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DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

ON

THE EPISTLES AND GOSPELS

FOR

The Sundays and Holy Days throughout the Year.

VOL. I.

ADVENT TO WHITSUN WEEK.

RIVINGTONS

London..... *Waterloo Place*
Oxford..... *Magdalen Street*
Cambridge..... *Trinity Street*

SERMONS

ON

THE EPISTLES AND GOSPELS

FOR

The Sundays and Holy Days throughout the Year

BY THE REV.

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

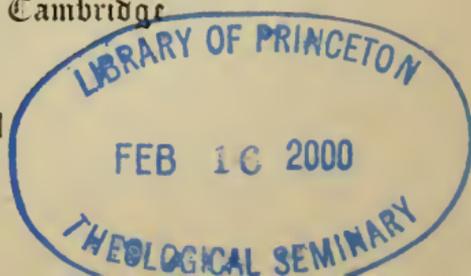
ADVENT TO WHITSUN WEEK

RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

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[*New Edition.*]



PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE following discourses, although they have been preached as Sermons, yet are in fact hardly worthy of the name; for they consist of a series of commentaries on the Epistle and Gospel for the day, with such practical or devotional reflections as the continued passages of each give rise to. They were indeed undertaken in consequence of a request made to the Writer, that he would publish some exposition on the Epistles and Gospels, such as might be suitable for private or domestic reading on the Sunday. And they were thrown into the form of Sermons, not only for the immediate occasions on which they were so used, but also as the most convenient mode in which they could appear for the purpose required.

But although the name of sermons might lead the reader to expect something more in the character of such published discourses of the present day, as have

been formed after the example of one so much once esteemed among us, whose position in the Church combined something of academic with parochial teaching;—such, I mean, as consist of eloquent expansions of some great point of Christian truth, with its application to the life of faith, with that oneness of idea which is so essential to works of excellence; yet this may be said in defence of these Sermons, which consist of mere plain interpretations of Scripture, that they have some authority from the example of ancient writers, as in the well-known Homilies of St. Chrysostom and St. Augustin. Sermons of the Fathers were generally explanations of the Scriptural readings for the day. And indeed the following discourses are sometimes formed on the Patristic Lectures, such as are found in the Breviaries for these Sundays.

On the other hand, though these Sermons are necessarily discursive, yet the Writer has for the most part adopted one lesson or leading point of instruction, as inculcated through the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the day. Whether such has been intended or not, he has always found it interesting to look upon them in this light, as forming one whole, and considered it most conducive to practical edification. If any one should think that he has sometimes pressed this too far, let him consider how natural and unavoidable it often becomes.

Every one must have noticed the singular power and force of application which exists in Scripture, and that when any absorbing subject occupies the mind, the whole of the Services of the Day will come forth, and appear to speak with reference to it; and no doubt rightly and properly are they understood to do so. It is but the omnipresent eye of God in Scripture found to be fixed on the heart. Now it is but in accordance with this, if nothing more, that if a Clergyman conceives a particular Sunday to convey one peculiar line of instruction, that the different parts should in his mind fall in with that one leading idea, should seem to harmonize and combine with it, to form one voice or language; and that in unfolding the same to his flock in church or school, he should bring them to bear, more or less, on that one point of view.

There is, moreover, another objection which may occur to any one conversant with other works of the Writer, that the passages from the Gospels have been already made by him the subject of commentary. But the two works do not in fact interfere. The applications in the following Sermons necessarily dwell much more on the plain and obvious meaning of the passages, such as are suitable to popular and parochial teaching, and do not for the most part touch on those mystic and deeper senses, founded on Patristic interpretation, which are

given in the Writer's other volumes on the Gospels. Again, in the latter there is usually stated a multiplicity of opinions, which, however desirable for the student and critical inquirer, yet must often needs be perplexing to the practical and devout reader; whereas in these Sermons one deduction has been usually adhered to. For in practical exhortations, to command many things at the same time is to weaken the obedience due to each one.

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SERMON I.

The First Sunday in Advent.

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THE KING OF SALEM.

Behold, Thy King cometh unto thee.—ST. MATT. xxi. 5.

WHEN our Blessed Lord was taking leave of His disciples at the Last Supper, the one great lesson and dying injunction which He left them was of loving one another. Very seasonably therefore does our Church take up at once the same Divine note when she bids us look for His return; beginning thus our Epistle for to-day, *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.* Not with regard to pecuniary obligation only, but fulfil every duty of every kind to every man, except that of love, for that you can never sufficiently discharge; you must be ever owing and ever paying, for it must be like the love of God, in which you can never go far enough. The more we love, the more we shall feel the debt, and the more we feel the debt, the more shall we grow in humility.

Let your only debt be love; for, adds St. Paul, *he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt*

not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, such as the Law would restrain; therefore love is in the highest and best sense the fulfilling of the Law. This is in effect the same as our Blessed Lord said to the rich young man who wished to know what he should do to obtain eternal life: our Lord questioned him respecting the six last commandments, of his duty to his neighbour; because in the love of God consists eternal life, and "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"¹

No duty is omitted where love is; love shall cover a multitude of sins; love alone shall not fail on the Great Day; love unites to God; amidst the darkness of this world love, as St. John describes it, is light; and to walk in love is to walk in the light; love is the best preparation for beholding Christ, Who hath so loved us; and therefore St. Paul goes on to connect it with the great Morning of Christ's appearing: He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, yet by love we in some sense draw more and more near unto Him.

And that knowing the time, adds St. Paul, lifting up the Advent trumpet, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep,—the sleep of this world with all its dreams,—for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Very beautiful and forcible is this comparison of Scripture, whereby our present condition is likened to the night, and that which approaches to the day. And no doubt the expression contains a great truth and reality, that the Advent which

¹ 1 St. John iv. 20.

approaches is like the sudden breaking in of daylight would be to those who had been always in the dark, or knew nothing but the night. What wonderful things would the light reveal to them, which they now only see darkly, or feel around ! It will be like sight suddenly given to the born blind. What a new world would burst upon him ! what faces, what eyes, what companies of which he can now form no idea, and himself also, like a blind man seeing for the first time his own countenance in a mirror ! This state Holy Scripture assures us is ever nearer and nearer, is fast approaching, is just appearing. And here it is as if there were signs of the coming dawn, the birds twittering under the roof, or such other tokens that the night was on the wane, and men were awaking each other and saying, It is now time to arise ; it is time to put on our armour, our clothing for the day.

The day is at hand, *Let us therefore*, proceeds the Apostle, *cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.* We are to clothe ourselves with armour,—with what armour ? That which suits the day. Although Scripture speaks of the manifestation of Christ as the day of light, yet the light is of that spiritual kind that we may have it even now—we are “children of the light.” *Let us walk honestly*, i. e. orderly and well behaved, *as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.* For all these are the works of darkness. *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Put on the armour of light, he had said, and now, as if explaining what this armour of light is, he adds, Put on—be clothed all over with—the Lord Christ. Be conformable to Him, do all things for His sake, love all men in Him, let Him dwell within you, and dwell ye in Him, put Him all around you, clothe

yourselves with Him, be armed with Him—your heart, your hands, your feet; let all your members be in Him. Let your life be with Him hidden in God; and here on earth be as strangers and pilgrims. *And make not provision for the flesh*, he adds, *to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Let not your forethought be for the life in the flesh and for its desires.

Thus the Epistle for to-day is like the herald voice in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. It sounds all of preparation for His appearing in light and glory. But the Gospel carries us back to His former Advent, and His visiting us in great humility. It is the account of His great kingly entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. As the Great High Priest that was to be, He offered up Himself on the Cross; as the Prophet, He foretold of Heaven and Hell, and of all future things pertaining to His Church; but as the promised King of the Jews He showed Himself on this occasion;—condescending to take upon Himself something as it were of earthly pomp, yet with such extreme lowliness, that the circumstance is precisely of the same character as when He was born in a stable; when He girded Himself as a slave to wash His disciples' feet. The Prophets had described Him as a King, and as a King He appears to fulfil the Prophets, and by such fulfilment to strengthen the hearts of those who would hereafter look upon these things as fulfilled in Him. As a King indeed, but as one Whose kingdom is not of this world, and Whose only manifestation here below is in more exceeding lowliness; as a King indeed, but to the eyes of this world having in His appearance something so little kingly, as not to have alarmed the Roman, nor given occasion to Chief Priests, nor exalted any disciple with ambition.

When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, says St. Matthew, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them. Never was a royal procession, a kingly entrance into a kingdom, like unto this; for where are the carriages, and the horses, the attendants, and the soldiers? It is as much the opposite to anything of this kind as words can describe. It is an ass—the humblest of all beasts to ride on; nor this only, but the foal of an ass, the colt with the dam by her side, as of one but half fit to ride on at all; and both together as signifying all meek love and tenderness, as shown by the mother and her colt, neither separated from the other; both combined setting forth something very unlike kingly state and pride. And not this only—for the Great King has not even this of His own, it is borrowed; but borrowed of one whose heart He knew and governed as King of kings; say, “The Lord hath need—and he will send them.”

But what occasion was there for all this at all? The Evangelist then explains the reason of it; which the disciples, says St. John, did not observe at the time, but they afterwards understood. *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.* Not the Law only, but the Prophets also, did our Lord with the greatest carefulness fulfil, that no one mark or tittle of the letter should fail of the Word of God.

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them: and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. The reason of this concourse was, that Christ had come the day before to Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem, and many of the Jews had come there from Jerusalem to see Him, and also Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead. And on this occasion they fell in with many coming from Jerusalem to meet Him for the same cause; and therefore it was in fact as acknowledging in Him the power of the Resurrection; as the King who had not only the keys of David, his kingly authority, but also the keys of hell and of death; as the King who was putting under His feet every enemy, visible or invisible. But in this they knew not what they did. Their hearts were in His hand and He moved them. But they were probably nearly all of them poor people; and these, with the little children who caught up the strain, and sang afterwards, when He came into the Temple, and the blind and the lame who came there to be healed, were His most meet kingly retinue. Let us, too, join them as on this day, and say, Blessed is He that cometh, the Infant of days, with the babes and sucklings His attendants! Blessed is He that cometh in our hearts, the King of Peace, Who inviteth us the blind and the lame into His kingdom! Blessed is He that cometh, the King of glory!

And what were the feelings of our King Himself, on

this His great kingly coming ; His entrance into His own festival city ; His triumphal entrance as Conqueror of death ? They also were suitable to this occasion of His great meekness, for St. Luke says, that when He came in sight of the city He wept over it. His entrance was meet for the "Man of Sorrows," it was with a heart full of tears ; as suited to Him who now in a few days was, by the hands of His own people whom He loved, to be lifted up upon His throne, and His title of King to be written thereon in every language, and this His throne was the shameful and painful Cross. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, because he was dead ; He wept at the sight of Jerusalem, because it was as a whited sepulchre without, and within worse than dead.

Thus was He now approaching as one goeth on his way weeping. But as He moved the hearts of men to do Him this little appearance of honour, so did He also move His own city at His appearing, that they might afterwards, when they had crucified Him, know and remember how this was He to whom the Prophets had borne witness.

And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. This was the answer of the multitude, for the common people were not ashamed of the lowly Nazareth, and the despised Galilee ; while the fact of His coming from these obscure places was an offence to the great, and the rich, and the learned.

What a wonderful contrast is all this to His next appearing, for which we daily wait, when all the dead shall be moved at His coming, and all the living ; when the sun, moon, and stars shall fall, and earth and Heaven shall take wing before His face, and when there will be no

more asking, Who is this? For all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest—all shall know Him as “Jesus the Prophet”—the Prophet, indeed the more than Prophet, bringing about the fulfilment of all things—the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee, Who “rideth upon the Heavens as it were upon a horse;” Who maketh the clouds His chariot; Who cometh with ten thousands of His Saints, when some He will “bring with Him,” them that are “with the Lord;” and some shall go forth to meet Him at His coming, the saints that are on earth.

But now, when He came in so much meekness without, and with so much sorrow of heart within, He showed by a remarkable sign what was the occasion of that sorrow; remarkable, as differing from every other action of His life, when He came not to judge but to save; remarkable as showing that in the Lamb of God Who came to offer up His life for us all, there is also wrath hidden which shall one day break forth, that the King Who is the Lamb of God, is also the Lion of Juda. For the account thus proceeds.

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple; and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. Now what is this transaction to us? Much no doubt in every way, as it is the only act of judgment and wrath recorded in the Gospel, it seems to put us back when we would approach Him, Who in meekness and mercy received all men, and warns us to pause and consider. “The Lord is in His holy Temple.”

But what is the peculiar lesson which our Lord would

teach us with such altered tokens of His gracious Presence? There can be no doubt but it signifies that it is of the very utmost importance how we keep holy the House of Prayer. This lies at the very heart of all religion; it is the very fountain-head and spring from which flows the stream of life, and if this be polluted, all must be full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Surely there was great evil then in Jerusalem; in the councils of the Chief Priests, in the court of Herod, in the popular keeping of this festival; but one thing only made the wrath of the Lamb to burst forth as a flame anticipating the last Judgment, and this was want of reverence in God's House. This is the most obvious and important lesson it would impress on us. Worship God aright, and all will be well. Come before Him without fear, and all your life will be as a city over which Christ weeps.

But again; when our Lord spoke of the temple—of destroying it and rebuilding it—He was under that symbol speaking mysteriously of His own Body, which evil men took literally, but good men, when they afterwards thought of it, understood what He meant. It is right, therefore, that we should reflect whether by this action in the Temple our Lord did not intend us to consider its application to that spiritual Temple made without hands, which is His own Body the Church.

Nay, further, to bring the case more closely home to each one of us, the body of every Christian is called in Scripture the Temple of the Holy Ghost; it should be the House of Prayer. It is of infinitely more value in God's sight than the Temple of the Jews was of old; and He comes to it in the day of visitation,—in various ways giving us tokens and warnings whenever He discloses

Himself. He will come to it in the day of Judgment, and be revealed therein in mercy or in wrath. What have we to regard with awe and reverence so much as the Presence of Christ in our own souls?

To conclude; we are to look to the Gospels as the treasure-house of all mercies, and therein to study all meekness, love, and goodness, as in the face of Jesus Christ, and so to prepare for the coming of our King, Who will receive as His own the poor in spirit, the meek, and the merciful,—this is putting on the armour of light, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and preparing ourselves for His coming. But then in the same Gospels we must remember the dreadful judgments He has declared will await impenitent sinners at His next appearing, and this awful token He has given us of the same when He appeared in His Temple of old.

“Behold, the Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, Whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?”²

² Mal. iii. 1, 2.

SERMON II.

The Second Sunday in Advent.

Rom. xv. 4—13. St. Luke xxi. 25—33.

THE SCRIPTURES BEARING WITNESS.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—ROM. xv. 4.

THE Holy Scriptures have been always made by the Church the subject of this Sunday. In the Epistle they are spoken of as already fulfilled; in the Gospel, which our Church has appointed, as now waiting their last accomplishment. The Epistle speaks of Christ as revealed to all nations; the Gospel as yet to be manifested in great power from Heaven. The things of which the Epistle speaks were once matters of prophecy, now matters of history; they were once merely in the written Word, and subjects of faith, but now of sight throughout the world. That which the Gospel describes is still matter of prophecy received by faith, not by sight. Yet not altogether thus; for the Gentiles are not yet fully called in as the Epistle describes, and the signs of which the Gospel speaks are even now some of them

fulfilled. Thus things which have been, and things that are, and things yet to be, are by Holy Scripture interwoven together, and form that "threefold cord" which "is not quickly broken." When we read the Epistle, we look behind and see what has been fulfilled and is fulfilling in us; in reading the Gospel we look before, and wait for what is yet to be.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, says St. Paul, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. He is speaking of things in the Old Testament respecting Christ; they are there written, he says, that we may dwell and ponder on the same, as seeing how they have been fulfilled in Him; and so being supported and comforted by them may have hope. But as the inspired Scriptures are of no avail unless God Himself, Who gave them, enlighten us, he takes up the same words of "patience and consolation," and proceeds, *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* That God may shed abroad His peace in our hearts, and this His peace may make us at peace with each other; and so having love to each other, we may render to God acceptable praise and united worship. This, the firstfruits of the Word and of the Spirit, must be by brotherly kindness, uniting Jew and Gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, fragrant as the sacred ointment, and as the dew from Heaven rich in blessing. *Wherefore receive ye one another,* he adds, *as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

St. Paul then returns to the fulfilment of the Scriptures, showing how the Law and the Prophets were in Christ

altogether accomplished ; inasmuch as He fulfilled the righteousness of the Law, was the object of its types, the substance of its shadows, and as such the "Apostle and High Priest" to the Hebrews ;¹ and according to the same Scriptures throughout, was to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith, that there might be "one fold and one Shepherd."

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers ; i. e. fulfilling all the promises made to Abraham and his seed. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. This calling of the nations, St. Paul next proceeds to show, is intimated through the whole of the Old Testament ; as instances of which he mentions these expressions of the Prophets : As it is written in the Psalms, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy Name. And again He saith, by the mouth of Moses long before, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again, the Psalmist, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud Him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust.

This is the mystery so long hidden ; the Jew knew Him not, and the Gentile knew Him not, but now both in Him are made one ; and as He opens their understandings they find the Scriptures bearing witness to Him they knew not. And thus the Holy Scriptures would have been as a sealed Book were it not for Christ, Who bears the keys of David. "The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof."² For now, the Holy Spirit

¹ Heb. iii. 1.

² Rev. v. 5.

enlightening our hearts, we are able therein to discern Christ throughout; we take hold of Him by faith, and will not let Him go, saying, "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth;" "My beloved is mine, and I am His."³ So the good Spirit whispered in the Old Testament to the secret heart of the penitent; and so did He speak aloud to St. Paul, filling all his life, as it were, and his soul with this Heavenly music, with which he laboured so earnestly to fill the minds of others. All of which he here sums up in these words, *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* "The God of hope," as before "the God of patience and consolation;" this is a wonderful expression; how full of sweetness; what a tower of strength is there in the very word! If our God is the "God of hope," who shall despair? if our God is "the God of patience," who shall not endure? And thus does the Epistle end as it begins with hope, as resting on the Scriptures, as strengthened by the fulfilment of them, as imparted by the God of all hope; and this hope is that "blessed hope" of seeing Christ soon return, and of being accepted in Him.

And surely such hope we need, and all the strength with which the Scriptures and the God of all consolation can afford to support us, when from looking back to what has already been fulfilled, we turn our eyes and look forward to those fearful things of which the Gospel for to-day speaks, and the coming on of which we may now expect.

It was a few days before our Lord's death, when He was walking up the Mount of Olives, after teaching in the Temple for the last time, that He turned and looked

3 Song of Sol. ii. 16; iii. 4.

on Jerusalem, and then sitting down there with four of His disciples, He spoke to them of its fall, and of the great end of all things, and His own return to judgment.

And there shall be signs, says our Lord, as St. Luke gives the account, *in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken.* Now what is signified by this description of the terrible signs which will mark the approach of the Great Day? Holy Scripture always, even unto the end, speaks of the sun, moon, and stars, the earth and the sea, thus shaking and being changed at its coming. But are these expressions to be understood literally? or are they intended as a figurative mode of describing something equally terrible of another kind? For it might be said that the first coming of Christ was represented by figures, such as mountains being made low, valleys exalted, and crooked ways being made straight; which signified the proud being humbled, the poor being raised up, and unrighteous dealings being corrected; so it might be said that the Sun might signify Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Which is hidden from the world, from faith failing, and that the moon is the Church which shines by His Light; and the stars falling might well signify good men or Churches being let fall from Christ's hand to the ground. Now it is not for us to decide in what way these prophecies will be fulfilled, we must wait and abide the time; when the time is come good men will see and understand. It may be that these things will take place literally; or it may be not literally, but

spiritually: or it may be in both ways. But of this we are assured from many passages throughout the Scriptures, that there will be a time unlike anything which yet has been; "the great tribulation," as it is called; the great trial of men. *After* which these signs will be. It is spoken of as the time of the great enemy of God who is called Antichrist, that he will draw away almost the whole world from Christ; that he will come "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." And not only this, but that he will have the power of outward signs and miracles, "lying wonders," so as to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect. That Satan will then be unloosed for a short season to deceive the nations. Now it may be that all this falling away from God, which will bring down the vengeance of the last fire, may be accompanied with these fearful sights in the natural world—the sun, moon, and stars—nature itself being moved, and the whole visible universe giving signs; or it may be that these are only used as symbols to describe the Christian world falling away from God. For this would be in fact in His eyes far more fearful than any visible shaking of the heavenly powers. For the value of one soul is in God's sight far greater than that of any material world. But this we know, that the words of Scripture never go beyond the truth, and that our conceptions always fall short of it; the great realities when fulfilled are mightier and more important than any figures which describe them. No man ever yet could understand in what way a prophecy of God would be fulfilled before it comes to pass; but when it does happen, then it is exact and wonderful in its accomplishment beyond all thought; and good men, taught by the Spirit, read in the events that come to pass the language of God. Let us therefore keep

close to the very words and literal meaning of Scripture until time shall throw light upon them, and God shall enable us to interpret the writing.

And then, it is added, that is in the midst of these fearful commotions, then *shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*. When charity has grown cold, when faith is failing, when Christ seems to have deserted His Church and His faithful few, then shall He be suddenly seen in full manifestation. This is always our comfort and strength in a thousand lesser matters; that when things appear at the worst God is wont to intervene; and not only this, but they who in earnest faith and prayer look to Him in their trials are sure to find some tokens of His presence, so that they know they are not deserted, but feel assured that He will again appear as the Sun coming forth from behind the clouds. This seeing of Christ, this beholding Him with our eyes returning, is a point on which great stress is laid throughout the Scriptures.

And when these things, says our Lord, *begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh*. This is spoken more especially to those who shall be in the midst of that great trouble; they will be cast down, their heads hanging to the ground; and therefore He says to them, "Then look up, lift up your heads, your deliverance is at hand." One of the greatest consolations to a humble Christian is this, that although the last day shall overtake men unawares throughout the whole world, yet it shall not be so with him. St. Paul says, "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."⁴ The Prophet

⁴ 1 Thess. v. 4.

Daniel, speaking of the same, says, "the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."⁵ And here our Lord Himself says, that His faithful disciples even at the last shall know the signs of His coming, and shall be comforted thereby. The troubles so terrible shall be to them like death itself is to a good Christian, awful, indeed, but with tokens of Christ's approach, and therefore full of consolation. Thus also when our Lord appears after His Ascension to St. John in the Revelation, He sends His promise to this faithful remnant which shall stand under the great temptation,—shall stand for the same reason which is given us in the Lesson of to-day, that they abide stedfast through "patience" of the Scriptures. To the humble Church of Philadelphia He says, "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My words, and hast not denied My Name. . . . I will make them to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."⁶

And this knowledge of the signs our Lord yet more distinctly describes. *And He spake to them a parable, Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.* And by the same parable does our Lord speak to His Bride the Church in the Song of Solomon: "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

⁵ Dan. xii. 10.

⁶ Rev. iii. 10.

the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." ⁷

Many and various are the signs of approaching summer, and manifold in like manner will be the tokens of Christ's last Advent which the good will notice ; will notice with joy and comfort, as a sick man does the coming on of summer. O day of great joy ! O day of great sorrow ! when wilt thou appear ? how many have looked and longed for thee, as they that wait for the dawn of the morning, and have been gathered in hope into the chambers of death, and the doors shut about them till the great tyranny be overpast ? O day of great confusion ! O day of great order and righteousness ! No light hath been as the light of that day will be : no darkness we know of will be like that which it brings. O day of great reality and truth ! all things are shadows and dreams when compared to thee ; and the falling of sun, moon, and stars, in the great tribulation, will be but as a light affliction which is but for a moment compared with thee, like clouds that break away when the sun appears. The world passes on and changes, but the Word of God still abides, pointing as with a finger immoveable unto that Day, that Day of Days. That "generation," the Jews to whom our Lord spake, still go about the world as His witnesses, as if saying, that destruction which He foretold came on us, and we continue to point out to the end that which He at the same time foretold will come on the Nations also in its appointed season. ⁸

Verily, I say unto you, said our Lord on this great occasion, when He sat on the Mount of Olives and looked on Jerusalem, and described its fall and the end of all things in the same discourse, *Verily, I say unto you, This gene-*

⁷ Song of Sol. ii. 11—13.

⁸ St. Matt. xxiv. 34.

ration shall not pass away till all be fulfilled : heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away. Blessed is he who labours more and more to wean his heart from all things which we behold in Heaven and earth, and makes his rest and stay only on the Word of God, which abideth for ever. In that Word is "the God of hope," "the God of patience and consolation ;" "therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved ; and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea." "The Lord of Hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge."⁹

⁹ Psalm xlvi. 2. 7.

SERMON III.

The Third Sunday in Advent.

I Cor. iv. 1—5. St. Matt. xi. 2—10.

THE CHURCH BEARING WITNESS.

But I have greater witness than that of John ; for the works which the FATHER hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me that the FATHER hath sent Me.—ST. JOHN v. 36.

THE preparations which Christ makes for His second coming are by means of His appointed Ministers ; and we are taught in the Epistle for to-day in what light we are to regard them. Although faithfulness to their high charge is everything to themselves, yet we are not to judge them. We are not indeed to judge one another, much less those who by God Himself are set over us. To their own Master they stand or fall. Even of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees our Lord said that as sitting in Moses' seat they were to be obeyed, although their bad example was to be avoided ; much more then must it be the case with those who sit, not in the seat of Moses, but, as it were, in that of Christ ; to whom He Himself hath said after His Resurrection, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."¹

¹ St. John xx. 21.

Let a man so account of us, says St. Paul, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Let him look upon us as Christ's servants, to whom is entrusted the dispensation of His gifts to His household the Church. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. Of man's "day" it is in the marginal reading, for man has his "day" and his "judgment" as God also has His. Nay, more, although that judgment of men were in some degree informed by the Spirit of God, yet it is of little moment; for even that voice in our own hearts must be confirmed by the final judgment of Christ. Yea, says St. Paul, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; or, although I am not conscious of any known sin in myself, any want, that is, of ministerial faithfulness, yet am I not hereby justified, but He that judgeth me is the Lord. I must still wait a higher decision.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. Not only the secret deeds of wickedness, but the intentions and thoughts—both of which are now unknown to man—will then be brought forth to await the sentence of God; "the Day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ."² And then, adds the Apostle, shall every man have praise of God; or rather, "and then the praise which shall accrue to every man shall be only that which is of God," there will be then no praise but His, no mistake, no false estimate. To this, therefore, the Minister of Christ is himself to look, and to

² Rom. ii. 16.

direct the eyes of all men ; they are not to judge him, neither is he to be moved by their judgment ; but both are to wait for the return of that Master from Whom alone he has received his stewardship, and been made the shepherd of His sheep ; Minister and people, people and Minister, both are to wait the one great approval. Such is the lesson of the Epistle for to-day.

But again, on the other hand, we have something of an apparently different character implied in Scripture ; for our Lord says, "Beware of false prophets, by their fruits ye shall know them." We are therefore in some sense to judge of false Teachers by their works, and our Lord Himself pointed to His works as the proof and evidence to men that He came from God. The two things to which He appealed were, first the testimony of John, that He had received His authority from above ; and secondly, the works that He did in His Father's name. So likewise does St. Paul appear to both : he was an Apostle, he says, "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ." Yet he often points to the evidence and fruits of this his Divine mission : "The seal of mine Apostleship," he says to the Corinthians, "are ye in the Lord." So must the Minister of Christ throughout refer to his outward commission to dispense God's mysteries, and at the same time must he by his works win men over to see that God is with him of a truth. God has united these two credentials, and they must not be put asunder by man.

Let us then next consider the Gospel for to-day. *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another ?* There is no intimation given us in the Gospels whether the

Baptist himself had any doubts or not, and therefore it may be well that we should leave the question undecided as Scripture has left it. It is indeed possible that it might have been as it was with St. Peter and the disciples after having confessed Christ to be the Son of God, having heard His discourses and seen His miracles, and been constantly with Him for three years, yet in the hour of trial did their faith waver, and they began to sink in the deep waters; so John the Baptist, although he had borne witness to Christ, yet when in prison and about to die, and having not seen, but only heard of His works by uncertain rumours, he might have had some misgivings and doubts. But it is far more probable, as the Church has always supposed, as it were with one consent,³ that there was no doubt or wavering in John the Baptist, but that he wished by these inquiries to have his disciples instructed by seeing and hearing our Lord Himself; and that as he was now in prison, and soon to be taken from them, they might thus become the disciples of Christ. As St. Paul "became weak that he might gain the weak," so the holy Baptist appears as if he himself were doubting in order that he might confirm the faith of others. He could no longer point out the Lamb of God to them as he had done, nor rejoice in hearing His voice; but those who were most attached to him, and who were ready to do anything for his sake, he could thus induce to hear the Bridegroom's voice, that hearing they might know, and with their own eyes behold Him Who was "fairer than the children of men," and Whose lips were "full of grace."

They came and beheld His wonderful works, the manifestation of God—for many miracles were wrought at the

³ With the exception of Tertullian alone among ancient writers. See Tertull., Ox. Tran., note, p. 267.

same hour—and thus their inquiry was, as it were, already answered before they had spoken. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.* These were many and great “works which none other man did,” and such emanations of Godhead that to disbelieve them were “sin.”⁴ Moreover, these miracles were precisely the fulfilment of those things which the Prophet Isaiah had said the Messiah should perform; and it might be understood that He wished to point out to them that He was Himself “He that should come,” as bearing the tokens which the Prophet described. But it is much more than this; a good man has a deep sense of the power and of the goodness of God; he is taught this by the Spirit, by the Father in Heaven; and all these things were therefore to a good man the sure evidences of God. For what power, what goodness could be greater than these? And not only this, but at all times after their degree, works of this kind, of humility and compassion, are the fruits of the Spirit; they can only be learned at the fountain-head of all Love and Goodness, from God Himself. They constrain, they draw, they allure others to the love of the Faith, they open their hearts and ears to hear what God would teach them. These works of our Blessed Lord contain the manifestation of God to His sinful creatures; they show us what God is; that “God is love,” else we could not approach Him; and if there is anything left in the corrupt heart of man capable of amendment they must reach it. Not in the whirlwind, not in the earth-

⁴ St. John xv. 24.

quake, not in the fire, but in the still small voice of human condescensions, of God made Man, whispering to the secret spirit of forgiveness and peace. To see God in Jesus Christ, and not to love Him, this itself is condemnation. And yet what is the evil which Satan works in the heart of fallen man but this, that the very sight of Divine goodness is an offence to him? Therefore, to this very description of His works our Lord adds that very mysterious and remarkable expression, *And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.* Offended in Thee! O gracious Lord, what words are these? Offended in Thee, because Thou givest sight to the blind! Offended in Thee, because Thou raisest the dead! Offended in Thee, because Thou givest the treasures of Heaven to the poor! Yet so it was, when He gave sight to the man born blind, they said, "He hath a devil;"⁵ when He raised Lazarus from the dead, the Pharisees, on hearing of it, immediately held a council to slay Him.⁶ Because He blessed and received the poor, they derided Him. But wisdom is justified of her own children; they see and acknowledge His goodness; they are not offended, not made to fall, but raised and lifted up from the ground, and strengthened in straight paths by beholding Him. These are "not offended," and, therefore, they are "blessed."

And thus as they were won over to Christ by the manifestation of His works, so is it now with the Spirit in His kingdom; His power is known by His fruits in good men, tokens of Him "Who alone worketh great marvels;" the lives of holy, self-denying Ministers preach more powerfully than their words; nay, give power to all their words and ministrations; by their fruits they

⁵ St. John x. 20.

⁶ St. John xi. 47.

are known ; their light cannot be hid ; whether they will or no, but still more strongly if they will it not, their life shines ; and thus wherever the Word is sown in this bad world it multiplies.

But, again, there is another point to be considered in the Gospel for to-day. Those whom Christ hath sent to prepare the way for His coming “ receive not honour from men ;” their faith may be doubted of men ; they may leave their very name under a cloud ; but Christ at His coming shall confess their name before men ; shall bear witness to them as they have confessed His name, and borne witness to Him among men. And so was it now with His first messenger and herald, the holy Baptist.

And as they—the messengers of John—departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see ? a reed shaken with the wind ? John the Baptist was much revered by the multitude ; and no doubt the coming of these two disciples from him in prison arrested very deep and solemn attention ; and now, when they had departed, we may suppose there was a thoughtful pause and some anxious doubts in those around respecting the meaning of this his inquiry. Our Lord, therefore, seems to say, John came not down among you as I have done, amidst the habitations and the habits of men, but you went forth unto him in the wilderness ; and with your own eyes you saw him, and can bear testimony to his character. He was not like the reed shaken by every wind, you well know ; but was one most steadfast—a burning and a shining light, whose constant flame wavered not. His sanctity and his constancy you doubt not. I appeal not only to My own works, but to his testimony also, that I am He Who was to come from God.

But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. That is, you were drawn to him in the wilderness—and thither went forth to see him—from the report of the great strictness and severity of his life; and you saw him, one like the prophets of old, but surpassing all of them, clothed with nothing but a rough garment of camels' hair, and in every way suitable to that place in which he appeared, “a voice in the wilderness,” very unlike the softness and luxury of a king's court. Though he did no miracle, yet his holy life and his words proved to you, and ye doubted not, that he was a Prophet come from God. He bare witness; to his testimony I appeal.

But what went ye out for to see? it was no ordinary sight—a prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For the prophets only saw afar off, but he close at hand; he not only foretold His coming, but attended on the very Presence of the King, and was beyond all the prophets well worthy to do so; he was not only himself a prophet, but the subject of prophecy, one of whom the prophets themselves wrote. *For this is he of whom it is written* in the Prophet Malachi, at the very close of the Old Testament, which seemed to die away with the prophecy of his coming on its tongue. This is he of whom it is written, *Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.* Here is our Lord's testimony to His own faithful messenger. He was then the “faithful and wise steward” whom the Lord found watching and waiting for Him at His coming.

To conclude: what was done in the Old Testament by single persons as setting forth that Holy One Which was to come from God, is since Christ's coming shown in many. The one king, as David, one prophet from time to time

prepared the way ; but now many messengers are gone forth to speak of Christ's coming—of His coming not alone, as before, but with ten thousands of His Saints. The little one hath become a thousand now in the many heralds of His approach. They go forth as a great cloud of witnesses. And oh, that Christ might at His coming bear witness Himself to their faithfulness, as He did before to His steadfast messenger, that they might in like manner confess Him and He might confess them. But ah, my brethren, what a heavy burden is this ! to prepare the way for His coming Whose manifestation will be as fire. Who is sufficient for such a weight—so momentous a charge ? who will not sink under it at last ? John was greater than all the prophets ; but our Lord has said that the least in His kingdom, *i. e.* in His Church, is greater than he,—greater because he is made a member of Christ and a child of God. How great, therefore, must be the charge of those who are shepherds of that flock which He prizes so dear, the least of which are to Him as the apple of His eye ! how great the responsibility of those who dispense His mysteries, and prepare all men to meet Him in the terrible Judgment !

But Priests and people are bound up in one lot ; they both must fall or stand together : neither can judge or accuse the other, for both partake of each other's sins. If the Priests are evil and careless, it is because the people pray not for them ; if the people fall away, it is because the Priests have not prayed and watched for them.

Hence there is great consolation in speaking on this subject of the awful terrors of the Priests' responsibility on this Sunday, because in this week the people are in an especial manner called upon to pray for them. The Collect for this week is altogether a prayer for them : the Ember

Days of this week are set apart on purpose to fast and pray for them. The awful sound of the Advent trumpet calls on all men to pray for them ; for if others cannot stand in that judgment, how shall they who have so much more to account for? The love and mercies of Christmas-time tenderly appeal to all men to pray for their Pastors.

We complain of the want of Bishops and Clergy ; we complain of their great feebleness, and, of what is worse ; we complain of the crippled condition of the Church ; of thousands and of tens of thousands daily perishing for lack of knowledge and from the deficiencies of Pastoral energy and care ; but they who thus complain do not consider how much of all this remains at their own door ; for no doubt the real cause which lies at the bottom of all this is that the people do not pray ; do not pray as they are required to do for their own Pastor, and for their own Bishop, and for the Church generally, that the Ministers and Stewards of Christ's mysteries may prepare the way before Him. For how did our Lord Himself meet this great want when He was moved with compassion at the sight? His words were, "Pray ye the Lord of the Harvest." He knew of no other way but this neither shall we find it.

SERMON IV.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Phil. iv. 4—7. St. John i. 19—28.

THE SPIRIT BEARING WITNESS.

Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice.—PHIL. iv. 4.

CHRISTMAS is the season of rejoicing. The Church therefore on this Sunday takes up this her solemn note from St. Paul's affectionate Epistle to his beloved Philippians: *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.* The Christian's joy is not of the world, but spiritual and heavenly; and the whole passage proceeds to furnish us with a short and beautiful description of the nature of this joy: "Rejoice," not in the things of the world which come to naught, but rejoice *in the Lord*. And again, this joy differs from any other in its steadfast and enduring nature: "Rejoice in the Lord *always*." This too is a lesson very seasonable; for Christmas is a time for all to rejoice, under all circumstances of life; but it finds many under outward afflictions of various kinds which might seem to render it no season of rejoicing for them: loss of friends or relations, or sickness, or poverty and worldly reverses, or depression of mind and sorrow for

sin, or public calamities and the distresses of the Church. But the darker the night, the more brightly shines the star of Bethlehem. "Rejoice in the Lord alway;" this includes every season of affliction. But the Christian's joy is peculiarly joy in tribulation: "When I sit in darkness," says the Prophet Micah, "the Lord shall be a light unto me."¹ And another Prophet: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation."² And we know how much this was the case with the early Christians, when they "sold their possessions, and parting them to all, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."³ And when beaten they rejoiced that they were "counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name's sake."⁴ "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."⁵

To this is added, *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* The rejoicing in spirit, the joy in the Holy Ghost, is in the secret heart—a joy which the stranger "intermeddleth not with;" but that without, which is known unto all men, is this moderation; this is the outer garment seen of men. The Christian will not be earnestly bent on any earthly design or object, but in his dealings with mankind he will be under a sense of the little value of anything in this world; and therefore will show a quiet moderation and evenness of spirit; in possessing as one who possesses not; in suffering as one who suffers

¹ Micah vii. 8.

² Hab. iii. 17, 18.

³ Acts ii. 45, 46.

⁴ Acts v. 41.

⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

not ; in doing all things as if he were doing nothing ; and all this from having his confidence in God only. If he meets with losses he is not troubled ; if visited with prosperity he is not puffed up ; if he meets with ill-treatment he is not angry ; if despised he is not cast down. And St. Paul here adds the grounds of this "moderation," viz. his feeling that the time is short : *The Lord is at hand*. This awakening Advent sound ever and anon occurs throughout the New Testament, as if it were intended to form the one ever-abiding impression on the mind of a Christian. Thus St. James says, "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." "Grudge not one against another, the Judge standeth before the door." And St. Peter, "But the end of all things is at hand ; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." This the Christian's "moderation" of mind, which is "known to all" from his indifference to the things of the world, is connected with a deep sense ever in his mind that "the Lord is at hand." How it is that the coming of his Lord is so near he knows not, but he receives it in faith, in a full assurance that as Christ has taken such pains to impress upon Christians the suddenness and stillness, the speediness of His coming, that somehow hereafter, when all is accomplished, it will be found to have been so. This heavenly-minded moderation with regard to the things of sight, from a feeling of their fleeting and perishable nature, is not unlike what St. Paul expresses in another place : "But this I say, brethren, the time is short ; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; for the fashion of this world passeth

away." Thus among the storms of the world the Christian has his soul stayed upon God, and therefore is at peace.

To this the Epistle adds in fuller explanation, *Be careful for nothing.* "Be careful:" it is the same word which our Lord uses when He says, "Take no thought," *i. e.* be not careful, "for the morrow," "what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed." And here St. Paul's command includes everything: "Be careful *for nothing.*" There is no subject therefore whatever of any kind on which we are to be anxious; and indeed such anxiety is sinful, for it implies a want of faith. What then are we to do in the many troubles which beset our path each day of our lives? In addition to those greater afflictions and misfortunes which from time to time seem to bring a cloud over our existence, and sometimes of long continuance, there are also lesser cares daily occurring to all, and which with some eat out the very heart, and leave no power or inclination for anything better. The occurrence of these troubles cannot be helped; in what therefore is the remedy? St. Paul here tells us, "Be careful for nothing, *but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*" Now trouble does not spring from the ground; there is some object and good purpose for the troubles which are planted so thick like thorns around our dwelling-places on earth. The reason is this: that such may be made subjects and occasions of prayer to God: God would have us at all times looking to Him; our faces always turned, not like the beasts to the ground, but towards Heaven. And if any one wishes to know on any occasion why this or that little matter of trouble occurs to him,—some difficulty perhaps, some regret, some ill treat-

ment, some loss or reproach, or bodily pain,—of this he may be assured, that it comes to him from God, in order to induce him to pray. If we had nothing to trouble us, we should have nothing to desire ; and if we had nothing to desire, we should have nothing to pray for. It is prayer which hallows all the lesser concerns and accidents of life. Many cares are actually sinful in their very nature, such as those which arise from envy or covetousness ; now these by prayer are destroyed. Some are not in their nature sinful, but may by prayer be rendered means of grace and steps to Heaven. Even so great a saint as St. Paul himself had a distressing thorn ; and the consequence of this thorn was, that he prayed earnestly and often with respect to it ; and thus he found it became to him such an abundant occasion of grace, that he no longer wished for it to be removed, but, on the contrary, rejoiced in it ; for “ when I am weak,” he said, “ then am I strong.” “ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities.” To pray for the greatest and best of all things—for eternal life, for acceptance of God, and forgiveness of sins—is of course what we ought to do according to the true value and importance of such things ; but what we need is, to be continually and at all times urged to prayer ; and this is the object and use of all the lesser inconveniences and thorns of life.

And here we may observe in this instance of St. Paul, that his prayer with regard to that thorn which troubled him became soon mingled with thanksgiving. This is another point which he mentions in this passage we are considering. “ By prayer,” he says, “ and supplication *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God.” Now it is certain that the prayer of faith is always heard and answered of God ; and he that prays in faith comes sooner or later to feel assured of this, and to know that his

prayer is answered: it may be not in the way which he first desired and thought of, yet doubtless in the best of all ways. And therefore thanksgiving with his prayers—thanksgiving for the past as well as requests for future mercies—are but the expression of this faith. Thanksgiving for past blessings is the best pledge and plea we can offer for future hopes. Thanksgiving opens and disposes the heart to God; and by acknowledging Him as the Author of all the good we have received, induces us to look to Him the more in prayer. And thus it is that in the Psalms prayers and thanksgivings are so blended together: the most earnest prayer is often lost in the end in thanksgiving. This of itself shows the effect of prayer, how it disposes us to lose ourselves in the sense of God's goodness.

St. Paul then proceeds to mention what will be the blessed result of thus living in prayer. *And the peace of God, he says, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds.* Peace passing the comprehension of man; that great gift "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."⁶ Thus St. Paul to the Corinthians, speaking of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,"⁷ such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man;" yet he says, "God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." It is that unspeakable gift which Christ describes as peculiarly His own, unlike anything of the world. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." It is that which the Spirit of God brings, and is spoken of as the hidden manna. This peace, St. Paul here says, "shall keep your hearts and minds," that is, your affections and your thoughts; it shall

⁶ Rev. ii. 17.

⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

“keep” them. The word “keep” is much more strong and expressive in the Greek than it sounds in our English version; it means, shall watch over and guard, like a garrison at watch in the country of an enemy. What is it which thus keeps guard in a good man, not only over his words and actions, but also over his heart and thoughts, so that he is not taken by surprise, and allows no opening to the enemy—it is Peace. Nothing expresses more forcibly the abiding character at all times of a good Christian than this; the peace of God in his heart keeps watch. If he has not the loves and desires of men of the world, it is because all such would discompose, are not in harmony and unison with, the vision of peace which is within him. He throws them off; they touch him not because his heart is guarded and garrisoned by this peace within. For this reason, when St. Paul comes to describe the love of God in the soul in his account of charity, he speaks of nothing else but of these things in the heart and thoughts over which such love keeps watch, as that it envies not, seeks not its own, behaves not unseemly, and the like, because the love of God, which is the peace incomprehensible, is shed abroad in the heart. And all this is the fruit of the Christian faith, through Christ Who hath made our peace with God, and is the Prince of Peace; it is abiding in Him; and therefore St. Paul says, “This peace shall keep your hearts and minds *through Jesus Christ* ;” or, more literally, “*in Jesus Christ* ;” it is making Him the sanctuary of our thoughts, our refuge, our stronghold. It is the life hid with Christ in God.

Now I think we cannot fail to see how very suitable this short passage of the Epistle is for this last Sunday in Advent; but perhaps we may not at first perceive why the appointed Gospel is selected by our Church for this season

—the account of the Jews sending to John the Baptist to inquire of him whether he were the Christ.

On last Sunday the Collect spoke of the Messenger sent before to prepare the way of Christ; and in consequence the Gospel for that day was of Christ bearing testimony to St. John the Baptist, His Messenger; but this Gospel for to-day is of the Baptist bearing testimony to Christ Himself; and with very peculiar fitness for this Sunday, for he was bearing witness to Christ and to His Godhead, just before He Himself appeared, even as it is with us on this day just before we acknowledge His appearing on Christmas Day. While He was among them, but unknown, not yet manifested; even so is it now: He is among us, but unseen; we wait for His Great Advent.

But there are many points which render this, the appointed Gospel, peculiarly suited to this season, and especially to this day. It is taken from the opening of St. John's Gospel, in which he is setting forth the Godhead of Christ; and in so doing he adduces this testimony of the Baptist. Because it was to John the Baptist our Lord Himself appealed as the great proof of His authority. "Ye sent unto John," He said, "and he bare witness unto the truth."⁸ And when the Jews questioned His mission from God, and His authority, He put this before them, "John the Baptist and his baptism, whence was it? from Heaven, or of men?"⁹ It was not, He said, that He needed "testimony of men," for His works proved Him to be of God; but it was because this was the Divine appointment, that John the Baptist should be sent before Him as the messenger and the witness; and therefore it is that the Evangelist, in declaring the Divinity of Christ, thus introduces St. John the Baptist: *This is the record,*

⁸ St. John v. 33.

⁹ St. Matt. xxi. 25.

he says, of *John*, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, *Who art thou?* It was so ordained of God that the testimony should thus be brought before the sacred nation, that they might be without excuse. "Priests and Levites" in a formal deputation "from Jerusalem." It was the Law itself putting the question "Who art thou?" Art thou *the Christ* Whom we expect? But if not, *art thou* then *Elijah*, whom the last Prophet Malachi said should come before Him? or if not, *art thou that Prophet* whom God said to Moses He would raise up from among their brethren, so that being God, yet He should speak to them as Man? John the Baptist said in answer, that he was spoken of by Isaiah, the great Prophet of Christ's kingdom, as *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, preparing the way. He came not to work miracles, as Christ did, and as the other Prophets, but was only a voice. He was even as *the voice* of His Church unto the end of the world *crying in the wilderness*, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and *make His paths straight.*" Here, therefore, in the Gospel for to-day we have *the Prophet Isaiah*—the great Prophet of Christ's coming—we have the voice of the messenger John the Baptist, and we have St. John the Evangelist bringing forward these two as his witnesses; what could be more suitable to announce Christmas Day?

When St. John the Baptist had made this announcement to the Jewish Priesthood, they again further inquired of him if he were not the Christ, what was the meaning of his *Baptism*. He then explained to them that this was not that Great Baptism which was to be, but nothing more than a baptism of *water*, signifying the need of washing by confession of sin and repentance, but He that should baptize with the Holy Ghost was already

standing among them although they knew it not: He who although coming after him was before him; He whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose. He indeed shall baptize openly with water, but at the same time with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This declaration in the Gospel for to-day seems to prepare the way for the festival of the Nativity, which, together with Christ's Birth, celebrates also our own new Birth in Christ by baptism.

These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing; on the banks of that sacred stream where our Lord was Himself baptized, where the heavens were opened, the Dove descended, and the new Birth came in.

Now these considerations on the Epistle and the Gospel will obtain much additional light when we bring out in connexion with them the ancient Collect also for the Day: "O Lord, raise up (we pray Thee) Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us." The Collect for last week spoke of the messengers and stewards of Christ's mysteries; and that for the preceding week of the Holy Scriptures as preparing the way; but the Collect on this day of Christ Himself coming among us with great power to succour us, as sore let and hindered by our sins. In like manner the Epistle and Gospel are entirely of Christ Himself, shedding abroad His peace in the heart, and coming among us, though we see Him not, even as He stood unknown among the Jews of old, "the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world;" when the friend of the Bridegroom stood, and heard, and rejoiced greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice.¹ And shall not the Bride herself rejoice at hearing of the same?

I will add a few words in conclusion on the subject of

¹ St. John iii. 29.

the text. Christian joy in the New Testament will be found to be of this peculiar character ; that it is more particularly attached to one kind of suffering, as the last of the Beatitudes explains it, *i. e.* on being persecuted for righteousness' sake. It is to this it is added, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."² And as this being "persecuted for righteousness' sake" was set forth beyond all in our blessed Lord Himself, so was it after their degree in those who in any way approached Him. Thus was it with the first Christians ; they drank of His Cup, and were baptized with His baptism of suffering, and therefore we find to them was held out with regard to these this great crown of rejoicing. It was so especially with these Philippians, whom St. Paul calls upon throughout this Epistle to rejoice in these sufferings.

The reason of this may be that these trials are of all the most severe. The enmity of the world against real goodness, is, humanly speaking, beyond what we can account for, yet so unavoidable, that even a Heathen Philosopher declared, that if a perfectly good man was to appear in the world, he would be put to a cruel death. It never appears in its own shape ; it puts on disguises ; it watches opportunities ; it will feign to be goodness itself,—all of which we see set forth in the Gospels so forcibly in the history of Christ ; where they watched for His halting ; waited on His words and actions ; and that enmity never let go its hold. This its malignity under specious appearances renders it hard to bear.

Now we are not worthy of this, and probably are not much subject to it ; but so far as any person aims at consistent holiness of life, he must be in some measure. "All," says St. Paul, "who would live godly in Christ

² St. Matt. v. 12.

Jesus, must suffer persecution." Although we may not thus suffer ourselves, there may be some one loved and revered by us who does thus suffer. It may be one to whom we feel that we owe even our own soul. A good man must have many such hearts knit to him, because they feel that through God they owe everything to him. To find such an one an object of suspicion and dislike is a severe trial of patience, and at such a time the evangelical call to rejoicing sounds strange to us. Yet even here, if we are knit together with the good in their sufferings, and take them as they do, we may partake also of their joy in God. This shines forth so beautifully in St. Paul's letters; he called upon others to sympathize with him in his bonds, to be joined with him in his afflictions as he was in theirs, in order that they might both rejoice and be comforted together. Blessed indeed, most blessed union, to be united with the good in their sorrows! bright heavenly light in the darkness of those their troubles in the early Church! greatest joy of all joy on earth when those saints of old were knit together with one another, and with their own suffering Lord, in fellowship of common sorrows! No joy, no love on earth was equal to that which was so inflamed and heightened by the flames of persecution and the hatred of the world; joy and love that overflowed from Christ's own Cup. His own sweat of suffering was on that Cup which they drank with Him, and fresh upon it was their Master's blood; His last, His best Beatitude.

Nor are these things afar off, and to be read of as some ancient history that concerns us not. Is there no danger of our taking part against some good man unknowingly, when Satan stirs up the world against him because he bears the mark of Christ? When the Pharisees watched our Lord, thirsting for His blood, they knew not why,

and spoke against Him with soft tongues, bringing forward plausible charges, misinterpreting His words and actions, and expressing the greatest zeal for righteousness and the Law, were there no good people carried away, do you think, by their dissimulation? Were there not many from want of a true heart, or lukewarmness, or cowardice, borne along to join the great crowd of persecutors against One Who was hated and despised of the world? Were not the whole multitude, which but a few days before received Him with Hosannas, led away by the Chief Priests to cry out, Crucify Him? Among those who then swelled the party of the Chief Priests, there were doubtless many who little thought of what they were doing till it was too late.

When our blessed Lord was crucified it was on the occasion of a great Festival. The city was full of rejoicing. Let our joy at this season be far different from theirs; let it be such as may have fellowship with St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents.

SERMON V.

Christmas Day.

Hebrews i. 1—12. St. John i. 1—15.

THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the FATHER), full of grace and truth.—ST. JOHN i. 14.

IN the Epistle and Gospel which have been always appointed for this Day, there is no mention of the birth at Bethlehem, nor of the Child in the manger, nor of the seed of Abraham and David, and the like. But the Church leaves, as it were, the day itself, with all its instructive lessons, to speak of these things, and, by its Epistle and Gospel, takes us into the inner sanctuary, and tells us of nothing there but of His unspeakable Godhead.

First of all from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Now the Hebrews knew not of the divinity of Christ; their Scriptures, indeed, spoke of it throughout, but yet they did not perceive nor understand this; it was the great secret of God. Abraham, indeed, and the Prophets, and the

Royal Psalmist, knew that God had in store some mystery infinitely great and good, surpassing their highest wishes and thoughts; but it was so far beyond them that, even in speaking of it, they are as if they understood it not; their best conceptions could not attain to all they uttered. But when the Hebrews became Christians, then all to them was clear, and the Apostle, in this Epistle to them, dwells throughout on this, viz. how the Law and the Prophets, and all the religion and history of the Jews, contained within them this great mystery, and were only preparing the way for its full manifestation.

