteristics and qualifications of Jesus Christ our High-Priest, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

On Aaron’s head see the plate of gold secured by a lace of blue. Gold was the metal which denoted sacredness; and blue was the colour which signified consecration and obedience. Now look down toward his feet, and on the skirt of the blue robe see the glitter of gold again—small bells of the sacred metal, with artificial fruits between.

An ordinary Israelite wore a garment of what stuff and colour he pleased, but was bound by law to have it fringed with blue. This was significant of his belonging to a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The badge of his religious privilege and calling was the hem of his garment. It was the vainglorious fashion of the Pharisees of a later time to enlarge the

border of the garment—as though to express by the extra breadth of this blue fringe their superior piety.

The high-priest in this official dress had the blue robe from his neck almost down to his feet, as one entirely set apart to Jehovah's service. A blue fringe on a blue robe would have had no effect; so his garment was finished with a border of golden bells and coloured pomegranates of linen cloth. May we learn the significance of these?

I. The value of bells is in their sound. Of the instruments themselves little need be said. The Hebrew word so rendered here occurs only in this passage and in that which describes the execution of the Divine command respecting the accoutrement of the high-priest (Exod. xxxix. 25). The word rendered "bells" in Zech. xiv. 20 is the same as in other passages is translated "cymbals." And these instruments of percussion are in their origin connected together. A "tinkling cymbal" is not far from a tinkling bell, a clashing cymbal from a clanging bell. A metal plate with a circular indentation made a cymbal. The indentation had only to be made deeper, and the rim moulded into circular form and slightly turned outward to produce a bell. Bells in ancient times were not arranged as they may be now to yield the consecutive sounds of the musical scale and play melodies. They were capable merely of a tinkling sound. But this was enough for the high-priest's allotted service, which did not require or even allow musical expression. On his robe they simply intimated to the ear where he was, whether withdrawn from the view of the people in the holy place, or coming out of the sanctuary to intimate

that the service was accomplished, and that Jehovah would bless His people with peace.

The worshipping people might come into the court of the Tabernacle, and then through the curtained entrance they could hear the bells of the high-priest as he moved in the holy place for them, presenting the offering of incense as a sweet savour to the Lord. It appears from St. Luke i. 9, 10 that it became a custom with devout Jews to assemble "at the hour of incense" in the court of the Temple, while the priest was serving in the sanctuary and burning incense. They waited there until he came out. The sound of the bells on his robe told of his approach, and the people rejoiced that the service was accepted of Jehovah.

So the golden bells that used to intimate the active service of the high-priest suggest to us the continual intercession of Jesus Christ for us. True that the high-priest did not wear the blue robe on the one day of the year when he went into the Holy of Holies; but the veil has been rent in twain, and He, who is our High-Priest at the altar of incense, is before the mercy-seat—nothing between. Let us hear this sweet sound above all the din of earthly things—the golden bells that ring from heaven, saying, "Jesus Christ, your High-Priest over the house of God, is at His work of intercession for you." In the busy daytime, in the quiet night, hark how the bells do ring on high. Jesus Christ is in the holy place for you and for me. Our poet has called on wild bells to "ring out to the wild sky," happy bells to ring out the evils of the past and—

"Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws."

But the golden bells in heaven are the best of all, that tell of Jesus Christ in the presence of God for us.

Let us pray, for He pleads for us. As the devout at Jerusalem knelt in prayer, while the priest, by them unseen, offered incense, so let us pray while our High-Priest, by us unseen, is making intercession for us.

When this ministering in our behalf is finished, He will come forth to receive us to Himself. Let us wait for His coming. The sound of the bells was heard when Aaron was coming out of the holy place. So shall there be a joyful sound to all the faithful when Jesus Christ, having finished His intercession as well as His redeeming work for His people, shall come forth to receive them into His glory.

II. The pomegranates seem to us to speak of that future. The union of bells and pomegranates has been taken by many writers to represent the testimony and the fruitfulness of Christ and of Christians—the union, that is, of word and work. But the bells were sounded before God, not before the people, and indicate the priest's work of intercession, not the people's work of listening. Again, the display of artificial fruit on the skirt of a dress does not very obviously suggest the yielding of fruit by a living tree, which is the only proper type of Christian usefulness.