God, Who at sundry times, or in sundry portions, and in divers manners,—by miracle and sign, by vision and dream, by the cloud or the fire, by oracle or angel,—spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. After this introduction, the Apostle proceeds to speak of Him in those exalted expressions, by which the Scriptures describe the Christ. *Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, as the second and the eighth Psalms speak of Him: by Whom also He made the worlds; for He was “begotten of His Father before all worlds,” and “without Him was not anything made that was made;” Who being the brightness of His glory, the eternal radiance and effulgence emanating from Him, as “Light of Light, very God of very God;” “being of one substance with the Father:” and the express image of His Person, so that “he who hath seen Me,” says Christ, “hath seen the Father:” and upholding all things by the word of His Power, “for by Him all things consist.” When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;—fulfilling the hundred and tenth Psalm, which our Lord so earnestly pointed out to the Jews, where*

David, speaking of Him in this His exaltation, calls Him Lord, implying that He was God.¹

And now the Apostle proceeds to show that the Hebrew Scriptures speak of Christ as partaking of our nature, and sitting, after His Resurrection, upon the right hand of God, as both God and Man; that as such, He is always described as God, and above every creature. *Being made*, he says, that is in this His session on the right hand of God, *so much better than*, or superior to, *the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* *For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?* as He says of Christ, in the second Psalm, on His victory over death, *And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.* *And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world,*—or as St. Paul calls Him, in another place, “the Beginning, the First-born from the dead,”²—the expression “bringing into the world” signifies introducing into possession of an inheritance,—*He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.* He is an object of worship in this His exaltation over the grave to all the creatures of God, as being of higher substance and nature than they. Whereas the language of Scripture respecting these ministering spirits is quite of another kind. *And of the angels*—these messengers of God to the Hebrews under the old dispensation—of these *He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.* They are like the material universe, mere instruments in the hand of God. But when the Scripture comes to speak of Christ as exalting our nature in Himself to the right hand of God, it is altogether different. *But unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for*

¹ St. Matt. xxii. 45.

² Col. i. 18.

ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. Thou art the Anointed ; the anointing of the Holy One is with Thee. Thou art full of grace, and of Thy fulness have all we received ; for " God giveth not the Spirit by measure " unto Thee.

To this the Apostle adds, that this, the Incarnate God Who now sits on the right hand of Power, all things in heaven and earth being put in subjection under His feet, Who is our God for ever and ever, is the same co-eternal Son Who was in the beginning with God, from everlasting, before the worlds ; in confirmation of which he brings forward again to the Hebrews their own Scriptures, speaking of Christ. Of Him it is said in prayer, in the hundred and second Psalm, *And Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands : they shall perish, but Thou remainest : and they all shall wax old as doth a garment : and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed ; but Thou art the same,—the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever—and Thy years shall not fail.* Such, says the Epistle for to-day, are the expressions, so wonderfully eloquent and sublime, replete with such solemn harmony, in which Christ is described in the Old Testament. It is said that He covereth Himself with light like as with a garment, and here that the heavens themselves are to Him as the raiment which a man may make for himself and put on, and, as it grows old, may fold up and cast aside.

In like manner with the Epistle, the Gospel also for this day dwells altogether on the subject of the Godhead

of Christ, taken from the opening of St. John's Gospel. And here, in considering these words of the Holy Ghost, we are not to discuss them merely as a confession of our faith in the Divinity of our Lord ; nor to read them as we might in the Gospel of St. John on any other occasion ; nor to inquire into them as a matter of doctrine ; but, as our Church intends, the Gospel comes to us with an especial reference to our devotions on this day ; we are to turn it altogether into a matter of adoration, and prayer, and thanksgiving. It is not only as a star that leads us from the world afar off to Bethlehem, but, by leading us thus from above, teaches us that the heavens are thus moved because it is God that comes, that when we see Him, we look not on Him as an infant King only, but may with the Wise men from the East fall down and worship.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. O amazing sight that we behold ! Thou Who wast the Word, the only manifestation of God to all created things, Who wast in the beginning, from everlasting, before the worlds were made ; Thou, Who wast then, and always hadst been, in the bosom of the Father, in union and love incomprehensible, unspeakable ; and Thou Thyself, the only manifestation of the Father, wast God. Thou the very same Who in the beginning of all things wast with God, One with Him, is it Thee that we now behold, as an helpless Infant before us, on this day, as an Infant of a few hours old, stretching forth as it were Thy feeble hands to us, and saying, " This is Love ;" the great mystery which I have come thus to teach thee, and which thou canst not understand, is that God is Love : much have I borne with thee, O fallen man, much

have I taught thee of old by Angels, and by Prophets, and holy men, but now I come myself to teach thee by this sight, of that mercy which is with Me. O may the Blessed Spirit open our hearts that we may receive this sight; that it may enter into our souls by faith, and make us know what God is, and what we are. O day of days, birthday of life hid in God, door of blissful immortality, dawning light of New Creation! O day of days abiding ever, O day that hast no evening! O day of days, first of the days of Heaven, be ever with us, for the light of this world goeth down. *All things were made by Him*, adds the Evangelist, *and without Him was not anything made that was made*. And, O Thou Who hast made all things, canst Thou not, and will'st Thou not, make us anew? for it were better for us never to have been made at all, unless Thou make us again, and unmake that in us which we have made ourselves to be. Oh, Thou art surely willing, or else we could not behold what we do behold on this day: and oh, Thou art surely able, for all things were made by Thee. We have been endeavouring to make ourselves, and the labour of all men is to make themselves, and to make for themselves their own goodness, their own wisdom, their own happiness, and, by so doing, they are but undoing themselves the more; but without Thee nothing hath been made that was made, and all that Thou makest is exceeding good, and there is no good, and no goodness, nor ever has been, but what hath been made by Thee. And now, Thou, Who madest the heavens, and angels, and man also, perfectly good in Thine own image, hast Thyself come down to make him anew; that, by beholding Thee, he may learn what humility is, and what love is; that he may bow his proud head to enter under the lowly roof of this stable,

and may stoop down his high looks to behold what is in this manger. O marvellous sight, profound abyss of merciful lowliness, depth of Divine love which angels desire to look into, but understand not ; all things gaze on that mirror, and as they gaze are changed. But man, instead of leaning down, looks up to the serpent on the tree, and is in love with death, thinking to make himself wise and happy without God ; and therefore he loves not life, and loves not light, for his foolish heart is darkened.

In Him was Life, adds the Holy Spirit by St. John, *and the Life was the Light of men. And the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* O Thou, the Giver of all Life, the Life itself, Whom to know is eternal Life, and that Life the fulness of blessedness and joy, how art Thou as a despised infant unknown in the world which Thou hast made ! How little did they think of Thee, in that inn at Bethlehem, in which there was room for all but for Thee ! How little at Jerusalem, Thy Holy City ! And how little do all that sacred nation now know or think of Thee, laid as a babe in the manger in swaddling clothes ! How little did all around Thee know of Thine incomprehensible greatness ! What an eloquent sign is this of what Thou always hast been and art even now in the world, “ Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, the God of Israel, the Saviour ! ” Oh, make us to know Thee upon this day, the Light unapproachable, the Life hid with Thee in God ! Be Thou the Life and the Light in our hearts, lest the darkness overtake us which has no morning ; make us to be as Thou art, as a little child, learning of Thee unspeakable lowliness and love, which is the light that surrounds Thee in the darkness—and to be full of lowliness and of love is to find Thee, and to know Thee—and all else but this is but the

darkness which belongs to this world, and the forerunner of that darkness which is the shutting out from Thy kingdom. And since it is nothing but repentance and obedience which can bring us to that Light—and since it is altogether in vain to point out the spotless Lamb of God, the Lamb Which God hath for Himself provided, or to say This is He—This is the Child which to us is given; since to know this would but add to our condemnation unless we repent; therefore was the herald sent before to prepare the way by preaching of repentance. *There was a man sent from God*, adds the Evangelist, *whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.* John was indeed “a burning and a shining light,” as our Lord Himself said of him, but only as that star of Bethlehem which went before to lead to the Sun of Righteousness: the light which John had was none of his own, it was but the light which he caught from that Sun in Whom alone is life. He was of old the single star, but to us, my brethren, on this day not one star but a thousand stars have led us to Him—and we behold His rising in Whom is everlasting day. Then Prophets and Saints and Apostles and Ministers seem to withdraw their light, and to leave us to contemplate Him alone on this day, the Infant of days, the Everlasting God.

That was the true Light, proceeds St. John, *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* Every other light is but a shadow of that true Light, Which is Christ; whatever directs a man aright, whether natural conscience, or religion, or the Holy Spirit within him, all is from Christ and of Christ. Oh, that our steps may be ever in His Light; that the day-star may arise in the heart and

lead us to Him! May He Himself be in the heart "the bright and Morning Star" before the full day arise.

He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. Wonderful words to be spoken of God, yet we are angry and impatient because men do not recognize and respect us as we think they ought to do. He was in the Heathen world as a light shining in a dark place, but the darkness comprehended it not, and then *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.* Neither when born, nor when dying, nor when living among them, nor when by His ascension taken from them would His own receive Him. *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* Here then is another vast and exceeding high mystery, this Divine Babe is to be an image of ourselves, for we also by this His birth are to be born again from above into a new and everlasting life, and to be made partakers of His Godhead. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."³

And all is summed up in this declaration. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* "Dwelt among us," or, as it might be rendered, "within us," and oh, my brethren, may it be so with us this day! He comes to us as of old veiled in a mystery of lowliness, in mean elements; He, "whose goings forth have been from everlasting,"⁴ lies hid in Bethlehem, which is by interpretation the House of Bread,

³ 1 St. John iii. 1.

⁴ Micah v. 2.

Bethlehem the "little one." May the Incarnate God Who disdained not the lowly manger, come to visit us in this the humble mystery of His Altar, and make His tabernacle within our souls: may we have eyes to behold His glory, and in beholding to be changed;—His glory was in His humiliation and suffering, and therefore to the carnal mind was He "without form or comeliness, or any beauty that we should desire Him,"—but to them who behold and adore in Him the only-begotten of the Father, He is "full of grace," filling their souls out of His own fulness with mercy and loving-kindness: and He is "full of truth," for before Him all "shadows flee away;"⁵ and the earth and Heavens, we are told, shall depart the next time when He shall unveil His face.⁶

⁵ Song of Sol. ii. 17.

⁶ Rev. xx. 11.

SERMON VI.

Saint Stephen's Day.

Acts vii. 55—60. St. Matt. xxiii. 34—39.

LOVE STRONG AS DEATH.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

REV. ii. 10.

THIS festival was much celebrated by the early Church ; there are many sermons extant that were preached on this day, several by St. Augustin, by St. Chrysostom, and others whose names are well known in the Church. St. Augustin dwells on the significance of this festival occurring on the day after that of our Lord's Nativity, alluding to the martyrdom of a Saint being called his birthday ; "the birthday of the Lord," he says, "when He put on the clothing of our flesh, that of His servant, when he laid that clothing aside ; that of the Lord when He was made like unto us, that of His servant when he was brought most near unto Christ. For as Christ being born was united unto Stephen, so Stephen by dying was united unto Christ."¹

There is indeed much that is remarkable in the circum-

¹ Serm. cccxiv. In Nat. Steph. Mar.

stances of St. Stephen's death ; his angelic appearance, his vision of Christ, his bold and eloquent appeal, his prayer in death, and the signal fulfilment of that prayer ; it seems as if it had been especially intended for the encouragement of the many martyrs that were to follow.

Stephen, having now in vain preached to the Council of the Jews, *being full of the Holy Ghost*, it is said, *looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.* St. Stephen had been spoken of before as "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost ;" but here the expression "being full of the Holy Ghost," seems to imply something supernatural in his appearance, as if the Divine light within had penetrated through the fleshly veil, which was before intimated when it was said, that "looking steadfastly on him, they saw his face as it had been the face of an Angel ;" and something of the same kind is implied in his earnest looking, as it is added, into Heaven, not up towards Heaven, as we might do, but "into Heaven ;" so that there he beholds the very Fountain of life itself, "the glory of God," and in it our nature received in the Son of Man ; as our Lord Himself had foretold to that very Council on the night before His death ; but not "sitting on the right hand of God," as if all His warfare were accomplished, for he now sees Him "standing" as in readiness to aid His martyrs. And yet further, he not only sees into Heaven, and the Son of Man there, but also as he testifies, "I see the Heavens opened." The Heavens no longer closed against us, but from henceforth opened for us, as it was said at our Lord's Baptism, that "the Heavens were opened unto Him." And this now testified by the blood of His first martyr.

Then they cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. That is they looked upon Saul as their leader, as he himself says, "I was consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."² *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* He gave up his soul to Christ as into the hands of God, as our Lord Himself had in dying committed His spirit into His Father's keeping. It was altogether for his testimony to Christ's Godhead that he died: in confirmation of that truth for which Christ Himself was persecuted and slain. For they had taken up stones to kill our Lord Himself when He declared Himself to be One with the Father and equal with God:³ and before this Council, when He had spoken of Himself as the Son of the Blessed, and sitting hereafter on the right hand of God, the High Priest rent his clothes, and they all condemned Him as guilty of death. There are many points of similarity between our Lord's death and that of His first martyr. In this case, as in that of our Lord Himself, they had suborned false-witnesses to alter and give a false colour to words spoken respecting the Temple; but they succeeded not: it was for testimony to His Godhead that His own blood, and that of His martyrs was reserved; for salvation depended on this faith: it was against this that Satan instigated the minds of all "to stop their ears, and with one accord" to persecute unto the death. And St. Stephen too, like his Lord, must die without the City; as the sin-offering in the Law, whose blood was taken into the Holy place:⁴ and indeed that

² Acts xxii. 20.

³ St. John x. 30. 33.

⁴ Lev. iv. 11, 12. 21.

Jerusalem was not worthy ; the martyrs from henceforth “go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach,” seeking another City which hath more stable foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

And now there is another part yet remaining in which to render his martyrdom perfect, St. Stephen must be made like unto his Lord. *And he kneeled down*, it is added, that is, it was an action of a solemn and impressive kind, that in the midst of that violent death he should thus kneel down as in some very earnest supplication, for an object of great importance,—*He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Jerusalem was filling up the measure of its iniquity beyond forgiveness. A state for which prophets were forbidden to pray, wherein Moses and Samuel would stand before God in vain,⁵ and for which Noah, Daniel, and Job would avail not in prayer ; but for this sin of his own death he thus interceded, when he could add to that intercession the most powerful offering of his own death. *And when he had said this, he fell asleep.* In the beautiful and expressive language of Scripture, he exchanged this scene of trouble for one of repose and peace. “He fell asleep” on the bosom of God, and well suited for that rest, for his last words were of forgiveness and peace. And that prayer was not in vain.

The Spirit by which good men pray knoweth the mind of God, and to pray according to the mind of God, spreads abroad in the heart the full assurance of faith ; and it has always been remarked by the holy men of old, that in answer to this the dying prayer of St. Stephen, St. Paul may have been given to the Church. We cannot but observe with awe how God works in wonderful ways,

° Jer. xv. 1.

here was St. Stephen, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," full of wisdom, and persuasion, and eloquence, of zeal and courage, and especially beyond all, as it appears, of Divine love; yet cut off from the Church to which it might have been supposed that his life was invaluable; taken away in the very outset of his labours and preaching. But if St. Paul was given to his death and prayer, how otherwise could St. Stephen have obtained so rich a harvest as he had in all the labours of the great Apostle? how fruitful was his blood! it fell not on the ground in vain. The first in the army of martyrs who stand around the throne, he has as his companion there the chief of those that were now concerned in his death; and with him, "with white robes and palms in their hands," he shall see them coming in great multitudes into Heaven, and shall ask, "Who are these? and whence are they?" and the answer shall be, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

And who was this who was thus made to be the leader of the army of martyrs? not an Apostle or Evangelist, not a Priest or Elder, but one of those seven Deacons appointed by the Apostles, that they might not themselves have "to serve tables," but might give themselves to "prayer and the ministry of the Word." "One chosen from the Lambs," says St. Augustin, and not from the chief of the flock. This was the crown and first-fruits, for the word Stephen signifies a "crown." And in what shall we chiefly imitate him that we may obtain that crown? it is most of all, says the last-mentioned writer, in the love of our enemies. "Our King," says another Bishop, "came in humility, but came not empty. Great is the donative He hath brought for His soldiers, whereby He hath

not only largely enriched them, but also imparted invincible strength for the conflict,—and that gift is love; by which He would bring men to partake of His Godhead.”⁶ This all-conquering, all-possessing love is indeed the most signal grace of this dying martyr.

There might indeed have appeared something severe and stern in his earnest appeal to them, but his last prayer showed that it arose from the greatness of his love. In this as in other points St. Stephen followed close in the steps of his Divine Master, who blended His awful denunciations on the Jews with intimations of the deepest compassion; as in that His passionate exclamation in the anguish of affectionate sorrow: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest those that are sent unto thee!” Indeed, our Lord’s words in the Gospel appointed for to-day may serve as a short epitome of St. Stephen’s long speech before the Council; and never were words more full of mournful and disappointed love than those with which He concluded His most terrible warnings; they may well ring in our ears unto this day, sounding as much of pity as of Divine judgment.

Behold, I send you prophets. These were the last words which He spake publicly to the Jews in the temple: *I send you prophets*—men divinely inspired to speak of things to come, *and wise men*, such as St. Stephen himself, “full of wisdom,” *and scribes*—men learned in the law like St. Paul; *and some of them shall ye kill*, as by stoning them to death, like St. Stephen, or as St. Paul by the sword, *and crucify*, by stirring up the Romans against them; *and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues*, as they did to St. Peter and St. John, and the rest of the Apostles; *and persecute them from city to city*,

⁶ S. Fulgent. Episc. Ser. iii. De S. Steph. Brev.

as they did to St. Paul and his companions. *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.* From Abel, killed by that altar where by faith he offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, to Zacharias, slain also by the altar and in the temple of God. Thus by murder did they pollute religion itself, until they consummated all by the Great Sacrifice; and all was bound up in a wonderful series of evil with the first murderer, and from the same causes that influenced him, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." As our Lord is Himself one and the same throughout, Himself from the beginning sending these faithful witnesses, from Abel, the first martyr in the old dispensation, to Stephen, the first in the new; so the enemy of His Church is also like one and the same throughout in a continued chain of the same wickedness. Thus one sin is heaped upon another, one judgment upon another, till the patience and long-suffering of God is tried to the uttermost, and the vengeance at length overtakes suddenly, and leaves without remedy. *Verily I say unto you, our Lord adds, all these things shall come upon this generation.*

So was it with the chosen nation of God. And thus is it the case also in the history of a single soul, as the great Day will reveal; there is a connexion between the first and the last sin, and those two and all that lies between, though it may be they hide themselves for awhile and work unseen in the secret heart, yet are they all bound together by one chain, the chain which binds the impenitent soul.

Further, we may observe that as Christ is persecuted, and slain, as it were, in His Martyrs, from the righteous Abel unto the end of the world, so this people, who from being the first-born and chosen become the great enemy of God, are represented as one and the same as they of old, adding sin unto sin till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Thus in the Book of the Revelation, which is the prophetic history of the Church unto the end of the world, the Saints are said to be slain in "the Great City, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." "And in her," it is said, apparently speaking of the same, "in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."⁸ And therefore that very pathetic and tender appeal with which our Lord closes this His last expostulation, wherein judgment is so marked with mercy, may be carried on in its full force to all times; and, oh! how does it express His mysterious dealings with every soul, while it describes His earnest desire for its salvation, His earnest endeavour and long waiting in a case where it is found at last to be unavailing! *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* How does this express the presence of the Holy Spirit in every Christian soul endeavouring to bring all his wandering thoughts into His own sheltering peace, but too often in vain.

"How often!" how often! O how often! To you, my brethren, and to me, how often! It would, I am sure, melt the hardest heart to consider, in the deep solitude of a soul before God, such as may be when released

⁸ Rev. xi. 8; xviii. 24.

from the body it awaits the great Day, to think over "how often" the Spirit of Christ within hath desired to bring all the thoughts into that rest and obedience, but they would not. How often in childhood, how often in youth, in manhood or in age,—how often each passing year, each month, each week, each day,—has His voice pleaded, and it may be is doing so at this hour, till at length, if unheeded, that loving, warning Presence is withdrawn.

So was it with the type of Israel. *Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.* Look at that Israel now: what desolation so great, what slumber so deep as theirs!

SERMON VII.

Saint John the Evangelist's Day.

I St. John i. 1—10. St. John xxi. 19—25.

THE LOVE WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.

The disciple whom Jesus loved.—ST. JOHN xxi. 20.

IT is difficult to speak of St. John, the beloved disciple : he is so removed from mankind, not only in his privileges and the favour of his Lord, but in his being raised above the ordinary temptations of men ; for what were earthly honours, or gain, or pleasure to him, who was so full of Divine love, that he can speak and think of nothing else but the love of God and love of man, of the light and truth that are with God ? But again, the highest with God are always the humblest among men ; so in another point of view is he the most approachable of Saints, even as what he has written is considered to contain the highest and deepest wisdom in Scripture, which the most learned of men cannot worthily comprehend ; yet at the same time is it the most simple and easy—for a child. And all the highest wisdom which he teaches may be considered as contained in those few simple words which it is said he was ever repeating in extreme old age : “ Little

children, love one another." To this we may add, as the great object of all his teaching, what he himself says in this day's Epistle,—“that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” This is what he means. The nearer he is to God, the nearer is he to us also. Moreover, why, let us ask, was he raised to such an angel-like life above us all? surely he would himself answer, “By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was given me was not in vain.” He was as much bound around by the infirmities of our common humanity as ourselves, but by the grace of God given him, and by his not abusing that grace, he became what he was and is. We may be like him, may be as he was, and it is in one sense more in our way and less difficult than in the case of other saints; for it was by the love of God in a heart of great simplicity and sincerity; any one may strive after this; any one in any circumstances of life, on the bed of sickness, in prison, in bodily labours, in the streets, or in the field; in all straitnesses, in solitude or in society, night or day, he may strive after this, and he shall not strive in vain. But again, from whence does this love of God flow? the commencement of St. John's Gospel, and also that of his Epistle, will show at once it is from belief in Christ as God. This is the fountain-head from whence all is derived; this is with him the beginning and the end, the all in all. It is as with St. Stephen, from his beholding Christ as God that the love of man so abundantly flowed.

That which was, he says, from the beginning, Which we have heard, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. The Word Which was God, and Which

was from everlasting with God, and in taking on Him our nature has made the senses of our diseased body, our ears, eyes, and hands, to be cognizant of Him—our health and life. *For the Life was manifested, and we have seen It, and bear witness:* we by martyrdom bear testimony to this, which is the very object of our Apostleship, to be witnesses of His life among us in the flesh and His subsequent resurrection.¹ *And show unto you that eternal Life, Which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* As our Lord Himself said at the Last Supper to Philip, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”²

That Which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. As our Lord Himself had said in His prayer to the Father, “that they may be one as We are,” “that they also may be one in Us.” To be truly, therefore, in fellowship with the Apostles is to be in fellowship with Christ and with God. They were eye-witnesses of His Incarnation on Mount Tabor, on Mount Olivet, on Mount Calvary, in His glory, in His agony, and in His death; and, to crown all, in His Resurrection also and Ascension. And to be a witness to His manifestation in the flesh is to be a witness of His Godhead. As St. Thomas, when he saw, and felt, and handled the Risen Body, did in so doing acknowledge “the Word made flesh,” saying, “My Lord and my God!” “Because he touched the Man,” says St. Augustine, “he confessed the God.”³ And to us also, who cannot see Him nor touch Him with the hand, hath come down in the

¹ Acts i. 22.

² St. John xiv. 9.

³ In Epist. Joan. Tr.

Church the same marvellous blessing, when in Him Whom we have not seen we believe.

And these things, adds St. John, write we unto you that your joy may be full:—joy and peace in believing, joy in fellowship and union with God, joy especially of this season in the Word come to dwell among us, without sin among us sinners.

This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, That God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. This then is that fellowship of which he spake: it is to be raised above the darkness of this world into union with God through His Church. “For what communion,” says St. Paul, “hath light with darkness?”⁴ We are in darkness, our works are of darkness, we ourselves are darkness; but God is Light, and if we are in Him we are not in darkness. Sin and all temptations to sin are of darkness; but he who lay on his Lord’s breast cometh to the light, and the light disperses the darkness; and therefore he walks in the light and seems to be above mortality and its temptations, not of himself, but because of the light in which he walks. Thus it is that all is from above. The words of St. John breathe of love; but this love is but as the fragrance of the flower, indicating that it is not of earth, but has its root in God, and by the dews of His Spirit is nourished, and quickened by that living Sun which is the Word. Hence of old was St. John spoken of for wisdom, even more than for love; and this his festival with its Collect speaks to us not of our loving one another, but of that light which is with God, from whence alone all true love is derived.

⁴ 1 Cor. vi. 14.

But if we are in sin and darkness, no less need is there that we come to that light, for in that Sun of Righteousness there is "healing," and restoration in that light; for that light is "the refiner's fire," as long as in that light we endeavour to walk, "purifying ourselves even as He is pure." *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.* "We have fellowship one with another,"—this is love, the love of the brethren,—we can only have this when we walk in the light. And if we walk in the light, then "the blood of Christ cleanseth,"—this is fellowship with God, and in it the love of God.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. In such a case we are as the blind Pharisees, hypocrites or self-deceivers. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* We are then not as the Pharisee, but as the Publican who smote on his breast, confessing his sins, and was justified. For Christ is the Physician come to heal the sick; the Shepherd to seek the lost; the Comforter to restore the penitent. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.* If we say we know Him and keep not His commandments we are liars; and if we say we have no sin we are liars; therefore to be in the light and in the truth is to keep His commandments ever more and more, and yet in doing so to be ever the more sensible that we keep them not; this is to grow in grace and in humility also; and the more we are humbled, to be the more exalted. This is to come to the true light, and in the true light to know ourselves. Thus speaks to us St. John, as from his Lord's bosom, whereon at this

season he, as it were, again is laid ; nay, the season itself thus teaches of littleness and of greatness unspeakable, the Infant of yesterday, and the everlasting God, Who was in the beginning. From hence St. John addresses all Christians as his "little children," cleansed from all unrighteousness ; that they may at length be received into that Bosom which is infinite and everlasting Rest.

Thus this short passage of Scripture for the day contains a brief summary of the whole of St. John's Gospel ; being itself from the commencement of his Epistle, while that which follows is from the end of his Gospel. *Jesus said unto Peter, Follow Me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following ; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee ? Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do ?* Our Lord had just foretold to St. Peter of his own martyrdom, and he seems then to ask in affectionate interest for his friend, whether he should likewise meet with the same blessed end. And here we may observe, how great a change had been wrought in them, for St. Peter had once deprecated the Cross saying, "That be far from Thee, Lord !" And St. John had with St. James asked for the highest places in His kingdom. But now the great object of their wishes is to show some pledge of their love in drinking with Him of the same cup of suffering, and dying for Him and for His sake.

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? Follow thou Me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, That that disciple should not die : yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? What is signified by the expression " tarry till

I come," our Lord does not further explain, nor does St. John himself, although he corrects a misapprehension respecting it, nor does the early Church, or any of its best writers; it is not therefore for us to do so. But we may observe, that he alone of all the Apostles, is supposed to have survived till the destruction of Jerusalem, which was his Lord's coming in the establishment of His spiritual kingdom. Again, in one sense, he, as an Evangelist, has, beyond St. Peter, an especial blessing of continuance in enlightening the Church till his Lord's second Coming: St. Peter, though the chief of Apostles, and a crucified martyr, has gone to his rest; but St. John is still with us, teaching us and speaking to us from the cradle to the grave, each one of us, by his writings; this is his great prerogative. And yet further, as a prophet, in writing the Apocalypse, he unites his Lord's first and second Coming by an account of the events which are to take place in the interval; his eye is opened to see visions of God and his Lord's coming amid the clouds. In both these he is, as it were, tarrying with us till his Lord comes. However it may be explained, it is remarkable that, as if mindful of these his Lord's words, whereas St. Paul, St. Peter, and others, speak of going to Christ; St. John speaks of Christ coming to him, as the object for which he waited,—"Even so come, Lord Jesus." And it may be that the words "tarry till I come," may merely signify, in distinction from what had been just said to St. Peter, What if he die not by a violent death, but wait for Me till the natural period of old age and death? but what is that to thee? attend thou to thyself, thy great privileges, and thy great duties; it is enough for thee to be consoled by knowing, that thy denial of Me shall be wiped out by thy martyrdom hereafter; inquire not of others, however dear

to thee ; their own God will take care of them. Leave him to Me—to his Master's love.

This, adds St. John, is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose, that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

Such then was the memory, such the thoughts and contemplations of the beloved disciple ; he thought over every word he had heard his Lord speak, everything he had seen Him do, till they appeared to him to be without number ; every one of priceless value, of worth unspeakable.

But it is the doctrine of St. John, that is especially the testimony to his Lord's Godhead throughout his Gospel, his Epistles, and the Apocalypse to which this day's Collect alludes ; this is the light of the Church, and the light of every one in the Church, both now and hereafter. That light is love, and that love is life ; the light, the love, and life which is in God. This it is with the deep sense of which St. John seems ever penetrated ; as if with eyes looking to God, and saying, "For with Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light."

Men think much in these days of knowledge, of the age being enlightened, of intellectual progress, and the like ; depend upon it, there is no knowledge, no light, no wisdom, like that of St. John ; all else is folly to this, and will be found in the end to be so. Theirs is but as the glimmering of the creeping worm that glows in the dark, compared with the sun dispensing life and light.

SERMON VIII.

The Innocents' Day.

Rev. xiv. 1—5. St. Matt. ii. 13—18.

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

*These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God
and to the LAMB.—REV. xiv. 4.*

WE cannot but see a great propriety in the passage which the Church has always applied to this day, where the Holy Innocents are spoken of as “the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb.” The very expression of “the Lamb,” of itself indicates this; they are “first-fruits to the Lamb,” they are “with the Lamb on Mount Sion,” they “follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” If our Blessed Saviour had been spoken of by any other expression, this suitableness would not have so strongly appeared. And indeed the very event itself which the description alludes to, and which we commemorate on this day, is the wonderful language of God; it speaks with a miraculous and Divine tongue more powerfully than human words; it sets forth the nature of His Kingdom in the kingly attendants born with Him; the pure in heart that shall see God; those that are persecuted for His sake, whose

reward is great in Heaven; the little ones whom He invites to Him saying, that of such is the Kingdom of Heaven; the weak things of the world which He hath chosen to confound the strong; in babes and sucklings the glory and strength of His Kingdom. He appears—the King of the true Israel, and while yet in the cradle He overcomes Herod on his throne, by making those whom he would destroy the first-fruits of His Heavenly Kingdom, the very types of His redeemed.

I looked, says St. John, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. “A Lamb,” in another place it is “a Lamb as it had been slain;”¹ *i. e.* the meek and inoffensive victim. When Christ is represented as sitting on a white horse, His Heavenly armies follow Him on white horses;² so here, when He is spoken of as the Lamb, who should be with Him but these little innocents, His martyrs? He stands “on Mount Sion,” and those that are numbered are from the Twelve tribes, as these victims are of Israel, who by their early dying partake of His Cross; “Israelites indeed without guile;” children of God, and citizens of the Jerusalem which is above; of such He says, “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from my God: and I will write upon him My new Name.”³

And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; waters, and thunder, and harps; i. e. all that we know of sound which is beautiful, and awful, and sweet. *And they sung as it*

¹ Rev. v. 6.² Rev. xix. 14³ Rev. iii. 12.

were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love Him." O wonderful and blessed change, from the discordant sounds of earth to that new song which passeth understanding, where the infant of yesterday surpasses in knowledge the wisest of sages and saints that are on earth! That wisdom is itself music, attuned to perfect gladness and thanksgiving, new born into the love of God, the melody of the heart which abideth for ever; in the beholding of His countenance, in whose presence is fulness of joy.

Now this account forms one of those visions of the redeemed, of those that are with God and Christ, such as are continually occurring throughout the Apocalypse, as if to remind how near to us is the state of the Blessed during this the warfare of the Church on earth. For in all its dismal account of things on earth, the image of the Blessed is ever made to be near. And here we may observe of this festival, that it is one, perhaps beyond all other Saints' days in our sacred year, which is revived and perpetuated by a continual and ever fresh remembrance, inasmuch as it seems to include in itself, unto the end of time, other little children taken into the bosom of blessedness, and joining that infant army of the redeemed. For who is there who has not an infant that lay near to the heart taken away with the Cross of Christ, the seal of the redeemed, yet fresh on its forehead? How often is it some mother to whom the Prophet speaks of comfort, as to the weeping Rachel? And indeed, in some sense, all baptized infants have a peculiar part and interest in this festival,

little ones chosen of Christ to be His, to take part in His death, not yet of their own will or confession, but by His own free grace and choice, "clothed in white robes," and brought near unto His throne. Such as have their Angels in Heaven ever beholding the face of the Father.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. Pure and spotless in mind as in body, incapable of knowing the desires that defile. Emblems of these were the young pigeons, or the lamb, offered up in the Temple at the Purification, or Presentation of the first-born; as the virgins that were watching with their lamps burning, at the espousals of the Virgin Bride brought unto Christ "without spot." *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; having no other love or desire, but that as He is they may be also. These were redeemed from among men; bought as the first-born with a price beyond price of the Lamb that was slain;—being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb, as the choicest and best of all His flock. And in their mouth was found no guile; sons indeed of Israel without guile, who are privileged to behold God; who are made by Him to be as the Lamb of God, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." For they are without fault before the throne of God; as made white with His Blood, and clothed by Him, "who is able to present" the sinful children of Adam as "faultless before the presence of His glory."*⁴ *These are they "which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."*⁵

Now it often happens, that, while the Scripture for the Epistle speaks of the Holy Jerusalem, "the vision of peace," whose towers arise to Heaven, the Gospel which

⁴ St. Jude 24.

⁵ Rev. iii. 4.

follows refers rather to that foundation below, the rock on which it is built consisting of the simple narrative of sacred events on which that doctrine is established. And so it is to-day.

The Angel of the Lord, says St. Matthew, *appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.* Will seek Him, because the star in Heaven, and worship from afar, and the oracles of God in Jerusalem, declare Him to be divinely born; therefore he will seek Him, not to adore, but to destroy. So strange the mystery of iniquity in the human heart! The mystery of Godliness also surrounds His birth; for to be allied to Him is to share His woes: to be His Mother or foster-parent is to have to flee from country and home; the stable and the manger are to be exchanged for hardship yet more severe: to be by any sympathies connected with Him is to suffer; to approach Him in time and place of birth is to die. But all this is clothed with the events of human circumstance, enshrining therein a lesson to ourselves, that we fret not nor repine at accidents that bring on us pain and discomfort, but recognize in them that Hand of God which He laid most severely on His own Son.

When he arose, it is said of Joseph on hearing the Angel, *he took the young Child and His Mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.* Flight "by night,"—this implies fear and danger. Our impatient hearts would have said, Might it not have been ordained that it should occur on a

calm bright day of hope for the Holy One of God, instead of a troubled, dark night of alarm? "Into Egypt," that country of idolatries,—might it not have been to some better country? and there to stay till Herod should die, might he not have been removed sooner for the sake of Christ and others? But the cruelty of Herod—the warning of the Angel—the obedience of Joseph—the night—the alarm—the desert way and its hardships—they are all in the Hand of God; and when it is said the Prophet had spoken, then that Hand is seen—all is well—ininitely well. It is God's will—that is enough. Who would have it otherwise? it could not be better. It is all infinite love: and this the Prophet himself expresses when he speaks of it, for he says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."⁶ The bringing him through tribulation and out of evil into the kingdom, it is at present a great mystery: but this is the love of God for the Israel of His choice. It is infinite love which wills the best end; it is infinite wisdom which contrives the best means; it is infinite power which has the choice of all. And if it is Christ, the Son of God, Who thus suffers, shall not His little ones partake with Him? With Him and for Him they suffer, and therefore what follows shall be the type of His martyrs, by whose blood His Kingdom shall be established in the world.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth; and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. It was an act of merciless cruelty almost unequalled in the

⁶ Hosea xi. 1.

world,⁷ but has its counterpart in that of Pharaoh, when he slew the first-born of Israel. Thus, amidst such cruelties on the part of man, first came into the world the unspeakable mercies of God—when He gave up His Son to be born and to die. But no comment on this atrocity is made by the Evangelist; it is sufficient to mention the fact, and to point out that the Prophet had spoken, and in speaking had given assurances of comfort. For although, as in the former instance, where the Prophet is referred to, the words of Jeremiah may not appear to refer to this event alone or exclusively, yet the power of the Divine words is not thereby diminished, but increased. For it is but this, that other mysterious providences, whereby God speaks as well as by words, are bound up in those expressions, events in themselves typical, and prophetic of other events to be further developed in the comings of Christ, in which they converge. And in this case those very occasions contain in themselves the secret of consolation and Divine strength, speaking of God the light in darkness.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. "Thus saith the Lord," adds the Prophet, "Refrain thy voice from weeping." The words quoted

⁷ An infant is the very emblem of pity, as our great Poet has personified it:—

“ And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven’s cherubin, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.”

by the Evangelist speak only of distress, but he intends rather to refer to the whole passage, which is full of consolation, and expressive of hope and re-urrection. When Rachel at her tomb in Bethlehem mourned for her children taken into captivity, she was bidden to refrain from weeping, for those her "children shall come again from the land of the enemy," and in their "end there is hope." So it is ever with the Israel of God; their death is the pledge of life; their captivity leads to the glorious liberty of God's children; their God turns night into morning, and heaviness into joy. And if so in the types going before, much more in these that attend on Christ Himself. For them the weeping Rachel is forbidden to mourn; for they shall come again from the land of the enemy, and these, the first-fruits of His humiliation, "shall God bring with Him" in His glorious coming. Their light affliction is but for a moment, their crown an exceeding weight of glory. "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears." The Lord Himself, we may add, "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." These are, indeed, both the first-fruits and the types of those that are His; and in His goings forth on earth to subdue the enemy such as these shall be with Him: "they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth;" it is through these that He overcomes the world—by those who are as little children—by those who suffer—His followers who are without guile—unarmed and inoffensive as lambs—as sheep in the midst of wolves—by those who are not of the world He overcomes the world; and in such weakness is His strength perfected: by those who are born not of the will of man, but of God. And Israel itself, or,

as it were, the mourning Rachel, shall supply the first martyrs, by which the persecuting world shall be overcome when He goes forth to establish His Kingdom; when Herod and Rome, when Edom and Babylon—for Herod was an Edomite—shall dash her little ones against the stones; when the Infant Deliverer, launched forth on the waters in the ark of bulrush, shall be taken up into the palace of that Pharaoh himself who would have slain the first-born. “Kings shall be thy nursing fathers:” “for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.”⁸

“Not by speaking, but by dying,” says the ancient Collect, “have they confessed Christ.” “Stephen,” says St. Bernard, “was a martyr among men; John may be considered so in the sight of angels, to whom by spiritual signs his devotion was known; but these are martyrs with God, for neither to men nor angels is their merit known, but commended to God alone in the prerogative of His singular grace.”⁹ “Before the use of the tongue,” says an ancient Bishop, “in silence He put forth the power of the Word, as if He were saying already, ‘Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.’ With a new glory He crowned infants, and in His own beginnings consecrated the first-fruits of little children; that hence we might learn that no one among mankind is incapable of a Divine Sacrament, since even that age was fit for the glory of martyrdom.” “Christ,” he adds, “loveth infancy, which on Himself He took both in mind and body; He loveth infancy as the mistress of humility, the type of innocence, the form of meekness; to infancy He directs the manners of elders, and brings back the old. It is to this, the similitude of little

⁸ Isa. xxix. 23. 25.

⁹ Serm. in Nativ. S. S. Innoc.

children, that you, most beloved, are invited by the mystery of this day's festival."¹

One thing only I will add on this day. There is a mystery in the Cross of Christ, which every thoughtful person knows, from his own experience, that we never so much feel and understand that God is Love as when He most heavily afflicts us. God is Love; and to know that He is Love is the Life of the redeemed; He that is the Life is also the Way, and the Way and the Life is Christ crucified; and therefore, to suffer is to be brought near unto God,—near to Him Who is Love, and therefore to know His Love. Thus Bethlehem, that it may be honoured as the birth-place of Christ, is known to all times as the place of weeping parents and dying children.

¹ Serm. S. Leo in Epiph. Brev.

SERMON IX.

The Sunday after Christmas Day.

Gal. iv. 1—7.—St. Matt. i. 18—25.

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

And because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the Spirit of His SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.—GAL. iv. 6.

WHEN the Church holds any great festival in commemoration of our Lord, on the following Sunday it sets forth the doctrine flowing from the same in relation to ourselves. This may be observed in the Epistle and Gospel for to-day : from the subject of our Lord's Nativity, they pass into that of our own new birth of God so wonderfully connected with it, the counterpart of it, and the effect upon ourselves by which we spiritually apprehend it. For at this season of Christmas we commemorate the Sacrament of Baptism and the new birth, in like manner as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper seems more connected with the festival of Easter.

The Epistle to the Galatians is written to those who were falling back into the bondage of the law, and the Apostle is explaining to them how Christianity, if I may so speak, arises out of Judaism. The Jews are often

described in the New Testament as servants, in distinction from Christians, who are the sons of God ; but St. Paul, in this passage of the Epistle for to-day, speaks rather of the Jew as the heir, while he was yet a child, and therefore like a servant, for a time, but to be hereafter with all the privileges and inheritance of a son. For this shows the connexion which there is between the state of the Christian and that of the Jew ; one grows out of the other. *Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all ; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, i. e. we Jews before Christ's coming, were in bondage under the elements of the world.* That is to say, the yoke of the law was a kind of servitude which partook of the nature of the things of this world ; but the love of God, which is the Christian's law, does away with all sense of servitude, and renders His service that of perfect freedom, through the spirit of adoption. As our Lord Himself says, "Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth."¹ *But when the fulness of the time was come,* adds St. Paul, that is, like the period appointed for the son coming of age, and being released from that discipline under which he was kept before, *God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law,—*by being "made of a woman," *i. e.* of a virgin, becoming Man, and as one of us ;—and "made under the law," coming altogether in the way of legal righteousness, and Himself perfectly fulfilling all ordinances of the law ;—*to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ;* "to redeem," that is, to buy for Himself, and recover those "that were under the law,"

¹ St. John xv. 15.

and, as not able to fulfil it, were under its curse and liable to death ; in order that we might be made one with Him in His Incarnation, and thereby receive the adoption—come in for all the spiritual inheritance of sons, in being born from above. And the fruits of all this are very great and wonderful ; the consequence of our being made one with Christ in His Incarnation, and made by Baptism sons of God in Him, is this which St. Paul proceeds to mention. *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* “Abba,” that is the Hebrew word for Father ; as the true Israel of God, inheriting that sonship, even as our Lord Himself, in His great hour of suffering humanity prayed, “Abba, Father.” *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.* Having within us this Divine Spirit of filial obedience, which always looks up to God in prayer as to a Father ; this is to us a pledge, even now, that we are His sons ; and, as such, shall inherit all the promises of God “through Christ.”

Now the Lesson for this Sunday is not of our being made sons of God, for it supposes that we have been already made sons of God at Baptism, and thanksgiving for this new birth was a part of Christmas day ; but to-day it is that, in consequence of our being made sons and born again in the Second Adam, we receive the spirit of sonship or adoption. For, as St. Chrysostom observes of this passage from the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul is not here speaking of our becoming sons of God, because he had been just before, in the previous chapter, describing this, saying, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” And then he proceeds, in this place, to speak of that Spirit of sonship by which

Christians live, in consequence of this their strict union with Christ, fulfilling all the Law by the Spirit of love, which is to them the earnest of their future inheritance, flowing altogether from their likeness to Christ, the true Son of God in whom they are received. As St. John also describes the same : “ Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.” “ Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as He is, so are we in this world.”² Thus the subject of this Sunday may be said especially to be the Spirit of adoption. And now let us see how the Gospel, also, for this day, bears on the same.

St. Paul speaks of us, in the Epistle, as sons by adoption, that is, in distinction from Christ, who is the Son of God by nature ; because it is in and through Him only that we are made sons, and that because we are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. And therefore the Gospel for the day proceeds to set forth Christ before us as the true and natural Son of God : for this reason it does not speak of Christ after His birth, as in the regular course after the Nativity might be expected, but before. *The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise : When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.* This is the foundation of all our hopes, the marvellous generation of the Second Adam ; and then, as it is a matter of fact on which all this doctrine of salvation is founded, occurs the narrative of some circumstances attending it. *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and therefore desirous to fulfil the law, and, yet from a feeling of tender charity, not willing to make her a public*

² St. John iv. 13—17.

example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, a lineage, though unregarded of man, not forgotten of God, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus : for He shall save His people from their sins. And thus, after describing the appearance of the Angel, the Gospel proceeds, Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. "Behold," ye Heavens and thou Earth, give heed to this, a Virgin shall bring forth ! a God shall be born !

Here therefore is the great mystery, of which no thought can fathom the depth or reach the height ; but expressed by these two names of Jesus, or the Lord the Saviour ; and Emmanuel, or God with us. The one which speaks of the Son of Man ; the other of the Son of God. The one, of saving us from sins ; the other, of our being for ever inconceivably united with God. Satan, the great enemy, knew not what he said when he falsely promised to the woman, on her disobedience : "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." For the unspeakable mercy of God has made his lie to be a great truth to them who are born again in Christ, the seed of the woman. They are lifted up to be made one with God : and, while they know the evil of sin and Satan, they know also the goodness of God.

Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife ;

and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son. This fact is all in all, God has become Man; it is the Lord of the new creation. "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not."³ Thus the Virgin brought forth her first-born Son: and he called His name Jesus. The "First-born" which had ever been set apart by the law as devoted to God; in this the First-born, the spotless Lamb, all are ransomed and sanctified.

Now one of the great benefits of these festivals is that we are led thereby to contemplate ourselves in Christ; to see how the saving doctrines of our faith are such as flow from Him. "Ye that follow after righteousness, look unto the Rock whence ye are hewn."⁴ The doctrine that we are made sons of God and receive the Spirit of adoption, is set forth in a very impressive manner by St. Paul in the Epistle, these high and heavenly truths are repeated by him in every form to engage our attention; for we are almost lost to a sense of privileges so vast. But the living reality of all this comes out still more strongly when considered in connexion with the short narrative in the Gospel. In the Epistle we ourselves are spoken of as sons of God by adoption; and we might ask why, and how can these things be to us. And the wonderful mystery—nay, the wonder of all wonders, the mystery of all mysteries,—God Himself come to be for ever one with us, appears in the Gospel. Thus when our Lord spoke to Nicodemus of the new birth by water and the Spirit; and of him that is born of the Spirit, being as the sound of the wind which we hear indeed, but know not whence it cometh and whither it goeth;

³ Isa. lxiii. 16.

⁴ Isa. li. 1.

Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?" and our Lord then spake of Him Who alone can of Himself ascend to Heaven, even of Him, Who came down from Heaven, "the Son of Man Who is in Heaven." In like manner does the appointed Gospel of this day come in to verify, and substantiate, to bring home to us as the great object of our faith, the Word made flesh, come to tabernacle among us—the living tabernacle in which our souls may dwell in the wilderness of the world. "I am that living water," said our Lord to the woman that inquired of the water of life. "I am that Bread that came down from Heaven," said He to His disciples at Capernaum. It is I Whom ye behold with your eyes. I Who am the Son of Man, though over all God blessed for evermore. It is on Me in faith that in both Sacraments—on Me, the Word made Flesh, that in all saving doctrines ye are to set your eyes and live.

It is remarkable how very much these two truths, which the Gospel and the Epistle combined thus teach us—of the marvellous generation of Jesus Christ the Son of God from above, and of our own marvellous generation by the Spirit, as adopted sons of God in Him, are held together in Scripture. I will mention one instance of this. In the Book of the Revelation we read, "And there appeared a great wonder in Heaven; a woman clothed with the sun: she being with child cried, travailing in birth; and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne."⁵ Now all this description has so close a relation

⁵ Rev. xii. 1—5.

to the history of our Lord's Incarnation—of His birth, and sufferings from Satan, and His ascension into Heaven—that no one can fail to see it: and yet it has never been supposed that St. John is here merely speaking of the Blessed Virgin giving birth to our Lord; but that the woman clothed with the sun and travailing in birth means the Church of God, bringing forth her first-born—the man child sanctified and set apart to God, especially the early saints and martyrs. They are described in another place as the “redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.”⁶ It is the Church of God clothed with the Sun of Righteousness, bringing forth Christ the first-born in His members. But why, it may be asked, does the Evangelical Prophet in the passage referred to, appear as if he were speaking of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, when in fact he is only describing good and faithful Christians? There is no confusion here, we must not suppose that. It is no accidental resemblance, but it is because one is the counterpart of the other; one is the foundation of the other. It is as if a person were to delineate the shadows of the sun and moon in the waters, it would be the same as to describe the sun and the moon themselves. Even so is Christ in good Christians, and what is said of Him is said of them. Because He is the Son of God, He has given unto them to be sons of God. They are said to reign with Him, to be risen with Him, to sit together with Him in heavenly places, to sit with Him on His throne.

And here it may be observed that one of the chief reasons why men do not understand the Scriptures is

⁶ Rev. xiv. 4.

because they do not sufficiently consider these things, and the very high privileges of our new birth in Christ. Who for instance, realizes to himself that the Kingdom of Heaven, so often spoken of in the Gospels, does for the most part signify the state of baptized Christians upon earth; and that Heaven—that power of a Kingdom which is already in their own hearts by faith? Yet much of the Gospels cannot be understood without observing this. Or again, to take the Apocalypse itself, the book to which we have been referring. It is no doubt a book hard to be understood; and the most learned have found it quite as much so as the most uneducated. But the chief difficulty and stumbling-block all the while has been this; that men have forgotten, or have been unwilling to receive and comprehend those very great and glorious things, which Holy Scripture always describes as given even in this life to the adopted sons of God, which are by Baptism engrafted into the body of Christ. And therefore in this sacred book of the Apocalypse when they read of the throne of God, and One sitting on the throne—and an innumerable company with Him, around His throne and in the midst of His throne, rejoicing and praising God; or of wearing crowns and reigning together with Christ; of the souls of those that live unto God sitting as it were on thrones with Him for the thousand years, that is, for the long period of His Church in the world; or of their being redeemed from among men, following the Lamb and by Him led to living fountains of water; when they read of these things and the like interspersed throughout the Revelation, it does not occur to them that these descriptions do but represent what the Prophets, and the Gospels and the Epistles speak of throughout,—the high and inconceivable blessings which

are given even in this life to those who are born again in Christ. But judging, on the contrary, from our own experience, which is, alas! too often of the earth earthly, we bring down the Holy Scriptures to ourselves; and therefore no wonder that we understand them not. For we are naturally so very unwilling to believe that we have received so much from God, and how much we owe Him; we do not like to think of His unspeakable gift—the Kingdom of God already begun; His throne within us and among us; and some poor and despised persons already partaking of all this; and we ourselves not sensible of it, all through our own faults;—this we are very slow to understand; and therefore among other things we lose the key of knowledge and the right understanding of the Scriptures. Thus with regard to this book we are alluding to, St. John speaks of it as of practical importance to every one. He says he was commanded not to seal the Book because it was not of things afar off, and to happen after a long season, but of the state of Christianity coming in immediately, and of deepest import to all. For the Prophet Daniel was told to seal up the things he had written, inasmuch as they would not be fulfilled for some time, i. e. not till Christ came; but St. John was not to do this. And yet the things of which he writes are generally imagined to be of everything else but of what concerns the daily life of a Christian: of something that happened before they were written, or of something to be upon the day of judgment: of something long ago, or long hereafter: of nations and people beyond the seas, or of other times and countries. And one great reason of this seems to be that persons are unwilling to believe that privileges so great have come to their own door; that Heaven is described as so near to

them. I will mention one instance; our Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne." These are touching and beautiful words as language can speak, and they seem to single out the individual that reads, as numerous other passages do in the same book, reminding us that throughout we are not to think of things afar off, but most intimately near.

We do not love to think that we are so gifted, so blessed, so privileged; that we are or may be those who are thus spoken of throughout. And as we are prone to set afar from ourselves spiritual gifts and graces so high, as belonging to our new birth in Christ, so do we at the same time the warnings connected with them. We do not like to apply to the state of Christians now, what was said by the Prophets and our Lord to the Jews of old; that their condition was like that of an adulterous wife, who had fallen away from the true love of her lord, as that harlot Jerusalem of old, that had "gone after many lovers," although the beloved one of God, His chosen whom He had so tenderly watched over, who in heart had gone from Him in spiritual idolatry; "an adulterous generation" as our Lord said. If St. John implies in the Apocalypse that all this is to be again in the Christian Church before Christ comes, he surely must mean something in which we ourselves have no part. If any Church or state of Christians is therein described as being in friendship or alliance with the enemy of Christ or Anti-Christ, it must be something which we are far from,

it cannot be a temptation that comes near to our own heart and home.

Thus we are too much inclined to put away from us what God tells us of our condition, as being grafted by Baptism into the Body of His Son, and having the inestimable gift of His Spirit. And thus we fall short of a due apprehension of the Scriptures; for we are led away by our own earthly wisdom and human sense of things; and judging from this we cannot think that, as St. Paul says, we are made to sit together in Heavenly places with Christ, above the troubles and cares of this world; neither are we humbled at the reflection, that because we are not doing so we are unfaithful to our high calling and "adulterous."

But to him who labours to walk in the Spirit, to whom the Spirit reveals the deep things of God, such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard,—let us consider even in this one book of the Revelation what wonderful blessings are spoken of as belonging to him, thus born again in Christ. "Blessed," it is said, "and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection;" that is, the resurrection of the soul unto righteousness in this life. "This," it is said, "is the first resurrection." They live and reign with Christ, and over them the second death hath no power, for they escape the mark of the evil one. And the first death, the death of the body, is spoken of as of very little consequence, so that as our Lord says of them, "they shall never die." It is death which casts a dark shadow over the whole of this our life on earth; and what greater blessing can there be than to be rid of all reasonable fear of death?—to be able to think of it with St. Paul as but to "sleep in the Lord," which is "far better"? In like manner it is said, "Blessed are they who are

called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Surely, my brethren, this is said of us all. We have been all called to that marriage supper. It is from this flows that other blessing, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

In other places the children of God, as born anew in Christ, are described as "sealed" by the good Spirit of God, and kept thereby unharmed from the temptations and troubles of the world. They are introduced under another figure as playing upon harps and singing, as it were, a new song before the throne, which none but themselves can understand. Such is that making melody in the heart to the Lord which St. Paul speaks of; that peace and joy of a thankful spirit rejoicing in the goodness of Christ; that new hymn of Christ's birth, which finds a deep lodging-place within them at all times, and attunes all their thoughts to unutterable peace; that harmony of soul which invests and clothes all things with glory to God, peace on earth, and good will towards men. Or they are represented as standing by that sea, through which they have escaped from their great enemy, having the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb; that is, giving thanks to God in the words of the Old and the New Testament, both of which alike bear testimony unto Christ. Or they are in Heaven following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; in other words, they have entered the Kingdom of Heaven here upon earth, and are made conformable unto Christ, receiving the Spirit of adoption. In another place they are spoken of as having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: they serve God day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: they hunger and thirst

no more, for they eat of that bread which cometh down from Heaven, and they drink of that living water of which he that drinketh shall never thirst. The Lamb leads them by His own living guidance, and refreshes them at His fountains of everlasting peace; and God the Comforter Himself wipes away from their eyes every occasion of sorrow.

These and many other such descriptions under a great variety of figures speak throughout the Apocalypse of the state of good Christians on earth, those who are "called, and chosen, and faithful:" such language expresses nothing more than is said of them in plain words throughout the rest of the Scriptures, but they are here put forth in a manner so forcible, in order to arrest our attention; and nothing can be more calculated to impress upon our minds the high and glorious things which are spoken of the Spirit of adoption. They are in themselves very moving and awakening descriptions, and when they are found to be all bearing onward more and more fully to that great and blissful consummation at the end, when this world shall all have gone by, and "the former things passed away," and "death" shall have been "swallowed up in victory," we may well feel almost overwhelmed by the weight of such an exalted condition of high hopes and privileges, and saddened indeed by the reflection that all these considerations may be driven away by one little temptation to a besetting sin. I have shown how this "Spirit of Adoption" is expressed throughout the Revelation, because this book is read at this season of the year more than at any other by the Church. St. John himself is at this time held in especial memory, and the book abounds throughout with allusions

to the Martyrs, such as St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents.

Thoughts such as these may be very humbling and profitable to us, and well suited to a chastened and holy joy, if while we read of what God has made us by His mercies in Christ, we consider also at the same time what we have made ourselves.

SERMON X.

The Circumcision of Christ.

Rom. iv. 8—14. St. Luke ii. 15—21.

THE OLD AND THE NEW MAN.

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.—ROM. iv. 12.

THERE is no history more interesting and instructive than that of Abraham; he seemed to walk so above the world, that he is throughout the very pattern for a Christian. After God had given him the great promise of Christ, He added the seal of circumcision, as an outward figure of that deadness to the world by which the Christian would be by faith united to God. And when this was fixed to the eighth day, it fully represented that new life which should be in Christ; with those who, by mortification of the flesh, were risen together with Him, in Him and with Him, coming from the grave on the eighth day. And surely it is a remarkable instance how debased the thoughts of men may become, that any could have supposed, as the Jews did, that the mercies of God, more high than Heaven, should be tied down to the Jewish

nation and the mere outward sign of circumcision. It is against this notion that St. Paul speaks in the Epistle for to-day.

Blessed is the man, he says, to whom the Lord will not impute sin. That is, David in the Psalms, when he speaks of blessedness, attributes it to the man whose sins are forgiven:¹ *Cometh this blessedness then, adds St. Paul, upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.* That is to say, it is so stated in the book of Genesis, when God promised him a son, to be almost supernaturally born, he believed the promise, and this his belief the Lord "counted to him for righteousness."²

How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, for it was long before this rite was established with Abraham, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, of that "righteousness" which God was said to have attributed to him, because he believed in Him, which faith he had being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; that the Gentiles might put on the garment of his salvation, and bear in the spirit the mark of Christ; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised, to them who have something more than the outward circumcision, as walking in that faith of which it was the seal. This is all clearly

¹ Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

² Gen. xv. 6

shown, very beautiful, and of still deeper interest when we read it all in the history of Abraham himself, trusting in God as his "exceeding great reward" throughout, and having the promises of God continually repeated to him, on account of that trust. *For the promise, adds St. Paul, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, if the Jews, as such, are to inherit the promise made to Abraham, faith itself, which was the very righteousness of Abraham, is made void, and the promise made of none effect.*

And consider, my brethren, how exalted his faith was. He believed in God, though the promise He made spoke at once of something beyond all hope, for the child of that promise was called Isaac, or "laughter," from "the strangeness of that salvation beyond all that they looked for," so that they that should walk in the fulfilment of it, would be like unto them that dream, their "mouth filled with laughter" and their "tongue with joy."

Thus did the promise and its outward seal of circumcision continue for about 1900 years unfulfilled, except in a low carnal sense, in that the seed of Abraham after the flesh were multiplied and received the promised land of Canaan, which was but a shadow of better things to come, until Christ came, the true seed of Abraham, and, being circumcised on this day, brought in the true fulfilment. For Christ being the son of Abraham, all that are in Him and one with Him* partake thereby of His sonship, His inheritance, and His circumcision, made as new creatures, and alive from the dead in the true circumcision of the Spirit. For the circumcision of Christ and the name

Jesus then given Him was like an anticipation of His Cross, whereby we are saved ; it was the earnest and prelibation of that sacrifice, when His blood was more fully shed to expiate the curse of the Law.

Let us then next turn to a consideration of this day of Christ, which Abraham saw afar off and was glad. How does heaven itself, with its angelic hymn, seem to open upon the world in the sacred narrative, and blending with the clouds and darkness of our mortal state, like the opening dawn, form a scene for the eye to rest on. A short radiance or light encircles our Lord's Birth, and then disappears again, that is, some little accounts of it come to our knowledge, and shed a light around Christmas and the sacred days that follow it. Thus is it to-day. *And it came to pass as the Angels were going away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.* Angels attended His birth because He was the Son of God ; shepherds, because He was the Son of Man : and thus, of old, the Angels of God met Jacob, the shepherd, as he entered on the Holy Land. Abel was a shepherd, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and the shepherd is the figure by which Scripture speaks of Christ and His ministers. One angelic voice is lost in the fulness of many, many angels and many shepherds, for many are to be brought into one Christ. And it is faith that leads them to the Divine cradle. "Let us now go and see."

And they came with haste, for faith added wings to their feet, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe, lying in a manger. And when they had seen It, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this

Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. Thus were they like the first of Apostles, preaching Christ, and are a pattern to ourselves. They hear by the ear, and then by faith seek Christ, and seeking find; being simple of heart and humble, they are not offended at the lowly manger. And this too was a sign of what was to be, for though the great and wise come from the Gentiles, none of the sacred nation are there, but these humble men of the fold. Shepherds of Bethlehem, and perhaps in the very place where David of old kept sheep and slew the lion and the bear, showing, even then, how God was about to choose the weak things of the world to confound the strong.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. The blessed Virgin is here the figure of the Church of God and of true Christians; while others hear with a sort of barren wonder, of the deep mysteries of the Word made flesh, and the Incarnation of Christ, the earnest Christian keeps them, and makes them his own, pondering over them in his heart, looking forward in faith to the great things which God will do. Such was the Holy Mary, by faith, the true child of Abraham, not only in the flesh, but still more in spirit.

But while wisdom gazes with eagle eye into the marvels of Redemption, watching with earnest-rapt thoughtfulness the dayspring from on high, loud in the morning dawn itself, are heard from others the matin songs of thanksgiving. For to the devout contemplations of St. Mary is added: *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and*

seen, as it was told unto them. They were informed of God, they believed, they went, they saw; and thus, in reward for that obedience, they returned with heart and mouth full of thanksgiving and praise.

After this, we have waited a few days more and come to this festival, when the joy of the birthright is to blend itself with the inheritance of pain; as the red streak, which shows itself in the light of the dawn, precedes a day of tears. For now was to be fulfilled that covenant which God had made with Abraham almost two thousand years before, binding it to his seed by the outward sign of circumcision, the sign of faith in His promise, and setting forth in mystery the true circumcision of the soul. *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His Name was called Jesus, which was so named of the Angel before He was conceived in the womb.*

The eighth day, the day of Christ's Resurrection, the first day of the New Creation, this may be like the beginning of the New Year to a Christian, the new everlasting year, whereby, being dead with Christ, he is alive unto God. Let us therefore combine together the two considerations which come before us on this day. The first, because it is the Circumcision, and we pray that as Christ was circumcised and obedient to the law for man, that God would grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts may be mortified from all worldly desires, so that we may in all things obey the blessed will of God.

The other consideration is that of the New Year's-day, which comes before us as inhabitants of this world, telling us that another short year of our earthly pilgrimage is at an end, that we are fast drawing on to the bounds of our

appointed course, bringing our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told ; that as many are now numbered with the dead who began life since we did, and many who were not expecting such an awful change this time last year ; so we, though we now little think of it, may, ere this year closes upon us, be departed from this scene, where no eye shall see us more.

The day of the Circumcision tells us that to follow Christ we must be in a manner dead to this world while we are in it ; that we must not seek to do our own will or follow our own pleasure, if we would learn to love God now and be with Him hereafter. If this seems a hard saying, let us ask the world what it has to promise. It will tell us, as on this day, that if we fix our hearts upon anything on earth, it will very soon depart from us, or we shall depart from it and leave it behind. A consideration of the fleetness of our days which a New Year brings to our minds, tells us that the time of our stay is so uncertain, and so short at the longest, that it really matters very little what we have and what we have not, what we may suffer or what we may enjoy, if only we may be admitted at last into the blessed Kingdom of God's rest.

The Gospel indeed calls us to mortification ; but what is this ? It only calls on us to give up that which will soon give us up if we do not ; to give it up in order that we may obtain something infinitely better, to give up earthly hopes and treasures for heavenly, that we may not lose both. To be ever looking up as the faithful Abraham did, feeling ourselves but as strangers and pilgrims in a land that is not our own ; that with a more free heart we may walk with God. Nature says, "I die daily ;" the grave is being dug for me ; Grace also says the same, "I die daily ;" but adds, "I

die that I may live ;” for a mansion is being prepared for me which is above. The world will tell us on this day that neither riches, nor honour, nor friends, nor learning will make us one year younger, or delay our departure to that place from whence there is no return. Does this sound melancholy ? The Gospel tells us on this day that we have no business with such desires and disappointments as the world brings, for we have been bound to renounce them long ago, that we may have our hearts and treasure elsewhere.

Again, are Christians taken up with family cares ? yet it is certain that they must leave their children, or their children will leave them before long. How gracious therefore is the call of Scripture which tells us by the example of Abraham, that we must look up beyond children to an inheritance with God ; which says by the prophet, To them that “ choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant ; even to them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters.”³ Are we lamenting that our parents are sinking fast into the vale of years, or are already gone from us ? The world has no comfort to offer us in such a loss. But the Gospel by its very call to mortification has provided for our peace. “ He that loveth father or mother more than Me,” says our Blessed Saviour, “ is not worthy of Me.” So that if our hearts were truly set to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, none of these things would move us, for we should be already in Jesus Christ dead to these even most sacred affections, so as to have in all things rest in God.

Or is it the love of riches which occupies the heart, a

³ Isa. lvi. 5.

desire to obtain a little more than we have, under all the various shapes in which such a desire attempts to hide itself? If with such dispositions we look to the world, it will tell us that riches will not keep off the hand of sickness and of death. And such a reflection may well dispose us to attend to the Gospel warning, that we must make ourselves little and low by mortification, and small in our own eyes by repentance, and small in the eyes of others by poverty of spirit, before we shall be able to enter at the narrow gate.

Is it any little worldly ease and comfort which we look for, as if our home was in this world and our rest was here? The swift passing year will tell us that as winter follows the summer, and autumn the spring, as day follows night, and evening quickly succeeds to the morning, as the sun, and moon, and stars are all hurrying away by turns; and trees, and animals, and rivers are all hastening away, and nothing is at rest; so is there no rest for man. So fast does manhood follow on youth, and old age on manhood, and death on old age. But this festival which explains to us the true meaning of the Circumcision bids us to mortify all desires of the natural man, and with them our natural cravings for rest and comfort in this world, in order that we may be in Christ "a new creature." And our Blessed Saviour Himself, Who in taking the name of Saviour began life by suffering, as on this day, has solemnly warned us that if any man would find rest in Him he must deny himself as He did. For thus is fulfilled in the Spirit that which in the mere letter sounded so awful of old, that he who was not circumcised was to be cut off from his people, and had broken the covenant of God.⁴

⁴ Gen. xvii. 14.

So truly is it the case in every way in which we can look at the subject, that he who lives as a Christian, is the only one who can reasonably be happy on a New Year's-day.

So far as we look for satisfaction in things temporal, another year passing over our heads must bring with it many melancholy reflections. But if any one is steadfastly purposed to follow Christ with the aid of His Blessed Spirit, and in all things to deny his own will in order to be conformed to the will of God, to him every passing year may afford encouragement and satisfaction, as it brings nearer to an end that state in which he must die daily, in order that he may live eternally.

Such is the true circumcision of the Spirit by which the Christian becomes a new creature. All things are become new to him, and as he grows older in this world, there is a new world opening upon him, new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Every year that has borne him onward in his course as it goes by is indeed a call to him for more active exertion, for more steadfastly setting his face toward the heavenly Jerusalem, to be more earnest and constant than he has ever yet been in the duties of religion; to forget the things that are behind, and to press forward more eagerly to that which is before, the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus.

O Thou that hast taken to Thyself our nights and days, that are so wearisome in their going, and fill us with tearful sadnesses and retrospections when gone; Thou that hast clothed Thyself with our afflictions, making them one with Thyself, and covered with the veil of Thy Flesh the mysterious sanctities of human sorrow; Who alone hast fathomed the depths of our suffering, and exhausted the

fulness of our mother Eve's inheritance of woe, Blessed Babe, may we never depart from Thee ; plant in our hearts that deadness to the world in which may live the seed of that life which is in Thee, that as the night of this world cometh on, we, with faithful Abraham, may see the day of Christ, and in seeing it, may rejoice.⁵

⁵ St. John viii. 56.

SERMON XI.

The Epiphany.

Eph. iii. 1—12. St. Matt. ii. 1—12.

THE DAY STAR IN THE HEART.

I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star.—REV. xxii. 16.

THE Epistle for to-day comes in like a wonderful fulfilment of the Gospel. In the Gospel the wise men are led from the East, by a star, to the Babe at Bethlehem, which sets forth, in figure, the call of the Gentiles; it is a star in the darkness. But a few years have passed when St. Paul, in the Epistle, declares the full accomplishment of this mystery, the sun fully risen on those that sat in the region of the shadow of death. In both cases it is indicated that the power is of God. In the Gospel the Babe is in the manger, wrapt in swaddling bands, Himself the centre of all light; in the Epistle St. Paul is imprisoned in a Roman jail and in bonds; the same Incarnate Word works invisibly with His marvellous grace. The star illumines his prison-walls, his chains fall off, and the Gospel is not bound.

For this cause, he says to the Ephesians, that is, in

order that they who were "far off" might be "made nigh by the blood of Christ," "for this cause" *I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles; for he was brought into bonds by the Jews because he preached to the Gentiles. If, indeed, says he, ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God Which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery: as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.* The hidden greatness and spiritual nature of the Christian religion, as it became known in the call of the Gentiles, is often spoken of as the mystery. And this was disclosed to St. Paul in a manner quite independent of the other Apostles, or of human testimony, by an express revelation from God. Thus he himself states, that he "neither received it of man nor was taught it," but it was by Christ revealed to him.¹ More than once mention is made of this his supernatural knowledge, and his visions of God,—as in the temple of Jerusalem, where, in a trance, it is said to him, "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."² And again, of his hearing unspeakable words in Heaven which it is not lawful for a man to utter. St. Paul sometimes alludes to these things, but never very fully or unreservedly; as to these Ephesians he had written of it before, but "in few words."

He next explains why it is a mystery: *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the Holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same Body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.* Great indeed was the change when, instead of being confined to earthly boundaries, the Kingdom of Christ

¹ Gal. i. 12.

² Acts xxii. 21.

was found to be high as the Heaven is above earth, and broad as from east to west, without bounds ; a star which, although it arose in space and time from the tents of Jacob, yet whose orbit was the universe, and its circuit as the days of Heaven. *Whereof*, adds St. Paul, *I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.* Even as God had said to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles."³ And this efficacy, indeed, of God's grace could not have been more strongly shown than by the exceeding lowliness with which the Apostle received the gift, which he beautifully here introduces : *Unto me*, he says, *who am less than the least of all Saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* O great Apostle ! greatest of saints ; and greatest of all in this, that thou wert so like thine own Divine Master in lowliness of heart ; and never so great as when saying, "I am less than the least of all." And surely never was mortal man called to a higher office and dispensation than this, which he thus describes.

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. And having thus spoken of the mystery hid from everlasting with Christ in God, St. Paul proceeds to say that it was so hidden in God as to have been unknown even to the angels in heaven. Yet it appears to have been to them matter of exceeding interest, for if angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, what great joy must it not occasion them that in Christ there should be laid up salvation for all mankind ! that in Him should be united together the

³ Acts ix. 15.

whole family in earth and Heaven! So that St. Peter, speaking on this subject, says, "which things the angels desire to look into."⁴

To the intent that now, says St. Paul, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, that wisdom of God which has in it ends so many and various, according to the eternal purpose, or that purpose which hath been from everlasting, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Whom we have boldness and access, i. e. full freedom of speech in prayer and means of approach, with confidence by the faith of Him, that is, through His Spirit within us, by which, from faith in Christ, we are able to approach God, saying, Abba, Father.

Thus, in the Epistle for to-day, we see the Church rising up like a very wonderful structure which fills all earth and Heaven; but in the Gospel which ensues, we are carried back a few years, and see nothing but the Corner-stone laid, and scarce seen by human eyes, the Corner-stone Which the builders rejected as unfit for their use, but Which God through their rejection made the Head of the corner, marvellous in our eyes, uniting thereby both Jews and Gentiles in one.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him. All this was very much in secret, for it was not known that He was the Son of God, nor that He was the Son of David; but yet, to a humble faith, there was a star in Heaven, and on earth Bethlehem, the city of David. From the East God had

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 12.

called Abraham, and had said, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed ; and now, after nearly two thousand years, to the East, the country of Abraham, He speaks by the star, saying, Come and see ; this is the seed of Abraham, the Child of promise. This is He ; by faith He would lead you to Himself, as He did Abraham of old. Knowledge is blind, but faith sees, in the night from the light of the star vouchsafed in Heaven ; or rather, we may say, it is faith the day star in the heart itself, "the morning star" which Christ Himself promises to give.⁵

And here we may observe that awful and mysterious circumstance which we so often have occasion to notice in the ways of God, they that are afar off, who are most beset with difficulties, and have least privileges, press forward and overtake those who were most near to God, who had most knowledge, and appear most highly favoured. For it is often the case, that the last become first and the first last.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. They were "troubled," as the Egyptians were "troubled" of old,⁶ when God looked forth upon them from that Cloudy Pillar by which He was graciously leading the children of Israel. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judæa : for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda : for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule My people Israel. Had Herod then and these Jews no star to guide them ? Yea,

⁵ Rev. ii. 28.

⁶ Exod. xiv. 24.

He who is Himself "the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star," He comes to them by these His messengers from the East, and says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."⁷ He leaves them not without witness. O terrible blindness of such knowledge, which says we see, and points out the way of salvation to others, while itself is but troubled, and seeks not!

The heathen afar off behold the goodly tents, the star arising out of Jacob, and sceptre of Israel.⁸ But if the Jews have no star sent expressly to them, it is because they are under the full light of God's word. The star disappears in the dawn, the Sun of Righteousness Himself was rising on them; they needed not the star. Oh, may it never be the case with us, who have so much knowledge, that the Jews in their turn should arise, like "the Kings of the East," to condemn us, and say, Christ was among you, and at your very doors; ye knew it well, for ye told it to others, yet ye yourselves heeded it not.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. He not only seeks the guidance of Scripture, but also would borrow that of the divine Star, and has knowledge in his own heart which tells him that adoration is due. Thus his son afterwards expected to see some miracle done by Christ, as if He were God, yet feared not. So marvellous is this "mystery of iniquity" wherein

⁷ St. John v. 39.

⁸ Numb. xxiv. 5. 17.

there are the false shadows of faith and knowledge. *When they had heard the king they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.* Now we know not what this star was, whether it might have been as St. Chrysostom supposes, an angel of light which was sent to conduct them, or in what consisted this resemblance to a star; but as our Lord has been pleased to speak of Himself as “the morning star,” and of bestowing “the morning star” as some especial gift of great price to him that overcomes the world, we may liken its appearance to this divine manifestation of Himself in the heart, some gracious living ray to which faith is likened. This had disappeared awhile when they were at the proud Jerusalem, but at the lowly Bethlehem it again appears. For at Jerusalem there was knowledge that pointed out the way, but it was proud knowledge without love, which even in believing believed not; but now the lovely beauteous guide which had led them so far, had led them from home and kindred, over Asian solitudes, with no earthly guide, amidst doubts and difficulties, it again appears. O blessed light of faith in the heart, what in all nature, in all that we behold in earth and Heaven is as lovely as thou! Christ Himself is this star; it is He that enlightens and purifies the heart, teaching it to look up and by His own sweet attractive influence within, leading us on to Himself, to the manifestation of Himself in great love and lowliness. And, oh! if to those that seek He is so gracious, what is He to those that find? When He “Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give that light”⁹ which is the

⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

knowledge of Himself, and reveal one ray from His countenance.

The star without may be likened to His providence; "the day star arising in the heart"¹ within to His grace; but both do but lead the way to Him, Who is Himself "the bright and Morning Star, the Root and Offspring of David;" Who is Himself, the Beginning and the End, the Guide Which leads the way, and Himself the Guide, the Way, and the Goal.

These Eastern sages were probably watching the stars, as their wonted employment was, when this star appeared, this star like no other star: so amid our various occupations, our thoughts of business, our natural homes, will this faith kindle its sweet and awful light in the heart, appearing in the midst of them, and in some respects resembling them, till it singles us out and becomes itself an occupation, a business, a home like no other; but, alas! how soon hidden, how soon lost from view, unless it be unceasingly watched, steadily pursued and obeyed! And yet how blessed, should it again appear at our journey's end! Should that star mark again the glowing portals of the evening as it did the opening dawn, and the sunset like the morning come forth with a radiant promise at the close. Then with the wise men at His birth, with the disciples at His resurrection, may we "rejoice with exceeding great joy." With joy the greater now, because for awhile He hid His face, and left us to seek, and in seeking to be for awhile overcast. "I sought Him but I found Him not," but after awhile the trusting soul says again, "I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him and would not let Him go."

And when they were come into the house, they saw the

¹ 2 Pet. i. 19.

young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Surely then, as we have said, it must have been the Morning Star in the heart, as well as that in the heavens without, which guided these mysterious strangers; for how else would they have worshipped the new-born infant as God, or have known that their gifts were acceptable to Him, the King of Heaven?

And here our attention is arrested by a circumstance, not of the same character as the lowly manger and the Cross, and other incidents that surrounded Him Who came to bear fellowship with the poor, and to clothe Himself with their lowly estate. For everything around Him that is unusual has some emphatic significance of Divine language. On two occasions were costly offerings made to our Lord; these gifts at His birth, and the precious ointment of the good Mary for His burial. And both we may well believe alike accepted of Him—the latter for the love which had saved the gift with much cost, and the former for the faith of these adoring worshippers which had brought these pledges from afar. And in both cases faith and love were in a mysterious way doing what they knew not of. The loving and beloved Mary had, according to her Lord's testimony, kept that precious ointment for His burial, though of this she herself at the time knew not. And so do now these Gentiles from afar present, in these offerings, the first-fruits of the riches of the believing world, which were hereafter to be brought to Christ, and flow into His Church. The gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh, speak the costly oblations. These, too, already represented, as symbols, the prayers (instead of the incense of old in the golden censer), the

sufferings and sacrifices of the saints in that Jerusalem from above, in the light of which "the nations shall walk," and into which "the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour."²

This was that "star out of Jacob" which led of old to this same Bethlehem that faithful daughter of Moab, when the lowly Ruth, forgetting her own people and her father's house, came with suppliant reverence and hid herself under the skirt of a Jew.³ She knew not of what great things she was even then the type, and to be herself the instrument.

The costly offerings, as well as the attentions of Herod, indicate the state of the givers as well as Him to Whom they were given. All is kingly. "The kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts;" the great of the earth, the wise and learned He invites to His cradle, as well as those humble shepherds who had nothing to offer but their praises and their prayers. Nay, more; the star is stirred in heaven—the earth is moved; East and West have kissed each other; wisdom, taught of God, leads the way; and, as the Epistle states, "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." The star is in heaven—the manger is below.

And, indeed, in the secret providences of God there may be wonderful fulfilments to be hereafter on earth, of which these led the way; and great things we know not of, signified by the coming of these Gentile worshippers. It may be sufficient to observe that in the Revelation of St. John we read that the waters of Babylon shall be dried up, "that the way of the kings of the East might be

² Rev. xxi. 24. 26.

³ Ruth iii. 9.

prepared,"⁴ with an apparent allusion to these wise men, of which no one as yet can explain the meaning.

That the hearts of these strangers were in the hand of God, and under His supernatural visitation and guidance, from within as well as from without, appears in what follows, the concluding words of the Gospel: *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.* Thus do they show themselves as "friends of God," like Abraham of old, and worthy of the guidance from above. For they "come and see," they worship, they obey, and in obedience seem to rest. No curious inquiries, no speculation; but they seek Him Whom they are to worship, and in finding Him, and in worshipping are satisfied; though under appearances, as man judges, but little kingly or divine. Truly wise men indeed, for they have the wisdom which God reveals to babes; and as in type of the kingdom, wisdom and infancy are met together. Theirs then is "the Morning Star" which God gives as the reward of obedience.

One word in conclusion: there is a propriety and peculiar fitness of language in every Scripture symbol; the strength of their significancy is in their appropriate expression. Christ is said to be the Sun of Righteousness, arising "with healing on His wings," when He kindles life throughout the world, bearing health and salvation; or when His glory breaks forth on the Great Day. But He is "the bright and Morning Star," when amidst the surrounding darkness, and amidst circumstances of lowliness, He that is "fairer than the children of men" kindles an unearthly hope; the pure and soft light in the breast, like a solitary star, leading onward to Himself

⁴ Rev. xvi. 12.

from afar off. Such is the Star of Bethlehem ; the Star that leadeth to "Bethlehem Ephratah," the lowly "House of Bread," *fruitful* in all good works ; of the Bread that came down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

But let us haste ; "the Morning Star" implies that "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand ;" that Star which led the way is about to depart, for it is even now on the borders of that City which hath "no need of the sun nor moon," for "the Lamb is the light thereof."

SERMON XII.

The First Sunday after the Epiphany.

Rom. xii. 1—5. St. Luke ii. 41—52.

OBEDIENCE THE BEST SACRIFICE.

Be not conformed to this world ; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of GOD.—ROM. xii. 2.

THE Gospel for to-day, in which our Lord appears before us for once as a child, is so full of life and instruction, that we may consider the Epistle throughout with reference to it, as calling us to the same childlike, loving obedience ; that so, fulfilling all Christian righteousness, we may be found in Him as the sons of God, may keep the true passover, and go up with the Divine Child to the Jerusalem which is above, which is the Mother of us all.

St. Paul had been dwelling, at great length, in this Epistle to the Romans, on the unsearchable riches and goodness of God, in grafting the Gentiles into the stock of Israel, whereby they were become partakers of all the promises made to the Jews of old ; which he sums up by this appeal : *I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies*

of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. After the pattern of the Holy Child obedient to the law, we, in obedience to the law of Christ, the true Lamb of God, Christ our Passover, Who is sacrificed for us, are called upon to present ourselves, not as the slain animals of old, but a "living" sacrifice, *i. e.* the offering of our whole lives; "holy," *i. e.* free from sin, as the lamb of old without spot or blemish; "acceptable to God," for of those former sacrifices it is said that they were not acceptable: "Sacrifice and meat-offering Thou wouldest not, but mine ears hast Thou opened;"¹ "I will praise the Name of God; this shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock."² And this is our "reasonable service," that is the true worship of the rational soul, as distinguished from the carnal ordinances of the Jews.

And be not conformed to this world; be not like the age around you and in which you live, the fashion of which perisheth and passeth away; *but be ye transformed,* let a continual change be taking place in you, *by the renewing of your mind,* by a new heart, new dispositions, and new ways, such as is consistent with the new man and the new birth in Christ, being made conformable to the Holy Child in obedience, *that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* "That ye may prove," the word means to ascertain by putting it to the proof; by obedience men come to know what is pleasing to God, as our Lord says, "if ye do the will, ye shall know of the doctrine." And St. Paul more than once uses this word in this same sense; thus, to the Philippians, "that ye may abound in knowledge and all judgment," and "approve," *i. e.* know by proof, "things that are

¹ Ps. xl. 8.

² Ps. lxix. 30.

excellent.”³ And to the Hebrews, “by reason of use having senses exercised to discern,” *i. e.* to know by proof, for it is the same word, “both good and evil.”⁴ The Collect for to-day seems to express this, “that they may perceive and know what things they ought to do.” Thus, says the Epistle, by the renewal of your minds, shall ye learn that which is good, well-pleasing to God, and perfect. The old sacrifices were not so, being but the shadows of good things to come, but the body is of Christ. He is the only good, the one well-pleasing and perfect Sacrifice, and such are they who by faith shall be found in Him, perfect even as He is perfect, inasmuch as their old man being buried and dead, they are only known of God as having their life in Christ.

For I say, adds the Apostle, *through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,* not to be high in designs and affections beyond the lowly mind of a Christian. He has just before been speaking of being renewed and transformed in mind, and such newness of Spirit is always connected with humility, as our Lord Himself says, “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;” and “Whosoever humbleth himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Such is to be our disposition; not to be high-minded, *but,* adds St. Paul, *to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith;* that is, to consider whatever we have as the gift of God, according to that measure by which He deals to every one. *For as*

³ Phil. i. 9.

⁴ Heb. v. 14.

we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. St. Paul uses the same figure to the Corinthians, as the great remedy for pride; and St. Chrysostom thus explains it: "Why dost thou think highly of thyself? Are we not all one body, both great and small? Why dost thou separate thyself, and put thy brother to shame? For as he is a member of thee, so art thou of him."

It may be observed, in this consideration of St. Paul, that humility becomes lost in love, let no one think highly of himself, for we are all members one of another; and then brotherly love itself is lost in the love of God. For we are all one body, he says, and that body is Christ.

Thus in Christ must all Christian teaching begin and end; He is Himself the true Passover, and the Lamb that is offered; in Him alone is all reasonable service, and filial obedience. He is the New Man to Whom we are to be transformed day by day, by the renewing of our mind. It is as parts of His body, as limbs and members of Him, that we are to learn humility and love to one another; it is in Him we are to be about our Father's business and in His house. He is Himself that little child according to Whose pattern we are to humble ourselves.

Thus the Epistle for the day may be found to connect itself, in a very beautiful manner, with the Gospel; for where can this humility be better taught; from what does it all flow but from the example of this divine Child, Who at the same time that He is the most lowly and obedient among children, is also the Lord and King of Heaven? From what other source do the Highest Angels which see His face in Heaven, learn this lesson of

holy charity, that, as our Lord says, they watch over His little ones upon earth? It is no doubt from seeing that their own Lord and Master has been pleased thus to humble Himself as to become a little child; Himself teaching angels and men this lesson, while He Himself was submitting to be taught of the Jewish Doctors in the Temple.

Thus the Epistle and the Gospel seem to teach us one living lesson, and by a beautiful transition to pass from one into the other. Our Lord at twelve years of age was fulfilling all legal righteousness, present at Jerusalem and in the Temple, and submitting Himself to the doctors of the law, setting forth to us that perfect pattern of obedience, through which we by faith shall be joined to Him, shall in Him keep the Passover, shall offer up an acceptable sacrifice; shall worship Him in spirit and in truth, in that better temple which is His Church; shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and be found at last in that Holy City, the new Jerusalem of which St. John speaks, wherein is seen no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." "And the nations," as celebrating the true epiphany, "walk in the light" of that City.⁵

And now let us consider, in detail, the Gospel itself for this week. It is one of peculiar interest, as this account which it gives is the only circumstance mentioned of our Blessed Lord from His childhood till He was thirty years of age. And while it contains much matter for deeper reflection, it bears at once on the surface this information, that He was living in strict obedience to the Law of Moses, and in wonderful lowli-

⁵ Rev. xxi. 22. 24.

ness and meekness was being brought up as any child of human parents might be.

Now His parents, it is said, went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. For the law had required that every male should appear before God at the feast of unleavened bread. And this was a part of the burdensome service or yoke of the Mosaic Law, for the distance which they had to travel from the Galilean village of Nazareth to Jerusalem, could not have been much less than a hundred miles, by the way they had to go, and all this probably for poor persons was on foot. *And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, i. e. the seven days of the Passover, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; even as we may suppose a holy child might have done, forgetting himself as it were, and lingering in devout meditation about the holy City of God and the Temple. And Joseph and His Mother knew not of it; but they had proceeded on their way homeward, supposing Him to have been in the company, and went a day's journey before they had missed Him.* It was the kind of accident which might have occurred to any child with no more than ordinary watchfulness and care. As all faithful Jews went up to Jerusalem at this season, going and coming away together, they travelled in very large caravans or pilgrim companies, and those of the same country, the same neighbourhood or village, and especially relatives and friends, would naturally be more or less in smaller parties among themselves. *And they sought Him, it is added, among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.*

And when they found Him not, they turned back again

to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple. It was the custom among the Jews to resort to the Temple to pray, even for the purpose of private prayer and devotion, and it seems not improbable that His parents in their distress had gone for that purpose to the Temple; and not from supposing that a child by himself would have gone thither; for it appears as if to their surprise they found Him there. That they did not expect to find Him in the Temple, or at all events not so engaged, appears from what is afterwards added, *And when they saw Him they were amazed*; it is a very strong expression: *and His Mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.* The words convey an impression not of astonishment only, but something also of complaint. How often do they find an echo in our own hearts, when in God's dealings with us we seem to have suffered sorrow without cause, as if He knew not or cared not for our troubles! Yet the grief of love is a sacred grief; and in all these things, what we need is the strengthening of our faith in Him Who is out of sight.

And they found Him, it is said, *in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.* St. Luke had before said of Him, that "He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." And the Prophet Isaiah, that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: and make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."⁶ That is, when the Prophet is speaking of Him as born "of the stem of Jesse," and of His human soul, wherein as a child He grew in wisdom and in favour with God. And such

⁶ Isa. xi. 2, 3.

is He now, in meekness as a child, not teaching the doctors, but listening to their instructions, and asking them questions. There was the same lowliness in this as when He performed the humblest duties for Joseph and His Virgin Mother at Nazareth. *And all that heard Him*, it is said, *were astonished at His understanding and answers*. Not, we may suppose, from any manifestation of His Godhead, but as a holy child attentive to Divine things becomes wise, as it were, beyond his years; "of quick understanding," as the Prophet says, "in the fear of the Lord." "I have more understanding than my teachers," says the Psalmist, "for Thy testimonies are my study." "I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments."⁷

But at the same time, while He condescends to act with unspeakable humility as man, as a poor man, ministered unto by others for His temporal wants, and as a child needing instruction, yet on every occasion there is something which bears witness to His Godhead. And this seems to be the case now, in His answer to His Mother, *And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?* or as it might be translated "in My Father's house."⁸ *And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them*. When He spake to them as man, they understood; but when He spake to them as God, they understood not. This is the case on many occasions. *But His Mother kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart*.

After the account of this short incident He is again altogether removed from our sight; for all that we now learn of our Blessed Lord until the season of His Baptism

⁷ Ps. cxix.

⁸ St. John ii. 16.

is contained in these few words : *And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.* And then it is added, as it might be of other children or another child, almost indeed in the very words in which it was said of Samuel,⁹ *and Jesus increased in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man.*

Surely all this is worthy of our deepest wonder and adoration. Our Blessed Lord does not appear before us in His childhood like the child Samuel, dwelling always in the Temple, removed from the ways of common men ; nor as John the Baptist, living alone in the wilderness ; nor as David when a youth, remarkable for great deeds of might, when feeding his father's flock he slew the lion and the bear ; but He is disclosed to us in very great humility in the ways of common life, as ordinary children are brought up, in subjection and retirement, differing only in that quick understanding in things Divine which arises from the love and the fear of God. Of this, perhaps, one reason was that our Lord has called upon us to imitate Him more especially in meekness and lowliness ; and humility is best secured and guarded in the most ordinary stations of life, and in the most common circumstances of obscurity and poverty. To be different from other men is a temptation to pride ; subjection and obedience to natural and lawful superiors is in itself a great exercise of humility, and under the cover of these, holiness and the love of God is cherished in the heart. Another reason for our Blessed Saviour's thus taking upon Himself this ordinary condition as a child may be this ; in order that all men in their station in life may be able to imitate and follow Him, which they could not do so well if He had appeared as one set apart from other

⁹ 1 Sam. ii. 26.

men, like some of His own prophets and servants had been. For there is no child who may not show obedience to his parents; and attentive hearing of his instructors; and yet at the same time so great a zeal and love for God's house, as to forget everything else in comparison with that; so that his very love and subjection to his parents should be seen to be nothing else but the fruits of his love and obedience to Almighty God; the faint shadow of it; and that while he surpasses all other children in dutiful obedience and affection to his parents; yet even that love when it came in comparison with the love of God, should vanish away like the light of a candle in the full blaze of the noonday sun.

And, again; there may be also a further reason in this circumstance, of our Lord's being pleased to take upon Him this state of ordinary children; that He thus learned, as man, to sympathize and have a fellow-feeling with the lot of mankind; in all their infirmities, in all their trials; to be as a child among children, in a condition not differing from theirs, this was the choice of His love for them. To be rich and at ease, to be admired and cherished by others, to be known and talked of as a child,—this can be the lot of a few only among mankind, even were it good for them; very different from this, therefore, was the state which our Blessed Saviour chose for Himself; one that differed, it may be, in nothing else from that of ordinary poor children, except in extraordinary piety and goodness.

For this is the circumstance which, I think, must strike every one on hearing or reading the Gospel which we are considering to-day, viz. how like it is to common life. His parents, it is said, went up to Jerusalem, as it was customary among the Jews to do, in obedience to the law, and

the Holy Child, being now twelve years of age, went with them. And so much was He as other children are wont to be, that they had left Jerusalem to return home, and had proceeded some considerable way, before they perceived that He was not with them, and even then they supposed Him to be among some of their own party of friends and relatives. They missed and lost Him, and sought for Him, and that with much trouble and sorrow. Of so little account in that company, and in that city, was the Son of God when He appeared among men. And then when found, still as a child, engaged with religious teachers, and fulfilling all that Solomon had said in the Book of Proverbs, of listening to the voice of Wisdom: "My son, attend to my words, write them upon the table of thine heart; so shalt thou find favour with God and man."¹ And as the Psalmist: "Whereby shall a young man cleanse his way? even by ruling himself after Thy Word."² And thus did He teach us as a Child, but in the same kind of manner as any child might do who was filled with the Spirit of God. But it is especially to be noticed, as the one great and chief point in all this, that while He taught us throughout His whole childhood obedience to parents, by this one incident He has combined with it another lesson also, without which it is of no value, of no avail, namely this—"He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Now the great stumbling-block to our faith as Christians is this: It is difficult for us to understand that men engaged in the little affairs of this poor unsatisfying life on earth, with all its petty concerns and troubles, are what Scripture reveals to us, heirs of immortality intended for Heaven, to be made equal to the angels, and to dwell for

¹ Prov. iii. 3, 4; iv. 20.

² Ps. cxix. 9.

ever with God. And yet our Blessed Saviour would not only have us deeply impressed with this truth ourselves, and always acting under this impression, but also to look upon others in this light, as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. This consideration raises the case of a poor and most ordinary child to a condition, in our sight, so high and precious, that all earthly distinction is lost in the sense of it.

But now all this is made to us easy of acceptance and belief, so far as we in faith behold God Himself in this Child, of Whom we read in this day's Gospel. We hear nothing more of our Lord's childhood, but it is quite enough if we know and receive this. It at once raises the common life of us all, especially of all children, up to Heaven. If God was, then, so wonderfully present and hiding Himself in that lowly condition, in things that appeared outwardly like those of other children and the usual ways of life, He may be now also spiritually present in the hearts and lives of children who are born again in Baptism as the sons of God, although the world knows nothing of it. His Mother, it is stated, pondered in her heart these mysterious intimations of Godhead; this of itself intimates that others did not so. Is not something of this kind the case now? there are some who, in the ways of Providence, and in the Kingdom of Grace, notice at all times the Presence of God, and meditate on such things; while, to men of the world, He passes by, and they perceive Him not.

To apply once more this practical conclusion. On other occasions Christ is manifested to us in the great offices of His Mission, in His Baptism, Temptation, and His Ministry, in working of miracles and proclaiming His Gospel; and, therefore, in all those circumstances He is necessarily

more removed from the daily condition and situation of us all, than in this most impressive incident of His early youth.

Our Blessed Lord on more than one occasion, when He would teach His disciples humility, took a little child and set him before them ; He took a child to His side ; He took a child up in His arms ; He put a child in the midst of the Twelve Apostles ; and thus He proceeded to instruct them in this lowliness and meekness of heart which He was inculcating. That is to say, He thought this sight, this gracious action of His, and the child they saw, and His own demeanour and love thus shown, would be more expressive in teaching this duty, than any words of themselves alone could do. Now something of this kind, but infinitely higher and better, and more graciously condescending, is this sight which is vouchsafed to our eyes in this most touching narrative of the Gospel. It is a Child set before us, and that Child—Oh, the inconceivable mystery of lowliness ! Oh, the wonderful depth of love ! words may speak it, but heart of man cannot comprehend it worthily—that Child is our God !

St. Paul says, “Be not high-minded.” “Let each esteem other better than himself, in lowliness of mind.” Our Lord Himself says, “Blessed are the meek.” But how far do even Divine words themselves, fall short of this sight ; this beholding “with our eyes,”³ as St. John says, the Son of God Himself, manifested to us as a child, lost among the throng, a poor child of poor parents, and as an unnoticed wanderer gone from them ; submitting to learn, and lost, as it were, to others in the love of Divine wisdom ; sitting as a disciple at the feet of them who were in the seat of Moses, and then returning home to a poor

³ 1 St. John i. 1.

village, to spend years in subjection and obedience; and that, not to parents only, but to Joseph, who was His reputed and supposed parent. For even this is found among men an additional trial of patience. Thus did He live, known to God His Father only, until this, His long obedience, was sealed at His Baptism by that Voice from Heaven, which said, "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." This is the Sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to God. And when He was seen again in the sight of all men upon the Cross, this was but the perfecting of that patience which He had practised from a child.

What, therefore, is the one great weekly lesson which we are to learn from this Divine narrative? If we look around us and in ourselves, we find "trouble about many things," because many are the objects which men desire, and therefore many are their fears and hopes, which are crossed every day, and gather strength and increasing quietude, till the courses of men are quite hampered by various temptations and a multiplicity of wants. Every wind that blows is loaded with trifling fears and cares, covetous and envious fears, unprofitable cares, and unabiding pleasures, which, passing away, leave no trace behind, but a heart more and more entangled and deceived by the world. But if for this one week we will meditate on this short lesson, which the Church of all ages and countries has connected with it, we shall learn the very opposite to which the world teaches, both from within and from without; namely, this: That there is nothing worthy to be loved but God; nothing to be dreaded but sin.

SERMON XIII.

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Rom. xii. 6—16. St. John ii. 1—11.

THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

This beginning of miracles did JESUS in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.—
ST. JOHN ii. 11.

THE Gospels occur during this season in a beautiful order. On the Epiphany there is the star manifesting to the Gentiles the Child born at Bethlehem. On the first Sunday after, there is the Holy Child, at twelve years of age, seen in His Father's house. To-day the first manifestation of our Lord's glory in the working of miracles. And thus we shall find that the Gospels continue through the successive Sundays, opening more and more the Epiphany, or manifestation of the Word made flesh, and come to dwell among us.

But let us, first of all, read the Epistle, and, as on Sunday last, consider it as in the light of Christ's own Presence, that loving example of His goodness with which the Gospel furnishes us. These passages from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans come in the order of their course in

these four first Sundays of the Epiphany, and we find, in ancient books, that they have been so appointed from time immemorial. But they will be found to harmonize and fall in, to a great degree, with the successive Gospels for the same days. On Sunday last, St. Paul, after speaking of our being grafted into the ancient stock of Israel, sums up with an exhortation that we should offer up our lives as a continual sacrifice unto God, as being from henceforth made His children, and to-day he pursues the same into a variety of particulars. This Epistle, appointed for to-day, seems to spread out, as it were, into our whole life, and into all circumstances of our condition, the same lesson of love which the Gospel teaches; it is the unfolding of this universal law of charity into every department and duty of a Christian.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; that is, charity will measure our divine instruction to each according as he is able to receive it; not roughly putting forth one truth only of God, but allowing everything to keep its own place; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. In short, let every one in the household of God labour to fulfil that duty and service unto which it has pleased God to call him. It is in this that the sacrifice of himself is to be made in the fear of God and in brotherly love. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, or, as the same word in another place is translated, "with liberality,"¹ in singleness of heart, as unto God; he that ruleth, with diligence, he that is set over others, or has to protect

¹ 2 Cor. viii 2.

them, fulfilling his charge with earnest zeal: *he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness*, as he that giveth is to do it "not grudgingly or by constraint, for God loveth a cheerful giver,"² so especially is mercy to man increased by a gentle and glad spirit. *Let love be without dissimulation*, love, the mother of all these graces, as St. Chrysostom says, let it be genuine. Thus St. John, the great disciple of divine love, exhorts, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."³

But now what may here be observed of the whole of this passage, and of the way in which it continues, is this, that perhaps no other passage from Scripture could be found, of the same length, which dwells so much on what may be called the friendly and social virtues, those graces which are exercised in our daily intercourse with others; at the same time that we are living under the fear and love of God, which is throughout implied as the source from which all our actions flow. *Abhor that which is evil*; not only to be avoiding all sin, but in very heart fleeing from it with detestation, such is the meaning of the word translated "abhor;" *cleave to that which is good*, be united, and, as it were, wedded to that which is good in heart and practice.

In brotherly love towards one another, it proceeds, *full of affection* "as brethren," says an ancient Bishop, "come of the same pangs," for the word rendered *kindly affectioned* does in the Greek signify this closest bond of natural affection. And of this we can have no greater instance than that recorded in this day's Gospel of Him Who hath so humbled Himself as to call us His brethren.

² 2 Cor. ix. 7.

³ 1 St. John iii. 18.

Thus was He in that family of Cana, deigning to enter under their roof, not as their Lord, their Creator, their King, and Judge, but to be among them as a brother.

In honour preferring one another; for the root of all ill-will is pride; we cannot love those whom we do not honour; and to honour and esteem others better than ourselves is the truest way to obtain their love. Thus did our Blessed Saviour do honour to that house, to His own Mother, who asked in faith that favour of Him, and especially to the bridegroom himself, whose great poverty was made to abound unto such riches.

Not slothful in business, or rather in zeal not backward or remiss; but *in spirit fervent*, it is this which renders all labour light, all service easy, when the spirit within is warm and glowing; *serving the Lord*, that is, considering all things, whatever we do, as a service done unto God, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, not as seeking our own profit or pleasure, but in all things as the servants of God, looking to Him only for payment and reward. *Rejoicing in hope*; *patient in tribulation*; *continuing instant in prayer*, or in prayer earnestly persevering, for this is the source which replenishes all these graces. *Distributing to the necessity of saints*, or sharing in the wants of good Christians as if they were your own; *given to hospitality*, or rather following after, earnestly pursuing it, for thereby, says St. Paul, "some have entertained Angels unawares," yea, surely One far greater than Angels, Himself receiving with all hospitality and ministering to the wants of those who had invited Him as a guest. *Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not*. Be at all times like Him Who was full of blessing even to the unthankful, to those who knew Him not, to those who knew not that what they received was

from Him, their unknown Benefactor come to be among them.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep, even as He, Who not only wept with those that wept at the grave of Lazarus, and was so compassionate to the penitent sinner that washed His feet with her tears, but also sympathized with the marriage feast and the bridegroom. *Be of the same mind one toward another*: not only in their joys and griefs, but in their affections and pursuits also endeavour to have a fellow-feeling with others; as in another place: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them."⁴ *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate*. "That is," says St. Chrysostom, "bring thyself down to their humble condition, ride or walk with them, do not be humbled in mind only, but help them also, and reach forth thy hand to them, be as a father taking care of a child, as the head taking care of the body."⁵

This is throughout the beautiful description of Divine Charity, as it shows itself in all intercourse with mankind; this is putting on the mind of Christ, being clothed all over with His humility. By the constant practice of these things, we shall be found with loins girded and with lamps burning when the Lord shall return from the wedding; and we shall be admitted into that marriage supper of the Lamb, and shall behold that Heavenly Bridegroom, Who differs from all that is found among men in this, that He hath kept the good wine until the last.

Let us now proceed to this interesting narrative in the Gospel. It was shortly after our Lord's Baptism, when

⁴ Heb. xiii. 3.

⁵ Hom. xxii. ad loc.

St. John the Baptist, on the banks of the Jordan, had pointed Him out to some of his disciples as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. In consequence, St. Andrew and St. Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, together with another, which was probably St. John, were now attaching themselves to Him as His disciples, when the scene of the narrative is changed from Judæa to Galilee. *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage, i. e.* those who were afterwards solemnly called to be "His disciples," and had now accompanied Him home from where John was baptizing. Cana was a small village not far from Nazareth. "The mother of Jesus was there," but Joseph is no more mentioned, and therefore it is supposed that he had died after the occurrence described in the Gospel for last Sunday, which was eighteen years before. We may observe, from more than one place in the Gospels, and especially from some of our Lord's parables, that a marriage feast was then much thought of, the greatest of domestic festivities; but it would appear, from what is next mentioned, that this occasion was among poor people. It has always been supposed, and, indeed, is mentioned by St. Augustin, that our Lord thus intended to give His own divine sanction to the institution of marriage, as there shall arise in the last days some, as St. Paul says, "forbidding to marry." Thus, in our own Marriage Service, it is said, "which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with His presence, and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee."

And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. This was surely a matter of distress, and indicates the poverty of the family, that

they had not wherewithal to entertain the guests which they had invited. And the Blessed Virgin, who pondered and weighed things in her mind, had, no doubt, in faith perceived that the time was now near at hand for our Lord's miraculous manifestation of Himself. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.* That is to say, that the working of miracles is according to His Godhead, not according to that manhood which He had received from a human mother. Nor in the Divine mission which He had received from the Father, was He to be controlled or influenced by a parent to whom He had been subject according to the flesh. And for this manifestation of Himself by miracles the "hour was not yet" fully arrived, although it was just about to be. But notwithstanding this, the mercies of God are so wont to overflow beyond their own appointed bounds, and the Virgin Mother had so well known our Lord's gracious condescension on every occasion of need, that she did not consider these words as a refusal of her request. But as she asked in faith, so she in faith received. For God often hears and answers even when He appears at first to decline. *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.* She felt assured of that which we find in every page of the Gospels, that the union of obedience with faith is necessary for any miracle to be wrought, or that we should receive anything of God. *And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews; on account of those frequent washings which they performed before eating bread, or returning from the market and the like ;⁶ containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with*

⁶ St. Mark vii. 3, 4.

water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was. For the governor of the feast, the person according to custom appointed to preside in the chief place,⁷ and one it is supposed for that purpose of a priestly office, was probably not aware of the want of wine, and therefore ignorant of the means by which it was procured. *But the servants which drew the water knew.* They who had acted in faith and obedience were given to witness this manifestation of hidden Godhead. *The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.* That is to say, he thus unconsciously bore testimony to the miracle, not only to the reality of the wine into which the water was thus converted, but to its being more excellent than common wine. Thus the servants and the disciples who were present were confirmed in the fact of this miracle, thus wrought by the word of Christ. The governor spake as one in authority, and his words were attended to as such.

But it is impossible to pass over these remarkable words, thus spoken by the governor of the feast, without perceiving that they contain a great deal more, not only than the governor himself meant, but also more than the mere confirmation of the miracle. Perhaps as bearing a sacred office he spake, like Caiaphas, things divine which he knew not of. St. John, in his Gospel, is always wont to mention such things, and to leave us to ponder on the hidden

⁷ ὁ ἀρχιτρίκλινος.

meanings they contain. Before entering therefore into the more practical lesson which this Gospel for the day teaches us, I may just allude to the mystery which it has always been supposed to contain. Our Lord's presence at this marriage was not only the sanction of marriage as the appointment of God, but set forth also that "great mystery" which St. Paul tells us it is made to signify,⁸ that strict spiritual union which is betwixt Christ and His Church. Our Lord Himself had now left His Father⁹ in Heaven, and had come to be united to that Bride which He was about to purchase with His own Blood, to nourish and cherish as His own flesh; bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. It is she who is taken out of His own side by means of the two sacraments, the Water and the Blood, as He is laid in the deep sleep of death. It is He Who is throughout the Scriptures spoken of under the figure of the Bridegroom. This marriage at Cana of Galilee is but a representation of that great mystery; and the bridegroom who was then present was therefore but a type or symbol of our Lord Himself; and words spoken to that man were treasured up and by the Spirit brought to the remembrance afterwards of the inspired Evangelist. Among mankind, and in all things pertaining to man and this world, the good is first set forth, and afterwards that which is worse; but it is not so with the things of God. He always keeps the good till the last. "But thou hast kept the good wine until now." Wine, and the good wine, and the new wine, are often put in Holy Scripture for the Blood of Christ, and therefore more generally for His Gospel. As our Lord Himself says, the "new wine put into old bottles," *i. e.* received into the old man, withered and decayed, will "burst the bottles" and be

⁸ Eph. v. 23. 32.