To Aaron or any believing Israelite in the wilderness a pomegranate spoke of the Promised Land. Along with grapes and figs, pomegranates were brought back to the camp of Israel by the scouts whom Moses sent forward. And in Deut. viii. 8, the good land is described as a land of vines, fig-trees, and pomegranates. It is well known to travellers as a much-prized fruit in hot countries. It grows on a low tree,

is globular in shape, and has a refreshing pulp full of ruby-coloured juice.

That pomegranates in coloured linen were placed on the high-priest's robe, and afterwards the same fruit wrought in brass into the capitals of the pillars at the Temple seems to us first a promise and then an acknowledgment of what Jehovah had prepared for His people. Fruit sweet to the taste was the sign of a rich inheritance in the land of Canaan; and the title to that inheritance lay in that relation to Jehovah and His service which was most fully expressed in the position and ministration of the high-priest. Now we have the hope of a better inheritance with all manner of fruits; and our heirship is through and with the great High-Priest who now pleads our cause on high, and with whom at His second coming we shall be glorified.

Thus by the bells and pomegranates I do not understand preaching and practice, but rather prayers and promises—the intercessory action of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. If the heart faint under the thought that Jesus Christ has departed and forsaken us, cure this faintness by listening to the golden bells of Aaron, which say that our High-Priest is interceding for us in the heavenly sanctuary. If the heart faint at the length of the way in the wilderness, cure that faintness by looking at the fruit of the heavenly country on the skirt of our High-Priest's garment. A little while, and we shall be with Him in the Promised Land and eat His pleasant fruits.

How foolish would have been that Israelite who said, "What matter these laws of dress? What is the high-

priest to me?" Everything depended on the high-priest, and his conforming to the law and will of God. The access of all Israel to Jehovah was bound up with the service of the high-priest. So now how foolish is he who professes and calls himself a Christian, but thinks to justify himself, and come to God the Father, without any intervention or mediation of Jesus Christ! Everything depends on His sacrifice on earth, and His priestly presentation of the virtue of the sacrifice in heaven. Therefore we set before you Jesus Christ. Consider Him. Study Him. That powerful intercession of which we are allowed to hear the beginning in St. John xvii. continues. With unwearied love He presents Himself for us, His merit for our demerit; and bears us, as the high-priest bore the names of the twelve tribes on his breast, before the face of God.

We repeat it again and again. Consider Him. There is none to be brought into comparison with Him. If you would have peace in your conscience, calm joy at your heart, energy in your Christian life, set Him before you; dwell on the thought of what He has done and is doing for you; and the golden bells of His heavenly activity in your behalf will set responsive bells of gladness ringing in your breasts, and His promise of the sweet fruits and joys of the inheritance to come will lift you above care and discontent. Consider Him: Prophet, Priest, and King.

What is the use of your coming to this place and hearing the Scriptures opened if you will not consider Him to whom all the Scriptures testify? Your services will not save you. Your attention to religious proprieties will not bring you near to God. Only His atoning blood can put away your sin. Only His

continual intercession can obtain your salvation to the uttermost. Only His treasures of wisdom and knowledge can be your Urim and Thummim when all counsels fail. Only His Spirit can lead you to the land of uprightness. "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father: to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

XIX.

THE CHARGE OF CRAZINESS.

"When His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him : for they said, He is beside Himself."—MARK iii. 21.

"Many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad ; why hear ye Him ?"—JOHN x. 20.

"As he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."—ACTS xxvi. 24, 25.

"Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God : or whether we be sober, it is for your cause."—2 COR. v. 13.

IN statistics of lunacy there is a column for cases of religious mania. It is notorious that aberration of mind not infrequently takes the direction of religious excitement or of religious melancholy tending to despair. A man who was arrested in the City last week announced to the alderman that he was Jesus Christ, and that the whole world belonged to him. Then there is the frenzy excited by groups of devotees vying with each other, as in the dancing dervishes. It may be a short madness ; but it is mania for the time. And, alas ! some men are permanently crazy on religious topics, the pressure of highly-wrought feeling having found out the weak spot in their ill-compacted or ill-nourished brains.