⁹ Gen. ii. 24.

lost. And no man used to the old wine "straightway desireth new," for he saith that "the old is better;"—in both cases by the "new wine" signifying His Gospel. Thus therefore was it now. The heavenly, the spiritual Bridegroom, Who was then present, and was about to appear, though they knew Him not,—He had kept the good wine till the last. He had given them the Law and carnal ordinances, but He had kept the gracious dispensation of His Gospel till now. It is therefore in itself impossible to conceive anything more engaging and beautiful, more divinely expressive, than was this the opening of our Blessed Lord's Gospel by means of this His first miracle at the marriage feast. It was He Himself, the Great Creator and Preserver of all, Who, unseen and unheeded, had been performing this miracle ever since the creation of the world, when in the ways of His natural Providence He converts the dews and the rains of Heaven into the juice of the grape, thus converting water into wine; it is He Who now appears as the Son of man and works this same miracle, showing that He Who is about to die for us as man, is no other than He Who made us as God. And as He changes water into wine, thereby to set forth the great sacrament of His atoning Blood: so does He convert this occasion of an ordinary marriage festival into a spiritual symbol of His own Incarnation, and His mysterious union with us in the flesh.

But what is the more ordinary and simple instruction, which the circumstance is calculated to teach by our Lord's appearing at this marriage, and thus acting in the first manifestation of His glory? For it is added, *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.* But when they believed in His Divine mission, and looked

up to Him in faith on account of this evidence of the miracle, they did not of course understand at that time all this depth of Divine wisdom which the whole of that occasion contained, but they looked to all His words and His actions to be instructed by them. The whole of our Lord's example in what He was doing was no doubt for their practical instruction. They were to be transformed in all their own hearts and lives by Him, by His Divine power, and saving aid and guidance, and they looked to all that He said and did, although they knew not as yet the hidden things of God. And no doubt to us likewise our Lord's example is full of practical teaching in the same manner. Now if we are to ask what is the lesson which the Gospel for last week contained, it might be said in one word to be Humility. In like manner it might be said that the subject of the Gospel for this week is Love.

Now there have been in the world many teachers of wisdom—some among heathen philosophers truly virtuous and good, according to the light given unto them, and often speaking such words of wisdom as none but God Himself could have taught them. Many, again, commissioned and inspired of God, prophets and holy men of old, and Apostles afterwards, and Saints in the Church ;—all these labouring in various ways to bring men to the knowledge of God and of Christ. But I know of nothing among them that in any way partakes of the character of this incident, which takes so prominent a place in our Lord's history. This appears to be quite different from anything recorded of them, on account of that wonderful Divine love which pervades it—such loving condescension to the common ways of life ; and not only that, but to such occasions as might be thought out of the reach of religion and the religious teacher, raising and sanctifying them by

the presence and influence of Divine meekness and love, showing us that God is Himself present in such, that He must be considered and remembered as present; and indeed, were He not so, then such things ought not and must not be at all. If they are to be, God must be in them; and He may, and indeed delights and loves, in merciful condescension, to be in them; "to beautify," as our Prayer Book well expresses it, and to consecrate "by His presence."

But this is not all; it is in wonderful meekness as man also that He instructs us. He was there, not yet as one in authority, nor as a Divine teacher, for He does not appear to be as yet known as such, except to those few persons, afterwards His disciples, to whom John the Baptist had pointed Him out a few days before. He was probably there only as the son of the carpenter in a neighbouring village. And how humble was the occasion of the miracle? It was not like those cases of distress which afterwards occurred, of limbs lost and paralyzed, of sick and dying persons and the afflictions of their relatives and friends, or of hearts overcome with the sense of sin; but it was one of those trivial circumstances which nothing but the tenderness of meek and gentle loving-kindness would have attended to. To have been there at all was, humanly speaking, not to have been expected of One so holy, and a Teacher of God so wise and good: but, when there, to have sympathized in such little wants, this was even much more than the former. It was the perfecting of this example of condescending meekness. Again, among mankind it is a great proof of charity, it is a blessed and Divine work, to sympathize with the afflicted, to have a fellow-feeling with others in their afflictions, and to endeavour to alleviate them. But it is

often more difficult to sympathize also with those that are happy and prosperous, so as to be anxious to make up for anything wanting in their comfort. This, indeed, is not at all difficult when we ourselves have a part in such things ; for the world itself, in such cases, is very forward to rejoice and have its own share in the joys of others. But when we ourselves are entirely of another sort in our feelings,—so that our hearts being elsewhere, their joys are of a far different kind to ours,—yet still, even then, not only to take part in the greater distresses of others, but even in those little things as may be needful to make up their little satisfactions, this is a charity beyond that which is commonly to be met with among men ; nay, among religious teachers, and even great saints of God. We may see something like it in the love of a mother to her children, for that is the greatest instance of natural love that we know of, when she takes part in their innocent joys. Such maternal love is only an image of the love of God for His creatures. And it may be that this differs from all that we read of, because it is not human but Divine love.

But still, as a lesson to ourselves, it is not unlike many of our Lord's own commands to us, Who, while He says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly," says also, "Be ye merciful, even as your Father in Heaven is merciful." We are to imitate not only Christ in meekness, but also at the same time to imitate God in mercy ; to look to the Divine goodness over all His creatures, for our own pattern of loving-kindness. Thus, I was going to observe, many of His particular injunctions to us are of this character, implying a consideration of little wants on little occasions. Thus of the goodness of God our Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you. For every

one that asketh receiveth." It makes no exception; however trivial the matter may be, we may have recourse to God, and He will grant what we ask. In like manner He says to us, "Give to him that asketh thee." "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." "Despise not these little ones." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, Verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Thus does our Lord give us injunctions respecting such matters as may meet us at every turn; such actions as might commonly be called those of good nature, are by Him sanctified when done for the love of God. But even from His commands let us turn again to our Lord Himself, and to His example. This was the opening of His Gospel. Thus did He begin His Ministry, and there was something in it ever throughout so much of this character of most tender and gracious condescension, that His enemies said of Him, "a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners." Thus could they speak of the "Man of Sorrows." Yea, even of Himself did He say, "the Son of man is come eating and drinking;" though His knees were weak through fasting, and tears were His meat day and night. For as the rays of the sun are not polluted, however unclean may be the places on which they fall, neither could He be harmed by any example of men in such societies; but He could hallow, and alleviate, and cheer, and make them better by His Presence. Among mankind a proud man would not condescend to such little wants; an envious man could not so sympathize in the joys of others; a religious teacher would not so meet men in the unguarded intercourse of such occasions; one who was not dead to the world, could not, perhaps, do so without

temptation to evil. Some men have practised severe and mortified lives themselves, but cannot look on what is innocent and lawful in the domestic and social life of others without much bitterness. Alas, how weak we all are! How much do we all need, each after his way, to be melted and subdued by this tender instance of Divine love! As crippled and infirm persons, half withered and dried up by old age or infirmities, are brought out to be placed in the warmth of the sun, so do we all need to be warmed and enlivened in our cold and barren hearts by the influence of this Divine example.

SERMON XIV.

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

Rom. xii. 16—21. St. Matt. viii. 1—13.

THE FAITH THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD.

And behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.
And JESUS put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.—ST. MATT. viii. 2, 3.

THE Epistle for last week might be said to be on the subject of our duties to each other in the household of God and among friends; but that of to-day rather of our conduct among enemies. *Be not wise in your own conceits*, for that is the origin of all ill-will to others. *Recompense to no man evil for evil.* To no man, whatever he may be, is it lawful in a Christian to return evil. *Provide things honest in the sight of all men.* St. Paul uses the same expression in another place, which may explain it: "Providing for honest things," he says, "not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."¹ *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* That is, it may not be possible,

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 21.

because we are sometimes bound to maintain the truth at the expense of peace, and to support those who are unjustly treated; to which may be added, that, however peaceably-minded we may be ourselves, others may not be so; as the Psalmist laments, "I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready for battle."² Yet, notwithstanding all this, "Blessed are the peacemakers." And then, as if in sympathy for suffering Christians, the Apostle exclaims, *Dearly beloved, or, O my beloved ones, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, that is in the Law of Moses,³ Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.* This passage is taken from the book of Proverbs, and is difficult to understand. St. Chrysostom seems to think that the former part is addressed to the good Christian, exhorting him to do good to his enemy, leaving all requital to God; but that the latter part, of "heaping coals of fire on his head," is intended to alarm and warn the other, who is unkind to him who has forgiven and loved him. For, doubtless, the sin against God must in that case be very grievous. But St. Augustin more than once, in speaking of this text, says, that as of course it cannot mean that we are to do good to our enemy in order to bring down the vengeance of God upon him, which would be the part of malevolence, not of Christian good-will; it must be understood figuratively, by these means—you will melt your enemy by the fire of God's love, the coals from His altar, which we may consider to be the love of Christ crucified;

² Ps. cxx. 6.

³ Deut. xxxii. 35.

you will bring down his proud head to repentance.⁴ And the following verse seems to favour this interpretation, *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

But the verse going before suggests rather the former explanation: "Vengeance is Mine," saith the Lord; "therefore do good to thine enemy, and let him fear the recompense of God;" for, doubtless, very fearful is the condition of him who forgives not another who has forgiven him.

And now we have, in the Gospel for the day, the constraining motives and reasons for all forgiveness. The first incident therein mentioned is the healing of the leper, a circumstance throughout so striking, that surely it must be familiar to the thoughts of every Christian, and to which his own heart will supply him with the best explanation and commentary. For I suppose there can be no one who, feeling himself polluted with sin, and unclean in God's sight, does not often in his prayers bring to remembrance this account, and the prayer of the leper, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean:" and who does not feel strengthened and comforted by the gracious answer which it received. And, indeed, this seems to be brought out by the Collect for this week as the one great lesson of encouragement which we are to derive from the appointed Services of the day; for there is an evident allusion, not only to both the miracles recorded in the Gospel, but especially to the words of the Text, in the prayer, "Mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us."

⁴ In Ps. lxxviii. 14. De Doct. Chr. lib. iii. 24.

When He was come down from the mountain, that is, after delivering His Sermon on the Mount, *great multitudes followed Him.* And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him. The expressions in St. Luke are still stronger, "Behold, a man full of leprosy, when he saw Jesus, fell on his face and besought Him." But in the very words of his prayer all the Evangelists agree, *Saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.* Here he acknowledges Christ as God, full of all power, as if he had said, "I am unworthy, I dare not ask, but if Thou art willing Thou art able." *And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.* He not only granted the very words of his request, but also, in so doing, "touched him." According to the Law, whoever touched a leper became himself unclean; but Christ, in this proof of His power as God, showed that He was above the Law, and could not be rendered unclean; but, at the same time, in thus doing He seemed to say that He took upon Himself the curse of the Law, the penalty of his sins: "Himself made sin for us," as the Prophet had said, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." For leprosy was made the outward sign which represented sin. And by touching, on this and other occasions, our Lord showed that it is by Himself as God and Man united, the Word made Flesh and dwelling among us and within us, and by uniting us to Himself, and the communication of His own sacred Body, that all restoration and healing must be. By His own life-giving touch He healed him. He granted the very words of his prayer, but over and above his prayer added also, in tender pity, His own most sacred Body. *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith*

unto him, *See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* He sent him thus to bear evidence of His Godhead to the Priests, and also of His obedience to the Law, that, however unbelieving the Priests and Pharisees might be, it might be "a testimony unto them," even as He has now sent forth His Gospel "as a witness to all nations." He was to tell no man, but to go to the Priest, for our Lord first of all appealed to "the House of Israel."

How full of instruction is all this incident to us, when by prayer and meditation we bring it home, as it is intended we should do, each one to himself. The same power is present to heal when we feel and know ourselves to be "full of leprosy." And the like humiliation of ourselves, and the like faith, will be heard as it then was. But, alas! leprosy of soul and uncleanness in the sight of God is not so known and felt as bodily disease would be. Otherwise there is the same remedy, the same nearness to that all-healing Presence, the same will to restore us. Nay, far more; there is the same life-giving Body in the Holy Eucharist, ready to communicate Himself to us, as He touched the leper and made him clean. And then there is the same lesson of obedience that we may continue in that holy fellowship. "Show thyself to the Priest," as Moses in the Law commanded, and "offer the gift;" but to us it is not the command of the Law only, but also of the Gospel; and the gift is not that of dead animals, but, as the Church says to us at this season, in the words of St. Paul, "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."

Another incident is mentioned in the Gospel of to-day, which is put by St. Matthew together with the former miracle, that of healing the centurion's servant, which

intimates the calling of the Gentiles, as the former circumstance implies the witness of Christ to the Jewish nation, and the true fulfilment of the Law. And perhaps we shall better understand this by taking the account of St. Luke together with that of St. Matthew; for that of St. Luke, according to his manner, enters more into detail or particulars. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, that is, a Roman captain, who probably had command of the soldiers who were stationed at or near Capernaum, as the chief city in that part of Galilee, and who had no doubt heard much of our Lord's teaching and miracles, for Capernaum had been lately the usual place of our Lord's resort. He came unto Jesus beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.* But we learn from St. Luke that the centurion did not at first come himself, but sent unto Him the elders of the Jews to entreat for him. For, being a Heathen, he knew that he was considered legally unclean by all of the Jewish nation; and much more, he might think, must he be esteemed to be so by so holy a Teacher; and, indeed, his own lowly heart within bore witness to the Jewish Law, that he was by nature spiritually unclean in the sight of the Most Holy God. And these elders of the Jews, when they came, earnestly besought Him, says St. Luke, inasmuch as this captain, although a Gentile, was well worthy, they said, for he loved the Jewish nation, and had built their synagogue for them. We think it much for a Christian to build a church for Christians, but he had done so for those who looked on him as abominable and their enemy. This circumstance of his great apparent piety may seem to us remarkable in a Heathen soldier, but we have another Roman centurion mentioned in the Acts, Cornelius; of

whom it is said that he was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”⁵ It is an awful reflection how much in that time of great manifestation, when the Gospel was first preached, those who had the least religious advantages appeared so much better than those who had the highest. Heathens and Publicans were far more prepared for the Kingdom of Heaven than those Priests and Pharisees who had, in their hands and in their heads, the oracles of God, and lived amidst the privileges of divinely-appointed worship.

And Jesus saith unto him—perhaps sends word to him by these elders, saying—*I will come and heal him.* It appears from St. Luke, that it was by means of friends that the centurion now sent again a second time, on learning that Christ was coming to his house, as if he were quite overcome with something of awe and alarm, so as to have forgotten his own distress in a sense of the Majesty of God. “When He was now not far from the house,” says St. Luke, “the centurion sent friends unto Him, saying, Lord, trouble not Thyself. For I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore I did not think myself worthy to come unto Thee.” And then St. Luke’s account of his words falls in exactly with that of St. Matthew, as here given. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.* That is, if even I who am myself but a servant of others, yet

⁵ Acts x. 2.

without moving or going from place to place have those under me that execute my commands when I only speak the word, how much more must it be the case that Thou, Who art the Lord of all, can perform all things at a distance by Thy word? It is evident from this remarkable confession of faith that God Himself, Who alone makes known the mystery of Christ, the "Father which is in Heaven, had revealed" to this Gentile what "flesh and blood had not" told him, and what Christ Himself had not yet openly declared, that He was the Son of God,—that great saving truth which St. Peter afterwards confessed, which is the very Rock on which His Church is built. The High and Lofty One Who inhabiteth eternity had come to dwell with this Gentile, because he was of a meek and lowly spirit; for none but the Holy One could have made known to his heart this saving faith. He was "pure in heart," and therefore he had the blessing and power vouchsafed to him to "see God." He must, in faith, have seen "angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man," like "an Israelite indeed without guile," or else he would not have compared the power of Christ to his own ordering of attendants, and saying, Come, and go, and do this. He must have seen that ministering spirits, the unseen powers of Heaven, were in humble service waiting on Him to Whom he sent. His words imply this; they have no other meaning. But that, as his servants attended on him and obeyed him, so diseases and death and all things else served Christ, and hearkened unto the voice of His words.

When Jesus heard it, He marvelled; He was as one struck with admiration and wonder. His manner of turning to the crowd, as St. Luke describes His doing, was expressive of this feeling. Such faith, and that in a

Gentile, was so unlike what our Lord had yet met with, He called attention to it as very remarkable by His whole demeanour, *and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* This Gentile had surpassed them all, those who had the Law and the Prophets, the whole substance and sum of which was Christ; there had been no instance among them of such faith. A Jewish nobleman, at this same Capernaum, a little before had sent, saying, "Sir, come down ere my child die;" he did not say, Speak the word, but, Come Thyself. He believed that Christ was able to perform miracles of healing, but not that He could heal by a word at a distance; he believed not that He was God, and he was reproved; for Christ said unto him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." So was it with the hard-hearted Jews. And Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, and one of the wisest and best among them, had before this come by night, saying, "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles which Thou doest, except God be with him." But he was very slow to believe the things of Heaven, because he saw not that Christ was God. But how different was this centurion, the great marvel of God's grace!

And here it may be observed what the effect is upon the whole conduct, when God is acknowledged by man; his faith in Christ as God was spoken, not by these words only, but by the whole of his character, in that remarkable humility which distinguishes him from others. The Jewish elders said, he is worthy, for he hath built us a synagogue; but how different was his own sense of worthiness! He was overwhelmed with a sense of his own nothingness, because he believed Christ to be God. Our Lord, therefore,

at once marked him out as the great token of the calling of the Gentiles. He was poor in spirit, and, as such, the first to enter the Kingdom. 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, shall be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven; for his humbling himself is an acknowledgment of God. He had built for the Jews a synagogue with poor earthly wealth; but out of that synagogue, and from the temple of the Jews, there grew for him "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," even the Church of God which the Jews should not enter. He was not an Israelite, not a disciple, not a follower of Christ, but a Heathen soldier in his place, belonging to a tyrannical, wicked empire, brought up himself among false gods, and in the stronghold of Satan's kingdom. But now in Galilee he had caught some glimpse of that Light which had "sprung up in the region and shadow of death." He might, on some occasion perhaps, have been as a stranger among the crowd, and heard the blessed words that fell from our Lord's gracious lips, and seen some of His works of mercy. He may have seen His eye upon himself amidst the crowd, and found it ever after in his own heart;—he may have learnt this His love and mercy for this poor dying slave (or rather not dying, perhaps, but pitiably suffering) from the same fountain of mercy;—he may have learnt this love even from what he had seen and heard in our Lord Himself. He might, perhaps, have heard His Sermon on the Mount; he may have pondered day and night on the words, have recalled them again and again with the countenance and the accents of Him that spake. He may have compared them with the wisdom of the Gentiles, and may have found that all the learning and boasted virtues of the world were light as vanity itself, but as dust in the balance, when weighed with one sentence which he

may have treasured of Christ's words. When Scribes in the crowd mocked, he may have trembled, unseen and alone; when the rulers of the synagogue were filled with envy, he may have been deeply moved with Divine love; when they looked proudly on, he may have been humbled to the ground. Something of this, and far more of the same kind, and many such little incidents, may have occurred. It is not at all improbable. Or it may have been otherwise. It may have been that he had never seen Christ at all, nor heard His words himself, but had known only of Him from others. But very much he must have understood concerning Him, in whatever little had come before his notice, that he should have thus perceived that it was, indeed, the Almighty God come down from Heaven, in wonderful condescension, to attend to the wants of His afflicted creatures. He knew that He, to Whom he thus sent at a distance, could work whatever He willed in his own house; and, therefore, he must from this have known that Christ was in his own house, that He was a God that was near "and not afar off," wherever He was;⁶ that His all-seeing eye, and His love, and His power were with him and all about him; or else he never could have made such a request as that, saying, Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. And therefore it must needs have been that the all-subduing, all-hallowing, all-endearing Presence of Christ was ruling his own heart and life. For otherwise how could he have known that Christ, by His mere will and word, had power of life and death, and over all the distresses of that servant over whom he was watching? "No man," said our Lord Himself, "can come to Me, except the Father Which hath sent Me draw him."⁷ Surely, therefore, it was a constraining power

⁶ Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

⁷ St. John vi. 44.

in his own heart, and nothing else, that led him to acknowledge, that gave him eyes to see, and ears to hear God in Christ. And of this we may be certain, that however religious persons may appear to be, however learned in the Scriptures, and zealous for the Church, yet, if they have not a temper of mercy and humility, they do not know God. Lowliness and compassion and the fear of God are so marked in that man, that they must have deeply worked within him. However, whatever the circumstances of this soldier may have been, and his dealings with his own heart, that he should have become thus enlightened, they will be all known on the great Day of Judgment. But among men, had it not been for this sickness of his servant, he would have been never known or heard of, although he was, as it were, the first from among us Gentiles to lead the way and enter into the Kingdom. From this we may see what a secret it all is with God—only to be known on that day when “many that are first shall be last, and the last first.”

When the soldiers and the Publicans came before John the Baptist, asking what they should do in order that they might be meet to enter the Kingdom, they were told by him to avoid the particular sin which beset them in their station in life. This was their preparation of heart, that they might be able to discern the Lamb of God that taketh away sin. This centurion might have been one of them. At all events, it is remarkable how in him was found the opposite to the sins of his station: so does the Grace of God make strong in weakness. As a Roman captain he might have despised that conquered nation; he might have thought that our Lord, as a humble Galilean, might have waited on him. But oh, how different was the case! Again, though he might have

known he was considered unclean by the law of Israel, yet he might have presumed on having built a synagogue; but it was far otherwise. And further, what might one have expected in a Roman soldier but cruel and tyrannical selfishness? but he is all full of compassion; his distress is not for himself, but for another; one might have thought that such interest was for a dying child; but no, it is for an afflicted slave. Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, says, "My daughter is dying, but come and lay Thine hand upon her, and she shall live." But this man, though used to command, having soldiers and servants waiting for his orders, says, "I am not worthy to come to Thee, or I would come. I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word." From all this we may see how it is that believing in Christ as God is all in all, because it affects every thought of a man's heart, every action of his life, his whole character and disposition.

Such, then, was the faith of which our Lord spake, that He had not found such in Israel, and to this He added those memorable words which are like the first dawn of the Epiphany. *And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west,—even we, may we add, of the far West, give thanks unto Thy name, Who makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Thee—they shall come, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom, i. e. those Jews who consider themselves as such, and with them all those who abuse those privileges which God has given them, shall be cast out into outer darkness: into spiritual darkness, the forerunner of death. "For the whole world" shall "shine with clear light," but "over them only spread a heavy*

night, an image of that darkness which should afterwards receive them ;"⁸ of which it is said, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

And Jesus said unto the centurion—who had now, perhaps, come himself, having before sent first the Jewish elders, and then his own friends—Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

⁸ Wisd. xvii. 20, 21.

SERMON XV.

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Rom. xiii. 1—7. St. Matt. viii. 23—34.

OUR REFUGE IN PUBLIC TROUBLES.

And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, LORD, save us, we perish.

And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?—

ST. MATT. viii. 25, 26.

THE Epiphany on this Sunday opens as it were into things on a larger scale. Last week we read of our Lord's manifesting Himself to single persons in the Gospel; and the Epistle spoke of our conduct as individuals. But to-day Christ is seen by us as God commanding the powers of nature, the winds and the waves; and afterwards, those still more vast powers of the unseen world, the evil spirits, whose name is Legion, possessing a great herd of more than two thousand swine, and hurrying them to destruction. And in like manner the Epistle for to-day, although it is still taken in continuation from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, yet it falls in with this more enlarged view of Christ's manifestation, speaking of the powers ordained of God, or the governments of the

world, and the duty of obedience on our part for conscience' sake. This agreement between the Epistle and Gospel is remarkable ; for when persons introduce either of the incidents mentioned in the Gospel, it is generally on the subject of national or popular commotions ; they put the two together, like the Psalmist when he says, " Who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people."¹ And such an army of evil spirits entering into a multitude of animals by Christ's permission, may well remind us of whole nations being influenced or possessed, as we sometimes see they are, by violent impulses and evil passions, setting forth the same thing as the former figure, " the madness of the people." Thus it is said, " He sent evil angels among them." Now such a lesson as this seems well calculated to impress our minds with a readiness to receive all those parts of our duty which the Epistle inculcates, to obey all ordinances of God, and so under His protection to possess our souls in patience.

Let every soul, says St. Paul, be subject unto the higher powers ; for there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God : and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. It is very much the same as St. Peter says, " Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."² The doctrine is the same which St. Paul inculcates in other places, and indeed is so clear as to require no explanation. Yet some even Christian teachers maintain the contrary ; they speak as if the poor and servants of others had a right to make laws to govern and to control the highest authority. But such teachers, as it seems to me, not only set at nought

¹ Ps. lxxv. 7.

² 1 Pet. ii. 13.

the spirit of the Gospel, but really can in heart have no value for its inestimable privileges and blessings. For they speak of these things as if they were a matter of right given to all by some law of nature; and that those in a lower condition of life are hardly dealt with, unless they are as free to govern and to give laws as those set over them. Thus in fact the tendency of their teaching is, that they lead men to feel that God is hard upon them in putting them in a low and subject condition. And yet surely, if the Gospel is true, it is the rich and powerful who have most reason to complain of hardship and unfairness. Because what if it be the case, that the poor are necessarily in a state of subjection, and liable to oppression and cruelty from those set over them; yet is it not the poor in the express words of Scripture that God hath chosen for His Kingdom? They have a larger share now of the grace which is needful to attain everlasting life; and having now more grace given, they have the better chance of more treasure hereafter. This is so frequently stated throughout the New Testament, as to form the very character of the Gospel. And those who value these Evangelical privileges, will feel that those are only trifling with them who speak of such poor worldly rights. But the miserable effect of such teachers is not merely that they render men discontented with the ordinances of God, but, what is far more serious, they rob them of the brightest crown of poverty, namely, poverty of spirit, and of that which is most inestimable, which worlds cannot buy,—the temper of meekness and obedience. They make them poor indeed. “God hath chosen the poor,” saith Scripture, “rich in faith.”³ He has given them more abundantly the riches of His Kingdom. But, alas! these Christian

³ St. James ii. 5.

ministers would deprive them of all this, their inheritance which God gives, while they make their worldly condition no better. They make them, I say, poor indeed; whereas such mere differences in station are in fact but diversity of talents which God has lent.

St. Paul, speaking of civil powers as appointed of God, adds, *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.* As St. Peter says, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" *Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good.* The Apostle is writing this to Christians living under heathen rulers, and yet he says, "he is a minister of God for good to thee;" that is, government is a Divine ordinance, and intended by God for the good of mankind; you must look upon it in this light; it is His appointment, and is indeed the occasion of very great benefit to you, protecting your property, your life, your character. *But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain.* God has given him "the sword" of capital punishment to protect the innocent, and cut off such offenders as are dangerous to society; this must not be borne "in vain," or else innocent blood will lie on the ground unavenged, and cry aloud to God. *For he is, says St. Paul, a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, i. e. not only from fear of the punishment inflicted by man for breaking his laws, but also,* adds the Apostle, *for conscience' sake.* We see how Scripture here exalts and dignifies even human laws and governors, and teaches us to pass on from their imperfections, to forget their persons, and see them only as representatives of God, set

over us for a certain purpose. *For for this cause pay ye tribute also.* That is, by paying taxes you acknowledge this their superintending care of you; even this also, which to worldly men is a burdensome and hateful charge, is not to be so to a Christian, but a cheerful recognition of God's providential government; as Christ pointed out to the Jews that they were making use of Cæsar's money, and therefore acknowledged his government. *For they are God's ministers,* adds St. Paul, again and again returning to this point; and the word "ministers" here even still more strongly than the former word so translated,⁴ is a sacred word, the same used of the clergy and priests of God; as if such governors were to be looked upon by us as performing a Divine service to Him, and to be honoured as such, even as kings are called the Lord's Anointed. *Attending continually upon this very thing,* their whole business is to protect and take care of you in the place which God has assigned them. *Render therefore to all their dues;* do not think that such obedience on your part is a mere favour, it is a debt you have to pay; *tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom,* all the various dues which the state in manifold ways requires; and not only such payments, but even beyond that, *fear to whom fear is due, honour to whom honour.*

Such is the Divine ordinance, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."⁵ Thus even amidst the troublous governments of the world may the Christian promote the harmony of Heaven, not by receiving, but by paying obedience, respect, tribute.

⁴ λειτουργοὶ Θεοῦ, v. 6. Θεοῦ διάκονος, v. 4. ⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 2.

And now let us turn to the Gospel for the day, and to Him Who seems therein to say to us, "Fear not; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."⁶ "He sitteth between the Cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet." He is revealed as from the Mercy-seat in His Gospels, as ever giving rest.

And when He was entered into a ship, says St. Matthew, His disciples followed Him. Our Lord, now in the second year of His preaching, on finding the Jews more and more hard-hearted and unbelieving, crosses the lake of Galilee unto those parts of the country which were more among the Gentiles. And this is probably the reason for this passage being selected for this Sunday of the Epiphany, as a further manifestation which our Lord made of Himself to us Gentiles. *And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.* Now this of itself may be a real comfort to us, that a dangerous storm and great distress may happen even to the best of men; such things are no proof that we are deserted of God, or that He is displeased with us. Christ being in the ship with His disciples did not prevent the storm. This circumstance hallows and ennobles to us such an occurrence, in a way that no heathen could have understood. And this applies to many of our troubles and perplexities, especially such as occur to the Church; which is indeed that sacred vessel which contains Christ and His people, and is almost always as it were "in jeopardy," and "covered with the waves." And Christ within her is often as it were "asleep," trying our faith and waiting for our prayers.

And indeed the Collect seems to apply the circum-

⁶ Gen. xv. 1.

stance to the whole of our condition here upon earth: "O God, Who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers," and this, it adds, "by reason of the frailty of our nature;" as if it was this our frail nature which is compared to this weak bark at sea: for which reason we pray that God will "grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations." And this is the way in which St. Augustin applies it.⁷

And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Here our blessed Lord does not reprove them for having recourse to Him in their distress, for that was surely an act of faith in them, but for their being so "fearful;" the greatness of their fears showed the littleness of their faith. But let us consider in this and like cases, what it is which Christ disapproves of. The boat was filled with water; there was every appearance of most imminent danger, and we are not to expect that God will work a miracle to save us. To look upon death as approaching when we see every sign that it is near, cannot be the want of faith here complained of. To be "fearful," to be full of fear and alarm in such danger, is the thing reprov'd. An entire trust in God, and acquiescence in His gracious will, would teach us to commit ourselves altogether into His hands either for life or death. This is the true courage which faith gives, not a confidence that we shall not die, but a repose in God's will, whether we die or live. For instance, at the time of our Lord's death the disciples failed from this fearfulness and want of faith; they "all forsook Him and fled," and one of them denied Him, from this fearfulness;

⁷ Enarr. 2, in Ps. xxv.

and yet the danger was as great as could be conceived; they could have apprehended nothing so terrible as what was about to occur; that their Lord should be put to death, and such a death,—scourged and crucified. And yet if their faith in His Godhead had been great and steadfast, they would not have feared; at all events, they would not have forsaken or denied Him from fear. After the day of Pentecost they were themselves in no less danger: one of them was killed by the sword, but great was their faith, and they feared not. Now this it is most important to observe. And such is the effect of earnest prayer in the time of danger, that it increases faith, and by so doing leads us to cast off fear, which “fear hath torment,” and to love above all things God’s will; to “commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator,” Who careth for all that He hath made.

Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him! And surely it must have been a very wonderful sight, as much so as was ever beheld by man. There is something very magnificent in the power of the sea; it at once opens the heart to great wonders; and in the strength also of violent winds there is something which appears to us quite uncontrollable and beyond all resistance; we naturally connect them both with our ideas of God’s power. For one therefore who appeared but a moment before to be sleeping as a man, overcome by weariness and exhaustion, to speak with the tongue of man to the sea and the winds as if they were His own creatures; so that while they were contending in their utmost violence and fury, they should hear and obey His

voice,—this must have been indeed to “see the wonders of the Lord in the deep.”

But now we are not to suppose from this miracle that Christ will arise and perform for us the like miraculous deliverance, either in such a storm at sea, or in the midst of that raging of men’s passions, which like a storm may toss either the ark of Christ’s Church in which we are, or our own fortunes, or homes, or lives. But what faith and prayer will teach us from this miracle is this, that Christ is able to do so by His word at once with the greatest ease; and also that in answer to our prayers He will either do so, or else that some time or other He will give us reason to know that He answered our prayers in a higher and better manner than we could have thought of. In short, it will teach us the great secret which none but a good man knows; and which he comes to know more and more, viz. that in every danger and extremity, God is both able and willing to aid us beyond all that we can ask or think.

Of visible things we can conceive few things more terrible than a storm at sea, or more calculated to try the faith and shake the courage of those who are subject to it. And no doubt it is intended by God to remind us of what is still more terrible, viz. the powers of the unseen world of spirits when they are not controlled by the Almighty power of God. And now we have a glimpse given us, in what follows, of those more awful spiritual dangers.

And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the

time? Such a sight as this must have brought strongly before the minds of the disciples, that we are encompassed with dangers of a nature far more awful than anything that winds and waves could do. Their dwelling among the graves of the dead, their fierce malignity, their great power, for they brake their chains, it is said, and no one could bind them; their vast number, for they called themselves Legion (a legion in the Roman army consisted of above six thousand); moreover, their knowledge and allusion to mysterious things; their at once recognizing Christ as "the Son of God," which men knew not; believing and trembling, as we are told that devils do, at His presence; their mysterious allusion to the terrible time of the Last Judgment, and their not understanding this His first coming to redeem mankind, "Art Thou come before the time?" their entreating Him not to send them "into the deep," that awful abyss of Hell to which they thus darkly and fearfully alluded; and, when they perceived that Christ was taking mankind under His gracious protection, their insatiable lust of cruelty that they should ask to enter into the herd of swine; and above all, perhaps, very amazing and fearful must have been all the while the fact of their so possessing these men that their voice was heard speaking from the men, and not the voices of the men themselves;—surely the whole of this incident has an awful character about it, so far beyond what the world has otherwise ever witnessed, that there appears to be something in it almost like the Day of Judgment; such an insight into the unseen; such a disclosure of the terrible things which are about us of which we think not.

And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine, feeding on the mountain. So the devils

besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. There were in the herd, says St. Mark, "about two thousand." Such destruction was the effect of their malice. But the wickedness of evil spirits is always converted by God to His own glory, and the teaching and the good of His elect. And so it was now. The swine were stamped by the law as unclean, as an abomination, the Jews were not allowed to keep them; but these people on this farther side of the lake were Gentiles, and thus by this sign did Christ manifest that He was the God of Israel, that "salvation cometh," as He said to the woman of Samaria, "of the Jews." And more than this did He thus teach them, for unclean animals were marked to the Jews as signs, first of all of the Gentiles, the people that know not God, and then of all wicked men wallowing in the sins of uncleanness. And what lesson could our Lord have delivered more powerful than this, brought about by these evil spirits themselves, to teach men what their effect is when Christ, in His awful judgment, allows them to possess men who have pleasure in unrighteousness? The self-destruction of the unclean was thus manifested by a visible miracle, showing what the Psalmist had said, that "the wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the people that forget God."

And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought

Him that He would depart out of their coasts. They were like ourselves, awed and shrinking back from the majesty of God ; more afraid of His holiness and power, than won by the gracious approaches of His love ; nay, they were full of fear, and subdued by the very tokens of His mercy.

In conclusion, let us draw together the Epistle and Gospel again into one practical lesson for this Sunday ; as those who have been with Christ in these two great and terrible miracles, let us sit at the Apostle's feet, and apply the faith thus derived to our own obedience, and to the blessed privilege of finding ourselves under His protection. Like the powers of mighty winds and waves which are kept in subjection by God for the harmony of nature ; and as the powers of an infinite number of evil spirits are controlled and restrained by Almighty God, so the passions and desires of great multitudes are kept under by the same watchful providence by means of rulers and laws, or else the powerful would devour the weak, and every one would be a prey to his neighbour. And when God allows them to break out from the spirit of disobedience, the effects are more fearful than those of any storm at sea, or any destruction of a herd of animals, as we well know from what has more than once taken place in a neighbouring country.

We live, it may be, in peace and quietness, yet in the midst of most fearful elements. It is not in the power of any of us to stop the violence of men's passions which bring on popular commotions and wars, any more than we can command the winds and waves in a storm ; and if it should please God to let loose evil spirits as they will be unchained in the last days, it is not for any one of us to resist them, in whatever shape they may come upon us,

whether by wars or otherwise ; but this each one of us can do, we can by obedience obtain the protection of Christ, and hide us under the shelter of His wings ; and by so doing we shall have no cause to fear any violent accidents of nature, nor can we be harmed by any persecutions or tumults which evil spirits or evil men may raise against us. Amidst them all we may say, with confidence, "The floods are risen, O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice. The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly : but yet the Lord, Who dwelleth on high, is mightier."⁸

⁸ Ps. xciii. 4, 5.

SERMON XVI.

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Col. iii. 12—17. St. Matt. xiii. 24—30.

LIGHT AND SAFETY IN LOVE.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee. —
ISA. xxvi. 3.

IN the Collect for this week we pray God to keep His “Church and household continually in” His “true religion;” and the Epistle consists of a beautiful exhortation to all the graces of the Christian family, as it thus continues to abound more and more in all goodness and love. But the Gospel for the day furnishes us with our Lord’s own account of a state of things to be expected in the world, during the spread of His Gospel, very different from this state of truth and charity prevailing; it is of His household, the Church, not continuing in true religion, of heresies and iniquities abounding. Therefore love as of one family will not be found. But the combination of these two, the loving appeals of the Epistle taken together with the sad prophecy of the Gospel, are in the highest degree edifying, and furnish a lesson most needful and seasonable to us at this time. For the faith of some is

staggered, and that Christian love which the Epistle describes waxes more cold in others, from their seeing in Christ's Church this state of things, while it is in fact no other than what the Gospel foretold.

For, my brethren, that love which the Epistle inculcates is indeed the remedy, the safeguard, and the light in these our troubles. Nothing can be right without it; nothing can be very wrong while this humble love continues. Love God, and love your neighbour, and try to do so more and more, humbling yourself. This is the best advice which can be given in times of religious doubt, of darkness and difficulty, such as now accompanies the great Epiphany. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one toward another."

Abide then in love, and you will find the truth. The Church at large is rent in pieces by the just judgment of God on account of corruptions in faith and practice, and it were dishonour to God to suppose that His truth should be found entire in a Church broken and divided in the faith, because corrupt in life. God will be found in the unity of His Church; but to look for truth and light where righteousness and love are not, were to disparage His holiness. But in this night, this twilight, He that keeps the Divine fire from the altar in his own soul shall have light thereby; and he that holds fast to this clue of love shall through the labyrinth be guided aright. To keep love alive is our great need; while it is itself the more endangered, and the heavenly torch burns dim because of that air of corruption which is abroad.

This indeed is a great and peculiar snare amidst the aboundings of false doctrine and rendings of the Church;

for we ought to hate what is evil, and to contend against it; but there is great danger lest this hatred and contention should sour the heart and stifle charity, and so be a scandal to others and ruin to ourselves; nay more, that we “root up the wheat with the tares in our zeal.” At such times we especially need that our souls should be attuned to heavenly harmonies, as by the short Epistle for this day; nothing so conducive to win others, and keep us in the path of truth. “My feet were almost gone; my treadings had well-nigh slipped; and why?”¹ because I beheld the manifold prosperities of evil; but when “I went into the sanctuary of God,” then all was clear, and the stumbling feet were strengthened.

Put on therefore, says St. Paul to the Colossians, *as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies*. “Put on,” that is, as of something which ye had not before, which is not of nature, the “new commandment” of Christ’s love. He had just said, “Put on the new man,” and here, “put on bowels of mercies,”—all that human compassion and tenderness which was seen in Christ when He took on Him our nature. The word perhaps alludes to the white clothing put on at Baptism. Put on bowels of mercies, *kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering*; and then, applying the same more particularly, *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel, or matter of complaint, against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*. Literally, it is “graciously accept” him, though you may have cause of blame, as Christ has been “gracious” to you. *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness*. “Above all these,” because there is no need of forbearance, and for-

¹ Ps. lxxiii.

givenness, and long-suffering, where there is love; for it includes it all: or it may be translated, "upon all these," or "in addition to all these," put on charity; in like manner as by St. Peter it is added as the last crown to other graces.² And it is the "bond of perfectness," it is the perfect bond which unites together all in Christ. Our Lord, in St. Luke's Gospel, says, "Be ye merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful;" and in St. Matthew, "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect;" so that the very "perfectness" of a Christian consists in this compassionate love.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, let it "rule,"—it is a peculiar word,³—let it "sit as umpire" or "arbiter" in your hearts to decide upon and moderate all differences; to the which also, he adds, ye were called in one body, this peace holding you all together as "one body," is the very object of your calling. And be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; let it "dwell in you richly," i. e. with all aboundings of spiritual wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Whatever is felt strongly is wont to find expression in melody and song; and if Christ dwells in the heart in all richness of wisdom, then such songs will partake of the same, like overflowing streams from the hidden fountains of God, refreshing, enlivening, fertilizing all around, and making to abound in charity and thanksgiving to the praise of God. For here St. Paul combines the two, brotherly edification and thanksgiving; for he first says, "admonishing one another," and then adds, "singing to the Lord with grace

² 2 Pet. i. 7.

³ ἡ εἰρήνη βραβευέτω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις.

in the heart." It is to God's glory that we thus sing ; yet we cannot do so without benefiting others with this glad, this angelic service. For thankful love is like the flower, which cannot open its breast to Heaven but that at the same time it breathes incense around.

Nor in this are we left to ourselves, for the Spirit has Himself supplied us, and laid up in His Church a sacred treasury of "psalms and spiritual songs," rich in all the wisdom of God, full of all mutual admonishing and grace ; with which the heart may find utterance with God on every occasion of thanksgiving ; and may ever kindle its own flame anew from the altar.

But again, this voice of melody is not merely such as to break forth in such strains of the tongue ; but this clothing of thanksgiving is to cover all the life ; this temper to colour all with hues from the heart. For St. Paul adds, *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.* "If you eat," says St. Chrysostom, "give thanks to God before and after. If you sleep, give thanks to God before and after." And so likewise he proceeds to apply it to every act of business we may undertake. It is not sufficient that we should have in all our actions a general intention of pleasing God ; St. Paul evidently implies more than this ; it is most desirable that we should form a constant habit of praying and giving thanks in the most ordinary things of life. "I have set God always before me,"⁴ says the Psalmist. And nothing conduces so much to produce in us a lively sense of God's Presence, and of our dependence upon Him, as in all occurrences, pleasant or painful, great or small ; in all our

⁴ Ps. xvi. 9.

doings, reading, conversing, walking, going in and out, making some definite act of prayer, or reverential earnest thought and aspiration, to Him in Whom we live and move and have our being; bringing down upon everything the remembrance of the Lord Jesus; sanctifying everything by the all-saving Name. For the "Name" of Christ is "as ointment poured forth," sweetening, hallowing, purifying every thought, word, and work.

Thus does the Epistle contain a most engaging account of a perfect Christian life, which, as the Collect expresses, "leans only upon the hope of God's heavenly grace," and so is shielded in the evil day by His "mighty power." "Salvation will God appoint," says the Prophet, "for walls and bulwarks." "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee."⁵ And when heresies prevail, and in consequence disputes and controversies in religion, this peace and love of God is as it were a sacred and sheltering "tabernacle," in which He will hide him "secretly from the strife of tongues."⁶ And what is of still greater consequence, it will tend much to keep him in the way of truth himself, from being swayed by passion or party zeal to the right hand or to the left; the path of humility and love will open to himself fuller, larger, broader, deeper views of the mystery of Christ and the hidden life of the Spirit. Thus it is in speaking of this brotherly kindness and charity that St. Peter adds, "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷

Now many of the parables which our Lord delivered

⁵ Isa. xxvi. 1—3.

⁶ Ps. xxxi. 22.

⁷ 2 Pet. i. 8.

consist of prophecies respecting the state of His Church, and at the same time convey instructive lessons to us when these prophecies are being fulfilled. Such are the parables respecting the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, our Lord's own Kingdom upon earth; and of these, that which constitutes the Gospel for to-day is not the least remarkable.

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. Such was the case when the Word of God was first sown by our Lord Himself, and afterwards by His Spirit, through the Apostles and early Martyrs. The love of the Bride, pure and undefiled, fasted and mourned for the absence of the Bridegroom, and looked forward with steadfast watch and in undoubting faith to His return. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers: and fear came upon all."⁸ The garment of Christ was in consequence undivided; without seam throughout, from the top to the bottom; from the highest doctrine to the lowest duty, all was one, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. As men became careless in the faith, sleeping over the things of eternity, while "as the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered," as the Church in process of time lost her first love, the devil "came while men were asleep." In the dead and still night, wrapping up himself in the darkness, he went forth on his purpose, and having sowed the seeds of false doctrine while men knew not of it, he departed by stealth as he came. Thus he leaves them to grow, and take root, and spread in their own time and season, and to mingle

⁸ Acts ii. 42.

among the fruit, to grow up side by side with it, as if they were both sown together by the same hand of the one good Husbandman, claiming the field for their own as much as the good seed, which if they could, they would stifle and destroy. *But when the blade was sprung up, He says, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.* Not apparently till they "brought forth fruit," were the tares seen. "By their fruits," says our Lord in another place, "shall ye know them."⁹

Corruption, first in practice, then in faith; perversity of life, then of doctrine; so that, although the Sun of Righteousness hath arisen, and the dews of His Spirit descend, yet a mingled field awaits the harvest. And the expression of Job is spiritually fulfilled, which he so eloquently adds to that catalogue of sins—If mine eye hath wandered in lust, if I have walked in vanity, if I have neglected the poor, if I have rejoiced in the misfortunes of mine enemy, if I have covered my transgressions as Adam, if I feared a great multitude, if my land hath cried against me, then "let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley."¹ Such have been the manifold aboundings of evil, and such therefore the field of the great Householder, the Church of God.

So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. Good men, the servants of the householder, they see at once the difference; they are grieved, and, as it were, offended, by it; but, in all difficulties, in all doubts and offences, they turn and look to God; and He, by His Spirit, gives them to know the truth that

⁹ St. Matt. vii. 16.

¹ Job xxxi. 40.

“an enemy hath done this,” that it is the work of the great enemy of souls. He can, we know, transform himself into the appearance of an angel of light; his ministers can do the same—they will put on them the clothing of the sheep, so that He only Who knoweth His sheep can know them; and so with their doctrines, they appear like good seed while growing up side by side—but “by their fruits they are known,” and then men marvel and are offended.

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. When a person is suddenly awakened to the truths of religion, he becomes amazed at the aboundings of iniquity, the wickedness of the world around him, that the goodly field is so full of tares; and then there is often wont to follow an impatient zeal to root them out, which, if left to itself unrestrained, is likely to produce more harm than otherwise. Evil and good have become so confused and blended together; and the Wise Husbandman hath ordained that they should so continue. Meanwhile, as always, He converts the evil of the great enemy to His own good ends. For all things work together for good to those that love Him. This state of things conduces to the trial of faith, the exercise of patience, the perfecting of brotherly love, the earnestness of prayer, the furtherance of humility, the greater watchfulness of godly fear, and the fuller final manifestation of the sons of God. “The time will come,” says the Apostle, “when men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers.”² Such is the field

² 2 Tim. iv. 3.

overrun with tares. And still more expressly, of the great enemy sowing the tares, "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."³ Yet this evil, the same Apostle bears witness, shall not be without consequences of good: "There must be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."⁴

But how long-suffering is Christ! "Let them alone" was our Lord's command in speaking of false and pernicious teachers, "they be blind leaders of the blind." "Every plant which My Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."⁵ "Go not after them," He says in speaking of false prophets. "Forbid him not," on another occasion, when there was much good in one that followed not altogether in Apostolic unity of faith. These were lessons of forbearance to those who had themselves chosen the more excellent way. For the elect's sake He bears long with the wicked. He makes His Sun to rise on the evil and the good. He is merciful to all, and patient, and would have us to imitate His own Divine goodness and forbearance. *Let both grow together*, he adds, *until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn.* "Let both grow together until the harvest,"—this referring all things to the last Day, is calculated to sober and chasten our zeal, to soften bitterness, to check impatience, to humble presumptuous self-confidence. "Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, Who will bring to light and make manifest."⁶ "Remember the end, and thou shalt never do"—and, we

³ 1 Tim. iv. 1.

⁵ St. Matt. xv. 14. 13.

⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

⁶ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

may add, and thou shalt never judge—"amiss."⁷ Meanwhile it is a very awful consideration to reflect how good and evil are growing up together, so intermixed, so nearly, so intimately united, not the principles only, but the persons that hold them; so mingled, so soon to be set asunder for ever. Two shall be in a field together, the one taken and the other left; two women grinding together at a mill, two men shall be in one bed, the one taken and the other left. Oh the terrible, the overwhelming separation which shall be by Him Who cannot judge amiss! Oh the infinite distance which shall be set between those who are under one and the same roof, who partake of one and the same cup, when one shall be taken into the bosom of God, and the other left to the devouring flame! Who but God Himself, the discerner of hearts, can make such a division, and set such a gulf between one and another?

So the Lord foretold it should be, so we in our own day see it fulfilled. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest," and not the goodly grain only, but the noisome weeds are fast ripening; therefore we know that the time draws near for the Lord of the Harvest to descend. And now, under such circumstances so wondrously fulfilling and fulfilled, let us return to the subject with which we first commenced; let us endeavour to profit by this state of things around us which God intends for our probation, and for the more effectual working out of our salvation. Let us consider what a call it is for patience and forbearance towards others, and a closer walk with God, to keep the flame of charity alive in our own hearts. Let us not

⁷ Ecclus. vii. 36.

be content to be as others, but labour to outstrip them in forgiveness and humility, and all that beautiful pattern of a Christian's life who has God for his portion, which the Epistle for to-day portrays; "putting on bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, forbearing, and forgiving one another." And surely that state of things which the Gospel declares is already a wonderful Epiphany—a great manifestation of the truth of the Divine Word, and therefore points forward with an awful sanction to that other manifestation which is to be at the great separation.

And one word more on one point of particular advice given in the Epistle,—that the peace of God which is to rule in the heart—that love which is ever to be overflowing in the exercise of brotherly kindness—that watchful earnestness which is to seize every act and word as an occasion of prayer and thanksgiving—is also to keep itself alive by the aid of psalms and melodies. This is no light matter, that it should be our duty, our privilege, and delight, and that God should Himself have supplied us with words sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. "Thou hast put a new song in my mouth." "Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." The very attribute of our gracious God is, that He "giveth songs in the night."⁸

Soldiers in preparation for battle kindle their hearts, and keep themselves in order by warlike strains of music; men full of lust or wine, when their minds are enflamed by the great enemy of souls, break forth into singing; even timid and lonely hearts, in the dark and solitary night, will comfort their drooping spirits by cheerful melodies; how much more may they who are engaged in

⁸ Job xxxv. 10.

the one great conflict of mankind,—they whose minds are filled with God,—they who droop in the dark and dangerous night of the world. How much more may they endeavour to live in psalms and inspired hymns, kindling and supporting their own souls, and edifying others, and keeping alive in each other the hope, that they may be admitted hereafter to that company who have the “harps of God, and sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”⁹

⁹ Rev. xv. 3.

SERMON XVII.

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

1 St. John iii. 1—8. St. Matt. xxiv. 23—31.

THE GREAT MANIFESTATION.

And now, little children, abide in Him ; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.—1 St. JOHN ii. 28.

FROM the subject of last Sunday we pass, by a very natural transition, into that of this day, the last and great Epiphany, the full and final manifestation of the sons of God ; and that by an arrangement peculiar to our own Church in its appointment of the Epistle and Gospel, and the Collect appropriate to the same. For the Collect in a beautiful manner combines in prayer the lesson of both, the mystery of the Incarnation, the purification it requires, and the last appearing of Christ to which it points. The whole is comprised in the short epitome of St. Paul, that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ; teaching us that we should live godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, who gave Himself for us, that He might purify

unto Himself a peculiar people.”¹ But let us listen to St. John himself.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! that we should be called His sons and by His calling should be made to be so, His sons in heart and life; first in faith, and then in hope, and then in charity; strange indeed and unspeakable love must it appear to those who value the same, and well may the disciple of Divine love pause as if in adoring wonder, and call attention to it as to some great marvel, saying, “Behold, what manner of love!” Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. There is a whole world around us, men in whose heart this world is, and among them are they in whom God dwells, and yet these know not each other; for God Himself walked among men in the flesh, and the world knew Him not, and how therefore can they know His children? “They that rebel against the light,” said Job, “they know not the ways, nor abide in the paths thereof.”²

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. “As He is,” that is, we shall see Him in His unchangeable, eternal nature as God; we shall see Him in that beatific vision of which it is said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” and in order that we may see Him “we shall be like Him;” for the wicked cannot behold Him as God. It is this for which our nature ever desires and longs, it is this for which it ever seeks, and seeking amiss is restless, and unsatisfied, and miserable. “It is a certain vision,” says

¹ Tit. ii. 12—14.

² Job xxiv. 13.

St. Augustin, "which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man."³ A vision surpassing all there is of earthly beauty in gold and silver, in groves and fields; all that is beautiful in sea and sky, in sun and moon, in stars, in angels; because all things from thence derive what in them is beautiful."⁴ The tongue, adds the same writer, hath done what it could in sounding the words; but it must be left to the heart, to the Uncion from the Holy One, to think on that which is unspeakable; to long and labour for it in holy desires, and aspirations; emptying ourselves of all other desires, that when He shall come He may fill us. For the whole life of a good Christian is an holy longing, a longing for that which he sees not, while he is by that longing rendered capable of beholding; and is ever growing in that desire as he cuts off all love for the world.

And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure. For "by hope," says St. Paul, "we are saved,"⁵ while that hope of what is as yet unseen exercises patience, and in patient waiting is likened to that for which it waits. For he that hath this living hope by which "we are saved," by Him that dwelleth within him cleanseth himself from sin after the example of the Son of God, aiming at that perfection which is in mercy, whereby we may become like unto God. "He purifieth himself," for it is his own free will that operates, but that will is thus made one with God's will, Whose "will is our sanctification," and when our will is one with God's will, it is joined to Almighty power, and overcomes the world.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for

³ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

⁴ Hom. iv. in 1 St. John iii.

⁵ Rom. viii. 24.

*sin is the transgression of the law, and in transgressing the law he is guilty of the death which Mount Sinai pronounces; he takes part with that "Lawless One" to be yet revealed, which is the Antichrist, "the son of perdition." For all sin is of this nature. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*⁶ And therefore as made one with Him, and partaking of His righteousness, *Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; "In so far as he abideth in Him, in so far he sinneth not."*⁷ For he hath that righteousness which now through faith in Him worketh by a living hope, and in seeing Him shall hereafter be perfected. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.* There must be some self-deceit if there is any allowed sin in one who supposes that he sees by faith, and knows that Blessed One; for to see and know Him is, even in this evil world, to be free from sin. What mysterious divine music of heavenly wisdom, what sublime simplicity of love sounds in this wonderful expression, from which the beloved disciple breaks forth into words of tender and parental affection. *Little children, he says, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* Though no one be good but God, yet they who in obedience and love abide in Him, partake of His goodness, for His love dwelling in them bringeth forth fruit unto holiness.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. For this very purpose was He manifested—

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁷ Aug. ad loc.

that He might "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" but if sin, which is the work of the devil, were to abound in those that by Him are called and regenerate; if they are not to be holy, and righteous, and godly, then would that very purpose of His manifestation be frustrated. Which is, that they who in the first Adam were born sinful through the devil, might, in the second Adam, be found sinless through the power of God. For though, "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves," yet, by faith in Him, propitiation is found for sin past; and love, which covereth a multitude of sins, is itself incapable of wilful sin, so far as it is that true love which unites to Him, and to which His commandments are not grievous. Adam, as man, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image,"⁸—man, like himself, corrupt, sinful, fallen; but Christ, as God and man after His own image and likeness, hath begotten sons of God, to partake of His own sinless nature. After His likeness, the likeness of God, must we in this our regeneration be created anew. For He Himself, within us, must purify our souls to be like Himself. Sweet and awful truth!—His immutable eternal goodness must in us find place, that we, who are evil, changeable, and perishable, may partake of His unchangeable eternity.

Such, then, is our present Epiphany, in which we wait for "the manifestation of the sons of God;" yet such that even now, in this our season of waiting, Christ may be manifested to us, so that we may see and know Him, and wherein we are manifested unto Him and known of God; and how this may be, the Epistle has set before us with all possible eloquence of Divine love, as seeking with all

⁸ Gen. v. 3.

awfulness and tenderness to engage our affections. Here, then, is all our salvation and our safety—that we may acquaint ourselves with God, and with ourselves, and be at peace. For the Sabbath which now is, waiteth for another Sabbath; the Kingdom of Heaven which now is, for another Kingdom of Heaven; the Advent which hath been, and which now is, waiteth for another Advent; and this Epiphany, wherein the light shineth through the world, for another Epiphany, wherein the light will be, after another manner, revealed.

And now, after the Epistle has exhorted us to that strength and light which may be within, the Gospel informs us of those dangers which will be without, in this our time of waiting; such as will be the forerunners of that great and last appearing,—meteor lights before the dawn, which will imitate the bright and Morning Star.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Therefore, “signs and wonders” are not to be trusted, not to be relied upon or looked to, for they will come with all deceivableness and power of seduction, so that it will not be possible for any to escape their influence, except the elect of God. And, therefore, holiness of life can alone afford safety or ensure knowledge of the truth. They that obey the truth shall love it, and they that love it shall understand. They that seek shall find; and if aught be wanting, God shall reveal even this unto them, if they wait on Him in watching and prayer. There shall be “false Christs and false prophets;” a woman

shall sit with a golden cup of bewitching power, of which the nations shall drink; "seducing spirits" shall go forth, many and manifold as the ways of error. But there is One Mediator once revealed, one way of salvation, one faith once delivered to the saints.

Behold, says He, Whose words are life, *I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.* Unholy curiosity was in the fall of our first parents, and is since mingled with most temptations. Many will say, "Who will show us any good?" but our answer will be to God in prayer, beseeching Him to lift up on us the light of His countenance. It will not be "Search and look;" nor will it be "Come and see," as it was when Christ appeared of old, on the mountain with the multitudes, or with His disciples in the house. But where there is great pretension, the warning is, "Go not forth;" and "Believe it not." In every place may there be patient waiting for Christ; in every place may His Presence be found preparing the heart for the great manifestation of Himself; in every place may the gracious lesson of this day's Epistle be fulfilled in those who, by patient well-doing, seek for immortality. For His coming shall not be local, circumscribed, or partial. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.* Marvellous was the speed in the first spread of His Gospel, when its light and its sound went forth into all lands. But far more marvellous shall be His final manifestation of Himself,—sudden, swift, all-pervading, all-penetrating, and ubiquitous. *For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* He that hath bade the eagle to be present

“where the slain are,”⁹ and “her eyes to behold afar off;” He that hath made His ministering spirits to be at hand when Lazarus dies; He Himself, with all His angels, will be at hand when the earth shall be corrupt and dead, and call down the vengeance of the last fire; and the angel shall say to the reaper that sitteth on the cloud, “Thrust in thy sickle,” “for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”¹

For the earth shall again appear “without form and void,” “darkness on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God” moving “on the face of the waters.” It shall be as one dead after the great agony of her last struggle shall have passed; and then shall His appearing be as of the eagle which from afar off hath seen the slain.² *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken.* That is, all things shall be worthy of that coming, of awe and magnitude suited to it, on a scale and with terrors adequate to the occasion so vast, when Christ, God and Man, shall appear in His own glory, and that of His Father, and of the holy angels, to assign to all men that have lived an everlasting portion of Heaven or Hell; but to each individual soul its own interest and concern on that day will be so great, that the consternation and shaking of the heavenly bodies, and the extinction of their light, will be as nothing to him,—unnoticed, unthought of, uncared for. And therefore, even now, it were folly to speculate on the mode of such fulfilments; rather let us labour in the preparation

⁹ Job xxxix. 29, 30.

¹ Rev. xiv. 15.

² For other explanations of this passage see “Holy Week,” pp. 280, 283; and “The Ministry,” 2nd Yr., p. 421.

of the heart and life to meet that unavoidable and approaching hour.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; then shall there be some full and clear indication of who it is that comes, in distinction and contrast to every former occasion of His coming, of which the Epiphany has been in some sense and in some degree in secret; but now it shall be the sign visible and unmistakable in unquestioned manifestation, and that in Heaven, as visible and extensive as the sky over our heads. *And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn*; not Jerusalem only,³ but all nations shall acknowledge Him that was crucified, with feelings suited to the Cross and Passion of God and Man suffering to save mankind. Oh, Cross of Christ, the savour of life and of death, some shall mourn at beholding thee with a godly sorrow, some in confusion of face!

And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory. They shall "see" Him, each individual for himself, with a close and particular manifestation, according to that mysterious vision of the bodily sight of which Job speaks. "In my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."⁴ They shall see Him in power, in distinction from that weakness in which He was crucified; and in glory, as contrasted with His former humiliation. They shall see Him, but with feelings how utterly different! some with delight and joy inexpressible shall come to know the life-giving and beatific vision of God; but others in shame and amazement shall behold in Him the wrath of the Lamb.

³ Zech. xii. 12.

⁴ Job xix. 26, 27.

And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other. Some ask what is the nature of these angels, and what is this trumpet which is to sound, and what shall this gathering be? Trifling and unworthy inquiries; for how are they all swallowed up in that one great overwhelming concern,—shall we be of that number which shall then be gathered in? Shall I be, O my soul? Shall I,—when I come indeed to know what that trumpet-sound is of which the Truth hath spoken, and what those angels are,—shall I then find myself numbered in that in-gathering? Or shall I find myself, O sad and terrible thought! shall I then find myself for the first time omitted among the saints? left out, left behind! and ask by surprise why it is? The more thou art now affected by the possibility of this, by the consequence of it, by the certainty that it shall be either this way or that, either gathered in or omitted, the more safe wilt thou be from that last terrible alternative. O my soul, what art thou about, what art thou doing at this present time, which will have a bearing upon that? Are the thoughts of thine heart and the works of thine hands such as day by day make thee less likely to be “ashamed before Him at His coming”? Are thy prayers as deep and earnest, as fervent and frequent as the occasion requires? O my soul, art thou pure? art thou purifying thyself, as He is pure, with the hope of that His appearing? or does this exhortation sound unto thee as some strange thing which concerneth the saints, but not thyself? O my soul, what art thou? as a little drop of dew sparkling in the morning sun, but soon to vanish away, such is thy stay below,—one drop, like thyself, another little drop, and then again another about thee,

yea, thousands on every side, have got up and gone ; and thou art going even yet, even yet art going, yet trembling for a moment on the edge of that unutterable change !
O my soul, what art thou doing ?

SERMON XVIII.

The Sunday called Septuagesima.

I Cor. ix. 24. St. Matt. xx. 1—16.

PERSEVERANCE FOUND IN HUMILITY.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.—

ST. MATT. xix. 30.

THIS memorable saying of our Lord's occurs both before and after the parable which forms the Gospel for to-day; and seems, therefore, to furnish us with a key to the purport of that parable. It meets, also, with a singular illustration in the Epistle, which affords us a short account of one who was last and least; yet, as it were, first and greatest of all. For the parable, at the very time it was uttered, was about to meet with a strange and awful fulfilment among those Apostles themselves who heard it. Judas Iscariot was among the first that were called, yet he became the last of all. And there was another called to be an Apostle long after the others, even as "one born after due time," yet was "not behind the very chiefest of Apostles;" nay, "laboured more abundantly than they all." With what beautiful harmony then, with what appropriate instruction does the

Epistle introduce the example of St. Paul. We catch, therein, a glimpse of him in the midst of his heavenward race; as amidst that Apostolic company he was the last called into the vineyard, so he always studied to be the last of all and the servant of all, in condescension to the infirmities of others, in lowly submission to sufferings and reproaches, in the mean estimate of himself, and constant sense of his own unworthiness; but laboured to be the first of all in earnest zeal in the service of his Master, and unwearied burning love for the souls of men.

Know ye not, he says, *that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* In those heathen games so much esteemed in Greece, with which these Corinthians were so familiar, they all ran who were in the lists, but one only, out of all, received the prize. St. Paul does not mean to say that this is the case in the Christian race for eternity, that one only receives the prize out of so many; the best divines, as St. Augustin¹ and St. Chrysostom,² caution us against understanding it thus: for it is, on the contrary, a crown which all may obtain; but what St. Paul here intends is, that as they witnessed, in those games, the great earnestness with which each one contended, as if to outstrip all others in the race; so must it be with us. "Strive," says our Lord, "to enter in at the strait gate." This His expression, "strive," means "contend earnestly," like those in the games; and St. Paul's description is like an explanation of that our Lord's saying, "Strive to enter in," as taking the Kingdom by violence. And the Apostle proceeds, still more closely: *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.* The expres-

¹ In Ps. xxxix. 11.

² In 1 Cor. ad loc.

sion, "*Striveth* for the mastery," being the very same word, translated "Strive," which our Lord uses. Whoever enters upon those contests, practises self-control or continence in all things; he keeps aloof from sensual indulgences; he eats and drinks exactly so much as is most conducive to the object he has in view; he engages not, or very sparingly, in the business or pursuits of life; he exercises himself, at all times, for the one end to which he is devoted. In exhorting Timothy to "endure hardship," St. Paul adduces the same example—"And if a man strive for the mastery, he is not crowned except he strive lawfully."³

Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; they undergo all this for a crown which was a mere chaplet of green laurel leaves; such was the prize of the victors in those games; but we an incorruptible, the crown which is an eternal weight of glory in the Heavens. Set together, in the balance, these two prizes, and then consider what men do to gain an earthly object, the attainment of which is so uncertain, its value so imaginary, and which in itself is so fading and transient.

I therefore, says St. Paul, so run, not as uncertainly; not as one living without purpose and at random, but having always the true end of my course in view, the salvation of others, the glory of God, the one great object of life. Or this expression, rendered, "not as uncertainly," might signify, "not," as one practising and training, "out of sight" and in secret, but as running in the sight of all; "a spectacle to angels and to men," in the great race which is set before us. So fight I, not as one that beateth the air; I contend as one in a true

³ 2 Tim. ii. 5.

battle, not as a mere teacher of others, beating the air in a mock contest, but as one who has an enemy to bruise and struggle with, that is, my own body; or, as St. Chrysostom says, one who has Satan to contend with. *But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.* The literal meaning here is, as a wrestler or a combatant in a true warfare, I beat down my enemy with real blows and drag him captive, knowing full well that if I do not he will overcome and enslave me, and that the contest is for life and death. *Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway; should be found wanting in the trial, and rejected.*

Alas, my brethren, how different is it wont to be with us in these days! all interests, in what we witness around us, are supposed to be real and substantial but the things of God and eternity.

And now let us proceed to the parable which, under a figure altogether different, would impress on us the same lesson of earnest diligence and perseverance. In order to understand its full scope and meaning, we must first consider the occasion on which it was delivered. St. Peter had said, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee;" and our Lord, in His answer, had added, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first;" and then He delivered this parable, in further explanation. As if He had said, There will be no advantage conferred on you because you are first called, for even from this time unto the end of the world will be "the day of salvation," in which the Householder will be calling into His vineyard. Yet, although it was first spoken with a peculiar reference to the disciples, warning them not to presume; yet, no doubt, our blessed Lord, in

delivering this parable, had an eye to all of us who read and hear it this day; and did intend that it should speak to us as we should naturally understand it.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. What is life but a day, after which the night cometh, when no man can work? a day in which each has his work appointed of God, as even our Lord Himself spake of His own, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day."⁴ It is a day which has its morning, noon, and evening fast succeeding each other, in each of which the Householder is calling us into His vineyard.

First, "early in the morning." So was it with us all; early in the morning, before it was yet day, did He, by Baptism, hire us into His vineyard with the promised reward of eternal life. There is no other call like this call. Then, once for all, we were taken into this vineyard.

But yet, in some sense, we may consider that there is a call of God repeated to us through our whole life, by natural reason and conscience, His providence and grace. *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.* "At the third hour," in the time of youth, does He come to us, and not by Confirmation only, but in numberless ways, call us aloud to labour in His vineyard, to do the work of God in our own soul. However laborious our life may be, yet in the sight of God, it is all a mere "idling in the market-

⁴ St. John ix. 4.

place" of this world, unless our labour is in His service ; yea, even religious service may be as nothing, unless it be that work of repentance which He requires. It is in our own heart that this great work is to be ; and how much this work is of all others the most neglected, every one's own conscience will tell him. But, above all the other constraining meanings of this parable, by which God is at all times calling us to this one great business of repentance, the Church of all ages, by appointing this lesson for this Sunday of Septuagesima, does evidently intend us to understand it most especially as applied to this coming season of Lent. By thus introducing it, the Church says to us, consider this approaching Lent as the call of God to work in His vineyard ; in whatever age of life you may be, in childhood, or youth, or manhood, or old age, now, once for all, hear this voice, as if you had never heard it before, and as if you should never hear it again. For you that are "at the third hour" may never live to hear the summons "at the sixth ;" and you that are "at the sixth hour" may never reach "the ninth." But at all hours of the day, whatever your period of life may be, answer this His call to repentance, with that answer of the heart which is by earnest obedience and prayer. "In the evening, and morning, and at noon-day will I pray," says the Psalmist, "and that instantly, and He shall hear my voice."⁵ So, in the evening, or morn, or noon of life, may we instantly hear the voice of God and obey. At all times hearing His call, "Seek ye My face ;" at all times answering, by our prayers and service, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Again He went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. The third call is at "the sixth hour," or

⁵ Ps. lv. 18.

the time of youthful manhood, and the fourth call is at "the ninth hour," or coming on of old age, as St. Augustin explains it. Such will this approaching Lent be to many of us, as the sun of life is beginning to go down; the call of God into His vineyard, as if we had never laboured there before.

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? This may be the case with some even in this Christian land, "all the day idle!" their whole life lost, as to the things of eternity; all their work to begin with feeble and cold hands. Sometimes, even at such a time, some great reverse of condition, some affliction, or the prospect of death, will be the means in which God comes and thus speaks, when He seems, as it were, to uplift a veil which had been upon their souls, and His awful whisper is heard, of Judgment, of Heaven, and Hell, and of the door for ever closed.

Perhaps to one who has been under the cloud of ignorance, or evil company, or bad habits, all his life, the light will thus break in from the everlasting morning, as the night of old age and death is overtaking him. And this Lent may be his first entering the vineyard.

Nay, it has been the case with some very holy men, that, when at last disengaged from the world, and contemplating the holiness of God, and the near approach of His Presence, they have seemed to themselves as if they had been trifling all their life long, "all the day standing idle," so little do they seem to have done, compared with what they had always wished and intended to do, and now wish they had done. Now do they seem, as if for the first time, to hear the voice of God, even "at the eleventh hour," so little do they seem to have heard and attended

to it before. Such, indeed, a sense of their condition, in good men, is no other than the Holy Spirit pleading within them, and making them to know the holiness, and the love, and the majesty of God; His light breaks in upon them through the rents and failing of their earthly tabernacle, and His awful rays penetrate the veil of the flesh, when it is about to be removed, and make them to feel that all the efforts of their past life were but idleness; their best deeds as done for some one else but their one true Master. It is, indeed, for such especially that our Lord seems to make this mention of a call "at the eleventh hour," because to such this His expression has been an especial source of comfort. Thou callest me now, at length, they seem to say, at the eleventh hour; and now, as if for the first time, I rise and hear Thy call. This has been the case with those who laboured long, and, in so doing, have persevered unto the end.

They say unto Him, Because no man hath hired us. This, indeed, can properly be said by none of us, because the Son of Man hath, from the early morning of our life, hired us into His vineyard. But, alas, how many a self-stricken, sorrowful penitent must, at this approach of Lent, find an echo to this answer in his own heart? I seem to have been wandering all my life, as a sheep that is lost; oh, seek Thy servant; if Thou seekest not, the night will have overtaken us, and we have none else to go to. There is no hire, no recompense, no wages, but with Thee. Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. Thus was it with the penitent thief on the cross; at the last hour was he called by the gracious Spirit pleading within him, and

he obeyed the call; and, as if a pledge of the truth of these our Lord's words, he was the last called by Him when the night of death approached, and he was the first to enter the Kingdom: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." And it may be observed that this parable must have been full of consolation at the first preaching of the Gospel, when many who had been heathens or Jews all their lives were called by God's mercy, and deeply repented, and were baptized late in life, having never before heard and disobeyed the call, as, alas, too many of us have done.

We now come to another part of the parable, *So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. That is the gift of eternal life, that which is even now, in some sense, the joy of their Lord, the fruition of God, the countenance of the King. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; they thought that a difference would have been made in their favour: and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.* Now this does not mean at the Day of Judgment or in Heaven hereafter, for there can be no murmuring there; but this part of the parable had an especial reference to the Jews, who were so full of envy at the Gentiles being called into all the privileges of the Gospel, as well as themselves. Such was the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son, who was so

offended at the welcome given to his returning brother ; and the circumstance is often alluded to in the Gospels. But, no doubt, it is spoken as a warning to us, as much as unto them : there is a great and peculiar danger which besets those who have long had the blessing of religious privileges, and who, on that account, are liable to be esteemed by others, and to esteem themselves religious ; a danger of secretly despising others who have not had the same advantages ; of thinking light of their conversion ; and of becoming themselves, therefore, careless, and hard-hearted, and proud. This danger is so important, so overtakes persons unawares, that many who think not of it are constantly being left behind in the race of eternity by others who seemed once far worse than themselves. And it is the more serious and alarming, as, from the very nature of the case, it is not likely to be found out in this world ; for the difference will consist more in the secret state of the heart than anything else, which will only come to their knowledge when they are commanded hereafter to take the lowest place, or find that they are shut out altogether from the Kingdom. It has been said, that, if we ourselves should be admitted into Heaven at last, there are two things at which we shall be surprised ; one, that we shall find many there whom we should not have expected ; the other, that we shall find that many are not there whom we should have expected to see there. If this be the case, it will be greatly owing to this circumstance. Oh, how fearful and wonderful is our probation ; how full of encouragement at all times ; at all times how full of terror !

For, if there is awful warning, there is also great consolation in what our Lord here says, that even at the last hour, by a full and effectual repentance, a very earnest

penitent may obtain such love and such humility, as to be equal to the first; when feeling that he is much forgiven, he loves much; when he is as the lost sheep, whom the good Shepherd has found, and carries back on His shoulders rejoicing, when the good angels and the Father Who is in Heaven rejoice with Him. It is the seal of our Lord's own gracious promise on the words of His prophet, "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die."⁶

Thus, as the manna in the wilderness was agreeable to every taste and suited to every need, so is this most gracious doctrine of the Gospel to those who will heartily and truly repent, without putting off, from day to day, at whatever hour it be. It would remove all despair and distrust of God's mercy by which many perish, and, at the same time, cut off presumptuous hope, by which still more are lost. It tends to keep us, in ourselves, full of humility and of fear, and, at the same time, more and more sensible of the undeserved mercies of God.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? God is good to all; and here it is to be observed, that even he who complains does not deny but that God has been perfectly good and just to him; it is on the extent and the greatness of God's goodness, embracing others as well as himself, that this envious man looks with an evil eye. His eye is evil because God is good. Yet it seems implied in this, that although everything is the

⁶ Ezek. xviii. 21.

free gift of God according to His promise, yet that in these ways of God's grace there is something mysterious and inscrutable to man ; something hidden in the wisdom and goodness of God which is quite beyond all our power to comprehend in this life. It is enough for each one of us to know that God is to him good and just. That which is here represented as so unsearchable, is not the ways of God in general, but His undeserved mercies. It was under a sense of this that St. Paul cried out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out."⁷

Our Lord often concludes His discourses with some short and striking saying, which He would have us always remember. *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called but few chosen.* This is the sum and purport of the whole parable, that those who were first called become the last in God's Kingdom from want of charity and humility—they are apt to fall from some secret pride ; while others, by very earnest repentance becoming humbled, pass before them, and persevere unto the end lowly and contrite. But the last words are still more awful and impressive ; that, in consequence of this, it arises that "many are called, but few chosen ;" it is this circumstance which renders the way of life narrow and difficult, because so few attain unto this grace of perseverance. I suppose that all persons have, at some time or other, serious thoughts, and are impressed more or less with a sense of God and eternity. This is probably some more especial call to them from the Great Householder. But, for the most part, these intentions pass away, and they who

are thus called do not grow in grace and humility unto the end.

Let us now again return to the Epistle for to-day, and pause to consider the remarkable example of St. Paul, as there set forth for our imitation and warranty. Not his supernatural call, not his miraculous conversion, not his labours in preaching the Gospel to the whole world, not all his imprisonments, and trials, and sufferings, even unto death, not his being taken up into Paradise and hearing unspeakable words, not the abundance of the revelations which were given him, could save St. Paul from working out his own salvation, with fear and trembling, unto the last; and, especially, could not relieve him from the necessity of mortifying the flesh. Nor did he do this with the view of obtaining any great meritorious sanctity or perfection above others, but in order that he might not be a "castaway." It was this, his persevering humiliation unto the last, which kept him above others in grace and goodness; if he had presumed he would have fallen below them.

One of the greatest saints of old times,—one, perhaps, most like to St. Paul himself in his labours,—in speaking of this passage,⁸ exclaims, "If even Paul thus feared, what shall we say?" and I think such a reflection must force itself on every thoughtful mind, in these days, in a manner so painful as almost to occasion a feeling of despair; for the best of men now alive, when he compares himself with St. Paul, must indeed feel as if he were one of those who had been "standing idle in the market-place all the day." What healing medicine, what antidote can be found against such a sense of despondency? It will be found in this

⁸ St. Chrys. in 1 Cor., Hom. xxiii.

parable. For what if it be the case that all our life has been hitherto wasted and lost, yet even now, although it be at the ninth or eleventh hour, there is a call into the vineyard from Him Who "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" and Who has Himself assured us, that there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

SERMON XIX.

The Sunday called Sexagesima.

2 Cor. xi. 19—31. St. Luke viii. 4—15.

BRINGING FORTH FRUIT WITH PATIENCE.

If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.—2 ST. PET. i. 8.

THE Epistle for to-day needs explanation, and this explanation is best furnished by observing St. Paul's manner of writing. These Corinthians were being puffed up by vain and false teachers, for whose sake they were setting at naught Christ's own Apostle. But he meets them in this their self-confidence, as our Blessed Saviour used sometimes to do with men, and frames his speech according to their estimate of themselves. *Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you in the face.* As if he had said, Now ye Corinthians, being so perfect yourselves in that charity which beareth all things, in all patience and forbearance to the infirmities of weak brethren, bear with me a little, as if I were a weak

and vain man, while I boast of all that I have done and suffered. Not that these Corinthians were thus meek and perfect; quite the contrary; as in his former Epistle, in speaking of the same subject,¹ he says to them, "Ye are rich, ye would reign as kings without us;" and then adds, "Ah, I would to God that ye did reign!" And so here he proceeds: *I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak.* That is, I speak as though ye were able thus to bear all reproaches for Christ's sake, but we were not able to do so; as in the former place referred to, he says to them, "we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong." Well then, as ye are so proud of these presuming teachers, which flatter you while they tyrannize over you, in your wisdom and patience bear with me, while, in a vain-glorious manner, I measure myself with them. *Howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool)—I am more.* Thus he refers to matters highly valued among men, as partaking of worldly honour, though utterly worthless, in his estimation, from the exceeding greatness of the treasure which he had found. As he himself so beautifully expresses it, to his friends at Philippi, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." From these things, therefore, he passes to what partakes more of his Lord's cup of sorrows.

And now, had it not been for these false apostles, compelling St. Paul to this defence of himself in order to

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 8. 10.

protect his flock, we should not have had this wonderful description of his life; such a life as the world has never seen before or since. And all this, great beyond all human greatness, touched upon in a few words so eloquent, and clothed with such humility and sweetness, as to leave one more in amazement at his meekness and forgetfulness of self than at all the rest. "I will show him," said Christ, when He first called him to His service, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."² And "great things" indeed they were, but hallowed and blessed because they were for His "Name's sake."

In labours more abundant than all other ministers; in stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft; oftentimes in the midst of all the circumstances of death. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one—five times with the usual Jewish scourging of thirty-nine lashes;³ thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned, and left for dead. O blessed Paul, what malefactor or murderer could number up such inflictions? thy whole life was like one long crucifixion. And not only as if suffering for evil deeds, but all nature seemed stirred up against thee by wicked spirits, as against Job of old. Thrice I suffered shipwreck, he adds; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers; in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen; as at Iconium, at Lystra, at Derbe, at Ephesus, at every place it was but a change from one scene of persecution and affliction to another; in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, more treacherous than the winds and the waves. What a world of distresses does

² Acts ix. 16.

³ Deut. xxv. 3.

the Apostle comprise in almost every word ; and any single one of which we should have thought it much to have endured for Christ's sake. As he says to the elders at Ephesus, who knew so well what his manner of life was, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy."

And again : *In weariness and painfulness ; in watchings often ; in hunger and thirst ; in fastings often ; in cold and nakedness.* But still these were, for the most part, sufferings of the body, and had intervals of rest ; but he had, in addition to all these, a weight on his spirit from which he had never any repose, for every day it was the same. *Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches.* And not only of the Churches at large, but "from house to house" with every one, and "at all seasons," "with many tears" he bore the burden of each. *Who is weak, and I am not weak ? who is offended, and I burn not ?* In all their weaknesses, in all their temptations, had he to sympathize with each, as if the weakness and the temptation was his own.

He begins to glory, in order to win them over, by signs infinitely beyond their false teachers could show ; but he likes it not, and he ever passes from these to his humiliations, which he loved, his infirmities and many sorrows. *If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.* God is my witness that I have no joy in anything but that which brings me more near to my Master's Cross. "That I may know Him, and the power of His

Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."⁴

Now in the Collect for to-day we appeal to God's mercy, as seeing "that we put not our trust in anything that we do;" in the Epistle we have set before us St. Paul's unexampled sufferings and labours, who, notwithstanding, so little trusted in them that he was ashamed to mention them; and then, that we may not be deterred by the pattern of so great a saint, in whom the Word sown brought forth a hundredfold, the Gospel brings us all to listen to our Lord's great parable of the sower.

In this parable we find that all depends on the heart, on the soil where the seed falls, on our mode of receiving the Word of life. The Gospel for last Sunday ended with the words, "Many are called, but few are chosen;" and the Gospel for to-day shows us, in detail, how this is the case. As it is the first of parables, so it is the most comprehensive, and is of all the most awful, inasmuch as it commends itself to every man's conscience, as bearing evidence to the sad reality of what we see around us, viz. that "many are called, but few are chosen."

When our Lord spake these things the multitudes were thronging to hear Him: they hung upon His gracious words, they filled the shore so that there was no room to stand among them, they came about the boat, in which He was, in other boats; never was evinced greater desire to receive the Word of life. Yet the parable itself intimates how small a proportion, in the eyes of Him that knows the heart, were even on those occasions hearing to the saving of the soul. How much more, then, may this be the case in the preaching of any human teacher? But

⁴ Phil. iii. 10.

the parable is of very extensive application. It is not confined in its intention to that of our Lord's preaching in the flesh, but to the spread of His Gospel until the end. The parable, immediately after it was spoken, began to be fulfilled, wherever the Sower went forth throughout the whole world, and from that time to this day has been fulfilled in whole nations, and Churches, and parishes, it is now the very history of this parish, and of every other in which the Kingdom of Christ is established; it on this very day is now being fulfilled in this Church. The parable describes this very congregation as if it had been written for no other; even in this House of Prayer are gathered together the different kinds of hearers which our Lord mentions, and (Oh, the wonderful power and omnipresence of Christ's word!) He, the Divine Sower, in the midst of us, is scattering the seed with the same manifold effect.

When much people were gathered together, says St. Luke, and were come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. "He went out to sow His seed;" not the knowledge only, but the desire, the inclination, and intention of good; these all the Divine Sower imparts by His grace, these all partake of the Word of life, the most precious of all things. But the seed enters not. It is first slighted and trampled on, then taken away. Diversions, daily occupations, concerns in themselves indifferent, yet of this life, these trample down the seed and make the heart hard. Of how many, even on Sundays, does this describe the state? their minds are not open, their thoughts are where the heart is, and cares of weekday business, like feet

passing to and fro, harden the soul; the Word lies on the surface. "They sit before thee," says the Prophet, "as My people, and they hear thy words; but their heart goeth after their covetousness."⁵ Yet Sunday is the day of light in which, especially, the Sower goeth forth to sow His seed.

And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. Alas, how like the stony rock are the hearts of us all—no tenderness, no depth, no moisture. How little place for that Word which is so infinitely good; it comes before the mind as the lesson of life, good and profitable, but it is not received with reverence, or nursed with tears of repentance and godly sorrow; nor are the dews of God's grace sought for by prayer to replenish the good thoughts that may arise! It withers away "as the grass growing upon the housetops."

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up with it, and choked it. In this case there is more continuance than in the former two, but in the end this also is unfruitful. You have the love of God, and you receive His Word,—this is well; but you have also the love of the world: these continue in your heart together for some time. There are good desires, good designs, good works, the beginnings of all good appear; but there are also other desires, other designs, other works; and look again, after a little while, and the good seed is choked. The influence of things present is the most powerful; the evil ground of the heart naturally brings forth thorns. But as God will admit of no divided service, His grace, in this case, is received in vain. With St. Paul there was a Demas, who first laboured, and after a time appeared

⁵ Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

changed; nay, more, there is scarcely a more touching and sad place in all his affecting Epistles, than where he says to the Philippians, "I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. When man is the sower, he sows only on the ground he has prepared; but in nature, as in grace, when God is the sower, He sows in all places alike. And here, alas, in one place only out of four is the seed of eternal life availing; only one portion gathered into the heavenly barn at last; all the rest lost, after having once had their time of probation; lost opportunities, lost gifts of grace, lost times of repentance, lost intentions and desires of good and feeble efforts; all lost, and for ever gone.

And when He had said these things He cried—He exclaimed as with a loud voice—He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. As if He had said, I do not expect all of you to receive this My lesson of wisdom, but whether you do or not depends on yourselves; there is a hearing ear and a seeing eye which God gives, and will not deny to them that ask it. *And His disciples asked Him privately, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.* All the ways of God and His religion are, to men of the world, like parables or dark sayings which they do not understand; but to good men He makes known, in secret, all the wonders of His grace, however unlearned they may be. How kind and condescending is He to teach, wherever there is a heart willing to learn;

but how awful and terrible in His just retributions, where He leaves men to a judicial blindness, while they think they see!

Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Men would say, then come thoughts of business, or of amusement, or of society, or some employment; but our Lord speaks differently, as seeing the unseen world and things that are therein, even as we behold the birds around us. He says, "then cometh the devil," clothing his spiritual approaches to the soul in these ordinary matters; and why? "Lest they should believe and be saved." Often does the evil one keep us from our prayers in this way, by suggesting various distracting engagements. Every one who watches himself must well know this.

They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away. They are better than the last, for they believe, but it is only for awhile. Thus was it with Herod, who heard John the Baptist, and "observed him," and "did many things and heard him gladly," but when temptation came he slew him. So was it with the Pharisees, who went to the Preacher of repentance, and were "willing for a season to rejoice in his light." So with Demas; and probably so was it with Judas Iscariot; so may it be with any of us any day of our lives. Yet it is not temptation from without is the cause of their fall; but that having no root in themselves, temptation from without is too much for them. For the Sun of persecution is needful for maturing the good seed, and the winds and storms of

the world do but strengthen and exercise the faith of the saints; as St. Paul's imprisonments and "deaths oft" and manifold afflictions, were welcomed by him, that he might thereby "obtain a better resurrection."

And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. And here again, to judge our whole life, we may take any small portion of it, say for one week. The things of God, for some cause, in church or otherwise, may make a strong impression on our minds; we are other than our usual selves, and wish to be so; eternity is all in all to us, and death and judgment, Heaven and Hell; nothing else seems real, or of any importance; but we "go forth" from these thoughts,—we "go forth" from the inner and better man into the world, and soon all our holier resolutions are choked up with thorns; the cares, the riches, the pleasures of this short life, after a few days, or it may be after a few hours, fill our hearts again. There is no more melancholy truth in the world than this, how quickly the reflections of wisdom, and the lessons of adversity, fade away from our minds, and good impressions pass off. And this, which happens often on a smaller scale, in a few days or weeks, is apt to prevail in the whole course of our lives; no fruit is brought "to perfection." Yet the Sower Himself all the while how anxious for us, how long-suffering, how willing to aid, what encouragement at all times to seek Him, for "He careth for us," and watcheth over us! He who hath done so much, hath prepared the soil, hath watered it with His own tears, and fertilized it with His own Blood, can He ever be wanting to us, if we are not wanting to Him?

But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. They hear, they understand, they "keep" the Word, in distinction from those who "understand it not," and from whom "the devil takes it away," because it is trampled upon and not inwardly received; and these "keep it in an honest and good heart," as differing from those who are beguiled by the deceits of the world. And, again, they "bring forth fruit with patience," in distinction from those who "in time of temptation fall away." "The husbandman hath long patience," waiting for "the early and latter rain;" and the seed requires time while it brings forth "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," going on unto perfection.

O gracious Teacher, teach us to know this parable! to know it with that Divine, Heavenly knowledge which Thou alone givest! Let it, as Thine own living Word, find place in our hearts, deep, abiding, ample, with no other desires to impede and weaken it; let our joys, sorrows, hopes, fears, all keep and cherish this treasure; let us soften with sorrow, deepen with reflection, and water with prayers the ground, and root out every rising weed with all exercises of repentance and prayer. But all must be Thy gift, not the seed only, but the good heart to receive it, and prayers and watchfulness to preserve it. All is of Thee, and all is Thine; and whatever it may be "of Thine own we give Thee." For we all are as "grass" which "withereth" and as "the flower of grass" which "falleth away." But Thy Word "endureth for ever."⁶

⁶ 1 St. Pet. i. 24, 25.

SERMON XX.

The Sunday called Quinquagesima.

I Cor. xiii. 1—13. St. Luke xviii. 31—43.

THE MOST EXCELLENT GIFT.

Charity never faileth.—I COR. xiii. 8.

ON the Sunday before Lent the Church sets before us the subject of charity; to remind us that all works of repentance can be of no avail unless they begin and end in the love of God. On Sunday last we had the account of St. Paul's apostolic labours, but in the Epistle for to-day, he tells us of how little avail all our works and labours must be without charity.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; like instruments of idle sound, without spirit and life to instruct and improve the heart. And though I have the gift of prophecy—that is, of speaking by the inspiration of God,—and understand all mysteries,—the gift of comprehending the secret things of religion,—and all knowledge, to perceive the wonders of His word and providence; and though I have all faith, that super-

natural trust in God which the Spirit gave, in order to work miracles ; and this faith, the very greatest, *so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* St. Paul has been here alluding to those miraculous gifts which then existed in the Church at Corinth, of which he had been speaking in the former chapter ; but to these he proceeds to add those outward actions of Christian righteousness which are of no value in themselves, unless they proceed from the love of God. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned ; though outwardly I may be as a saint or as a martyr, yet, if I have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

If I give to the poor without love to man, or if I die a martyr without love to God, it avails not. But these acts are, indeed, the ordinary expressions of love itself. Thus, to the rich man our Lord said, "If thou wouldst be perfect, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor,"—thus was he to evince his love to man : but to this He added, "and follow Me." For to follow Christ is to love God. And when salvation came to the house of Zaccheus, he not only gave half of his goods to the poor, but it was for Christ—that Christ might be more worthily received as his guest. For to receive Christ is to love God.

We may observe how the Apostle, as inspired by the theme, rises in sublime eloquence from the gift of tongues to prophecy, and then to the highest kind of prophecy, "all mysteries and knowledge ;" and then from knowledge to that which is higher and more divine,—to faith itself, and "all faith ;" and from faith to its highest fruits, to almsgiving and martyrdom ; and those, too, of no ordinary kind, but "all my goods" in alms, and death

by martyrdom of all the most severe—that of being “burned” alive.

But now, we may ask, since the love of God must dwell in the deep unseen fountain of the heart, where the eye of God seeth in secret, how is it to be known? St. Paul next proceeds to show that this principle of love will be like a law regulating the whole conduct and outer man, for the first and great commandment can only be seen by men in the keeping of the second; and our Lord Himself, when He speaks of the love of God, points to its fulfilment in duties to our neighbour. For how can it be known that we love God Whom we have not seen? we cannot love Him unless we love our brother whom we have seen. That love, therefore, which is the life hidden with Christ in God, can never exist where it is not as a light breaking forth from within around our path below.

Charity suffereth long, like her blessed Master Himself, Who was the pattern of all meekness; *and is kind*, and gracious in all her ways. *Charity envieth not*. Where love is there is no anger, no ill-will, no jealousy; for looking to God, in Him it hath all things, and needeth nothing else. *Charity vaunteth not itself*, seeking not display, nor exercising itself in high matters, nor flattering the world by easy compliances with it. So some understand the expression; others, as St. Chrysostom, interpret it as not rash and precipitate, but having a constant evenness of mind, not violently bent on any design. Again, *charity is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly*,—the last-mentioned writer would take it, accounting nothing unseemly for love’s sake, as our Lord submitted to all indignities out of love to man. *Seeketh not her own*; this is the very characteristic of brotherly love, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Thus St. Paul in this

Epistle says of himself, "not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many." And just before, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."¹ And to the Philippians he laments, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."² From this absence of self, it next follows that charity *is not easily provoked*, not quick to take offence; and, what is much akin to this, *thinketh no evil*, is very slow to impute evil to others; for love is blind to their defects, and covereth all faults, attributing to others those good intentions which it has itself. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*; in converse with others it hath no false liberality, no dissembling of evil; but at the same time it hath no pleasure in wickedness, in seeing, or hearing, or speaking of it, but with the truth it finds its own joy and sympathy. Thus the disciple of divine love says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."³ Charity *beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*; is full of forbearance, of confidence, of hope, of patience, which it is tempted on no occasion to forego; being, as it were, proof⁴ against all things in the armour of God, clothed all over with humility. In the Old Testament, faith in Abraham, patience in Job, meekness in Moses, penitential love in David, affectionate gentleness and long-suffering are seen in Joseph: but all these together make up that charity which is the "bond of perfectness," for which the Christian is to labour after the example of Christ. For in St. Paul's language, to "put on Christ" is to "put on charity."

Such is the delineation of this grace: not for us merely

¹ 1 Cor. x. 33. 24.

² 3 St. John 4.

³ Phil. ii. 21.

⁴ πάντα στέγει.

to admire, but as furnishing close and searching matters of inquiry and self-examination for the approaching penitential season; viz. whether we seek our own, be easily provoked, whether we detect in ourselves feelings of envy and the like. But with regard to its ultimate crown, the Apostle now proceeds to speak.

Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Since love is being like unto God, it will partake of His eternity; but as for other miraculous or spiritual gifts, they are but aids of our present imperfect state, and with that come to an end. *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* How different are the thoughts and the knowledge of an infant compared with those of a grown man; yet how poor is the knowledge of the wisest man compared with that which shall be hereafter! *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* To the grown man all his childish thoughts appear like a dream when he looks back upon them; so confined, so little, so foolish were the things of infancy. Such will our earthly knowledge appear when we awake to the vision of God. *For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.* O awful, wonderful moment, when we shall be unclothed of this body which now is as a cloud upon the soul, shall come out of darkness into marvellous light; when the infant of days shall know more than the wisest philosopher or divine that ever lived upon earth; when the greatest intellectual and spiritual endowments shall have gone by like shadows that

were in the dark, and nothing remains but love only, love only to be put in the scale of our everlasting portion; when "the merciful shall obtain mercy," and "mercy shall rejoice against judgment!"

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three,—all Christian graces, leading to Heaven,—but the greatest of these is charity, the greatest even now below. Faith trusts in God, unseen as yet, hope looks forward to behold Him, but love, in some sense, sees Him already. Faith is the root of all good, hope matures its progress, but in love it bears fruit and is perfected. Faith apprehends God, hope quickens our desires after Him, but love already, as it were, enjoys His presence. Love gives life to all, and crowns all; nay, is itself the beginning of all, for nothing is of any worth without it.

And now very impressive and instructive is the transition from the Epistle to the Gospel for the day; for thus, after the description of divine love, we pass to the perfect Pattern of divine love itself; for "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And here we have our Lord preparing Himself, and preparing others for His death, even as now He would prepare us, through the season of Lent, to go up with Him to witness His death at Jerusalem. And all this His journey throughout, accompanied at every step with lowliest acts of that charity which "suffereth long and is kind;" and blessed be God, not only setting forth to us what true love is, but giving us power to obtain it while we look to Him. For how shall we learn this love unless He draw us unto Himself? This divine love goeth forth like virtue from Him; for very love's sake may He make us to love Him, and if we love Him we have perfect love; love of God

and love of man; love of man whom we have seen, in Him Who is emphatically the Son of Man; and love of God also, Whom in man we see manifested in Jesus Christ.

Then took He unto Him, says St. Luke, the twelve,— i. e. took them apart from all others, as about to disclose some great and concerning circumstances unto them,— and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Now this is not the only occasion when our Lord prepared His disciples for His approaching sufferings; for some months before His death He had been doing so continually; as many as nine times of His doing so are mentioned in the Gospels. Yet it was so beyond all their thoughts, that, notwithstanding, they could not comprehend it; and in this it is like all prophecies of God. He repeats them often and often, as if saying, “let these things sink deep in your ears,” yet before they are fulfilled they are never understood; when they take place, then the prophecies are remembered, and it is seen how God had been foretelling all the events throughout. But although the disciples could not understand how such things could be, yet all the while the effect of these our Lord’s repeated declarations did prepare their hearts, put them in a state of prayer, and watchfulness, and waiting upon God. On one occasion, it is said, “they were exceeding sorry,” when

they heard it: on another, St. Peter deprecated, praying that it might not be; from which it is evident that he understood it to mean the enduring of some great sorrows by his beloved Master. And at this time, when they saw their Lord's boldness in going up to meet all these things at Jerusalem, it is said in another Gospel, they "were amazed;" and "as they followed Him they were afraid."

He took the twelve aside, it is said, apart from the multitude, to teach them of these things. Blessed privilege, to be taken aside from the world and taught by Him; and to be taken, though they hardly know, into fellowship with His sufferings; to prepare them beforehand for closer communion with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and for the Last Supper, and the Mount of Calvary, and afterwards for that upper chamber at Jerusalem, where, the doors being locked, He should be with them, and give them His peace. In like manner is it the case with us now; the Scriptures would prepare us for some great and wonderful manifestation, suddenly to come upon us, when charity alone shall stand, but we cannot comprehend how such things are to be. In the meanwhile Christ would talk to us apart, would take us up to Jerusalem with Him, to witness His sufferings, saying, that in Him only shall we find life and safety in those awful things which are to be.

Again, "charity never faileth," is never wanting under any trial; and this we are to keep in mind through this approaching season of humiliation, that under no pressure of self-mortification we forget the love of our neighbour. This also is beautifully brought before our minds in the Gospel for this day. For while our Lord was now going up to Jerusalem as a willing Victim to die, so filled with a sense of the awful sorrows that awaited Him, and

the Twelve around Him partaking of the like feelings of undefinable sorrow, amazement, and apprehension, yet all is alleviated by acts of mercy to the meanest. "Charity never faileth," but "suffereth long and is kind." It is that same love which amidst the agonies of Gethsemane forgot not the sleeping disciples, nor on the Cross was unmindful of the penitent thief, and of His suffering Mother, and of those who, in crucifying Him, knew not what they did.

Moreover, this incident which follows seems to derive a peculiar significancy from its connexion with that discourse itself which preceded it. For it is said, "they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." And then the narrative proceeds. *And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.* He had been teaching the disciples, but they were blind; they could not understand; helpless, by the way side, having none to guide; but in this their blindness who shall lead them? who shall open their eyes? This lowly act of charity shall teach them and instruct us all. When the Lord approached Jerusalem He wept over it because "the things belonging to their peace" were "hidden from their eyes;" because they were blind, and had no eyes to see, and were not sensible of their own blindness. But if by humiliation we are made to know our own blindness, and, as the beggar by the road side, to know that we have no help but in Him, He will open our eyes; He will give us power to follow Him on the road, and to be with

Him in that true Jerusalem which is "the vision of peace."

Blessed be His Name, He bids us ask of Him in order that He may give. "Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art," as this blind beggar, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."⁵

And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, Jesus Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. How does this represent ourselves? blind by nature and by sin, we would appeal earnestly to Christ to open our eyes, that we may see Him and ourselves; but when we would set our faces steadfastly to seek Him in prayer, what a thronging multitude of fancies would make us to hold our peace, and rebuke us until we do; what thoughts of business intervene to stop us,—conversation with others,—reading or worldly matters,—relations, friends, strangers,—all seem to combine to draw us away from prayer and communion with God; household duties, our very meals, daily labours, all cry out; and if we listen to them, Jesus will pass by as if He heard not,—will pass by and never again return. But herein faith is the more seen and tried: "He cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" He was all the more importunate for these hindrances; so will it ever be with the Christian who is thoroughly in earnest. Things that would stifle a weak flame, serve as fuel to the strong one. Those very temptations which

⁵ Rev. iii. 17, 18.

would hinder the lukewarm, render him more fervent in overcoming them; and above them all his voice is heard. The world is importunate, and sin and Satan, but more importunate is his prayer to Him Whose Name is Love, Who "suffereth long and is kind."

And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him. St. Mark gives an interesting account of the scene. Our Lord seems to have passed by, when turning He "commanded him to be called; and they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus." *And when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee.* That faith which first inquired after Me; that faith which cried unto Me, though I was "as one that heard not," and, unless I had been constrained by thee, would have passed by; that faith which fainted not, but persevered, and was the more urgent when so many that went before would have come between Me and thee, and stopped thine entreaties; that "faith hath saved thee." "I am the Light of the world." Blessed is he who knoweth his own blindness, poverty, and nakedness, and seeketh of Me eyes to see.

And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. By faith Christ drew him unto Himself, and when his eyes were opened he followed Him. Faith came first, and then love; by love he followed Him, and in following Him glorified God. What a lively emblem of the Christian is this! he feels his misery and helplessness, and prays in faith with perseverance, and his eyes are opened to see God, Whom to see is to love and follow.

It has been well said of this Divine lesson, set forth in this blind man, "Happy is that blind person, to whom God gives not only eyes to know Him, but likewise feet to follow, a tongue to praise, and a heart to love Him."⁶

And all the people, it is added, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. Thus wherever there is such a true conversion of the whole heart and life to God through "faith working by love," the "light shines before men;" and they who before would have hindered and held him back, are now themselves moved by the marvellous grace which they witness, and they also glorify God.

Now consider what is this light, my brethren, of which we speak; this light, not of the body, but of the soul, which Scripture so often mentions. This light is no other than love; it is the same love which St. Paul describes in the Epistle, that charity which never faileth. "He that saith he is in the light," says St. John, "and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."⁷

"God is Light," and "God is Love." This love is that light which surrounds the steps, and warms the heart of the penitent, and burneth more and more bright to cheer him on his desolate road. If any ask, what is the one thing needful? the Epistle says it is Love. If any ask, what is Love? the Gospel for this day says, it is Jesus going up to Jerusalem to die. And if we ask, and what shall we do? it is with blind Bartimæus to pray earnestly in faith that we may have sight to see Him; and casting aside the beggarly garments of our former self, to follow Him in the way.

In short, in the exalted account given us of charity, we

⁶ Quesnel on St. Luke.

⁷ 1 St. John ii. 10.

may well feel overwhelmed at our great want of it, as we come to fathom the depths of our need, and measure ourselves by the Pattern. Our great relief on such occasions is looking to Christ in prayer; in prayer with regard to every particular of these our daily sad miscarriages and short-comings; and what we derive from dwelling on this incident, is the assurance, that if we are importunate He will hear us, in such a prayer as we offer in the Collect for this day.

SERMON XXI.

Ash-Wednesday.

Joel ii. 12—17. St. Matt. vi. 16.

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE.

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.—
JOEL ii. 12.

STRANGE invitation, that one who invites us to come to him, should bid us come with sorrow, nay, with sorrow heaped upon sorrow, requiring us to add more and more to our pains; still more strange the reason given, because he who thus invites us is good, and kind, and forgiving! Yet so it is. *Turn ye even to Me, saith the Lord, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.* Yes, it is because God so tenderly loves us that He is so desirous that we should afflict our souls; it is in order that we may turn to Him “with our heart,” and “with all our heart;” therefore it must be with *fasting*; and when the

heart is made tender and humble with fasting, it will then know and find out its sins, and understand their measure and their multitude; and then to fasting will be added "*weeping*," until sadness hath covered all the soul, and then it will be "*with mourning*" also; and sackcloth will clothe the Heavens in the remembrance of our sins. God wishes us to mourn, because He is the God of all consolation, Himself the Comforter. And oh, one particle of His Divine joy, which is sure to be found in that mourning, is infinitely more sweet than all the pleasures which this world can afford.

So grateful to Almighty God is this humiliation of ourselves, that in the Old Testament He represents Himself as changing His purpose, and setting aside or suspending His temporal judgments in consequence. Thus when Ahab fasted and humbled himself He put off the evil from him; when Nineveh, that great Heathen city, fasted and repented, He averted that destruction which awaited it; in like manner is it on this occasion. The land was oppressed with so sore a famine, that even "the meat-offering and the drink-offering," it is said, "were cut off from the house of the Lord." Yet on their fasting and repentance the Prophet Joel here adds, *Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him; even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord your God.* Thus God represents Himself as repenting when we repent; of being changed towards us when we are changed. So was it with that temporal judgment; but what a lively emblem is this of a heart that with deep contrition hath thoroughly turned to the Lord, when again bringing forth the fruits of love and obedience it "receiveth blessing from God,"¹ so that it is

¹ Heb. vi. 7.

able to restore the same in thanksgiving! "Their soul shall be as a watered garden," "I will turn their mourning into joy," and "I will make them rejoice for their sorrow."²

But although God will thus meet the mourner, yet he must not presume beforehand on this His goodness, nor look to His consolation, but to the thorough rending of his own heart; let all his care be that this be sincere, deep, and genuine. For the Prophet puts this change on the part of God as it were uncertain; a graciousness almost beyond what we have reason to expect; "Who knoweth if He will return?" If the greatest penitents had presumed in their humiliation, they had lost the fruits of their sorrow.