Men who have no ardent feeling whatever are apt to exaggerate this. In their eyes coolness is the cardinal virtue, and fervour, religious fervour especially,

is always unreasonable and pernicious. They have a strong conviction that to talk of obtaining actual guidance from the unseen Divine Spirit is fanatical. They very much doubt whether the brain of Socrates was sound—given as he was to long trances and guided by a mystic voice. Gautama in his dreamy abstraction, and Mohammed in his strange moods and visions, were beside themselves. All prophets and seers have been open to this suspicion. Nor did it hurt them among the ancient nations. It was the ordinary belief that nearness to the gods drew men into abnormal conditions of body and mind, and that the diviners were, and ought to be, mad. This has been alleged against many of the saints and prophets and reformers in Christendom. Not to speak of those of old, you will find that even in these later centuries Martin Luther was thought to be mad. John Knox has been taken by many for a man full of frenzy. John Howard's benevolent labours were ascribed to a craze. George Whitefield and John Wesley were set down as crack-brained fanatics. And whenever men stir their fellow-men to more than wonted religious earnestness, they are said to be mad, or to be driving others mad with their religion.

The first and second texts before us show that our Master, Jesus Christ, was thus misjudged. On the first occasion His friends said, "He is beside Himself." They could not account for the elevation with which He spoke and the impression which His ministry was making on the people of Galilee, save on the theory that His mind was off its balance; and they thought it would be right and even kind to put Him under restraint. The word they used was not a severe one.

It implied a temporary over-excitement of mind, and from it we derive our word "ecstasy." But in the second instance, the charge was much more harsh and serious. It came from Jews at Jerusalem on hearing from the lips of Jesus words far too wise and too divine for their dull minds to receive. With a malevolent meaning, many of them said, "He hath a demon and raveth." Here it is the word from which we derive "mania" and "maniac."

So they judged Him: and yet He was the "greater than Solomon," the wisest who ever spoke with human lips; full of the most sublime enthusiasm, for God was in and with Him; but at the same time full of the meekness of wisdom, and in both respects far above the appreciation of those proud and formal Jews.

Yet why do we so freely censure them? If Jesus Christ should reappear in England in the guise of a poor man, not "in orders," unconnected with our seats of learning, and unknown to the more influential classes of society, and if He should expose the hollowness of men's lives and the hypocrisy of many who make a great show of piety, and should talk of the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, would not many persons describe Him superciliously as a strange enthusiast who should be put under restraint—at all events to whom no intelligent person should seriously listen?

St. Paul was not one of those who companied with the Lord in Galilee and Judea, but he had as much as any of them had of the mind of Christ; and the servant was treated as his Lord.

Before Herod Agrippa and Bernice and the Roman governor Festus, he narrated his vision of the Saviour

and the testimony to Him which he had borne for years in accordance with Moses and the prophets. The Jewish prince and princess listened quietly, but the heathen Festus could not abide such raving. He interrupted the speaker with a loud voice, "Thou ravest—thy much learning doth bring on mania." Nothing daunted by the imputation, the Apostle answered, "I am no maniac, but speak forth words of truth and soberness." He had been mad when he persecuted Christians—he was wise when he proclaimed Christ and the resurrection of the dead. An intellectual man, as Paul was, must have felt himself hurt and even insulted by such an imputation as Festus hurled at him. It must, also, have been a great trial to him to know that many looked upon him as a restless wandering Jew, whose brain had been crazed with visions and hallucinations. He knew what harm such a report might do. And he warned the Christians at Corinth so to conduct their assemblies for worship as to give no opportunity to the scoffing Greeks around them to accuse them of an irrational frenzy. "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Cor. xiv. 23).

Our last text is found in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and in it we find that though the Apostle would not for a moment admit the charge of madness or mania, he did not altogether refuse that of ecstasy. Toward men he claimed to have a sober mind, disowning extravagance and rhapsody. If he was beside himself, it was to God, for the love of Christ constrained him. What wonder if a man should be

beyond, if not beside, himself when all his faculties were divinely attuned to think and speak of such a theme as this, and his whole emotional nature was filled with a spiritual intensity and tenderness? But this has nothing in common with hysterical feebleness or incoherence.