This call in the Prophet Joel is a public and national one, on account of a general calamity; but contains the strongest appeal to ourselves at this season of Lent, because that judgment which it was to avert, is throughout very closely connected with the Day of Judgment, of which it was given as a sign, a type interwoven throughout. "Sound an alarm," it says, "for the day of the Lord cometh;" "the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" And immediately after this is added the solemn call of this day's Scripture. And what words can be more descriptive of the duties required of us at this season, to which the passage has always been applied through all the Churches of God! "*Blow the trumpet in Zion;*" *i. e.* let every Christian minister in the Church of God proclaim this public act of humiliation; *sanctify a fast, i. e.* let the fast be considered a sacred obligation, imposed by God Himself

² Jer. xxxi. 12, 13.

through His Church; *call a solemn assembly, i. e.* let it be accompanied with the outward ordinances of social worship and assembling together in prayer; *gather the people, sanctify the congregation.* Now the word "sanctify" we find used in this way when God appeared on Mount Sinai: "Sanctify the people," said the Lord to Moses, "let them wash their clothes." "Let the priests sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them." And again, "Set bounds about the mount and sanctify it."³ And what here can it imply but this, that the Christian congregation be set aside from the world, and withdrawn in solitude of spirit to be alone with God in the rending of the heart:—that so God's Name be hallowed in this service? as the Apostle says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." *Assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet; i. e.* let there be by public worship an open and solemn recognition of this fast by all of every age, sex, and condition. Such must be the public act of humiliation. But another prophet expresses that more private and domestic mourning that must accompany it, for it must be not only general but also personal, and the latter is thus described: "God shall pour upon Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced;" "and they shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born;" "and the land shall mourn, every family apart, and their wives apart."⁴

And as the High Priest was to stand before God in the Holy Place with the names of the twelve tribes on his

³ Exod. xx. 10. 22. 24.

⁴ Zech. xii. 10—14.

breast,⁵ and as we trust that our Great High Priest is interceding for us with a continual remembrance in Heaven ; so in this the public humiliation of ourselves in the congregation, the Priesthood are, as it were, to stand before God for His people, pleading the all-atoning Sacrifice ; or bearing before Him the incense in their hands, that is, the prayers of the Saints, thus standing between the dead and the living that the plague may be stayed. *Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar ;* in the most solemn place of supplication ; and after the example of Him Who “ offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save from death ;” *and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them : wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God ?* Or, as we may apply it, Let not Nineveh arise in the judgment and condemn us, because they fasted and repented at the call of God ; let not Sodom and Gomorrha, those guilty cities, in their “ fulness of bread ;” let not Tyre and Sidon, those merchant cities of Heathenism, arise against us and say, If the mighty works of Christ had been done in them, instead of among ourselves, they would “ a great while ago have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.”⁶ Nay, let not other Christian Churches bear witness against us, at the last, and say, “ You despised us as fallen from grace, but we humbled ourselves before God ; you boasted of your knowledge of Christ, but we fasted before Him, and found mercy ; you preached, but we also prayed, and were heard.”

And now, after this solemn and public call to re-

⁵ Exod. xxviii. 29.

⁶ St. Luke x. 13.

penitance in the Prophet, Christ seems in the Gospel to call each one of us aside, and with fatherly counsel and tender love to instruct us how we may each best render this our service acceptable, telling us how we are to fast, in order to be secure of God's reward and blessing. And throughout we may observe, that He has so connected it with Himself, so united it with the thoughts of God as our Father and of Heaven, that fasting is no more like a painful and irksome duty, but is a privilege and grace,—a drawing nearer unto God—a retiring in secrecy of spirit from the vanities and disappointments of this world to be with a Father in Heaven.

When ye fast, says our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, when He is giving us directions respecting the three great instruments of a holy life—prayer, fasting, and alms: *When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* The reward is of such infinite worth, the blessing so great, that you must take heed that no inferior consideration come in and spoil you of that reward. “It is manifest,” says St. Augustin, “that by these precepts He would have all our attention directed to those inner joys, lest seeking a reward from without we be conformed to this world, and lose a reward so much more substantial, that inward blessedness of being conformed to the image of the Son of God.”⁷ “For not only,” he adds, “may there be vainglory in the splendour and show of external things, but even in sordidness of sorrow; and the more dangerous as it deceives with the plea of serving God.”⁸

And here we may observe how close-besetting and un-

⁷ De Serm. Dom. in Mont. lib. ii.

⁸ Ibid.

ceasing are the deceits of the great enemy of souls, of which our Lord so graciously warns us. Even with Him also in His fasting of the forty days the tempter was present with his wiles, insinuating suggestions to vainglory and pride,—and how much more with us? And we know how in the Heathen world the worship which God would have of His creatures he corrupted and perverted, and so obtained it for himself; so is it now with the service which God demands of us—our prayers, fasting, and alms: he would render even these a snare to us, that the things which should have been for our wealth may be to us an occasion of falling. For “as dead flies in the apothecary’s ointment,” so he knows is vanity and pride in these duties which we owe to God. And what an awful expression is that which our Lord has here left on solemn record!—“Verily, they have their reward:” they have it now, they have none with God hereafter. They have it in a little breath of empty air, and that founded on falsehood, an estimation for holiness which they have not: and even at best what is it, but praise given to dying men from dying men—for which they have bartered and sold the favour of God. Let it not be so with us.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father Which is in secret: and thy Father, Which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. “Thy Father Which is in secret.” Oh! what a depth of meaning is there in these words! He is in secret; the more you withdraw yourself from all other objects in your thoughts and affections, in the stillness of your heart and of your chamber, the nearer you are to Him. He “is in secret.” With what reverence and fixedness of mind must we approach Him! And again, what is still more awful and

penetrating, "He seeth in secret:" and, moreover, above all, He is "thy Father." What love and fear are there in these words! And to fast to obtain His favour, Whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, but Whose great prerogative is that He seeth in secret; to draw nearer unto Him with suitable humiliation and expressions of sorrow, how all-constraining the motive!—"He shall reward thee." For Whom do we seek to propitiate by our fasting, but Him Whom we have offended? For what do we mourn, but that we have loved other things more than Him? Shall we in our very fasting add yet to this very sin and cause of sorrow, and, self-deceiving, seek for exaltation when we would humble ourselves? To be thought good and religious by others is of itself, at all times, a great snare; it withdraws the eyes from Him that seeth in secret. It lessens the hope and consolation of meeting Him in death, Who is in secret, and Whose eye seeth in secret. It impairs even now His peace within the soul; it dims that vision of the inner mind which beholds God; and, as our Blessed Lord Himself here intimates, it takes away from the reward hereafter. Blessed is he whom God justifies, and not man; and miserable is he whom man justifies, but not God.

And now, as alms-giving is closely connected with fasting, so this direction of cleansing the secret intention, by looking to the reward which is with God, is most needful for both, that the eye being single the whole body may be full of light. To both duties alike may apply the impressive and memorable words that follow: *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, when neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves*

do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Who is not moved by hearing these precepts, however often it be? who does not see and approve, nay, even admire and love their beauty and truth? And yet how few of us take them to heart? how little do we act up to them, as we know we shall one day wish we had done? What earthly father has ever been more earnest and anxious that his son should lay up treasure—should gain a habit of doing so—with a single eye to that treasure? A Father in Heaven, a home in Heaven, and treasure in Heaven: what words are these, and which Christ has connected with these duties? He who looks to the reward which God promises, who purifies his motives by prayer and self-denying charity, that he may do so with an undivided affection, has his treasure ever increasing, ever sure; and, oh! the great blessedness, not his treasure only, but his heart will be with God. This is, indeed, the “manifold more in this present time,”—to have a heart with God in Heaven.

Here then our Blessed Saviour’s loving and fatherly advice in the Gospel for to-day is but a drawing out and closer application of what His Spirit speaks in the Prophet Joel, which we have for the Epistle: “Turn ye even to Me, saith the Lord, with all your heart.” God requires of us the whole heart. “My son, give Me thine heart,” is the call of Wisdom; and of all outward observances compared with this God says, “Who hath required this at your hand?” But the heart being “deceitful above all things,” our Lord’s caution is to try this sincerity of the heart by bringing it before the Eye of God, which purifies and heals. The very expression of “*turning*” unto God implies that it has turned

from Him. "The heart," says St. Bernard on these words of Joel, "is made up of four affections; with all these let it be turned unto God: thy love, that it may love nothing but Him, or at least for His sake; thy fear, for all thy fear is perverted, if thou fearest anything but Him, or on His account; so likewise let thy joy and thy sorrow be turned unto Him, that thou rejoice and grieve for nothing but according unto God."⁹ "And in this turning of the heart to God," says the same writer, "the body must afford aid to the spirit, and therefore it is added, *with fasting*; but this applies not only to abstaining from meats." "As not thine appetite only, but all thy members have sinned, let them all keep this fast. The eye, from sights of curiosity and wandering abroad; the ear, from tales and hearing of news, and such idle things as conduce not to salvation; the tongue, from detraction and murmuring and vain words; the hands, from things not enjoined thee; but, more than all, let thy soul fast from sin and from following its own will. For such things are reprov'd of God, Who saith, 'Behold, in the day of your fast, ye find pleasure.'"¹

And how earnestly and anxiously, may I say, does God wait and watch for us, that we should thus turn to Him, and that it be with godly sorrow!—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus," "therefore my bowels are troubled for him."²

Again, not only the words, "Turn even to Me with all your heart," but also how full of all that our Lord teaches is that further expression of His Prophet!—"And rend your heart, and not your garments." This inward rending of the soul as of the garments without implies not grief

⁹ In Quad. Serm. ii.

¹ Is. lviii. 3. Ibid. Serm. iii.

² Jer. xxxi. 18, 20.

only, but also indignation and hate, that self-indignation and revenge of which St. Paul speaks³ as a part of genuine repentance and "godly sorrow" unto salvation. Dost thou mourn over and hate thy sins? then thou wilt also hate the doer of them, which is thyself; and the more thou mournest over them, recounting them before God, with all their aggravations, and numbering their sad signs and accumulation, the more wilt thou hate thyself and thine own life; *weeping* in earnest desire for that better self and better life which is with God. Thus some indications of self-reproach and self-indignation must go with that heart-rending which God requires: this is the "smiting on the thigh" of the returning penitent Ephraim; this is the beating on the breast of the self-reproving Publican in the Temple; nay more than both of these is this self-hate to be found in that weeping penitent who, being much forgiven, loved much, when she stood at the Lord's feet, bedewing them with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Love, as a precious drop from Heaven, was in that cup of bitterness, and sweetened and hallowed that self-humiliation and sorrow; but she knew not as yet that that drop of consolation was her Lord's own Blood, which He sheds for her.

Such outward demonstrations were as from a heart overcharged with sorrow, which forgot all things else but the Presence of God, and itself a sinner in His sight. But lest we fail of that love which can alone give refreshment and sanctification to this penitential exercise of Lent, let us remember our Lord's own caution, that our sorrow be for the Eye that "seeth in secret," in the

³ 2 Cor. vii. 11.

rending of the heart, not of the garment. Our Lord's own example often affords a living comment on His precepts: and here it is remarkable, that although there was no fasting like that of our Blessed Saviour Himself,—for He was beyond the sons of men “acquainted with grief,” and His life on earth was a continued fast; His “knees were weak through fasting,” and “tears were His meat day and night,”—yet what we know of His express fasting was in secret: such was His fasting in the desert, into which He was led by the Spirit of God, where no eye of man was; His whole nights spent in prayer were in solitary mountains; while at the same time amongst men it was said, that He “came eating and drinking,” “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.” And now, if the Bridegroom is withdrawn, and the widowed Church solemnly calls on her children to fast and mourn, their fasting, indeed, and mourning must be in some measure like that of “the friend of the Bridegroom” with public and general humiliation: yet, notwithstanding, that holy precept and Divine example may be with us, and the deeper our internal sorrow and repentance is, the more will it be for the most part in secret, where God sees, and in solitude of heart with “the Man of Sorrows.”

Surely we have need. “When the Bridegroom is taken from them,” says our Lord, “then shall they fast in those days.” If the Bridegroom's absence be the occasion of this fasting and mourning, what cause can be greater than ours from whom the Bridegroom is in great measure withdrawn, not from sight only, but in Spirit also! Alas, in how many of us is the wedding-garment wanting—the clothing of love and praise; and that fidelity and longing for Him, which rejoices to hear the Bridegroom's Voice! The more the soul mourns and fasts for

His absence, the more shall it be filled with joy at His countenance. It is love that makes His absence to be felt and known. As the Psalmist says, "My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God: when shall I come to appear in the presence of God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God?" It is from needing the tokens of His presence that the faithful spirit mourns. Hence it is that His blessing is left on those that mourn, and those that weep, and those that hunger now. "They that mourn shall be comforted." "They which do hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled."

Therefore it is, that holy men have ever approached this season of penitence, not with deprecation, but with joy and welcome, and have entered the Cloud, not with heaviness, but with thanksgiving; knowing that in that Cloud they may be with Moses, and with Elias, and with Christ; they have felt, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," and would at the end continue there still, if so it might be. They accept the Gospel alike both for joy and sorrow; and when it says, "We have piped unto you," their heart has answered to the call; and when it has said, "We have mourned unto you," that call also has not been in vain. But both alike are unheeded by the world. To us, my brethren, for the most part, probably neither of these is the case, and we answer indeed, but then it is feebly and faintly that we answer both calls. Our repentance is not sufficiently severe and deep, and therefore our love of God, and our joy in God, is not what it ought to be. And the reason in both cases is, that our hearts are too much taken up with inferior things. It is true, we cannot turn ourselves, our affections, our wills; but if so, then we ought to be the more careful in seeking

of God that He would do so. The most earnest conversion is accompanied with the most earnest asking of God, "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God."⁴ But in order that He may do so, let us resist none of His calls.

And now, remember, the Epistle which the Church assigns is the letter which God sends you, the Gospel is the good tidings which Christ hath brought you, and both on this day are of fasting; and the appointed Psalms are the sorrowful moanings of a widowed soul, and the intercessions of the Spirit with God; and what is the Communion Service but the Church saying, like the Evangelical Prophet, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."⁵ And in the Collect, throughout this season, we daily ask of God for that contrite heart which He requires and alone can give. Surely God has done all for us that could persuade, invite, and warn. The times and seasons He keeps in His own hands, and He may never afford another Lent. All our services for this day are as if Christ had spoken to the Father for each of us, saying, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it," and as if in consequence now through His Church He was making every effort with us. "Now is the appointed time:" by Moses in the Law, by Elias for the Prophets, by Christ Himself in the Gospels is sanctified to us the Fast of forty days. If from the Scriptures and the Church without we turn to the secret spirit within, surely everything that is in man cries, as it were, aloud for this fast; what greater cause for sorrow than sin? what more worthy of anger than the sinner?

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 18.

⁵ Isa. lviii. 1.

what greater occasion for fear than God's wrath? what greater object of desire than God's love? Sorrow and anger, fear and desire, these make up the whole of man; and all these things are to be directed aright, by withdrawing our eyes from the world which is without, to the Kingdom of God which is within.

SERMON XXII.

The First Sunday in Lent.

' 2 Cor. vi. 1—10. St. Matt. iv. 1—11.

THE ACCEPTED TIME.

We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of GOD in vain.—2 COR. vi. 1.

THE season of Lent is introduced to us by our Lord's fast of forty days, the subject of the Gospel for to-day. This, with His temptation in the wilderness, took place before He entered upon His ministry; and in the Epistle for to-day St. Paul describes what the ministers of Christ endured as such. Thus was that fast which was prefigured in Moses and Elias, and fulfilled in Christ, carried on also by His ministers after Him, filling up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ; fulfilled also in His many members through their whole lives, made more than conquerors through His grace. Who, for their sakes, endured temptation and overcame. It is with respect to Christian ministers that this subject is more especially brought before us on this day; not only because they ought to go before others, and lead the way, but as

this first week in Lent is also the season of the Ember Fast.

This connexion between the Epistle and the Gospel is shown in the first words of the Epistle. *We then*, says St. Paul, *as workers together with Him, i. e. with Christ, Who was "made sin for us, that we might be made in Him the righteousness of God," we beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith, i. e. the Scripture saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee.* These words are spoken, in the Prophet Isaiah, of Christ, and they may be well understood of the season when He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, was tempted and overcame; and they are here further applied by St. Paul to the "time accepted," the "day of salvation," appointed to every Christian and to the Church at large. Each has his season of probation in this wilderness, even as Christ Himself spoke of a "day" when He had to "work the works of Him that sent" Him before "the night cometh."¹ An ancient Bishop,² indeed, commenting on this day's Epistle, applies the words especially to this season of Lent; in which sense they strongly appeal to us. But we may also apply them more generally, for forty years represent man's life of trial; and the forty days express the like analogy, "a day for a year," as Scripture says.³ *Behold, now*, adds the Apostle, *is the accepted time*, the one opportunity of welcome acceptance, *now is the day of salvation*,—the time when God works together with you in this your "day of temptation in the wilderness." And then, after telling them that this is their day of grace as

¹ St. John ix. 4.

² St. Leo, Serm. iv. De Quadrag.

³ Ezek. iv. 6.

hearers, he returns to speak of the ministry fulfilling with Christ this their appointed work.

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; we, the stewards and ministers of God, must be careful that this your day of grace and our own also, be not lost by our fault, but that we carry on the example of Christ in His season of suffering and probation; *but in all things approving ourselves*, or commending ourselves to you, *as the ministers of God*. And here, in contemplating this pattern of what Christian ministers have been and ought to be, we must consider how it is as partaking in that victory which our Blessed Saviour obtained in His temptation; for here we have the same Spirit which led Him forth into the wilderness sustaining His Apostles in His victory over the world, one of like passions and infirmities with ourselves. In those days of the Church's early sufferings and persecution, we see His Apostles walking as it were unharmed in the midst of the fiery furnace, and we behold One with them like unto the Son of God.

In much patience, in great and manifold endurance, *in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses*. Each one of these words contain quite a history in St. Paul's eventful life of suffering, which might be supplied even from the little we know of it. *In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults*, or it might be "in tossings to and fro," as St. Chrysostom takes it; and to these things from without he adds further, those which he imposed on himself, *in labours, in watchings, in fastings*. And here, my brethren, we must remember, that although St. Paul's life was such as we must rather admire than imitate in the extraordinary hardships which outward circumstances brought upon him, yet it is not so in the care of his own soul, and in such things as he here mentions.

By pureness, i. e. by a chaste heart and life; *by knowledge, i. e.* by that wisdom which is the result of goodness of life, as St. Peter says, “add to virtue knowledge:”⁴ *by long-suffering, by kindness,* as he says of charity, that it is “long-suffering and kind:” *by the Holy Ghost, i. e.* by the exercise of spiritual gifts. And to this he adds that crowning grace of the Spirit, which he called “the more excellent way,” *by love unfeigned,* charity “without dissimulation,” that best gift from above. *By the word of truth,* which he kept as a sacred deposit, and by which our Lord overcame the evil one; *by the power of God,* “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power;”⁵ *by the armour of righteousness on the right and on the left,*—the sword and the shield of offensive and defensive warfare; or it may be as armed on all sides against the effects of good or evil success; at all events, it seems connected with what follows: *by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report,* converting both alike to the glory of God. *As deceivers, and yet true,* according to the various estimations of men: *as unknown, and yet well known,*—unknown of the world, yet manifest to the consciences of his own, to Saints, to Angels, and to God: *as dying, and behold, we live:* as in the midst of “deaths oft;” as “always delivered unto death;” as “dying daily,” yet through all marvellously delivered by “God which raiseth the dead.” Behold! still surviving; yea, and having more abundantly a life in God, secure from every peril, we live and greatly live, having “the life of the Lord Jesus manifested in our body.” *As chastened, and not killed;* as the Psalmist says, “The Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death.”⁶

⁴ 2 St. Pet. i. 5.⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 4.⁶ Ps. cxviii. 18.

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; for the more we mourn, the more are we comforted of God. *As poor, yet making many rich* ; as poor in this world, yet sustaining others by the liberal distribution of alms, and far more by imparting unto "many" those "true riches" which alone endure ; *as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*, as having given up all things for Christ's sake, and yet obtaining from Him whatever we ask in prayer ; as made in Him "heirs of all things," both in time and eternity ; as emptied of self, and possessing God, and having in Him every need supplied.

Such a series of contrasts, such a contradiction, such a mystery to the world, is the true Christian. And thus in him are fully obtained and realized in substance and truth all those things which Satan falsely offered in the Temptation. Stones have to him become as bread, and the wilderness a fruitful field. In possessing all things he has "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" for his own ; the true riches whereby he makes many rich ; he is sustained by angels, and borne aloof by them safe from all harm unto the bosom of God.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Then did the Holy Spirit which descended upon Him in Baptism lead Him forth to that great trial which was to be the likeness of our own, as the Spirit had led before the children of Israel into the wilderness for their probation. He was led by the good Spirit, for, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."⁷ "He goes to overcome for us, clothed in our weakness without, full of His own divine strength within."⁸ *And when He had fasted*

⁷ Rom. viii. 14.

⁸ Quesnel on St. Matt.

forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. "He fasted," as an example to ourselves of that armour by which we are to prepare ourselves for trial, weakening the power of the flesh against the Spirit. "He hungred" as Israel in the wilderness, as Elijah hungred in the trials of faith; for that hunger is sustained of God by spiritual food. *And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* If it be, as I lately heard the voice from Heaven to declare, that Thou art the Son of God, then surely as the children of God were miraculously supported by bread in the wilderness, Thou art able to do the same for Thyself. Every temptation is to make ourselves independent of God. *But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* He took "the shield of faith, to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" one, and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,"⁹ as an example to ourselves in the like trials. The tempter's allusion is to Israel in the wilderness, and from that our Lord's answer is given. "He humbled thee," said Moses, "and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that He might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."¹ That supernatural bread was given, not so much to nourish the body as the soul itself, by faith in God. The manna itself was given in order to teach them this trust, as a pledge of that better "Bread" which the "Father giveth." Thus, as the first Adam doubted God's word, the second Adam takes no other protection. The first Adam was in

⁹ Eph. vi. 16, 17.

¹ Deut. viii. 3.

a garden, in abundance of all things ; the second Adam in a wilderness, and “ an hungred.” The first Adam sinned against a positive command ; the second Adam chose the better part, where no command was given. The first Adam doubted God’s love, as if He could withhold from him that which was good ; and God’s truth also, as if he might eat and not die. But the second Adam has taught us by His example, that our meat should be to do His will.² The blessed Son of God well knew, and the tempter well knew, that almost all evil among men arose from their seeking good for themselves instead of waiting upon God ; of seeking good, not in, but out of God. And here this fountain of evil in our nature was stopped. For the seeds of all subsequent sins were in the fall of the first Adam, sensuality, pride, curiosity ; their remedies all in the New Man, mortification, humility, faith.

Then the devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple. He that so emptied Himself of all His glory as to suffer indignities from evil men, to be kissed by Judas, to be dragged as a criminal to Pilate, now, for our sakes, in His exceeding humility, yields Himself to be carried by the evil one. For to suffer external violence from him is not sin. And now the tempter, who is ever wont to lift up in order that he may cast down, as an angel of light, with feigned hypocrisy himself quotes Scripture, and that Psalm which he knew to be written of the Christ Who was to come. *And he saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down ; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee : and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against*

² St. John iv. 34.

a stone. The tempter seems to say, so you trust altogether in God, in this confidence you have obtained the victory over self, for you rely upon His written word. For Satan well knew that when men have overcome the temptations of the flesh, they are then apt to fall from spiritual pride; and that presumptuous self-confidence is founded in unbelief, as much as that distrust which he had before suggested. Thus some, presuming on their privileges as sons of God, throw themselves down, as it were, thinking that God will hold them up, and that they are safe. For many sins are connected with false confidences. It is true that God will keep those that trust in Him, as the Psalm promises, but there is one point which the devil omitted to mention, it is, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee *in all thy ways.*"³ In the ordered and appointed "ways" they will keep him. When Scripture is quoted, we should look and see whether it is the whole of Scripture on that point.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Thus did our Lord submit, in infinite lowliness, to that humble nature which He had assumed as a creature dependent upon God, and presumed not beyond the state which is suitable for fallen man. And, mindful of this, it may be, and of the secret misgivings of God with which it is connected, "He sighed deeply in spirit," when the Jews of that adulterous generation sought for a sign.

Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and

³ Ps. xci. 11.

worship me. Now we may, at first, be surprised that such an offer as this should be made at all to Him Who, as God, possessed all things. But the tempter did not, it appears, at this time, know Him to be God, nor, as God, could He have been tempted at all, but, as perfect man, He might have desired to have all that this world could give. In the Scriptures of God, we are given thoroughly to understand and know that such a wish would be to put something else in the place of God, and is incompatible with that entire love of Him which becomes a creature. God is the rest, the life, the happiness of the soul; whatever, therefore, the soul makes its rest and happiness, it makes its God, and worships. Add to which, as the tempter says, in St. Luke's account, "for that is delivered unto me," this is in one sense true, that the world has fallen away from God, and therefore on that account no object of desire for a good man.

Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Here, again, the tempter is not answered with human arguments, there is no stopping to converse with him, as our first parents did, but the Scripture which is open to the humblest believer is all that Wisdom requires. They that are tempted may flee into this as a tower of refuge, and are safe. And blessed are they who thus answer the tempter by the language of their lives, whose only wish is to avoid these his manifold insinuations, in whatever shape they occur, and to worship and serve God only.

Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him. He refused to relieve His own wants, and waited patiently upon God; and God, in His own good time, ministers by angels to His wants;

fulfilling truly what the Psalm had said, that He should give His angels charge to keep Him in His ways and bear Him up. They minister unto Him, and His foot fell not on that stumbling-block which the tempter had devised.

Now, as our Lord's Temptation is of all things in the world the matter of greatest concern to us, so is there nothing more worthy of our deep consideration, for it is calculated to impress upon us beyond anything the reality of our own state of probation, as connected with the fall of our first parents, of that enemy with whom we have to contend, and of our restoration in Christ. And further, as the declaration of His Sonship from Heaven, preceding His Temptation, seems to say to us all who partake of His Baptism, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation:"⁴ so we may observe, that fasting is the best means of preparation, and our only safety under temptation is a strict obedience to God's Word.

⁴ Ecclus. ii. 1.

SERMON XXIII.

The Second Sunday in Lent.

1 Thess. iv. 1—8. St. Matt. xv. 21—28.

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the LORD JESUS, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please GOD, so ye would abound more and more.—1 THESS. iv. 1.

THESE words of St. Paul, together with the passage that follows, are like a short Lenten sermon; and thus taken, they are as if he had said, now being “the accepted time” and “the day of salvation,” he who does not advance forward and make progress, will assuredly fall back. *We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.* The danger of your falling back is so great, that “by the Lord Jesus,” by all your hopes in Christ I do “beseech you,” nay, I do “exhort you as brethren,” that ye will not look back, nor stop, but press forward in your high calling. St. Paul’s words are often best explained by what he says on other occasions; and this passage is very similar to what he writes to the Colossians,

“that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”¹

For, he adds, ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. As if he had said, But you will ask what is this conversation, pleasing to God, in which we are to abound? why, it is your own sanctification or holiness; and this your holiness consists in avoiding fornication, that is, all sins of the flesh. It is that law which, as our Lord so often teaches us in the Gospel, reaches to the heart; out of which issue adulteries, fornication, uncleanness; that desire within, which is like the right eye, and if it makes us to fall must be plucked out, that the whole body be not cast into hell,—that eye of lust, which our Lord declares to be in the sentence of the Judge as the very sin of adultery. This is the flesh which is at war with the Spirit, and against which the Spirit contends, and one of these must gain the mastery. It is in this mortification that we are continually to advance without ceasing. For this is the purity of heart to which is given the vision and the knowledge of God.² This is that holiness, “without which,” says St. Paul, “no man shall see the Lord.”³ Nothing that defileth,⁴ no unclean or effeminate person, can enter into the City of God, or be found in His Presence.

That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; that is, there is something very awful in this body which we bear about with

¹ Col. i. 10.

³ Heb. xii. 14.

² St. Matt. v. 8.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 27.

us; it is like a vessel set apart in the Temple; nay, more, "your body," says St. Paul, "is the temple of the Holy Ghost."⁵ There is some great mystery on this subject, which makes sins of the flesh of a heinous and very aggravated character in a Christian. "Know ye not," says the same Apostle, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."⁶

Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God. The very gods of the Gentiles were of themselves lustful and impure, because they were in fact devils, and the worship of devils was compatible with all uncleanness; those sins were the very proof that they "know not God," Who is infinitely holy, and Who cannot be approached or known without purity of heart and life.

That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any (or the) matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. Having spoken of each keeping his own body in holiness, St. Paul advances a step further, and speaks of others also being overreached or injured, as must be the case in all such acts of defilement as adultery and fornication. There is no subject in Holy Scripture so terrible as this, because it speaks of God Himself being in some especial manner of all such sins "*the Avenger.*" As in another place, "but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."⁷ Hence we find that human laws do not punish these sins; they cannot; they are beyond them; God reserves them to

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

⁶ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 4.

Himself for His own judgment. And it may be observed, that in Scripture these sins are usually spoken of with some allusion to the eternal fire, as in the Gospels to "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." Thus St. Peter says that "the Lord reserveth the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished; but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness."⁸

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. That is, for the very purpose of our being thus "called" out of the world, and set apart by Baptism for God's service, is this sanctification; as everything in the Temple of old was marked as "holiness unto the Lord," and very carefully kept from all profane or common uses, so must it be with our own bodies; they are to be held in reverence, set apart by the Holy Unction which is within, as the abode of God's Spirit, as parts of Christ's own Body. "Not fashioning yourselves," says St. Peter to those who had once been Gentiles, "according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."⁹

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, Who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit. Here, again, is expressed the whole matter, as before alluded to. The peculiar effect of such sins is, that they harden the heart, "take away the heart,"¹ as Scripture says, and alienate it from God; and this is shown by light indifference and contempt. Such a one, therefore,

⁸ 2 St. Pet. ii. 9.

⁹ 1 St. Pet. i. 14—16.

¹ Hos. iv. 11.

despises in heart and sets at naught all those by whom he is admonished—the Apostles of God; and then His minister, it may be, and his warnings; or the countenance of his parents and elders, and of all good people; he secretly mocks at them, and in heart sets them at defiance; nay, far more, there are others also whom he despises, those whose souls or bodies he defiles. It is this which renders him easy-hearted, and allows him to live, perhaps, and die without fear. But what says St. Paul in this passage? he “despiseth not man, but God.” God keeps this as His own especial business and care. And why is this sin of despising God so heavy in this matter beyond all? it is what St. Paul ever repeats, “because He hath given unto us His Holy Spirit;” that Holy Spirit Which shall enable us to resist and overcome such temptations, if we will; and Who, if we will not, is grieved first, and then (O terrible desertion!) leaves us.

There is, moreover, an evident suitableness that God should be so peculiarly the Watcher and Avenger of all sins of this nature, because they are for the most part known to God only, Whose eye is on the heart, and on all the secret ways of men. And because the contrary to this, viz. purity of heart and mortification of life, has the indwelling of God, the hidden Presence of His Spirit, fills the soul with a disposition to unceasing prayer, and draws it more and more into communion with God. And all this must be in secret. It is here that God only rewards and punishes. He rewards the pure in heart with the knowledge of Himself, because He intends that they should for ever dwell with Him in Heaven; He punishes the unclean by withdrawing from them His Holy Spirit, because they are to be hereafter for ever shut out from His Presence. And, therefore, of such it

is said: "A fornicator will never cease till he hath kindled a fire. He will not leave off till he die." So says the wise man; but why? assuredly because God takes from him His Holy Spirit. He saith "in his heart, Who seeth me? I am compassed about with darkness, the walls cover me, and nobody seeth me; what need I to fear? the Most High will not remember my sins: such a man only feareth the eyes of men, and knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun."²

Now, such being the nature of these sins, the weight of them is very terrible to an awakened conscience which makes any serious attempts to draw near to God; the recollection of sins of this kind, not in deed only, but of any approaches to them in evil thought, depresses, darkens, overwhelms the spirit, perhaps, more than any other sin. And, therefore, there seems something peculiarly suitable in the Gospel which our Church has appointed for this week, as following the Epistle, and thus connecting it with this most sad subject, wherein we are taught that we have not, under such feelings, to lift up the bitter cry of Esau, of which we have the account in this morning's Lesson, when, after having sold his birthright for one morsel of meat, "he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears;"³ but, on the contrary, like the poor Canaanitish woman, although unworthy of the children's bread, and unclean in the sight of God, yet we have only to persevere, and after much importunity and many tears shall undoubtedly be accepted.

And this may be noticed the rather, because, although the Epistle is, as usual, the same, yet our Gospel for to-

² Ecclus. xxiii. 17—19.

³ Heb. xii. 17.

day is different from that of other and foreign Churches. For this day's Gospel with them contains the account of our Lord's transfiguration, when Moses and Elias were seen with Him on the Mount. For Moses, who represented the Law, and Elias the Prophets, and Christ setting forth the Gospel; all three of them fasted for forty days; and, therefore, all three of them together seem witnesses of this Fast of Lent which the Church keeps; all three of them together conversing on the subject of our Lord's Passion and Crucifixion, which was to follow. But our own Church does not on this day take us up to be on the Mount with them; but, after warning us of the sins of the flesh which will for ever shut us out from His Presence, brings before us the example and the acceptance of this poor Heathen suppliant of Canaan, as an encouragement to us penitent sinners.

Then Jesus went thence, that is, He left the neighbourhood of the Jews, where the Pharisees from Jerusalem were lying in wait for Him, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, those old heathen cities on the borders of the Great Sea. And behold, a woman of Canaan, one that remained from that wicked nation which God had driven out from the land, came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, as He was proceeding along the road with His disciples, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David. Thou, the promised Messiah of Israel, which I know Thee to be, though persecuted and rejected of the Jews, have mercy on me: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. He was the same God Who so often seems as if He heard not our prayers, and answers them not, while, all the time, He hears them, indeed, and remembers every word; but waits on purpose to try us, and to exercise our

faith, in order that, praying the more importunately and more earnestly, we may receive the more abundantly.

And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. They felt as Jews, for she was not only a Gentile, whom the law had marked as unclean, but, if possible, even worse, one of the accursed stock of Canaan; they could not suppose that the mercies of their Divine Master could overflow for such. And, besides, they were desirous to be hid and unnoticed in retiring to these heathen parts, whereas she was calling observation upon them. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* He did not exactly send her away, but, as in other cases when Gentiles applied to Him, He seemed to hesitate; as desirous to grant, but waiting; full of compassions, but as under constraint.

Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. It was afterwards, in the house, as St. Mark tells us, that this happened, that she thus "came and fell at His feet," pressing, with still greater earnestness, her request and supplication. For she was fully impressed, not only with a sense of His Divine power, but also of His goodness and mercy. Long continuance and fervency in prayer is always expressive of this on our part. It always implies confidence and love in God. And there is nothing which God so much loves, as thus to be pressed by our perseverance and humiliation. It is this which increases repentance and faith; and it is this which our Blessed Lord means, when He says, "the violent take the kingdom by force:" when the lukewarm give over at any delay or discouragement, the humble and earnest, on the contrary, increase their humility and earnestness. They know that our Lord has Himself exhorted us not to be

faint or weary in our prayers ; to imitate the importunate widow, who overcame the unjust judge by her long, persevering entreaties ; and the man at midnight calling long, in vain, to his friend, and never giving over till he had gained what he had needed. There is something of exceeding value and importance to our souls in long and unceasing prayer ; and for this reason, Christ so often, in the Gospels, puts off and lingers long before He answered those petitioners with whom He was most pleased.

But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. The people of Israel, for Abraham's sake, were designated the children of God, to whom appertained the adoption ; and the dogs, as unclean animals, represented the Gentiles : in these words, therefore, our Lord expressed, still more strongly, what, in another manner, He had said before, that He was "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But we may also apply it to ourselves, and understand it in another way ; our Lord Himself is the true Bread of Life, the Bread of the true children of God ; it is not suitable that this the Bread of Heaven should be cast away on unclean persons. It is said, at the end of the Revelation, that "dogs" are not admitted into the Heavenly City of the Blessed, where by "dogs" is evidently meant those guilty of uncleanness and impurity.

But this woman of Canaan understood our Lord's words in the first sense, that He spoke of Jews and Gentiles. *And she said, Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* She acknowledged salvation to be of the Jews, implying, such is the great abundance of Thy mercies, that while there is enough for those that are in covenant with Thee,—for those Thy children who were called in Abraham, the Father of the

faithful,—yet even for us outcasts, and unclean heathens, who sit not among the children, but are under the table, and at the feet of Thy children and Thee, for us also are the crumbs that fall to the ground ; and we shall be rich with the least overflowings of Thy goodness. Very deep was the sense of her unworthiness, and of the greatness and holiness of God. And here we may observe, how everything with God must be in its own appointed and ordered place. Our Lord Himself said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel, that is, I must keep to the mission and appointment of God, Who has willed and ordained that Israel should be first called. I must not go beyond that for which I am sent. And again, all the humility and self-abasement of this woman consists in her fully acknowledging and knowing her own place. Our Lord spoke of her as one among the dogs, for so the law had declared the Gentiles to be ; she murmurs not at this, she accepts it at once, “ Truth, Lord.” I presume not, I know well that such is my place and condition. We may apply both of these cases to ourselves ; the minister has nothing else to do but that for which he is sent and appointed of God ; to go beyond this is pride, and not acceptable service. And, in the next place, nothing more is required of a sinner, than that he should know himself to be such, and act accordingly. He that exalteth himself, as the Jew did, shall be humbled, because he knows not himself as a sinner. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, because to humble himself more and more, is nothing else but his coming to a right sense of what his condition is in God’s sight.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Our Lord,

on one occasion, had said to His own Apostles, "O ye of little faith." And He had said unto them, even just before the last, "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," that is, ever so small, "ye will be able to remove mountains." What, therefore, must have been the faith of this daughter of Canaan, to whom Christ Himself said, in words that He used to no other, "O woman, great is thy faith." If faith ever so small could move a mountain, surely faith so great could move Heaven itself, could open the door of the Kingdom of Heaven for those Gentiles, against whom before it had been closed. And so it was; it was this Heathen woman, and such as she, who pressed with violence into the narrow door of Christ's Kingdom, for us all to follow after, so that we, who were accounted as dogs under the table, are made the children in His house; fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the table of God in His Kingdom. But our faith must be such as that of this poor suppliant, must have the same self-abasement and lowliness of mind for us to continue there. It is on this subject, of our receiving those privileges which Israel had rejected, that St. Paul exclaims, "be not high-minded, but fear."

Our Lord does not say, we may observe, that her daughter should be healed, but more than this, "be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" to faith so great the gift is given, that whatever she willed, it is granted to her; her "daughter made whole from that very hour" was but a pledge to her of things far greater even than this.

In conclusion it may be observed, that the importunate supplication of this woman was not for herself, but for her daughter. This, also, we must apply to the great Lesson of this Sunday in Lent. It may often be the case,

that one whose soul is possessed by an unclean devil, or a habit of impurity, cannot pray effectually for himself. What then? is he to be irrevocably lost, without hope? God forbid! It may be that Christ, in His providence, is drawing near, approaching, and waiting, as He did to the neighbourhood where the woman of Canaan dwelt; and that the humble and earnest prayer of some one else, some parent or friend, may save him. I speak not of an uncommon case. Thousands and ten thousands of souls are daily overtaken and perish, because the devil, unawares, creeps into their unsuspecting hearts by some impurity, and has them in his toils before they know it. Nor does it seem possible, by any degree of care or watchfulness, to prevent this altogether; there are no other means in the world that can prevent it, but the faithful and unceasing prayer of an anxious parent or guardian. This is a sure protection which cannot fail, but there is no other. It is a case that comes home to us all; everybody has some one for whom he has reason to pray, as this woman of Canaan did for her daughter.

There is a very remarkable instance of this kind in the history of the Church, which God has, no doubt, providentially made known to us for the same reason as He has this of the woman in the Gospels. There is no greater saint in the Church, since the days of the Apostles,—none, I mean, whose works have had a greater influence for good,—than St. Augustin. He was an unbeliever, living unbaptized till he had come to manhood, because he was entangled by a habit of sin; but his mother, Monica, who was a very devout and holy Christian, never ceased her earnest prayers for him; and her prayers, after a long time, like those of this Canaanitish woman, were most abundantly heard and answered. She lived to see him

become a very remarkable penitent, and holy man; to be herself instructed by his wonderful wisdom in the things of God; and she blessed God and died content. He was given to her prayers as a brand plucked from the fire, and made to shine as a star in Heaven for ever and ever, turning many to righteousness. For ever since that time, the greatest of saints and the most humble of penitents have sat, as it were, at the feet of St. Augustin, from whose soul the devil was cast out by the prayers of his mother.

With these examples I would earnestly entreat those who pray for themselves at this season, to pray also for others who, perhaps, do not or cannot pray for themselves.

SERMON XXIV.

The Third Sunday in Lent.

Eph. v. 1—14. St. Luke xi. 14—28.

THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT RETURNING.

Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.—St. LUKE xi. 26.

THE Gospel for last Sunday spoke of the evil spirit cast out of her daughter by the prayer of the Canaanitish woman; that for to-day in a remarkable manner carries on this awful subject, for it gives the account of an unclean spirit which had gone out of a man, watching for, and at length finding, an opportunity to return.

First of all, bearing in our minds this dread Lesson for the day, let us consider the Epistle with a reference to it. The Ephesians to whom St. Paul writes, were precisely in the situation of the penitent here described. The unclean spirit had been cast out; One far mightier than he, even the Lord Jesus, had entered in, had taken from him all the armour wherein he trusted, and had sanctified them to the service of God. They were under His protection,—the Spirit of God, Which had overcome the wicked one,

and cast him out of their hearts, was keeping watch within them. But the enemy was lying in wait, eagerly bent on returning, and watching his opportunity.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. By those loving-kindnesses of God, whereby He hath delivered you from the power of the enemy and made you His children, endeavour to be as He is ; this is the best return ye can make. *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* As if He had said, Dwell in love and ye will dwell in God, and God will dwell in you ; and this will be to you a pledge and proof that ye are safe from the enemy. As of the sacrifice of Noah it was said that God "smelled a sweet savour," much more is the sacrifice of Christ's death ever pleasing to Him ; and while ye are knit in love unto Christ and your brethren, ye shall have part in that sacrifice, and that wicked one toucheth you not. But mind, he goes on to say, there are some things quite incompatible with this love of God, the very contrary to it ; and if you in any way admit their approaches, you are opening your heart to the enemy, you are inviting him to you, and God will not dwell in you, Who alone is more powerful. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.* He does not say, avoid falling into these sins, but keep far away, even from the very mention of them ; for even to allow any conversation on such subjects implies some remains of love for them in the heart, which is not compatible with the holiness of a Christian, who has to watch and pray always against the enemy. Words of sensuality or avarice are like the breath of the unclean spirit ; like the parching breath of him that "walketh through dry places, seeking

rest," which will dry up in the heart the refreshing fountains of God's grace, and make you, like himself, to seek for rest and not to find it, because you seek it not in God. *Neither filthiness, adds St. Paul, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.* Let there not be that light and easy conversation which is unsuitable to your high calling, but that discourse which is "seasoned with salt" of good principle; and if your hearts at any time are full of Christian joy, let it be shown in "giving of thanks;" keeping always to that meekness of wisdom in which alone is safety.

On which passage St. Chrysostom says, "The devil stands hard at hand; he is going about roaring to catch thee, and turning everything against thy life. And art thou sitting down and talking folly? Look at the countenances of men in battle; the stern eye, the eager and beating heart, the spirit collected, but anxious and trembling. In camps all is order and discipline. If they who have visible enemies observe so great silence, art thou, whose chief warfare is in thy words, enjoying thyself with jests, and raising a laugh as if the matter were a mere nothing? Now is the time of watch and guard; such things are of the world, and can have no place here. Christ was crucified for thy ills: art thou taking it all in jest?"¹

But why is it that these things, this light carriage, is so dangerous? It is because they lie near to great sins, which are no less than the entering of the unclean spirit again into the soul. Such conversation makes light of those sins which will infallibly shut us out from the Kingdom of God. *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath*

¹ Ephes. ad loc.

any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Idol worship in the Old Testament is called "abomination;" and our Lord applies the same word in speaking of covetousness, saying, that what is "highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."² Here St. Paul warns us against conversation on such matters; because sins of the flesh, and that worldly wisdom which is set on gain, are not so estimated in the judgment of the world and in common discourse as they are with God; and this very materially assists that self-deceit which men put upon themselves in these cases, and is quite contrary to that prayer and watchfulness which is needful for those whom the devil is seeking to enter.

Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. These sins are the very cause of God's judgment on unbelievers; he had said before, in this Epistle, "in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."³ These are the marks of them who are manifestly under captivity to the great enemy. *Be not ye therefore partakers with them.* Do not ye then, by your conversation or otherwise, become associated with them in their thoughts and principles. "Let no man deceive you," he says. These deceivers are often, in Scripture, likened to Balaam of old, who endeavoured to destroy God's children, and put them in the power of their enemies by corrupting them with sensuality, from motives of covetousness. And that these Ephesians were in great danger of such relapse we learn from the Revelation of St. John, where our Lord some time after sent

² St. Luke xvi. 15.

³ Eph. ii. 2.

unto them, saying, "Thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent."⁴

For ye were sometimes darkness. He does not say in darkness, but "darkness" itself; ye yourselves "were darkness," the light within you being darkness, of which our Lord says, "how great is that darkness!" being in "the kingdom of darkness," and belonging to the prince of darkness; "their foolish heart was darkened,"⁵ because it was alienated from God. As our Lord says in the Gospel, "when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace;" the evil one in full power possessed the heart and affections, so that there was no struggle, no power, or thought of escape from him. *But now are ye light in the Lord.* All is now changed; as Christ says Himself, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁶ *Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.* Ye are light in the Lord, not in yourselves; for in yourselves ye are all darkness, but in the Lord ye are light; as long as ye continue in Him, by walking as His children, by proving what is acceptable to Him. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."⁷ And what else is this walking in the light but the fruit of the Spirit, which is *in all goodness*; that is, in all gentleness and forbearance, that walking in love which He had before spoken of, "forgiving one another as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." For, "if we

⁴ Rev. ii. 5.

⁵ Rom. i. 21.

⁶ St. John viii. 12.

⁷ 1 St. John i. 6.

walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," says St. John. *And righteousness*, that honest dealing which is contrary to all that covetousness and love of gain he had before condemned. *And truth*, as opposed to all that foolish talking, those deceits of vain words, by which men are entangled in the snares of the evil one before they are aware of it; persuading themselves that such things are allowable, which a good conscience, enlightened by the Spirit of Christ, would condemn.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Our Lord speaks of "idle words," and St. Paul here of "unfruitful works;" in both the expression is of those things which bear no fruit unto holiness. "What fruit had ye then," says the same Apostle to the Romans, "in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death."⁸ Do not partake in such things by appearing to consent with them, *but rather reprove them.* Take care that your presence rebukes them, either by your words or your silence, that you share them not. *For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.*

But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. I said that you must reprove these things, for you that are the light of Christ will, by your own example, condemn these sins and show what they are. As Christ Himself says, "Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." "Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewithal shall it be seasoned?" You must reprove and make mani-

⁸ Rom. vi. 21.

fest the evil that is around you, by your words, by your actions, by your very presence, letting the light of Christ shine forth from you in a dark world.

Wherefore He saith—i. e. the Holy Spirit says, by the Prophet in the Old Testament, when Christ shall arise on the gross darkness of the Heathen, *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* Thou that art asleep in darkness, come to Christ in faith and repentance, and He shall be thy light: thou that art “dead” in sin, “awake” to righteousness, and Christ shall be thy life.

And now let us come to the subject of the Gospel for to-day. The account is as follows: *Jesus was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake: and the people wondered.* They were “amazed,” says St. Matthew, and ready to acknowledge the promised “Son of David;” it was but natural for an unbiassed mind to do so. But with others the door of the heart was shut against conviction by envy or some other evil passion. *But some of them—the Scribes, says St. Mark, who had come down from Jerusalem,—said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. And others tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven.* To the former, who thus suggested to the people that He must be in league with the devils, our Lord meekly showed that it evidently could be nothing else but the mighty power and presence of God. *But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falleth.* This is a common proverb, and of course it must be the case. *If Satan also be divided against himself,*

how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say, that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you. It is allowed, even among yourselves, that to cast out evil spirits can only be by the wonderful power of God and in His Name: and it is impossible for you to resist the plain inference that the Kingdom of God is come. *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.* A strong man, with his soldiers, may keep quiet possession of a palace in which he has lodged himself; but if he is cast out of that possession, and is forced to quit his hold, surely it is obvious that it must be by means of one stronger than himself. If Satan is overcome and dislodged from the soul or body of any man, it can be by no other than by the Spirit or Finger of God Himself. And now, therefore, this being clear, no other alternative remains to you, but that you must take part either with Me or with Satan. *He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.*

Then occurs in St. Luke's Gospel that short warning of the relapsed penitent, which I have considered as the peculiar lesson of this day; it is one of such fearful interest, that, perhaps, nothing can be found to equal it in the whole of the Scriptures, so does it, in a few simple words, lift up the veil from the unseen world around us, showing us what our condition is, and telling us why we are so liable to a relapse, to fall again into a sin once admitted, and why, if this happens, it is so difficult to

recover. Our Lord had first called attention to this point, that if Satan be driven out, this can only be by the power of God; therefore, to attribute it to anything else is without excuse. But now, what awful consequences follow from this, for, if God alone can drive out an evil spirit, it is nothing but the protection of God which will keep him out, and if that protection is withdrawn, he will assuredly return. We know what watchfulness is necessary in every one that has repented of past sin, and how liable he is to fall into it again without constant care; our Lord has, in a very fearful manner, explained to us how this is. He says, *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, i. e.* the evil spirit wanders about, as one in search of that rest which the wicked seek in vain. In the meanwhile, the penitent, whom he seems to have left for a time, is perhaps refreshed and comforted by religion; the terrors from which he has escaped with much suffering, urge him to earnest prayer and communion with God. But at length he again becomes careless, and the love of that sin still lies hidden at the bottom of his heart, and that heart is more and more unguarded. This his great enemy knows, and again returns to tempt him; looking upon him as already his own, his own house, on account of his former possession. *Then saith the evil spirit, after seeking for rest, and finding none, I will return unto my house, whence I came out.* Oh, the fearful words, "my house!" And how does he find it? is it guarded on all sides and watched, with every avenue closed against so deadly an enemy? Not at all so. The door is open to invite him in. It is "empty," as St. Matthew says; the man is idle in the things of religion; no earnest prayers, no alms, or fasting. Nay, more, *he*

findeth the house *swept and garnished* for the evil spirit; it not only invites him in, it is all prepared for his return, and furnished for such company. So that the unclean spirit is not content to enter in alone. *Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there*; continue to abide in the man for ever. There is now no repentance, no amendment, no change, no remorse. He was once held by one chain, now by seven. Instead of the seven graces of God's good Spirit, there are the seven deadly sins. *And the last state of that man is worse than the first.* The one sin of youth, if it returns and gains the mastery in after-life, eats out the very heart of religion, and a man, after such relapse, becomes indifferent to God's grace altogether: covetousness, envy, pride, and other sins lodge in his heart, make themselves a very part of it.

Thus our Lord informs us of circumstances in our probation which none but Himself could have told; the effect we know full well of an evil habit returning, but we did not know the spiritual causes of it. And this, which our Lord here describes as the one unclean spirit returning with seven others, is, in another manner, expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance:"⁹ and alluded to by St. Peter: "It were better for them not to have known the way of truth, than, after they had known it, to turn away."

To revert once more to the subject of the Epistle for

⁹ Heb. vi. 4, 6.

the day. I observed that we should read it, on this occasion, by the light of the Gospel, wherein our Lord warns us, in so impressive a manner, of the effect of the evil spirit, once cast out, again returning. St. Paul, in the passage referred to, may be supposed to explain all those matters in our conduct, wherein our danger will lie of such a relapse. "I will return into my house whence I came out," says the evil spirit; on which words an ancient writer of our country, the Venerable Bede, says, "this verse is to be feared, not to be explained." And he thinks that a great aggravation of evil in this return of the unclean spirit with seven others more wicked, is apt to be, that it is accompanied with some false appearance of religion, a self-deceiving hypocrisy, by which the conscience is lulled into a false security. It may be observed that darkness is the word so much applied to it; this darkness implies an ignorance of our own true condition,—this is the great object of the prince of darkness. This de-ceivableness and darkness of a state of sin is the subject on which the Epistle especially dwells.

Now, our Lord distinctly says that the unclean spirit enters, on such a relapse, with "seven," that is, with many others, and takes up in the man his sure and permanent abode.

It is not to be supposed that the man to whom this happens is at all aware of it; he goes on as usual about his business or his pleasure; eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and converses, as other men, nay, with more freedom and ease of speech. When, therefore, does he come to know it? I ask in simple earnestness, as of a truth of which Christ assures us. When does he come to know it? When does the evil spirit within him allow him to know it, and bring the fact fully to his knowledge, viz. that he

is his? Not probably on his death-bed. But when the veil of flesh is removed!

May God of His great mercy keep us, and may we never know so terrible a reality; and, with the Collect for this day, let us beseech Him to "look upon" our "hearty desires, and stretch forth the right hand of His Majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies."

One word more. If we are at all impressed with what has been said, there is great danger still in our seeing the force, the beauty, the suitableness of all this, and being affected with the heavenly wisdom of Him that thus speaks as from the other world, and therein being satisfied. The Gospel, therefore, is lengthened out into one more lesson of caution. *And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice,¹ and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* To admire, to be impressed, to be sensibly moved by our Blessed Saviour's whole demeanour and words, His love for us, and anxiety that we should be saved, this is not enough; we must keep His Word; then shall we be blessed indeed, and so dear to Him, that that wicked one shall never pluck us out of His hand.

¹ On the cause of this interruption, see "The Ministry, 2nd Year," pp. 169, 170.

SERMON XXV.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Gal. iv. 21—31. St. John vi. 1—14.

THE PENITENT REFRESHED.

To comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.—ISA. lxi. 2, 3.

WHAT is the one great lesson which the Church teaches us on this Sunday in the middle of Lent? Shall we not say it is of rest with God amidst the sufferings of this world; of his brethren being received by the true Joseph, who was “dead and is alive again,” who was “lost and is found,” and eating bread with him in Egypt; of the children of God being fed by Christ with the true bread from Heaven in the wilderness of this world; of the freedom from earthly troubles and bondage, of those who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, who are “born after the Spirit,” and are “the children of promise;” in short, as the Collect expresses it, amidst the evils which we worthily deserve, being “mercifully relieved by the comfort of” God’s “grace.”

Now with regard to works of mortification and fasting,

these are practised by many who are not Christians, by Jews and heretics, by Hindoos and Mahometans ; in what respect, therefore, is the Christian to differ from these ? not in omitting those duties which nature itself teaches, and Scripture and the Church enjoins, but in that he is relieved under them, by having his heart in Heaven, and the free Spirit of adoption. This the Epistle for to-day sets before us.

Tell me, says St. Paul to the Galatians, who were falling back into Judaism, *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law ?* Ye think it necessary to fulfil all those Jewish ordinances, because the law enjoins them ; attend to me, and I will show you the better and higher wisdom which the law itself contained, if rightly understood. *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh ; but he of the free-woman was by promise.* He had told them that they were the true children of Abraham by faith, and now he shows how this was set forth in the very history of Abraham itself. For Ishmael, the son of Hagar, the Egyptian bond-woman, was born according to nature, with nothing appertaining to grace and faith in that birth ; but he that was of Sarah the free-woman, was born beyond and above nature, when the parents were past the age of having children,—was born by miracle, in consequence of a remarkable faith in God's promises. *Which things are an allegory, i. e.* a history which contains within it a mystical meaning. *For these are the two covenants ;* these two mothers represent the old and the new covenant, the Law and the Gospel ; *the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.* The

Hagarenes are a people of Arabia, to whom Mount Sinai belonged. Hagar, their mother, represents the law given from thence, *and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, that earthly Jerusalem that still exists, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above, the heavenly Jerusalem which walketh on high, the Christian Church which is above the world, the true spouse of Christ:—as “the Son of Man” while on earth was “in Heaven,”*¹ so now, with her Divine Lord, “Jerusalem,” while suffering below, is spoken of as being “above:”—*she is free; which is the Mother of us all, by whom we are all born unto Christ, having the “free Spirit” of adoption. And this will explain the allusions throughout the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, to that mystery of the fruitfulness of the “barren woman” made “to keep house,” and to be “a joyful mother of children.” For it is written by the Prophet Isaiah, when describing the Church and the inflowing of the Gentiles, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. To which St. Paul adds, taking up this spiritual mystery, of a woman by nature childless having by grace children unto God. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. “As it was not nature,” says St. Chrysostom, “but the promise of God which rendered Sarah a mother, so in our regeneration it is not nature, but the Word of God spoken at our Baptism, which makes us His children.” But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now. That history of Abraham still continues to speak in mystery;*

¹ St. John iii. 13.

they that are born after the flesh persecute them that are born after the Spirit. The Jew and the natural man will persecute Christ in His members. *Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture?* what is that end to which all these things are tending, as Scripture itself declares? *Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.* As our Lord Himself, speaking on the same subject, said to the Jews, "The servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."²

Now this very beautiful lesson is most suitable to us in this season of Lent, teaching us that we have not to mourn as they that have no hope: not to be cast down towards the earth as they who have not a Heaven to look up to: not as they who have a servile yoke upon the neck; but rather, as they that bear the Cross after Christ, and are able to fix their eyes upon Him going before; and thus, by the love of Him constraining them, have ever in tribulation a joy of which the world knoweth not. And what is the true liberty of the children of God? It consists in so denying themselves as to be masters of their own will, and thus to find that perfect freedom in the service of Christ, which can only be when our will is lost in His will. Our will is the will of the flesh "which gendereth to bondage," which mocks and persecutes that which is of God; this must be cast out; the will of Christ is the Spirit of adoption, which is from above, which cometh by faith, and must rule and abide in us for ever.

² St. John viii. 35, 36.

Christian mortification is of the very greatest moment when it thus deadens our own will; when it is united with devotion; when it quickens our repentance; when it is one with humiliation of ourselves, and partakes in all ways of the sacrifice of Christ. Then the fruits of it are blessed indeed, but not otherwise. "Keeping a fast," says Chrysostom, "does not consist in mere passing the time, but in fulfilling it with good deeds. Let us ask ourselves, have we become more diligent, have we corrected any defect, have we washed out crimes? What advantage is it to have completed the fast, if you have done so without works of good? If another should say, I have fasted the whole forty days; be thou able to say, I had an enemy and I am reconciled; I had a habit of detraction, I have left it off; I was used to profane swearing, but that wicked custom has been corrected by me. It is no profit to merchants to have passed over great length of sea; but only to have done so with bringing home abundance of produce and much merchandise. So the length of our fast will be of no profit to us, if we pass through that very time without fruits and carelessly."³

Every one must acknowledge the great wisdom of these words; the Christian must have his set times for fasting and mortifying the flesh, as all other religions, whether false or true, have had; but in him it must always be connected with Christ, never apart from Him, and His Spirit, and His sacrifice; and therefore, always to the humbling and bettering of the heart, to the forgiveness of injuries, and active charities. And thus it is, that when our Blessed Lord calls upon all that are heavy laden to come to Him that He may give them rest, He invites

³ Par. Brev. Dom. quart. Quadrage.

them to take upon them His yoke, by the practice of meekness and lowliness, after His example; and He promises that they shall find His yoke easy, and His burden light. Hence it is always the case, in very deep penitence and self-abasement, that the Spirit of God visits the soul with comfort. This David found,—the Prince of Penitents,—when in the fifty-first Psalm, after expressing his sorrows, he says, “Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.” “O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.” It was for the free and princely Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, for which he so earnestly sighed and prayed; and he prayed so earnestly because he felt that by his repentance he should obtain, and had obtained what he earnestly prayed for.

Now such is the teaching of this mid-Lent Sunday, and it is carried out in the Gospel for the day. When the Israelites were for forty years in the wilderness they were supported by bread from Heaven; when Moses was for forty days and forty nights in the Mount with God, and did eat nothing, he was sustained by the Presence of God; when Elijah fled into the wilderness, to Mount Horeb, the angel gave him a miraculous cake to eat,⁴ and he “went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto the Mount of God.” And the meaning of these things was further shown by our Blessed Lord Himself, when, in the wilderness, He fed the people with bread, and then explained to them that such was not the bread they were to think of, but the better Bread Which cometh down from Heaven, Which is His Body. The circumstance was as follows :

⁴ 1 Kings xix. 7, 8.

Our Lord had crossed the sea and retired into a desert place apart, together with His disciples, for they had no leisure so much as to eat; but after they had crossed the sea of Galilee for this purpose, and had sat down to rest in the wilderness or mountain, they found that they were followed by a great multitude of people, who, having learnt where they were going, outwent them and arrived in the place of their retirement, bringing with them such as were diseased. They were, moreover, now gathering in unusual numbers, on account of the approach of the Passover. And Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight, because they were as sheep having no shepherd, and healed their sick and taught them.

St. John's account is: *Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.* Thus forgetting His own weariness and need of retirement, He continued to heal their sick. Now when it was towards evening in the desert, and He saw great companies still coming, and knew that they had come without food to be with Him, and were in this desert mountain, far from any means of obtaining it, and yet weary and hungry, He was about to feed them with bread from His own Divine creative hands. But in the saving of our souls He works no miracles, He does nothing, unless man also by faith co-operates and joins with Him. And, therefore, in order to draw out this faith in the disciples, to induce them to look to Himself, Who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness, He began to question them as to what could be done to feed these multitudes

in the desert; He asked Philip whence they could buy bread; and then Andrew, the friend and fellow-townsmen of Philip, always on the watch for what Christ would do, brings to Him a boy with five barley loaves and two small fishes, intimating that this was all that they had to supply five thousand men. And indeed the twelve disciples also themselves had been long fasting. In the account we see as it were St. Andrew, with the lad by his side, looking up to the countenance of his Divine Master, waiting and wondering to know what He would do.

When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him, There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. "Five barley loaves and two small fishes;" it was, of course, as a mere nothing, but it was all that He wanted. This was the very thing which our Blessed Lord desired, that His disciples should do what they could, and then look to Him. Thus with ourselves it is at the Holy Eucharist; we must first bring bread and offer it up unto Him, that He may convert it into His own Body. And thus it is in His Providence: man must sow a little seed in faith, and that seed God will multiply. Nor was it the case only with Philip and Andrew, who brought the loaves, but on the part of all that were present He required faith; there was faith on

the part of the twelve disciples who distributed the loaves; there was faith on the part of the multitude who all sat down at His word,—at the table, as it were, prepared for them in the wilderness,—knowing that there was nothing there to eat but what He, the Good Shepherd, would give them. It is said, in one account, that His compassions were moved because they were as sheep without a shepherd.⁵ It was the fulfilment of the Prophet Ezekiel, “As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep;” “I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel,” and “I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.”⁶ All that He requires of them is confidence in Him and obedience to His word. He feeds them daily by His providence, and this is a pledge that He will feed them also by His marvellous grace.

How beautiful is the literal fulfilment of the Prophet, the Shepherd among His sheep, feeding them on the mountains of Israel as they looked up to His hand! *Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would. “As much as they would” out of “two small fishes;” to such great riches did this their poverty through faith abound! When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. His words shall not return unto Him void;*⁷ nothing shall be lost of His Divine gifts. *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five*

⁵ St. Mark vi. 34.

⁶ Ezek. xxxiv. 12, 14, 15.

⁷ Isa. lv. 11.

barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

But now, as our Lord is the Shepherd of His people in a spiritual sense, in that He feeds their souls unto everlasting life, so every thoughtful person does of course know and consider what our Lord intended by thus feeding His people in the wilderness, as He had done by the manna of old. It must have been something worthy of "the Prophet that should come." The meaning is well expressed by an holy teacher,⁸ "He takes occasion from this their want, and from the approaching Passover, to give His disciples an emblem of the miraculous Passover which He is preparing for His Church."

But although our Blessed Lord did, no doubt, by this miracle intend to teach us of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, which He was about to give at the Passover for the life of the world; yet over and above this lesson, the Church of all ages, by fixing this as the Gospel for this Sunday, would represent to us spiritual refreshment from the grace of Christ in the midst of mortification. The anointing of the Holy One, which speaketh of joy and gladness, goeth forth from His Cross.

In the book of the Revelation, when Christ had warned the Church of Pergamos of the doctrine of Balaam, the stumbling-block to God's children, and of the lusts of the flesh, He added, "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna."⁹ Now, without stopping to dwell upon this most heavenly subject, what this hidden manna may signify, for the Spirit of God can alone reveal

⁸ Quesnel, ad loc.

⁹ Rev. ii. 17.

it to the soul, beyond what eye, or ear, or thought of man can understand: for it is "the hidden manna," not like that which lay on the ground in the sight and gathering of all, but like that manna which was laid up in the Ark, and preserved unseen in the sanctuary of God; it belongs to that life which is "hid with Christ in God." But though it be itself the secret of God, yet there is something appertaining to it, and leading to it, which all of us may know and understand after his degree, who keep aright this season of repentance.

A mortified spirit is always a cheerful spirit; there is something in fasting which disposes the heart to peaceful resignation; he that overcometh himself, even in this life has imparted to him some share of the hidden manna. And, again, what fills the heart with peace more than prayer? it disposes to peace with God and peace with man; and even this has something in it of "the hidden manna." And almsgiving likewise, if accompanied with self-denial, receives of God in good thoughts far more than it gives to His poor. I do not mean to say that this is the true and full meaning of the hidden manna of which Christ speaks, for that may signify something too high and heavenly for us now to speak of; but it is of the same Divine nature, an earnest and pledge of that unspeakable Gift, shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit of God.

But this is not all. For what does mortification signify, but deadening the motions of the flesh? and what gives rise to discontent, to ill-temper, and all unhappiness, but the unmortified desires of the flesh? Envy, for instance; what a torment is it to its possessor! envious thoughts will constantly arise and cross his path, and on every occasion disquiet and distress him. What then if during

this season of Lent he should constantly bring such thoughts before the All-seeing eye of God in prayer and humiliation, considering that they are nothing but the vile leprosy of the devil, the awakening in his heart of the worm that dieth not, and how grievous in the sight of that God Whose Name is Love? If such a sin were thus carefully mortified and cast out by the aid of God's good Spirit, will not that mind be more cheerful and at peace, which has unbosomed itself of such a serpent? And is not there, even in this, a pledge to him of the truth of those words, that he that overcometh shall partake of that hidden manna?

So likewise with any other besetting sin. Is it covetousness? This is a hard matter, for it spreads so many roots into the heart. But it is to be overcome by restitution of goods unjustly gotten, or of unfair advantages taken, and by giving to the poor. And no doubt it is a fact which any one may know from experience, that an action of this kind does put a stop to worldly anxieties, disposes to resignation in God's providence, and brings about the path a ray of sunshine, as it were, from the other world. Such things prove to every one that Scripture must be true which holds out such promises to these duties.

In short, this Sunday speaks of the refreshments and consolations which God in every way vouchsafes to sincere repentance, reminding us of His gracious promise, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." It is as in the parable, where the bowels of the father are yearning for his son while he sees him returning from afar off, and is about to go forth to meet him. And as in the Prophet, where God laments over the adulteries of Israel in falling away from Him, and adds,

“Behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.” “I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope;” that is, the very place of bitter desolation and repentance, where Achan confessed his sin and was slain, shall open to her the way to better things. “Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.”¹

¹ Hos. ii. 6. 15. 14.

SERMON XXVI.

The Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Heb. ix. 11—15. St. John viii. 46—59.

OUR LIFE IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

He that is of GOD heareth GOD's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of GOD.—ST. JOHN viii. 47.

NO consideration of Christ's Passion can be of any avail to us, excepting so far as we believe in Him as God, and so by faith are made one with Him, the great Mediator between God and man. The Godhead of Christ is therefore made the one great subject of this Sunday of His Passion.

And first of all, as the Epistle for last Sunday spoke of the two covenants; the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth unto bondage, and represented by Hagar; the other, that of the heavenly Jerusalem; so the Epistle for this day speaks of the infinite difference between the earthly and the heavenly Temple.

Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come. Christ had now appeared the High Priest of those good things to which the law looked forward as about to be,—“the law,” as it is said in the next chapter, “having

a shadow of good things to come ;” “ things to come,” that is, future and eternal, in distinction from things present and temporal. For the whole Epistle to the Hebrews consists of a description of Christ as this High Priest of those great and blessed future realities. And thus our Lord Himself appeared to St. John in the Revelation in the dress of an High Priest, in the midst of the seven candlesticks of the Temple, clothed with the priestly long garment, and with the golden girdle about the breast. For the very sight of Him at once in that character indicated all.

*By a greater, he says, and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, not of this material fabric; or it might be, “not of this creation,” but by one born of supernatural birth. As it had been said before, an High Priest “of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” But here a “tabernacle greater and more perfect;” yea, even so far greater and more perfect as the Heaven of Heavens are greater and more perfect than that Jewish building of old which was given to represent the true. And, he adds, “not made with hands,” apparently in allusion to our Lord’s own expression respecting this spiritual building of God, that He would in three days build another temple “made without hands.”*¹

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place. “Once,” as he often repeats, “once offered,” “once entering in,” in distinction from the Jewish sacrifices which were often made, and the High Priest entering into the Holy of Holies every year. And he explains why it is only once,

¹ St. Mark xiv. 58.

having obtained eternal redemption for us. For the sacrifices of old were to obtain a ransom or redemption; and as this they could never do for sins against God, by being constantly repeated they seemed always to be asking and pleading for remission. But when Christ's Blood was "once offered," there was nothing more; there remained no more "sacrifice for sin." He had obtained all eternal redemption.

And here we cannot but notice that St. Paul, in mentioning the worthless sacrifices of the law, speaks "of goats and calves," and the like, but does not mention the lamb, which we know was the frequent offering under the law. How expressive is this omission! because the lamb is in Scripture so often applied to our Lord Himself, as significative not only of the sacrifice of Himself as the Lamb of the true Passover, but also of His own character of meekness and patience. He is Himself "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "The precious blood of Christ," says St. Peter, "as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot."² They "overcame by the blood of the Lamb"—"the Lamb shall lead them"—it is "the Lamb's Book of Life."³ Thus the Lamb is the very word that Christ keeps for Himself for His own appropriate designation; as teaching us how dear at all times to Him is the sacrifice of a lamb-like spirit. He rejects all other sacrifices; but this is well-pleasing to God, as partaking most of all in the sacrifice of His Son.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, as on the great day of the Atonement, when the High Priest in his white robe of expiation entered into the Holy Place; and the

² 1 St. Pet. i. 19.

³ Rev. xii. 11; vii. 17; xxi. 27.

ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, as when a person had touched a dead body, it was commanded to be done for his purification;⁴ if this sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; if this was sufficient to render a person clean and holy in the sight of God, so that he might again appear before God in His house after contracting legal uncleanness of the flesh. *How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who, through the eternal Spirit, that is to say, not through those legal shadows of washing and anointing, and the white robe, and the incense,⁵ but in that very reality signified by them all, "through the eternal Spirit" Himself, Who at our Lord's Conception, and Baptism, and Transfiguration, and Resurrection, was present, together with the Father, as quickening, and sanctifying, and justifying, and sealing that mysterious oblation of Himself for our sins:—"through the eternal Spirit," that bond between the Father and the Son, when He offered Himself without spot to God. How shall this not be efficacious and powerful to purge and cleanse not the flesh outwardly, but your conscience within; not from the touch of a dead body, or a grave, and the like, but from dead works; in "repentance from those dead works" in which the soul was dead, so purified and sanctified as to serve the living God, as those that are "alive from the dead;"⁶ to "serve," i. e. to perform acceptable service and ministration in the temple of that God in Whom is everlasting life. Such is the service of "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," Who says to us as our High Priest, "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore." This*

⁴ Num. xix, 17.

⁶ Rom. vi. 13.

⁵ Lev. xvi.

⁷ Rev. i. 5. 18.

St. Paul here puts forth in other words, *And for this cause*, that is, because as our High Priest He has offered up for us this life-giving sacrifice of Himself, *He is therefore the Mediator*, not as Aaron and the priests of old, standing between God and man as mere shadows and representations of His all-prevailing mediation, but He is *the Mediator*, the eternal Priest and Intercessor of *the new testament*; the New Will of God to man conveying his inheritance, the New Covenant; at the same time as God conveying, ratifying, bestowing; as Man interceding, advocating, obtaining. *That by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*; that is to say, the law or first testament having declared the sentence of death on all transgressions against God, Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, has rescued and ransomed us from that penalty. *That they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance*; that gift which this His Will hath bequeathed to us sealed and ratified by His own Blood; an inheritance not of an earthly Canaan and of temporal promises, but the inheritance of Christ, eternal in the Heavens.

Such, therefore, is the new and eternal covenant of God. The law did but prepare the way, being itself, in all its types and shadows, but the Gospel veiled, whereas the Gospel, as says St. Austin, is the law revealed. But the law was also at the same time the schoolmaster to bring to Christ; and it became the means of doing this by a very wonderful economy, for it in a mysterious manner supplied the test of the spiritual and true worshippers, meet for the heavenly courts; for faith, looking through those shadows by the mortification of self, led to the living God; and prepared the way by depression of the human to the exaltation of the Divine.

And now we come to the words of the text, which may be said to embody or express, in a short compass, the whole subject of the Gospel for to-day, wherein Christ bears testimony to His Godhead, and shows that the salvation of all mankind depends on believing in Him as God. *Which of you*, said our Lord to the Jews, *convinceth Me of sin?* He appeals to all men, yea, and to evil spirits, that none can deny but that He is that spotless One Who can alone approach unto God as interceding for us; "such an High Priest Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."^s *And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?* *He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* "This which He adds is very terrible," says St. Gregory, "for if he hears the words of God who is of God, and no one can hear the words of God unless he be of God, let each one ask himself, if, by the ear of the heart, he perceives the words of God and understands whence He is." They are indeed awful words, in their import not unlike that Divine expression, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." If any one is drawn to Christ, to love, and fear, and obey Him, this is to him sweet consoling evidence, that he is one of those whom He has chosen to eternal life. In like manner, it is enough to arouse our apprehensions, that indifference to the things of God is an indication to us that we are not predestined to be of that little flock whom the Father hath chosen for His Kingdom. Of this these Jews were an awful sign: we see them by degrees sealing more and more their own rejection.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we

^s Heb. vii. 26.

not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil: but I honour My Father, and ye do dishonour Me. And I seek not Mine own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth. What a wonderful pattern have we here of Divine meekness and forbearance: as His mercy is, so also is His majesty; and great as His power is, so great is His patience. "And if we imitate His patience," says St. Augustin, "we shall arrive at His power." The opprobrious name of Samaritan He rejects not, for those Samaritans, though outcasts of the Jews, were His creatures, and He was willing to receive them as His children. But when they said that He had a devil, to the great dishonour of God, He meekly replies that He has not a devil. Thus, "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously;"⁹ even to the Father, as here intimated, Who judgeth aright, Who seeketh the glory of Christ, and in the glory of His Son will Himself be glorified.

But having said, "he that is of God heareth the words of God," He now again solemnly states the same in another form: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death*, shall never see that death which is alone worthy of the name; for that which men call death is but a sleep, a laying aside the burden of the flesh; there is a "second death," which is death indeed.

Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death. Art Thou greater than our father

⁹ 1 St. Pet. ii. 23.

Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself? Yet Abraham was not dead, and the prophets were not dead in the sight of God; for God called Himself the God of Abraham, and He was the God of the Prophets; and His Name is the living God. For they live, they truly live, who live unto Him. But the Jews understood not; their foolish hearts were darkened because they saw not in Christ the Light of the World, the God of Abraham, and the Lord of David. “Whom makest Thou Thyself?” said they. His Apostle shall answer, “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant;” “wherefore God hath highly exalted Him.”

Jesus answered, If I honour Myself, My honour is nothing: it is My Father that honoureth Me; of Whom ye say, that He is your God: yet ye have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you; but I know Him, and keep His saying. To seek the honour that cometh from God only, to know Him and by obedience to keep His saying, this is common to the Lord and to His disciple; by this they are made one; for by this is the disciple by faith united unto his Lord, and by this does his Lord dwell also in the Father; for thus was His obedience made perfect, seeking not His own honour, but that of the Father only. And Him doth the Father delight to honour, by the Voice at His Baptism, by the Voice at His Transfiguration, by the Voice preceding His Passion,¹ by raising Him from the dead, by setting Him at His own right hand in Heavenly places; and all this but preparatory to that time when to Him every knee shall bow,

¹ St. John xii. 28.

of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; when all who are incorporated into His living Body shall partake in that honour which the Father shall then bestow upon Him, and all they that seek their own honour shall come to nought.

In this faith did all the patriarchs rest; in this hope were all the Prophets refreshed; in this vision were all the Saints perfected. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad.* His earnest desire and longing was for the day of Christ, for that Deliverer Which was to come; he looked forward as they that watch for the morning, and there was no joy equal to this joy which he had in God, when it was given him to behold afar off the day of God, and to look as it were upon the face of His Anointed. He beheld the rising dawn illumining that night; we the Sun of Righteousness Himself. He saw "in a glass darkly," but we "face to face."

But some, even in beholding Him, are blinded by that light; so was it with those Jews who saw in Him "no form nor comeliness," and "no beauty that they should desire Him;" but "a man acquainted with grief," His "visage marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men."²

Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Not hath Abraham seen Thee, for it would do too much honour to Him that spake so to understand His words, but contemptuously, hast Thou, the "despised and rejected of men," hast Thou seen the "father of the faithful?" and bringing down the Divine words to low, carnal, human

² Isa. lii. 14.

interpretation, "Thou, not yet fifty years old?" *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.* The Everlasting God, the true Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham, "having neither beginning of life nor end of days," "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," in the predestination of the Father, and in the will and obedience of the Son; "His Name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;"³ He Who revealed Himself to the fathers with the incommunicable name of I AM. And the Jews understood the saying, for, *then took they up stones to cast at Him*, thereby condemning Him as guilty of blasphemy, as they afterwards said on another like occasion, "For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy; and because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."⁴

But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. For his hour was not yet come. From the men of Nazareth, from the Jews at Jerusalem, when bent on His destruction, He departed unharmed; and when Judas came to take Him, He showed the same Divine power, evincing by act what He said of the voluntary surrender of His life. "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."⁵

Thus, then, as we approach more distinctly to the commemoration of our Lord's Passion, the one great object of the Church, as set forth in to-day's Gospel, is to show us that the cause of His rejection by the Jews was the confession of His Godhead. It is on this that they seek to slay Him as guilty of death, taking up stones, as in the

³ Isa. ix. 6.

⁴ St. John x. 33.

⁵ St. John x. 17, 18, and xviii. 6.

fulfilment of the law. It is this which afterwards, at the time of His death, comes forward in a very prominent manner, as in that great declaration before the High Priest, on which He was condemned to die, and delivered up to the Gentiles. "By our law," said they, "He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." This subject, therefore, of His Godhead, is so strongly put forward both in to-day's Epistle and Gospel, and on the Sunday before Easter, and on Good Friday. Thus the Gospel for to-day already prepares the way for His Passion, as showing that in that "contradiction of sinners against Himself" which He "endured" throughout, the one great culminating point, and the ultimate cause of His condemnation was this. This was the truth which He kept, as it were, under a veil in the usual reserve of His teaching, gradually disclosing the same rather by His works than His words. But when constrained, as it were, by the Jews, and called upon to bring forward this truth in justification of Himself, it is the stumbling-block or rock of offence; it is the fall and rise again of the many in Israel; it is the test and trial of men's souls in the sight of God. And thus the Scriptures point out that again at the last the great apostasy will consist in the denial of the Son. Let us, therefore, labour at this season more and more to humble ourselves before Him, for in the humiliation of self must be the practical acceptance and confession of His Godhead.

SERMON XXVII.

The Sunday next before Easter.

Phil. ii. 5—11. St. Matt. xxvii. 1—54.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS.

PHIL. ii. 5.

THESE words, with which the Epistle opens, may be said to contain the one great lesson of this week ; this week of all weeks ; and this the learning of all learning, the wisdom of all wisdom ; to have the mind of God. Oh, the thought infinitely high ; oh, the study infinitely good ! *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* And what was this mind ? it was this, *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ;* that is, being God in form or person, He spake of Himself on various occasions, and in various ways, as if there was no inequality between Himself and the Father, no disparagement to the Father in this equality He spake of ; and, surely, it is impossible that in so doing He could have been assuming to Himself beyond the truth. Yet, notwithstanding this, “He emptied Himself” of all, or, as in our translation, *but made*

Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, i. e. as He had been before in the form of God, so now He took upon Him the form of a creature ; as He had been perfect God, so now He became perfect man, and was made, or "born," in the likeness of men.

Infinite was the distance, unspeakable the humiliation ; but this was not all, for when He appeared on earth as one of His creatures, He still went on to perfect that pattern of humility which had brought Him from Heaven to earth : still beneath each depth opens another depth of loving mercy in the fountains inexhaustible of His goodness.

And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, throughout His life He set forth unexampled meekness and lowliness, and became obedient—this was much, but this obedience was not measured by life—obedient unto death. This was the crown and perfection of all obedience ; but not this only, for the death which He voluntarily chose for Himself was the most humiliating and degrading of all deaths—even the death of the cross, that of a malefactor and of a slave.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him ; not in His Divine nature, which was incapable of exaltation, but as Man after He had risen from the dead. And hath given Him a Name which is above every Name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. Thus it is so often spoken of, as in the Psalms, of our nature exalted to the right hand of God ; of all things put under the feet of Him Who is for ever God and Man ; or, as is described in the Apocalypse, of "every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth," giving glory "unto Him that sitteth upon the

Throne, and unto the Lamb" that was slain, "for ever and ever."¹

And that, as He had been reviled, and accursed, and set at nought, and mocked, and "made a curse," so *every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

"What is there," adds a Christian Bishop, "among all the works of God on which human admiration is bent, the contemplation of which so delights and overwhelms the mind as the Passion of the Saviour? And when we think, as often as we can, on His omnipotence, Who is of one substance with, and equal to, the Father, such humility in God appears to us more wonderful than His power; and the emptying of the Divine Majesty is more difficult for us to comprehend, than the highest exaltation of the form of a servant."²

Thus, then, let "the mind" be in us "which was also in Christ Jesus," when we come to that detailed narrative of His sufferings, which the Church sets before us with such care and reverential impressiveness during the whole of this week. And first of all, let us take the account of St. Matthew as given on this day. And perhaps it will not be unsuitable to the spirit of our Church merely to state at length the circumstances, as they occur in this day's Gospel, leaving such to the meditations of each.

When the morning was now come, after that terrible night, in the beginning of which our Lord had suffered such agony in the garden of sorrows, and throughout the remainder of it had been mocked and buffeted by the servants of the High Priest; betrayed by one disciple

¹ Rev. v. 12, 13.

² S. Leo, Serm. 60, De Pass. Dom.

and denied by His chief Apostle; at the break of day, for it was now very early and before dawn, *the Chief Priests and Elders* had in council decided on His death, and not venturing to execute it themselves, for fear of the people, *led Him* bound through the streets, and *delivered Him up to* one they themselves hated, the Roman *governor*, that he might have Him executed as a criminal. But so singularly loving and blameless, so awful and holy had His life been, that *seeing this His condemnation*, even the traitor *Judas* brought the money he had obtained, and, stricken with horror and remorse, said to those who had just condemned Him, *I have sinned; I have betrayed the innocent Blood*. The enormity of his crime filled him with despair, and casting down the money in the temple, *he departed, and went and hanged himself*. And here the Evangelist stops, as it were, by the way to point out, in the Prophet Jeremiah, how all this of *the thirty pieces of silver*, and of *the field* bought with the money, had been foretold long before; that we might see how all this was allowed, and ordained, and appointed of God; that amidst the wickedness of men it is God that orders all for the good of His elect, and Christ offers Himself through all a willing Victim and Sacrifice for us.

It was now, therefore, that Christ *stood* as a criminal with His hands tied, held by officers, and accused by His Jewish enemies, *before the Roman governor*; but, although they had themselves just condemned Him to death for declaring Himself the Son of God, and had been instigated against Him by envy and hatred of His holiness and His miracles; and because His Divine example condemned them by its light, and He was not, therefore, such a Messiah as they had wished; yet they say nothing of all this to their Heathen ruler, because he would not

have understood or cared for such charges; but what they brought against Him was, that He was raising seditions and setting Himself up for a King against the Romans. And when Pilate, on His being withdrawn from them into the Judgment Hall, simply asked Him whether the charge was true that He was the King of the Jews, He acknowledged He was, but afterwards He explained to Pilate that this was in a Divine and heavenly sense, and not in such a way as would interfere with the Romans. But to all the accusations which the Chief Priests so vehemently urged against Him, "as a lamb brought to the slaughter, as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Adam had been too full of excuses when he had sinned, but the Sinless One bears the reproach and answers not. But there was in this silence something very extraordinary and unspeakably Divine, for the heathen judge who had daily to condemn criminals was much affected by it. *He answered him,* says St. Matthew, *to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.* No words so moved him as that silence; it seemed to say, "Thou shalt answer for Me, O Lord My God." So the Roman soon saw through it all; he perceived that the accusations were false, and instigated by the envy of the Chief Priests. It happened also, at the very time, that *his wife sent unto him* to say that she had just had a very remarkable dream respecting that Holy and Just One Who stood before him as a malefactor. He resolved, therefore, that he would save Him from the Chief Priests; and when all the multitude were now gathered together, as the morning advanced, he said to them all, "I will leave it to you to decide; there is a custom, that at this your great Festival of the Passover we Romans *release unto the people a prisoner,* which you

choose. So I will give you your choice ; there is a robber and murderer who is to be put to the worst of all deaths—to be crucified ; will you have this murderer or Jesus released ?” But they, instigated by the Priests, cried out, *release unto us Barabbas*. “But what,” said Pilate, “am I to do with Him Who is called Christ ?” *Let Him be crucified !* cried they all with one voice, both Priests and people. Let Him be crucified instead of Barabbas. “What,” said the governor, “an innocent man ?”

But now arose the terrible tumult, which the Prophet Jeremiah likens to the fearful roar of lions at sight of their prey ; insisting, exclaiming, threatening, and urging with the voice of a whole nation, so that even the fierce Roman could not resist it ; and the one-voiced multitudinous cry was, *Let Him be crucified*. But even the heathen governor, used as he was to shedding blood, yet was appalled, and quailed within him at this, for he was unusually impressed and filled with awe, so that before them all he took water and washed his hands, and said, *I am innocent of this Blood* ; and the whole nation took it on themselves and on their children for ever, and bear it about upon them in all the world unto this day.

How full of hatred, my brethren, is this scene, and yet how full of love ! “The Cross of the Lord,” says the same ancient Bishop before referred to, “was not more cruel in the intention of the Jews, than wonderful in the goodness of Him that was crucified. Against Him alone the people rage, but upon all of them Christ hath pity.”

And now *the Roman soldiers* also take part with the Jews in what appears in them but the wantonness of cruel and diabolical sport with their victim ; for, after the governor *had scourged Him*, they take Him *into the common hall*, and collecting together their whole company

of soldiers, they make a mock^d of what appeared to them the absurd charge of the Jews, for which He was to die, namely, because He made Himself a King. *They stripped His bleeding Body, and found an old soldier's scarlet cloak, which they thought might very well represent the purple garment which kings wear; and for the golden crown, full of jewels and rays which was usual with kings, they platted a crown of piercing thorns for His head; and for the golden sceptre put a reed in His right hand.* And first of all they pretended to be courtiers and subjects, *bowing the knee;* and then *beat and spit on Him,* partly out of mere wanton cruelty, partly to amuse and yet ridicule the Jews, who brought against Him such an apparently absurd charge; as if one who appeared more mean and helpless than a slave could have been the object of their fear and envy as a king.

It might be supposed that from all these things our Blessed Saviour was by this time very weak, if not almost dying; and so it appears from an incident which St. Matthew next mentions, that instead of bearing His own Cross to the place of execution, as criminals usually did, they seized hold of a stranger, one come from the very distant city of Cyrene, in Africa, whom they happened to meet at the gate, and who perhaps was evincing some consternation and pity at what they were doing, *him they compelled to bear His Cross* after Him. And another incident seems to intimate the same weak and fainting state in which our Blessed Saviour then was; for the same Evangelist adds, that when they now came to the place, they gave Him *gall and vinegar*, as if to refresh and alleviate Him; but He, having *tasted, would not drink*, as willing to suffer all without relief.

And now St. Matthew pauses again, as usual, to notice

how the finger of God was in all this, although they knew it not; for while our Lord was now stripped naked on the Cross, and all that He possessed, which consisted of one poor outer cloak and four inner garments, was being divided among the soldiers, as usual at such executions, with their minds bent on nothing else but these trifles: the Psalmist had foretold it all. There they sat beneath the Cross, hard-hearted, careless Roman executioners, half in sport and half in earnest from covetousness, and perhaps jesting over the poor remains. But He that hung naked and in dying agonies over their heads had them in His eye, and described them when He poured forth His bitter sorrows in that prophetic Psalm so long before. That wonderful page of Holy Writ was opened on this day, and they were acting their part there set down, though they read not the words.

But they had also another part to perform. While criminals were left to die this lingering death at this place of thoroughfare by the Romans, it was usual to write up the name of the crime for which they suffered, as a warning to others. But as the Holy One of God died for no crime, the governor would have been at a loss to specify any charge, except that of the envy of the Jews; in derision, therefore, and scorn of their successful malice, he wrote down the charge which they had made, and this he delivered to the soldiers, to be placed over His head, *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews*. And surely never was written down a greater or more awful truth than what he thus wrote in mockery. Thus the most unwilling and unconscious agents, though with far other intent and purport, yet fulfil the will of God as well as His most obedient servants, and bring about the great objects of His truth and goodness.

And for greater contempt and perhaps convenience, they combine with Him in that shameful execution *two thieves*, not knowing what His own Prophet had before said, that He should be thus signally "numbered with the transgressors." And so the soldiers having completed their miserable work, *sat down and watched Him*. But the Psalmist, in the twenty-second Psalm, had called forth others also to take part in this terrible scene of death as spectators, willing spectators and actors, taking part in the wickedness and exulting in it. And here, my brethren, I cannot but make one reflection, which I hope we may all consider. We may sometimes have been tempted with unbelieving doubts about the strict accounts which are to be given on the Great Day. Now these cruel men, reviling, "wagging their heads," and "shooting out words" of scorn and bitterness, had their manner, their actions, their very words written down by the Holy Ghost many hundred years beforehand; for the Evangelist mentions the precise words they spake, and these we find to be identical, the same expressions which are given in the Psalms, as if they were taken from their very mouths. Now does not this suggest to us how it may be at the Day of Judgment; that our actions, manner, and very words should be found written down by the pen of God, "graven with an iron pen and in the rock for ever?"³ For surely it is as easy for the Holy Spirit to record things after they have happened as to describe them beforehand. Indeed, we think it easier for history to speak of what is past, than prophecy, of what is future. And let it be observed, that the sayings of these Chief Priests and Scribes on this occasion were not only Divinely foretold, but seem to have had awful meanings in them

³ Job xix. 24.

which they little thought of, and which time may even yet more fully reveal. They spoke among themselves, perhaps whispered "in the ear," but it shall be "proclaimed on the housetops," and they shall hear their own words again in the loud sound of the last trumpet. *The thieves also*, St. Matthew adds, dying together with Him, took part at one time in these revilings—O wonderful conspiracy of all men—under the power of the Prince of Darkness!

But this was not all; nay, it was but a small part of the burden borne by our gracious Saviour for the sins of us all; the heaviest weight was still behind, was out of our sight, was beyond the reach of man's thought or the knowledge of angels, and indicated only by a few words, which spake of that unfathomable depth of hidden anguish. For now, when there had been *darkness over all the land* for three hours, was heard that mysterious incomprehensible cry—in the Psalmist's words, the most sad and terrible which Creation has ever heard,—the cry of her Creator under the heavy burden of wrath for the sins of His creatures, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

But never was it more true that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness," for the cruel mockers that stood by, not hearing altogether the words, or not knowing the Hebrew language in which they were spoken, said, profanely and contemptuously, "He *calleth for Elias.*" And one of them, perceiving the anguish of the bitter cry, in fulfilment of the Psalm, gave Him *vinegar* to refresh Him; perhaps a more merciful soldier; but the rest, unrelenting, pitiless Jews, would have denied Him even this, and prevented it, saying, in profane jest, "*Let be; let us see if Elias will come and help Him.*"

These men, my brethren, were of the same flesh and blood, of like passions with ourselves ; and we also, while we think not of it any more than they did, may crucify Him afresh, as the Scripture says ; may persecute Him in His members, as He Himself testifies, when we consider them not as His.

And now when all is done there comes a change, and with it comes to some a moment of reflection. But, first, His own temple, and nature itself could not but give some tokens of sympathy with the death-struggles of their Lord. For there was the *loud voice* heard, full of power in death ; and the *veil of the temple rent in twain* ; and *the earth* shaking and *rocks* split asunder ; and *saints* coming forth *from their graves* and *appearing*. And as in the cave of Horeb, where Elijah was, after the fire, and the earthquake, and the strong wind, there was a stillness then ensued, and in it a small Voice that spake ; so is it now, in the silence that drew on after that terrible day. *The Centurion feared greatly, and said, Truly this was the Son of God.*

And in these words of the Centurion was heard the voice of the Gentile world, accepting Him Whom the Jews had rejected.

We observed that, in reading and in hearing these accounts, we can show no more acceptable thanksgiving than by labouring to have "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." This is the key-note, as it were, which our Church gives us for the services of this great and solemn week : this exhortation may guide our thoughts and feelings aright. But to urge us the more to this duty, it may further be noticed that, as the world has never seen such an example of love and patience ; so never has the contrast been so evinced for our warning, of the

weakness, the wickedness, the cruelty, and hatred of goodness, to which men may proceed. Good and evil, life and death, are set before us together, through this awful history, in a more emphatic and strong manner than on any other occasion in the world.

Life and death, good and evil, are again set before us, not in the garden of Eden, but on the Mount of Calvary. The *place* is called *Golgotha*; but the Tree of Life is also there.

SERMON XXVIII.

Monday before Easter.

Isa. lxiii. St. Mark xiv.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?

ISA. lxiii. 1.

O BLESSED SAVIOUR, are we to associate these Thy sad sorrows with words of triumph? Well may Thine own Prophet gaze on Thee, and ask in wonder, for all Thy Prophets, and Apostles, and Thy chosen Sion, even in knowing were as if they knew not. Nay, Angels stand aloof as in amaze. *Who is this that cometh from Edom*, the land of the great enemy, and ah, with no bloodless victory, *with dyed garments from Bozrah*, the strong city of death? *This that is glorious in His apparel*, the lowly One, apparelled in invincible meekness, “the King of kings,” *travelling in the greatness of His strength*, with powers of Godhead hid in weakness of suffering man?

He hath “a Name written that no man knoweth, but Himself,” and He Himself shall answer: “*I that speak in righteousness*,” the “Faithful and True,” Who

“in righteousness doth judge:”¹ *mighty to save.* But if thus mighty in saving others, why Thyself thus marred? *Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?* Why, O Blessed Lord, art Thou thus covered with blood? What has slaughter to do with Thee, the Meek and Merciful? Thou that art white and spotless, with garments such as no fuller can whiten, what hast Thou to do with purple stains? Ah, alas! it is Thine own Blood; it is what we once of Edom and Bozrah have done.

I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me. Yea, indeed, Thou alone hast endured all the wrath, forsaken of man and of God. And what was this Thy raiment but our flesh, which Thou hast put on? pressed was the blood from thence by sore anguish in Gethsemane; and in Gabbatha by the thorns and scourges; and in Golgotha by the nails and the spear; yea, altogether as the trodden grape in the winepress of wrath; till the Water and Blood came forth at last that we might live thereby.

O wonderful Conqueror Whoever Thou art; surely Thou art no other than that Shiloh Who should “wash His garments in the blood of grapes.”² *For I will tread them in Mine anger; O wonderful wrath of the Lamb! and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment.* Nor is Thy work yet done, for Thou wilt go on and tread the winepress unto the end; nay, Thyself be pressed sore and trodden; Thou shalt hide beneath Thy bleeding raiment, and in Thy wounds the broken, and bruised, and contrite spirits, and shalt bring them all in Thyself to God. For Thou art the True Vine; all the

¹ Rev. xix. 11, 12.

² Gen. xlix. 11.

clusters are in Thee, and of Thee, and in Thee pressed out, and Thou in them. Here on the Cross, and unto the end, Thou wilt crucify Thine own unto the world, and the world unto them; while Thou in them wilt be persecuted and slain. "*For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come.*" O strange mystery of mercy and wrath, of present redemption and of future vengeance, in one associated; the "stone elect and precious," yet shall "grind to powder those on whom it falls." He that is on the White Horse, with vesture dipped in blood, is no other than the Lamb that leads to living fountains; in the Lamb dumb before His shearers shall the Lion of Judah be found.

And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; none to save, none to intercede; no other name in which there can be salvation: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me, and My fury, it upheld Me. And I will tread down the people in Mine anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. When Thou saidst, "Father, forgive them," was this Thine anger? When Thou sentest down upon them the Unspeakable Gift, was this to make them drink of Thy fury? When Thou liftedst up Paul from the ground, was this the bringing down their strength? Wonderful words! full of love and full of fear, that, drawn by love or by fear, all may come to Him; while on His Cross, unto the end making His appeal unto us, or on His throne on the right hand of power, He would subdue all things unto Himself—our proud hearts, all enemies within us, all without us, that we may cling to Him, and be wholly His. Then will He turn and speak comfortably to us, as unto the dying thief.

I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel,—His unwearied mercies to His chosen of old, the pledges of the like to us, which He hath bestowed on them, according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses. Every shape of human ill has met with His mercy; still, as hoping against hope, He has dealt with them. For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour. Still, throughout all their history, He was as one that bore the burden of the day, and took upon Himself to endure with them every trouble. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence, the Messenger of the Covenant in Whom was their delight, His protecting shadow, saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; from Egypt, from Babylon, from every type of the bondage of the world; and, having ransomed them for His own, He bare them, as an eagle her young upon her wings, and carried them all the days of old. He that is now their King upon the Cross, is but finishing and perfecting there the full measure of that love. Pity and forbearance on the part of God, and impenitence and resistance on the part of man, is the whole history. But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. But even then, as full of tender reminiscences, and of His covenant with Abraham, ever relenting in His wrath, and gathering unto Himself every penitent into the true Israel of God. Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people. As the Father going forth to meet the returning prodigal; as the shepherd seeking his lost sheep; as a mother re-

membering the child of her pangs: so mindful of His sore agonies doth He bear long with us, *saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the Shepherd of His flock? by a wonderful way through that red sea of blood? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him? offering up Himself through the Holy Spirit, and anointed by the Holy One for that sacrifice as the Christ of God; that led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting Name; that at His Name every knee should bow? that led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble.* Thus He girded with threefold strength Peter that fell, as a type of all that shall in faith be filled with His Spirit and His love; and not with strength only, but with repose and peace. *As a beast goeth down into the valley, of rich pastures by the waters, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst Thou lead Thy people, to make Thyself a glorious Name.*

Thus all Christians shall in Thee be glorified, beholding Thy glory, and rejoicing in Thee. And to His ancient people greater even now in His wrath is His mercy than ever of old; for when in Babylon they sat down by the waters, and wept in vain for Jerusalem afar off; but now with them in every land is the true Tabernacle, the true Temple, ready to receive them, and the God of Abraham willing to embrace every returning penitent.

And now, Lord, on this the day of Thy sorrows, what would we ask but that, mindful of them, Thou wouldst have compassion on us from where Thou now art. *Look down from Heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory; Thou that art our Father*

in Heaven, where Thy Name is hallowed ; *where is Thy zeal and Thy strength*, Thine exceeding desire, and Thy might to save us, *the sounding of Thy bowels*, Thy more than parental compassions, *and of Thy mercies towards me ? are they restrained ?* Nay, surely not in Thee are we straitened, but straitened are we in our own want of love and faith. By Thy loving-kindnesses which were of old, will I plead with Thee ; by Thy compassions which fail not, by Thy cleansing of the leper, and giving sight to the blind ; by Thy raising of the dead, and ever hearing of prayer.

Doubtless, Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not ; though we bear no more the marks of the children of Abraham, and are unworthy to be numbered with the true Israel ; though earthly fathers would disown us, yet the goodness of our Father in Heaven is, Thou hast told us, infinitely greater than theirs : for Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; Thy Name is from everlasting ; for Thou art from all eternity in the bosom of God, and Thy Name is Love.

But if so, oh, why am I thus ? why thus still encompassed with the evils of my sin ; my want of love and lukewarmness ? Why doth this chain hold me, this "disease bind me about as the collar of my coat ?" *O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our hearts from Thy fear ? Is not this blindness of eyes from Thee in just judgment for my sin ? Return, for Thy servants' sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance.* O gather us again, though scattered abroad, into Thy one fold, of Israel the true Shepherd. O bring us again from our captivity ; how soon, like Israel of old, have we fallen away, and lost that first love which bound

Thy Church unto Thee ; but, alas ! for how little a while ! *The people of Thy holiness have possessed it but a little while.* On this day of our humiliation ; in this our penitential sorrow, each for himself and the plague of his own heart, remember the vine that Thou hast planted ; “be favourable and gracious unto Zion ;” and build Thou again our walls. *Our adversaries have trodden Thy sanctuary.*

We are Thine, by far more intimate union than they of old ; *Thou never barest rule over them*, never was Thy law written on their hearts by Thy Holy Spirit as it hath been with us ; *they were not called by Thy Name*, though Thy Name was placed in Jerusalem of old and they were Thy peculiar people, yet never did they bear, as we do, the Name of Thine Anointed—the Holy One of God ; never were they baptized into that One All-saving Name.

And now, when Thou wouldst “engrave us on the palms of Thy hands” in the history of Thy humiliations, would we approach Thee, and put away the leaven of malice to keep with Thee the true Passover, when Chief Priests and Scribes are laying snares for Thee, and our evil and proud hearts are even at this day too often taking part with them. First of all, in the Gospel of this day, in love and peace do we behold Thee. It is Thine *embalming* for the dead at that little feast *at Bethany* ; where of love and hate how great is the trial ! under the like exterior, where even Apostles seem carried away with the simulation and false semblance of fidelity of one among them, the difference between good and evil was so great that eternity alone can measure it, and the distance between the two was as Heaven and Hell. So was it when the good Mary, by that her affectionate embalming, was, as it were, pouring oil and wine into Thy wounds ;

and "the poison of asps" was under the tongue of Thine own chosen disciple, whose mouth was even now "as an open sepulchre." For all was in Thine eye, and Thy Spirit was with him, as he exchanged that little company of love for the Council of *Chief Priests and Scribes*, where he stood an unexpected, but welcome guest. And so is it at this day, when her memorial, ever blessed, is read, Thou alone, in each church and household, knowest the heart of Mary, and the envious eye and *indignation* of the dissembling Iscariot. O wonderful mystery of the human soul, that could prefer the gainful meeting of Chief Priests, set on blood, to the friendship and love of the Ever-Blessed! Let us ask and weigh it well: has it never been so with us?

One day more, and the scene is changed to that *upper chamber at Jerusalem* where the Victim is prepared for sacrifice; and no company, and no feast, before or after, has ever been like that. But as Satan mingling among the blessed in Heaven, and as thoughts which are from him when they interfere and steal in guileful seeming of good into our hearts at the Holy Eucharist, so is the presence of Judas among the Twelve at that table of the Last Supper. It is this that renders all so sorrowful, for it is of anguish and affliction unspeakable that they read on the countenance of the Man of Sorrows; and such are the words of His lips, for deepest grief hath darkened the streams of infinite lowliness and love. "*One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me.*" And deep are the searchings of heart while the introverted eye of conscience turns with trembling on itself, and, doubtful of itself, turns to Him Who is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Try me, O Lord, and seek the ground of my heart, "*Is it, I?*" Yes, Christian brethren, all are sorrow-

ful with His sorrow, all are searching within, all turn to the Eye of the All-knowing Judge, except the guilty one. He alone sorrows not, nor fears; nay, he is admitted to the sign of love and more intimate privilege, he of whom it is written, "*Good were it for that man if he had never been born.*"

But pass we from this: let him that hath searched and examined himself, and laid open his heart to the healing Eye of Him that knoweth all things, draw near with faith, and hear those words when first delivered, when the heart had been thus bleeding of Him that was about to die. "*This is My Body;*" "*take ye and eat*" of Me. He that had been *dipping* with Him *in the dish* had already plunged, as it were, the sacrificial knife into the veins of the Victim, and blood and tears were the mingled stream. While the Holy One of God, who endured all under the cloud of present and approaching sorrows, *gave thanks*, and blessed, and gave of *the Cup*, saying, "*This is My Blood of the New Testament.*" "*And they all drank of it.*"

And now, as all things pass so fast away, and nothing but the fruit and remembrance of them remains, so is it with this last farewell feast of love and sorrow: the sweet accents of thanksgiving and praise have died away; they have *sung the Hymn*, and *gone forth into the Mount of Olives*. Strange again, by the way, do His sayings sound of desertion and death, and yet being with them again in their wonted haunts of lowly *Galilee*.

"Little children, it is the last time," the last time to you all of being thus with that sorrowing, compassionate Master, Who made Himself as one with you. It is to Him also the last time, pre-ordained from all eternity, but the last time of His thus going in and out amongst

the children of men. How touching are all things that are for the last time! Now He, Who had so often spent whole nights in prayer, goes to spend this His last night in prayer, together with and yet apart from the Eleven, together with and yet apart from the Three, as an example to ourselves, that with love and sympathy we should be with others, and yet at the same time in solitude of spirit, withdrawn in prayer to God. Oh, with what power appeal to us those nights spent in prayer! By those Thy prayers, and by that night of agony, grant unto us something, O Lord, of that Thy Spirit, that we may learn how earnestly, how much, how long to pray. *Thrice* put aside is that terrible *cup* of anguish, only that it may be *thrice* accepted with the fulness of resignation, that in the weakness of suffering man the Divine strength may be perfected, and the offering made and bound with the strongest chain of sorrow. Of that *Cup* wouldst Thou drink alone—for us: but not alone wouldst Thou have Thy watching and Thy prayer. For even unto the last, and unto all, is that Thy most earnest, solemn appeal repeated, “*Couldst thou not watch one hour?*” “*Watch ye and pray.*”

“I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me.” So is it now: for to those who have continued with Thee in Thy temptations it is said, “*Sleep on now, and take your rest;*” “*the hour is come.*” “Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave Me alone.” The *kiss* hath marked the Victim. For as just before the pledge of Christ’s love only embittered the hate of the traitor, so now the very token of friendship is made the signal of betrayal. The *swords and staves* surround Him, and all have *fled*. The gate of Jerusalem must be entered again, but with far other com-

pany than that a few hours since of sorrowing and loving disciples.