The fault of the majority of Christians is that of too little fervour, not too much. There is such a thing as religious fanaticism, which shows itself in fuss and frenzy, and it is very much to be deprecated; but the great majority of us take sufficient care to keep what religion we have under the restraint of a strict decorum. We are very averse to being remarked on as peculiar or intense. We should be all the better for a good shaking. What if those around who have no faith and have never been constrained by the love of Christ should misunderstand us or jibe at us? What if lukewarm Christians dislike our over-zeal? It is to God that we look, not to them. If we go beyond ourselves, it is to Him, and He will not misunderstand us. Michal, daughter of King Saul, was full of scorn when she saw King David lead the sacred dance before the Ark of God, but the Lord was not displeased. And what an answer she got! "If I have leaped and danced with all my might, it was before the Lord, who chose me before thy father." Such, too, was the self-vindication of Paul, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God." Who shall forbid our grateful spirits to leap before the Lord with all our might?

But the parallel is by no means perfect. David's ecstasy was on one high occasion which stirred him and his subjects to unwonted triumph. That which we

discern in the Master, Jesus Christ, and in His servant Paul is something more habitual and sustained—a spiritual life hidden in God, with energies and joys that cannot be in subjection to worldly maxim or restraint. Indeed, no one appreciates any kind of real enthusiasm but he who has some spark of it in himself. To understand a brave action or heroic effort you must have some spark of valour in yourself. You must have some mental force and power of application in yourself in order to admire intellectual men. And you must have in your own bosom something of the love of Christ in order to apprehend how this love has constrained Apostles and saints.

Hard and selfish as men are, they can admire unselfish courage. A man sees a child fall into an angry sea ; it is not his child, but without hesitation he leaps into the sea to save it. A man in full health deliberately goes to live among lepers, simply to comfort them and do them spiritual good. There is a great explosion in the coal mine, and see how volunteers crowd to the pit-mouth, anxious to go down at any risk to rescue their fellow-miners. Such men are all beside themselves in a noble sense which the crowd can understand and cheer.

Everything depends on the sufficiency of the object. A young girl denies herself all society and recreation—absorbed in nursing her mother through a long and weary illness. To this she gives herself. And some one whose heart has never known an intense affection says, “It is a mistake ; she ought to think more of her own health—she is beside herself.” But if she is beside herself, it is to her mother that bore her. Censure her not !

A student pores over some problem which has perplexed many students, and to which he seems to have a clue. In his hope to solve it he forgets everything else. Food lies untouched; exercise appears a waste of time; even when he sleeps he dreams of his great problem. And some uncultivated neighbour talks of the ardent student with a wondering pity—"The poor man is quite beside himself!" So they might have thought who had seen Sir Isaac Newton forget that he was but half-dressed and sit on his bed for hours thinking, still as a statue; but he was reasoning out his great "Principia." And those who have in them a gleam of intellectual enthusiasm will say of the absorbed student, "If he is beside himself, it is for knowledge. Censure him not!"

In the same way of thinking let us rise higher still. There may surely be an engrossment of the Christian man with Christ—of the godly man with God. He sees the Invisible; he hears what cannot be uttered. Not on some select occasions and in holy places, but always and everywhere he sets the Lord before him, and will do nothing without reference to Him. Of such a man your formal Christian will say, "This is too much. Here is more religion than is fit for one to carry in a world like ours. This man goes beyond reason, and is beside himself." But those of you who know something of the love of Christ, and of life in the Spirit, will say, "If he is beside himself, it is to God. Judge him not! How can they that are after the flesh judge one who is after the Spirit?"

Oh, blessed fervour that glowed in the heart of Paul! Oh, most admirable infatuation! Oh, most wise ecstasy! A story runs of some formal old officer dis-

paraging General Wolfe to the King, and insinuating that he was mad; on which the King shrewdly answered, "If he be mad, I wish he would bite some of my generals, that they might be mad also." If Paul was mad, I wish we were all affected with the same mania. But that very prudent lukewarmness which some men count wisdom—let us have none of it, I pray.

Men and brethren, hear and obey the wise words of Jesus, whom His friends thought to be beside Himself, whom His enemies accused of raving. Hear the truth and soberness of Paul, whom Festus supposed to be mad. He would reason with you of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. He would have you a Christian altogether, a loving and ardent disciple. Why be afraid of earnestness? Why dread the criticism of those who have not known the Lord? Is it not they who are mad? The way of fervent faith and love is the way of Wisdom; and "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

THE END.



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