And now is that cloud come on the soul of Peter, blacker than midnight, but which shall be broken by the light of his Lord's countenance, and ere morning pass away in tears. How different is this St. Peter to him who was so blessed in confession, so earnest in love at all times, so confident in intention, so brave in resistance but an hour before! So is it always with the imperfect Christian: while the struggle of the old nature remains, he is like two selves, two different persons; and Simon, the son of Jonas, seems one, and Peter, whom his Lord hath named, another. What a change has come over his spirit! He is seated *by the fire*: his eyes seem to watch the flames, and his ears the converse of those around: but it is not so. His eyes and ears are where that midnight conclave are gathered in that hall apart; and his heart quails before the *High Priest in Council* with that solemn assembly, with the words of hate, and the *false witnesses*, and attitude and looks of scorn, and solemn adjuration of the Most High, and the rending of the Priestly robes, and formal *condemnation of death*. Where, then, is the strength of God, and where the victory of the Son of David? Is this the Conqueror of Edom that is to be? With what power hath Satan returned on Peter, who said before by his mouth, "That be far from Thee, Lord!"

But this is not all: for the spirit of Caiaphas hath descended to the meanest of his household; and the trembling disciple, though sitting afar off, is assailed with the sight and sound of words and blows which are poured forth on his Divine Master. "*And some began to spit on Him,*"—the greatest sign among Eastern, and, indeed,

among all nations, of loathing and hatred,—“*and to cover His face, and then, as in mockery, to say unto Him, If Thou art the Prophet of God, Prophecy, who is he that smote Thee; and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.*” But the attention of St. Peter is now arrested more near to himself, for *one of the maids of the High Priest* is earnestly gazing upon him in the light of the fire. Nor does the *cock crowing* recall him, for his heart is lost. Another hour of dismay is past, and all his Master’s words and faith in His Godhead—and His miracles—and His teaching—the draught of fishes—and the loaves—and commanding the seas—and raising the dead—the washing of his feet this night—and His Body and Blood—they are all gone like a dream; for it is the hour and the power of darkness: the provincial accent, which comes out more strongly in fear, betrays more than ever *the Galilean*, and he is ashamed of the Cross. Can this weakness—this condemnation—these revilings, be poured on the Son of God? But a light hath pierced the gloom: it is his Lord’s own eye that hath met his own; and now the *cock crows again*, but not in vain: the flood-gates are opened, the cloud hath burst in tears. It is his own—his Divine—his loved—his adored—Oh! never so loved, so adored—his gracious and all-pitying Lord! What a flood of tender recollections hath burst upon his soul! what a world of sorrow is contained in those words, “*And when he thought thereon he wept!*”

SERMON XXIX.

Tuesday before Easter.

Isa. l. 5—11. St. Mark xv. 1—39.

THE MAN OF SORROWS.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.—LAMENT. i. 12.

THE accounts of our Lord's sufferings in the Prophets and the Psalms are in some respects more high and awful than in the Gospels themselves, inasmuch as He so often speaks in them in His own Person. Thus, in the passage of Isaiah for to-day, after speaking of His "clothing the Heavens with blackness, and making sackcloth their covering," as in some great sorrow as God, He describes His voluntary humiliations as Man. *The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.* Thus in wonderful lowliness does He attribute all to the Spirit of God Who openeth the ear; to fulfil the will of God Which was in His heart; to perfect obedience through suffering. As arising up from Supper to make that offering up of Himself, He says, "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so

I do :” and a little while after, in inconceivable anguish at beholding that Cup, He thrice bows His head to the same. “I was not rebellious, nor turned back.” “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God !” For it is by that will, in the offering of Himself, that we are sanctified.

And then He describes this His own free will in what immediately followed, as the Evangelists have recorded, together with one circumstance of painful humiliation which they do not mention: *I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.*

And again, St. Peter describes as a matter of fact, that “when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” But how much more impressive His own affecting appeal: *For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.* As in His going forth to suffer, He says, “Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.” With what wonderful eloquence do these Divine words express the invincible patience and imperturbable meekness which shone forth through all our Lord’s sufferings! nay, emanating from within as a Divine light surrounded Him!

Yet further; had not our Blessed Lord been perfectly innocent, as man He could not have had this entire confidence in God; and had He not been God, this His innocent Sacrifice could not have given life to man: therefore, with this appeal does the offering up of Himself commence. “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me;” and before men this was tried, when immediately after He stood before the High Priest, and they sought for witness against Him, but found none;

except this only, that when solemnly adjured, He confessed Himself the Son of God. And the heathen judge declaring Him without fault, washed his hands of His innocent Blood. But how fully does He speak for Himself by His Prophet, while before men He was silent! *He is near that justifieth Me*; for "I obey His will, and do always what is pleasing in His sight." *Who will contend with Me? let us stand together: who is Mine adversary? let him come near to Me.* It is not the high priest only, but He Himself that calls for judgment. *Behold, the Lord God will help Me; who is he that shall condemn Me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.* As if He had said in answer before them, Thou, Caiaphas, and this council, and their false witnesses, and the Jewish nation, with their temple, and the throne of David, in the carnal sense in which ye hold them, are, as a worn-out garment, to be set aside; for from this time ye shall see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of power, and coming in His Kingdom from Heaven. And from henceforth what is My Kingdom? Who are Mine? the seed of Abraham, and the true Israel of God? where are they now, in this the hour of darkness, and unto the end? *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?* When the sun and moon seem to fail, and the stars of God to withdraw their shining, in that terrible eclipse that came on disciples that fled, and faithful women from Galilee that stood watching the Cross, and saw Him laid in the grave, and will come again in the last great trials. *Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God:* when every earthly appearance seems to be against him, still let him rest and hope in God, with Abraham and

Job. This is the patience of the Saints ; in this the crown of their endurance.

Especially in this exercise of patience, says St. Peter, are we to look to Christ Crucified. "For even hereunto were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps ;" and "concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."¹ "He opened not His mouth," "not murmuring," says St. Bernard, "against His Father by Whom He was sent ; nor against mankind, for whom He paid the things that He never took ; nor against His own people, from whom He received so much evil in return for so much good. Some suffer for their sins, and humbly endure it, and this is accounted for patience. Some are chastened in order that they may be proved and crowned, and still more is their patience commended. But how great was His patience, Who coming as the heir to His own inheritance, and being Himself incapable of sin, is put to a most cruel death by those whom He came to save !"²

But, proceeds the Prophet, because the countenance of God is hidden from us, the ways of sinners consist in kindling a fire of their own, and compassing themselves with its light and heat : such is covetousness, and lust, and ambition, and religious excitement, partisanship, and fanaticism, with all the evil passions of envy and wrath thence ensuing. So was it with Judas, and with Caiaphas, and the chief priests, and the multitudes inflamed by them ; they were sparks from the fire of Hell—and that shall be their end when they shall lie down in sorrow. *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about*

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 21 ; iv. 13.

² Fer. iv. Serm. De Pass. Dom.

with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.

But let the spark in my heart, O Lord, not be of my kindling, but of Thine; let it be Thy love, the love of Thee, and of Thy Cross, and feeble and faint though now it be, do Thou cherish and increase it more and more, as now I gaze and meditate on Thee, in that dreadful day of Thy sufferings; let it burn up within me all beside Thee; and let me know it to be Thine by my doing and suffering Thy will with patience.

We read yesterday how St. Peter fell and repented; Judas also repented, but not unto life; and the reason was this, that St. Peter believed Christ to be the Son of God; Judas, that He was an innocent man Whom he had betrayed. And much of this difference, my brethren, will there be in our repentance at this time, whether it be deepened and quickened by the Father in Heaven revealing unto us His Son, for which the Scripture for the Epistle so much prepares us.

We to-day proceed to take up the narrative from the Gospel of yesterday. It was now early *morning*: and *the council* which had condemned, *bound Him* as a criminal, and *led Him* through the streets to *Pilate*. He was, indeed, strongly bound; but they knew not that those bonds which held Him—those bonds which alone could bind Him—were love for them and for us. And now on two occasions only does He break that mysterious silence whereby, “as a sheep before his shearers is dumb,” He opened not His mouth in answer to His accusers: the one to confess Himself the Son of God—the other *the King of the Jews*; for both of these were to be guilty of death.

Now one of the sins to be killed in us by this Divine Sacrifice is "the pride of life," and you will know this vice in yourself when you are grieved that another is preferred before you. On how many occasions will this break forth, and show us unto ourselves! and where shall we find a cure for it but that which our God here has given us, when a solemn appeal was made to all *the people*, and *Barabbas* was chosen rather than He, and the death due unto *the murderer* was assigned by one voice to Him? What Christian after this can wish for the honour which men bestow? He is weighed, as it were, in the balance with *Barabbas*, and chief priests and multitude with one voice have chosen *Barabbas*, that he might be spared and live. After this it is, as St. Paul says, "a very small thing to be judged of man's day."³

Again, the world hath in our hearts another enemy of God, which is "the lust of the flesh," as St. John says; and nothing but much self-restraint on our parts can keep down this enemy: but to the heart which is knit to a Crucified Saviour there is another love which will greatly extinguish this flame, when we meditate on those pains of the flesh which the Son of God for us endured. Few of us could have the heart to witness the *scourging*, such as Roman soldiers would inflict, even were it on the most guilty and hardened of men: what must it have been on Him, Who, beyond all the sons of men, was pitiful and tender of heart? Yet it was our indulging the flesh, and cherishing it, that occasioned our Lord these pains; and it must be a sad truth to many of us, to reflect that this marks the measure of our love for Christ Crucified, and the power of His love in us, viz. the

³ 1 Cor. iv. 3.

violence we do to ourselves from the recollection of Him. So, my brethren, it was with St. Paul at all times. If you have this love, you will not ask if this or that is lawful; for that love will be a law to itself, and will restrain you before you have passed the bounds of sin. To this scourging shall we add the *crown of thorns*? Here also was pain: which of us could endure even to look on one with thorns piercing his temples? What would we think of one thorn so applied to ourselves? Yet these again are what we have planted on His brows. All things were in some mysterious manner present to Him, and for us to subdue one lust is to alleviate or compensate Him in those sorrows. For one thing He loved and valued beyond all things, and accounted nothing too dear to obtain it, and that was our love: our love, not feigned, not felt only, but faithful, like His, in obedience.

And now, Christian brethren, we have to set out with Him as He is *led forth* in the sad way of sorrows; but He has already suffered so much, that He sinks under the weight of what He has yet to sustain; and, as if needing our sympathy and our support, yea, as if in tender mercy and loving-kindness towards us, He affords us the opportunity of *bearing His Cross* after Him, which He Himself is too weak to bear. None in His own Jerusalem will aid Him; but He seems to appeal to us *coming from afar*—proselytes of the gate who have not joined in that cry of “Crucify Him!” You and me He seems by His very weakness to invite to Him. Shall we draw back from that sacred burden with Him? Others will put upon us this weight and burden of shame, if we seem to belong to Him; and for His sake, if thereby we may approach nearer unto Him, let us endure it. But this is to us but the easy yoke and light burden of Christ, while we draw

near and partake of that virtue which goeth forth from Him. Not so to Him; to Him it is the most painful bed of death—death drawn out to most agonized and lengthened dying. And what shall we say of those torturing wounds by which He is now transfixed and impaled thereon? of this we know, that it was a death invented by those who were most skilful in finding out what would most occasion suffering to the human body. Thus “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness,” but all one wound and full of pain: His back with the scourges; His head with the thorns; His hands and feet with the nails; His heart with the spear: that the body without might represent the worse agonies within—that His wounds may be as extensive as our sins. For what part is there of our flesh which does not minister to sin?

But there remains another source of sin within us among the three of which St. John speaks, “the lust of the eyes:” that which is goodly and fair to look on; “fruit pleasant to the eyes:” the beauty of the countenance; the kingly robe of Herod; these too are of the world, and minister to sin, till the tree of life has healed these waters of death. We are called upon to “see this great sight,”⁴ that we may see God and live. “His visage was so marred,” that when Pilate brought Him forth, and said, “Behold the Man!” what he meant was a countenance so disfigured with shame, sorrow, and suffering, as to be so little kingly that He was rather as “a worm and no man.” So foully treated with mockery and indignities, with spitting and with wounds, as to be scarce like humanity. Nor was this all: for nakedness *between two thieves* on the

⁴ Exod. iii. 3.

Cross was the worst degradation of which the human form was capable.

“This threefold cord of vanity,” says the holy Bernard, “by which many are drawn, is not quickly broken. But shall not the recollection of His patience shut out all pleasure? the consideration of His humility beat down our pride of life? Meditation on His love is well worthy so to occupy the whole soul as to stifle altogether the sin of curiosity.”⁵

“Behold the Man!” this is the type of humanity—of what man is, who with cries is ushered into this valley of tears, and goeth forth from it in pain, and fear, and sorrow. Behold, this is what man is when God visits—“Full of misery!” And oh! in Thee, Blessed Saviour, more full of mercy than of misery. More full of love than they of hate, though the powers of darkness had filled them with the fulness of all malice. Thy prayer for forgiveness was heard in Heaven above their cries for Thy death! And louder than our sins, which crucified Thee, are Thy desires for our pardon!

The King of the Jews, nay, our King, between “*transgressors*,” on either side stretching forth His hands; His hands to invite, to implore, to intercede, to bless, to embrace with the bleeding arms of His mercy. Oh, my Christian brethren, when at that sight they exclaimed, “*He saved others, Himself He cannot save*,” what they understood not was Love. They knew not Love; they knew not God; for God is Love. And this is what we know not; or the cords of our sin would drop off, and we could not bear to be other than what becomes the remembrance of Christ Crucified. One of the transgressors by His side, when

⁵ Serm. De Pass. Dom. Fer. iv.

thus brought near, saw into that abyss of love ; and beginning to find with Whom he was in that struggle, seemed to say, like Israel of old, " I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me ! " While at the same time, even in the form and equal balance of the Cross, is the measure of His justice on either hand, as between the sheep and the goats. Our King between two malefactors ; our God between dying men. This is our strength ; not in our sins, but to take us out of our sins. The malice and multitude of His enemies left no form of evil whereby He could be afflicted ; no shape of human suffering or sorrow but was in the bitterness of that Cup ; in the aggravation of that death ; but why so ? it was because His love knew no bounds ; that no sin might not have the fulness of its expiation and remedy ; " it goeth forth from the uttermost part of the Heaven, and runneth about to the end of it again, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof ; " to the utmost limit of human misery ; that no sin might not have the fulness of its expiation and remedy.

And now, *at the ninth hour*, after six hours on this agonizing and protracted bed of death on the Cross, we come to the verge of that great mystery of which all these were but, as it were, the outward signs and outskirts ; that dark abyss of anguish into which no man nor angel can look, and from which they must shrink back in amazement and horror ; all that we can see is like as when we behold a black thunder-cloud reflected in the unfathomable sea. Such was it when that *cry of desertion* was heard, and evil spirits with the tongues of men, when they heard it, mocked on. We know that the feeling heart of our Blessed Lord was much affected by the desertion of men, as He laments in the Psalms, " Thou hast hid Mine

acquaintance out of My sight, and made Me to be abhorred of them ;” “ I looked for some one to have pity on Me, but there was no man.” All this is a partaking of our sorrows ; but we know not what it was to His Holy Soul to have the countenance of God hidden from Him. “ Cain said, my punishment is greater than I can bear. From Thy face shall I be hid.” But how much greater than this to love God with an infinite love, and in the hour of need to be forsaken of Him. What compared with this is the malice of evil spirits, and of men instigated by them ? We are on the verge of a great mystery, as I said, which no created being can look into, much less can fathom.

But thus much we can see, even in this, of love and sympathy with man. There is a trial, which is of all others the most severe, to which mankind are subject, that indescribable depression of spirits almost verging on despair, which none can know but those who have experienced it. For of this it is said, “ the heart knoweth its own bitterness,” and “ the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity ; but a wounded spirit who can bear.”⁶ The soul is then wont to consider itself deserted of God, and doubly feels such sadness as an indication of being rejected by Him. The Lord, Who loveth whom He chasteneth, hath sometimes, nay, often visited the best of men with this heaviest load of sorrow. And what medicine can we find to sooth and sustain in such a case, but this resemblance of Christ Crucified ?

And now we come to the last words of the Gospel for this day, in which our All in All is comprised. Among the changes which had taken place during the long hours

⁶ Prov. xviii. 4.

of this terrible day, and of our Lord's dying on the Cross, one seems to have been the conversion and change that had come over the penitent thief; and it may be in like manner, that this *centurion* had taken part in what had been done on this cruel day; however this may be, it was not till he "*saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, that he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*"

I pray God, of His infinite mercies in Christ, that He will reveal unto us this truth in that sense in which it can alone profit us; and that we may come to deeper, and broader, and a higher faith in His Godhead, than any to which we have as yet attained.

SERMON XXX.

Wednesday before Easter.

Heb. ix. 16—28. St. Luke xxii.

THE GREAT SACRIFICE.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : How much more shall the blood of CHRIST, Who through the ETERNAL SPIRIT offered Himself without spot to GOD, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living GOD.—HEB. ix. 13, 14.

ON the two last days, by the appointed Scriptures for the Epistle, Christ's death has been set before us in prophecy, to-day in type. And here we may observe how, from the very beginning, Nature itself, as well as Revelation, seems to call for some Sacrifice of Blood, and that so distinctly as to need no interpreter ; nay, even at this day we are compassed about with these sad voices ; for is not our daily life supported by the deaths of innocent animals, in a way that we could not bear to think of, were they not memorials of the soul's life in the Atoning Blood of the Lamb of God ?

Where a testament is, says St. Paul to the Hebrews, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator ; for a testament is of force after men are dead ; otherwise

it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth. Even a man's will is of no avail till it is sealed by his death. Here St. Paul seems to draw his argument from human things ; as in another place he says, "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men ; though it be a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." ¹

Whereupon, neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. The former covenant of God from Mount Sinai was full of typical sacrifice. *For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water,* like that in which Pilate washed his hands in the Sacrifice of Christ ; blood and water, as representing the Blood and Water which flowed from Christ's side ; *and scarlet wool,* like the garment dyed in Blood, and "the scarlet robe" of mockery ; *and hyssop,* for on hyssop they offered Him vinegar on the Cross ; *and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* So was it in the law : and afterwards living under the law, the penitent in the Spirit had some insight into the meaning of these typical tokens of purifying, and of that to which they pointed, Christ's Sacrifice, when he says, "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God." "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit."

Moreover, Moses in that first covenant, sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law

¹ Gal. iii. 15.

purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission ; in all the offences that were against that ceremonial law. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the Heavens, the holy place, the altar, the tabernacle, and the like, which were but shadows of things existing now in the Kingdom of Heaven, should be purified with these ; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. As much as Heaven is above earth, so our admission into it must be through Atoning Blood, as much more precious than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; the Priest, after the order of Melchizedech, has not passed into the mere Levitical shrine, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. As the high priest in His white garments on the great day of the Atonement went into the holy of holies with the blood of that sacrifice which he had offered up without for the whole congregation of Israel, and continued there in prayer ; so hath our High Priest entered into Heaven itself : for though He hath been from all eternity in the bosom of God, yet now, as God and Man, hath He there appeared with our nature, finding access into the Holy Place by the shedding of Blood, to intercede for us, and to offer up the propitiation for our sins which He hath wrought by the Sacrifice of Himself.

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others : for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world ; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He hath been from the beginning as a God that "hideth Himself," but now in the end

of the world He hath appeared ; and His appearing is to put away sin, and that by Sacrifice—the Sacrifice of Himself. The high priest entered the holy place *once every year*, as a memorial constantly repeated ; yet the year signified the whole circuit of time, the *once for all*. The very frequency of those Mosaic sacrifices showed their weakness ; whereas, “ I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever : nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it ; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him.”² There is something very awful in this “ once for all ” in what God does ; and so the Apostle here places it with the most awful things which happen to man. Once to die, and then the judgment ; no more sacrifice, no more to be done, no change ; what power have these words ; once only, once for all !

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment : so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for Him, to them, as St. Paul says, who “ love His appearing ; ” or, as St. Peter, who “ look and hasten unto the coming of the Day of God,” shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation ; without bearing the penalties and burden of sin ; the countenance marred with sorrow ; the manger and the Cross ; the Circumcision and the Baptism ; the Water and the Blood ; but they that are found worthy “ shall see Him as He is,” in the glory of the Father, and in His own glory. Not as the High Priest entering into the Holy of Holies with propitiation and atonement, sprinkling with blood the Mercy Seat ; but as the same High Priest coming out of the Sanctuary “ the second time ” with benediction ; “ as the morning star in the

² Eccles. iii. 14.

midst of a cloud," "as the sun on the temple," "as the rainbow giving light in the clouds."³ But now is He "bearing the sins of many," "made sin for us;" in every part of His Body as one full of sin, in bearing our sin and its consequence; and every part full of sores and pains. No whole part in His Body.

In every part of the Gospel for to-day is this Sacrifice shown, even as the law was replete with the same. *The feast of unleavened bread*, it is said, *drew nigh*. But *the chief priests and scribes* kept not that *Passover* unto God, being full of the leaven of malice and wickedness; therefore He hath put away such sacrifices, saying, "Sacrifice and meat-offering Thou wouldest not, but Mine ears hast Thou opened;"⁴ and in their stead He seeketh those who in spirit and in truth shall keep the spiritual and true *Passover*. For this doth He yield up Himself. We may add, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, yea, even unto the horns of the altar;"⁵ for on this day did *Judas*, making his *agreement of betrayal in the assembly of the chief priests and captains*, deliver Him up, as it were, bound. Satan and Judas in greatest malice, God in greatest love, hath delivered Him up for us all.

And now *had come the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed*. In the city, Jerusalem, is the room prepared for our Lord and His disciples; that *upper chamber* wherein Christ's Presence is, and from henceforth the Church of God; in Jerusalem must the Lamb be slain; it cannot be that a Prophet perish out of Jerusalem. And here, O Christian soul, thou that art an Israelite indeed and without guile must be prepared for this true

³ Ecclus. i. 6, 7.

⁴ Ps. xl. 8.

⁵ Ps. cxviii. 27.

Passover, with loins girded, and staff in thine hand, and shoes on thy feet, and ready to depart hence in haste, and to pass over with the true Israel of God out of that city which is "spiritually called Egypt," and whose destruction slumbers not. And oh, if He Who was to be offered up *with earnest desire desired this passover*, wherein He was Himself to die, from the greatness of His love for us, what should be the earnestness of our desire by partaking in that Sacrifice to be made one with Him? Great was His desire, for it was His Will made one with the Will of God which rendered that Sacrifice atoning, and "by the which Will we are sanctified;"⁶ and what but our will, joined with His, can unite us unto Him in that offering of Himself? And it must be in haste; for it is even now *fulfilled in the Kingdom of God*, when He, Who is the true Bread without leaven, the Lamb without spot, shall be our Life. All things have become *new*, and that old cup of benediction, when they "poured of the blood of the grape,"⁷ is become the *New Wine in the Kingdom of God* at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It is now the passing over from the law: for the Great High Priest, the true Melchizedech, hath appeared with the Bread and Wine, for which, after His own order, He hath consecrated a New Priesthood, and "the Prince of peace" must ratify with Blood His covenant of peace.

And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My Body which is given for you. Henceforth the meat-offering of flour and the flesh of the sacrifice are found in one and the same. "My flesh is meat indeed." "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. A

⁶ Heb. x. 10.

⁷ Ecclus. i.

body is taken from mankind, full of sorrows : and full of Divine virtue, that *Body is given* again for and to man. And in the fulness of that gift every part of that Body is marked with Blood, as *given* for us, although but one drop of that Blood were all-sufficing ; the hands and the feet by the nails ; and the back with the scourge ; and the brow with the thorns ; and the soul within at every pore of the Body in the bleeding sweat ; every part of that Body is marked as sacrificial, as bruised and bleeding, and testifying to that Sacrifice ; and, last of all, His heart, as the seat of obedience and of life, from whence issue the signs of the life-giving sacraments, hath been opened in Water and Blood as the place of refuge for us. And of this *Body* thus *given* for us in death His life also set forth the tokens, as preparatory and anticipative of the same. For virtue went forth from that Body and took away diseases, the outward signs of sin, as showing that no other could in death be life-giving unto men. By the touch of that Body leprosy became new and clean flesh ; fever departed ; sight and hearing were restored ; the dead corpse by that Hand was quickened ; but that Body, by taking sin on itself, took death also,—that it might by death be to us full of life.

So to us shall the *remembrance* of Christ, and the memorial of that Sacrifice, give life to all we think, and say, and do ; and, as “ a continued oblation,” “ an everlasting memorial,” sanctify us at all hours. What can be right, O Lord, which has not in it at all times a *remembrance* of Thee?

Likewise also the Cup after Supper,—all things which are at the last, last words, and last actions, and last gifts, are sanctified to peculiar remembrance. *Likewise also the Cup after Supper, saying, This Cup is the new covenant*

in *My Blood*. No covenant of peace can be availing without blood : no testament can convey an inheritance, unless it be ratified by the death of the giver. All things with blood must be cleansed ; and this new covenant must enter into all our lives : for otherwise there is no remission.

And now, intermingling with this great mystery and sacrament of life, doth death also and “the mystery of iniquity” appear. “*But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table.*” Awful warning ! even unto the end of the world ! the table made a snare to take themselves withal ; and that saying, which speaks almost like a proverb with awful power, “He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.” And, O my soul, that would be one with this mysterious sacrifice, what a solemn call is made to thee to ask thyself, *Is it I ?* Is not thine hand in secret alliance with that world which is at enmity with God ? Canst thou say with all sincerity to thy Lord, “I have examined myself : but, oh ! do Thou search me. Try me, and seek the ground of my heart. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me” ?

But if not guilty of this mortal sin, which would crucify the Lord of life, yet hast thou so humbled thyself as to be meet to take part with Him Who giveth His life for thee ? What could more show the need of this sacrifice for all than, at such a moment, this *strife, which should be accounted the greatest* among Apostles, so long taught of God ? For from the Cross alone is every Christian grace. But Christ Himself, thy loving Master, in His great love hath a greatness for thee which thou knowest not of—a *table* at which He will give Himself to thee, O unspeakable joy ! pleasures at His right hand for ever-

more ! and a throne at which thou shalt sit with Him !— a glory beyond thy thought. But in this strife for exaltation below *Satan* is not far absent. He *hath desired to have you all, that he may sift you as wheat*, and scatter you in this temptation as chaff before the wind ; and Peter, who would stand forth so bold before all, and would be as a rock to break the waves, shall indeed be a strength to the others ; but it shall be in a way he thinks not of : it shall be through “the valley of Achor.” It is through the bitterness of self-humiliation, through the Cross, and the atoning Sacrifice, and the prayer of the great Intercessor alone, and His supporting hand stretched forth from the Cross, that he sinks not in the deep waters. *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* He that suffered *Satan* to approach Him, and submitted to his temptation, allows him also to try His disciples, and sift them as wheat : such is the mystery of our probation ; but prays for the loving yet over-confident disciple, that in that trial his faith fails not. He foresees—He permits—He saves. Peter would die for his Master : but, alas ! he cannot save himself. “So that he must let that alone for ever.” His Master must die for him, and for us all.

And, oh ! that we may be admitted with that holy company, where in agony, and with Blood falling to the ground, He *prays* for Himself and for us. Who shall escape his own hour of sorrow ? Well will it be for us if it is hallowed by this, His offering up of His soul unto God ; with the will of man lost in the Will of God,—in that perfect obedience which is better than sacrifice. The garden of Eden hath become Gethsemane. Nay, the sweat of Adam’s brow, wherein he should eat bread, hath become *the sweat, like great drops of Blood*, in the second Adam, *falling down to the ground* on which the curse is

laid, that henceforth there may be to us Bread, not of earth, but from Heaven. How does He draw us near unto Himself in His hour of trial, that we may in our trials be one with Him! Here we understand Job's cry of deep misery; David in exceeding heaviness; Jeremiah's imprecation on the day of his birth; Daniel in sackcloth of heart, "his comeliness turned in him to corruption." By the offering of His will they are sanctified. In this His weakness is our stay and strength. In this *His agony is the angel* of our comfort: in this His darkness is His Presence Light to us. In this meek surrender of Himself is the putting up for ever of Peter's sword. No other miracle of mercy is bestowed unasked for, but the healing of that wound. For charity hath overflowed its bounds. And *with swords and staves* One is taken *as a thief* to be numbered "among transgressors," that in perfect freedom of God's children we may be no more numbered among transgressors. He is bound, that we may be set loose. It is the power of darkness, and all are fled. The sheep are scattered and gone astray.

And now, from the solitude and darkness of that garden, let us pass into the light of the *hall of Caiaphas*. There also is all sacrificial and atoning to man: calling forth the tears, and giving efficacy and power to the tears of the penitent Peter: sanctifying and rendering acceptable to God that charity which "suffereth long," which "beareth all things, and endureth all things," and "seeketh not her own." This is the binding for sacrifice of that Lamb of God which henceforth shall lead the army of Martyrs, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

All is full of expiation and mercy while, as through

the Red Sea, He is passing over with His own. *They blindfolded Him; they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?* Yet He endures it all in atonement for man, who ever since the fall of Adam hath thus, as it were, treated his God and Maker: setting at defiance His power; raising clouds of sin between himself and his God, and making the face of God to be hidden from him; and setting at nought His all-searching knowledge, Who knoweth every thought of men, and all their works. God hath come down to know whether the sins of men are as the cry thereof which hath reached to Heaven; hath come down and stood in the midst, not to judge and condemn, but to save. Blasphemies are on every side: but He endures and atones for the same, expiating our blasphemies against God; and engraving humility and patience on the hearts of His disciples.

God questioned Adam, saying, "Where art thou?" and said to Eve, "What is this thou hast done?" and to Cain, "What hast thou done?" But now man hath put himself in the place of God. *And they said, What need we of further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth.* And thus He Who, if He be God and King, is by the involuntary testimony of all pronounced to be innocent, is by the voice of all declared to be guilty of death.

Which of us is there who does not feel that he has need of some expiation? There is something in the very bottom of the soul of each that bears witness to this his great want; a consciousness deeper than his deepest heart; yea, even if he had never heard of Christ, it would be so. The soul instinctively turns to God, and every thought of Him must be accompanied with this feeling of alienation

from Him and need of sacrifice ; from a sense of what we are by nature, and what we are by frequent transgression of the inward law. We feel our need, and, so far as we understand that God is good, we should not be without some trust in His goodness, that such atonement for us, through which we might approach Him, might in some way be laid up in the unsearchable treasures of His Mercy. But here we have all that the yearning heart could have desired supplied to us ; and that accompanied with works, and words, and precepts of healing compassion, and innumerable proofs of love beyond the thought of man.

Now, Christian brethren, in considering this the One Great Sacrifice, or, in the concluding words of the Epistle, "*Christ once offered to bear the sins of many,*" let us remember that our present state is nothing else but a waiting for a change in our being, inconceivably great, which is coming upon us all ! and which has been made by God to be so awful to our nature, as to be called in Scripture "the King of Terrors ;" and is usually accompanied with pains, fears, and sorrows, to subdue us, no doubt, and bring us to a condition of mind meet for some dread reality, in comparison with which all else sinks into insignificance. What it is to die we know not ; but we shall every one of us shortly know, each when his turn comes ; and we cannot too much and too often force our minds to the consideration of that change. Then it is that we shall understand the One Great Sacrifice ; then on all parts of it we shall be glad to dwell, if God should allow us to do so ; then we shall feel how far by sincerity of life we have had our feet upon the Rock, and have the foundation under our feet. Then, by His last sorrowful parting with the Twelve, and the offering up of Himself

for them ; then, by their desertion of Him, and His agony, and bloody Sweat ; then, by His supplication, with strong crying and tears ; then, by His bitter Cross and Passion, by His desolation and nakedness in the sight of all ; then, by His Blood poured out from all parts of His Body, by the pressure of sore pains both within and without ; then, by His unknown and incommunicable anguish on the Cross ; then, by His powerful intercession for His enemies ; then, by His long-enduring patience and meekness, by His perfect innocence without guile ; then, by His thoughts of us in His dying hours, His peculiar, tender love for each one of us, and His knowledge of our own dying pains and griefs ; then, by His last loud cry and giving up the ghost ; then, by “the oblation of Himself once offered,” we shall understand that Great Sacrifice.

SERMON XXXI.

Thursday before Easter.

I Cor. xi. 17—34. St. Luke xxiii.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE GREAT SACRIFICE

This do in remembrance of Me.—I COR. xi. 24.

THE Epistle of yesterday speaks of Christ's death in the sacrifices going before ; that of to-day in the memorial sacrifice coming after. And the respective Gospels might in this point of view be found to coincide with the Epistles ; in that of yesterday Christ is condemned by the high priest and Jewish council, because He confessed Himself the Son of God ; in that of to-day He is given up to the Gentiles, to the world at large, and crucified by them for the sins of all mankind. We now, then, "go forth," as it were, "unto Him without" the city Jerusalem ; we pass from the offerings of the law to that which is "from the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same."¹

In the account of the Eucharist given by St. Paul we find that it had already become subject to abuse. *In this*

¹ Mal. i. 11.

that I declare unto you I praise you not; that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it. Thus from the very beginning down to the present time Satan has been most busy to introduce strife where this feast of Divine love is. At its first institution "Satan entered," and the hand of Judas was on the table; and strange to say, even at that very time "there was a strife among them which should be the greatest." And now in the early Church at Corinth, to which St. Paul writes, at this the Sacrament of thanksgiving, the memorial of Christ's dying for all, the feast of love or Christian brotherhood which accompanied it was made the very occasion of selfishness and intemperance, as if brought about by the evil spirit in strange mockery of its purport and intention. *For in eating, says St. Paul, every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

In the second place, from the Epistle we learn that of such importance with God was the right holding of this Sacrament, that He made the institution itself the object of especial and immediate revelation to St. Paul; not leaving him to learn it from the Apostles who were present, or from their ordinances in all the Churches, but adding to theirs His own independent testimony; coinciding as it does with the narrative of the Evangelists, and furnishing perhaps that of St. Luke. And it is worthy of especial notice, that as a remedy for these disorders St. Paul immediately takes them to that upper chamber at Jerusalem, where, as on this day, our Lord gave Himself for us, simply giving an account of what there took place. It is in the tabernacle of God that we shall escape the strife of tongues, that secret Presence into which devotion

shall lead us, dwelling in remembrance on what He hath said and done. *For I have received*, he says, *of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you*, as a sacred deposit or tradition ever to be preserved in the Church. *That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed*,—when He was now, as it were, bound to the altar as the Victim prepared for death, in the very night which preceded that day of His death, He *took bread : and when He had given thanks*,—by a solemn act of sacerdotal benediction,—*He brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is My Body, Which is broken for you* :—words, indeed, that could not have been understood at the time, for they as yet required the realization of that terrible scene they were about to witness, when His life was to be violently rent in pieces, and broken for us, and the memorial of which was to continue as an everlasting covenant. His words, *This is My Body*, remain full of power at every altar and in every Church, and will do so until His coming again : “ Even,” says St. Chrysostom, “ as the words, Increase and multiply and replenish the earth, were once pronounced, but at all times afford to nature power of increase.” *This do in remembrance of Me*. In remembrance of that awful night and awful day, and of that long and painful dying ; in remembrance, too, of all that had gone before : the lively remembrance of Himself, that made His dying to be what it is to us ; nay, like all Scriptural words, they are deeper and fuller than they sound,—the presence ever continued of Himself, the participation of Himself, full of remembrances of Him. And the same St. Paul again repeats in the delivery of the Cup : *After the same manner also*—with the like solemnity of Divine institution—*He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My Blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it*,

in remembrance of Me. And yet further and more fully to set forth this ever-continued and perpetual memorial of His dying, this ever-present sacrifice unto the end, He adds, *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.*

And, oh ! that this remembrance may be ever hallowed to us ! that it may be a remembrance worthy of God ever present—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever !" a remembrance that may humble the heart, quicken the affections, may keep watch over all our conduct ; a remembrance which may make the words of the Gospel which we read and hear on this day to be living words !

In the next place, the lesson which the altar-service for this day would teach us is, that the want of love, and all other evils which indispose us from holding aright this great Sacrament, arise from *not discerning* therein the *Lord's Body* ; it was this which occasioned those abuses of which St. Paul complained. Their sin was that they discerned not the Lord's Body ; that having eyes they saw not that which was really present ; "Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified among" them. God is, we believe, present in this Sacrament ; "God is a Spirit," and where He is present He must be present spiritually ; but at the same time, the reason we know Christ to be present is because of His words, "This is My Body ;" therefore in some way His Body must be present. Now all this, blessed be God ! is a vast mystery infinitely beyond our weak reason to fathom, as everything appertaining to the attributes of God must be. Love and faith must be our only safeguard against the arts of Satan, tempting us either to lukewarmness or division.

Further, we may observe that on this occasion, as if in consideration of their imperfect knowledge, God visited

them with merciful chastisements of a temporal kind, as if saying, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."² For *when we are thus judged*, adds St. Paul, *we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

Thus St. Paul to-day in the Epistle, and in the Gospel his faithful companion St. Luke, bring us to the remembrance of Christ; and our notice may be confined to a few circumstances peculiar to St. Luke's narrative, and not found in the other Gospels. Such is that of our Blessed Lord's being sent to Herod. *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, He sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.* Now Galilee was the place where our Blessed Saviour had shown forth mostly His mighty works, in which the Prophet's words were fulfilled, "they that sat in darkness saw a great Light;" He had filled it with His miracles of mercy; had made it the place of His abode; surely from the ruler of that country He might find mercy and consideration? But far otherwise; it is but to heap insult and contempt on His innocent head; it is made by Pilate a mere occasion to serve his own interests with Herod; and Herod, who was not ignorant of Him, as Pilate was, but had heard of His miracles, is *exceeding glad* from the idle amusement and curiosity of seeing Him. How much must it have added to our Lord's sufferings to be thus brought before one who was the murderer of the Baptist, false and incestuous; and now, instigated by the presence of the *chief priests and*

² Rev. iii. 19.

scribes, so vehement in hate and cruelty. Strange, judging as man judges, that all should so combine against Him ; that not only chief priests with their servants, and fierce Roman soldiers, should so insult and mock Him, but the soldiers of Herod also in a like manner. *And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe,*—thus furnishing, perhaps, to the Roman soldiers a cruel hint for that their terrible mockery afterwards of the purple robe and the crown of thorns,—*and having thus done they sent Him again to Pilate.* No doubt it was by the instigation of evil spirits that there was raised such a combination on all sides of exceeding cruelty, but it all tends the more to show not only the meekness and patience, but also to proclaim the innocence of Him Who was now clothed in the white robe—the spotless Lamb of God : for while the Roman judge pronounces Him blameless of the charges brought against Him, saying, “ *I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man,*” he declares the same of Herod also : *No, he says, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him.* Thus the same mouth which condemns Him to death declares His innocence.

Another circumstance recorded by St. Luke only is this : *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.* From this passage we learn what our Blessed Saviour’s heart was full of in the midst of these His sad sufferings ; it was the very same subject which made Him weep when He approached Jerusalem ; the weight of His sorrows was the misery which awaited that guilty city for using Him thus. When received with Hosannahs, and

when reviled and set at nought, it was one and the same burden of woe. O inconceivable love ! stronger than death, which with its own sorrows had overcome the pains and shame of that long dying ! The sufferings of men are increased by a sense of injury, by anger at the cruel treatment of themselves, but those of the Son of God by commiseration and pity for them that inflict those pains. Surely this consideration is part of that quickening *remembrance* of Christ which we are to have in making the memorial of His dying ; when we would be united with Him in the partaking of His Body and Blood ; that we may be also of the same Spirit, may love Him Who thus loved us, and love our enemies after His example. And again, our Blessed Saviour does not in this case deprecate nor forbid our sorrows ; nay, rather bids us weep,—but it is for ourselves and those that belong to us, in the remembrance of Himself. To remember His sorrows, and in them to consider that day when the guilty shall in vain call upon the mountains *to fall on them, and the hills to cover them*, to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, Who thus died to take away sin. This reflection we may join, then, with St. Paul's command, that we be not unworthy partakers of that death : “ *let a man examine himself ;* ” “ *for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* ” Thus only shall we escape being dead and *dry* branches prepared for the burning ; and be parts of the Living Vine, grafted into the *green tree*. Of that life which is in Christ this love is the sign. *For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?* O that this life might be in us, which thus in suffering suffers not, because it is with love so united ! O that His Body and Blood may quicken us unto this life ! O that this Spirit may burn up within us all that is dead, selfish,

and worldly ! and what fuel do we need to kindle and sustain within us this fire, but this Cross that He bears, the thorny crown, and the reed sceptre of this our King !

How precious are the words thus spoken at this time to these poor weeping women ! Before Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate He was silent ; but He would not in silence and unmoved behold these mourners. The crowd *followed Him, a great company of people*, but the women *bewailed and lamented Him*, they wept aloud at the sight of such undeserved, unequalled sorrows, as they beheld Him sinking under the Cross which He was unable to bear. “ See if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger.” “ He hath made Me desolate and faint. The yoke of My transgressions is bound by His hand ; they are wreathed, and come up upon My neck ; He hath made My strength to fall ; the Lord hath delivered Me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.”³ And from the midst of this He Himself calls upon us with these words of mercy and warning, that if He thus suffers for us, we must also suffer with Him. “ Let us go forth to Him without the camp bearing His reproach, for here we have no continuing city.” He hath left that city of the earthly Jerusalem, and nothing but destruction awaits it, that we may go forth with Him, bearing His Cross, and with Him seek a heavenly Jerusalem, weeping for ourselves which have laid on Him these sorrows for us all.

The next point, mentioned by St. Luke alone, which may be the subject of our meditation on this day, is our Lord’s prayer for His murderers, when they had now come to the place of execution, and were at that point of

³ Lam. i. 12. 14.

exquisite torture in nailing Him to the Cross. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.* He had been condemned to death by them because He confessed Himself to be the Son of God ; and now, as the Son of God, He prays to His Father for them, that most prevailing of all prayers. For now the High Priest is offering up Himself on the Altar of the Cross. It is the shedding of that Blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. Nay, Christian Brethren, you, and I, and all of us, have a place in that prayer ; in that stretching forth of His hands to God ; for all of us are guilty of that death. And often has the like been repeated for us by the mediations of our merciful High Priest, and by that Spirit which “intercedeth for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” But the more immediate occasion of that prayer may bring back to us all, with greater power, this remembrance of Him in the offering up of Himself. For never was such hate and cruelty shown as then ; never such love expressed, as in that prayer. And observe how this Divine love not only forgives, and prays for forgiveness on bitterest enemies, but sees and takes hold of causes, however slight, for pity and pardon. *For they know not what they do.* How different is it with men on the ill-will which they feel for any affront or injury ; how apt are we to put the worst interpretation on what is done ; to imagine it more intended than it was ; to assign to it worse motives, more knowledge, less excuse than really belongs to it ; and so in our own minds to render forgiveness from the heart more difficult. We magnify the evil, and then find it the more difficult to forgive. What so conducive to a better mind as this remembrance ? Here for them do I shed My Blood, and do Thou, O Father, forgive them. For sins of ignorance the sacrifices

of the law could plead and atone, and of the high priest taken from among men it is said, "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity."⁴ But He Who had no sin, and could see into all the hearts of men, in the depths of this great wickedness could behold even now a place for His forgiveness and pardon. And to this He looked; this was His consolation in that bitter cup,—that they had not yet passed the bounds of His mercy. There was still a place for them within His bleeding arms. In the sacrament of His Body and Blood how earnestly should we pray for one drop of this mercy for each other; one ray of this charity. How would it soften our hard hearts; how would it warm and light up our cold and dark tempers! Is it possible that at such a time we should pray in vain to Him Who offered up this prayer? No; if we are in earnest it is impossible.

In addition to these things, St. Luke alone mentions the circumstance of the penitent thief. The Sacrifice on the Cross now began to work in the minds of men; and as if in answer to our Lord's prayer, "Father, forgive them," before the close of this day *the Centurion glorified God at the foot of the Cross, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man."* It had been mentioned, that not only the Jews and the soldiers reviled Him on the Cross, but that "the thieves that were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth." But during the six hours in which our Lord was with him on the Cross, a change had come over the feelings of one, for St. Luke says, *And one of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on Him, saying, If*

⁴ Heb. v. 2.

Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise. They condemned Him as making Himself the Son of God, and He exerted His filial intercession for them; they condemn Him as making Himself a king, and He exercises His kingly power, by giving a place in His Kingdom. And here let us observe, how wonderfully out of greatest evil does God bring forth greatest good; to nail thieves on a cross by His side was intended as wanton mockery, which Satan must himself have suggested to them; but here was the crowning and last act of Christ's love for sinners; and oh! what inexpressible comfort has this been to thousands of good men on their death-beds, and in their many preparations for death. How has this sense of God's mercy quickened their godly fear and their repentance, when "out of the deep" they have called unto Him. What support, what a world of consolation in every word is laid up for the dying penitent; what very "present help in trouble" when the soul is about to leave the body. "*To-day!*" and to-day *in Paradise*, where the wicked cease from troubling; even in this day restored to the Paradise of God. Now is the King of Terrors despoiled. O death, where is thy sting? that sting with which the old enemy hath armed thee in that Paradise of old. And far more than all this are the words, "*shalt thou be with Me.*" "To be with Christ" on the very day of death. The Psalmist had said, "Though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." We may fear to be with Christ, the All-Holy One, released from the veil of the body; who would not fear? but to be with Christ with our sins forgiven, how great the blessedness! It may indeed be the case that there is no greater instance of faith on record than that of this penitent thief, who believed in Christ coming in His Kingdom when the faith of Apostles failed, and when he beheld Him in the lowest depth of shame and misery, and, as it were, overcome by death itself; who attained in so short a time to such fulness of faith, such humility and love. But yet it is part of that remembrance of Christ which should open, and enlarge, and quicken our desires and hopes to lay hold on Him all our life long, and not let Him go.

Gracious Lord, Who wert willing to be riveted with nails to Thy bed of death, keep me in my prayers from wandering thoughts, that from my cross, whatever it be, I may ever look to Thee on Thine.

Again, our Lord's last dying words are recorded only in this Gospel of St. Luke: *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.* He cried *with a loud voice*, which we may well suppose to have reached to the end of created worlds; with a voice of power, which showed that voluntarily, of His own free will, and not from the necessity of dying, He laid down His life as a sacrifice for us all; a life over which sin and death had no power. *I commend into Thy hands*: I commit in keeping unto Thee, in the place of the dead, that others may hereafter be enabled to do the same, though born of sinful flesh.

And we may observe, that our Lord's first words, and also His last words on the Cross—the first at the time of

the morning, the last at that of the evening sacrifice—were both of them addressed unto His Father. “Father, forgive them;” and now, “Father, into Thine hands.” This was His sacrifice of perfect obedience—to do His Father’s Will, to unite us to His Father, that He might be our Father and our God.

SERMON XXXII.

Good Friday.

Heb. x. 1—25. St. John xix. 1—37.

THE FULFILMENT.

He said, It is finished.—ST. JOHN xix. 30.

“IT is finished;” the end of Christ’s coming into the world, His painful life, our redemption; as He had said the night before, “I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do;”¹ but rather it is here spoken with reference to all the types and prophecies going before, “that the Scripture might be fulfilled;” and especially with regard to the great Day of Atonement, when it is said, that after having finished the expiations of that day, “when He had made an end of reconciling the holy place,”² the priest was to let go the live goat into the wilderness. For so our Lord, having said this, now bowed and gave up His soul. These words, therefore, from the Gospel we may consider in connexion with the Epistle for this day, which carries on that for Wednesday last.

¹ St. John xvii. 4.

² Levit. xvi. 20.

The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, as shadowing forth, that is, the atonement for sin, but not conferring it, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect ; for thus they confessed their need of propitiation, but did not obtain it. For then would they not have ceased to be offered ? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins ; whereas the frequent repetition of them expressed their need of that remission which they had not. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. Notwithstanding all the sacrifices of the year, on the great day of atonement “all their sins” are again recorded as needing expiation. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Neither the bullock first slain for the priest, nor the goat afterwards for the people, on that great day, once a year, could do more than express their need. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, in the fortieth Psalm, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In the Psalm it is, “but Mine ears hast Thou opened.” Thou wilt clothe Me with a Body of flesh and with ears of obedience, if we may so combine the Hebrew and the Greek version of that passage. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Though acceptable tokens of obedience and of faith, yet in them there can be nothing to satisfy God, as He often intimates by His Prophets. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book: it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God: it is the one subject, the heading and superscription of the Book, the Book of books, which is all of Me.

Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the Law ; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. That is to say, the expression in the Psalmist implies the abrogation of those legal sacrifices, when Christ offers up Himself in obedience to His Father's will. By the which will, adds the Apostle, we are sanctified. By the will of the Son of Man in the struggle of deepest unspeakable agonies, resigning itself to the Will of God, and thus making all us sinners holy in Himself, and in Him acceptable. "For this is the will of God," says St. Paul, "even your sanctification." Through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ, differing from all legal sacrifices going before in this, that it is once for all.

And every priest, under the law, standeth daily ministering in the temple, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, as of the morning and evening lamb, which can never take away sins. But Christ, not in a local temple as confined to one place, not in a city as for one people only, but on the Cross, as on an altar lifted between Heaven and earth, to expiate and sanctify both at large ; and to enter into that holy place into which there was no access for man but by His blood. But this Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins ; He standeth not as in continual service, but as having perfected for ever His work, hath sat down on the right hand of God, waiting for the consummation promised of God, namely, till His enemies be made His footstool. As the continual power of His sacrifice is expressed in that figure, "in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain."³

³ Rev. v. 6.

For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The stress throughout is laid on this "once for all," "one oblation once offered," the full force of which is found in our Lord's expression on this day, "It is finished."

And this efficacy of that *one offering*, in perfecting for ever them that are sanctified by it, is confirmed by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, implying acceptance and plenary remission of sins, by pouring into the heart the new law of love, in fulfilment of the promise made through the Prophet Jeremiah. *Whereof*, adds St. Paul, *the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.* As our Lord said, "The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, He shall testify of Me." Unto this day, by His marvellous gifts in all the world, the Holy Ghost bears witness that the sacrifice hath been accepted. "The spirit of grace and of supplications" is poured on Israel, looking "upon Him Whom they have pierced."⁴ As set forth in the Day of Atonement, our High Priest having "finished" the Sacrifice, hath entered into the Holy of Holies, and is there interceding for us while we are praying for "a short space" without, and when He comes forth it will be with benediction.⁵

And now St. Paul proceeds to add the practical inference of the whole matter. *Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,*

⁴ Zech. xii. 10.

⁵ Ecclus. 1.

“through Him having access by One Spirit unto the Father,”⁶ “the Forerunner having for us entered;” and we in hope entering in with Him by the Manhood taken into God; *by a new and living way*; in the wonderful significance of Divine expression, by Him Who is Himself both the Way and the Life; a way *which He hath consecrated for us* by a Divine dedication, *through the veil rent asunder at His death; that is to say, His flesh, His Body pierced through and opened for us*; the way open into His heart, and through His heart unto God. *And having an High Priest over the house of God*; which is, says St. Paul, “the Church of the living God;”⁷ an High Priest who has no further sacrifice to make, but is now full of intercession and benediction, pleading that His one sacrifice of Himself; *let us draw near*, unto that His side opened for us, that is, through His two Sacraments, the Water and the Blood made one with Him; *with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled, with the Blood of Christ, and so purified from the stains of an evil conscience*, so as to approach Him with a clean heart, *and our bodies washed with pure water*, by the cleansing laver of regeneration; “the Water, and the Blood, and the Spirit” bearing witness with our spirit in the new birth, and in the heart of each. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised)*; let our faith and steadfastness answer to the sure faithfulness of God; *and let us consider one another*; let us look with a lively interest on the spiritual welfare of each other; *to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*; “endeavouring to

⁶ Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12.

⁷ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" in union of social and external worship; "in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship; in the breaking of Bread, and in Prayers;" "with one accord in one place;" not separating or withdrawing, *but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching;* the day of Christ's Coming in His Kingdom; at the destruction of Jerusalem first, in type and earnest, and then of the world.

He who stood by his Lord's Cross may well be the Evangelist for this day. *Then, says St. John, Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him.* This scourging appears to have been distinct from the Crucifixion: it is so mentioned by our Lord Himself, "they shall scourge Him, and shall crucify Him;" and is brought into like prominent mention by the Prophets, "the plowers plowed on My back, and made long furrows," and "by His stripes we are healed." O the awful, the wonderful, the terrible mystery, God is scourged by wicked men! Who is not moved, who is not terrified, who is not comforted by the contemplation of this sight? Is it this which the Apostle contrasts with "the blood of bulls and of goats"? Is it this with which "our hearts must be sprinkled from an evil conscience," in order that they may be alive unto God? Of what price in the sight of God must be the human soul, for one drop of that Blood is of infinitely greater value than all the worlds. How deep must our wounds be to require such a remedy; how offensive to God! If this be the "new and living way" by which we are to be quickened and restored, how constant in our hearts should be the meditation of it; how absorbing and intense the memory of it; how should we bear it in our

souls, in our thoughts and tempers. Our God scourged for us! How should we ourselves, in the little troubles of our daily life, bear the scourge of God, which we have so much deserved, but which henceforth is made to be the especial sign of His love towards us, "Who scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Another appearance of our Blessed Lord does the beloved disciple present to our thoughts on this day: *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!* It was an appeal to their mercy, as if saying, Surely on beholding this you will say, "It is enough." *Behold!* it is a sight of woes such as no man, before or after, hath seen. *Behold!* See the signs! The spitting, the bruises, the plucking off the hair, the mockery of the tattered purple, the Face and Head bleeding with thorns, and the Body even to the feet with the blood of the scourging, the stripes which are not for the free man, but for the slave. *Behold the Man!* the Man of sorrows, immersed in a sea of miseries to the lowest depths; yea, "a worm, and no man;" "His visage so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men:" "He hath no form nor comeliness:" "we hid, as it were, our faces from Him." God Himself by Pilate would say, as in the Epistle for this morning, "By your daily oblations, your legal rites, your types and prophecies; by the cries of distressed Nature, you have confessed your need of a Sacrifice,—here it is, *Behold the Man!* John the Baptist pointed Him out to you, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!' and Pilate hath now explained that expression, saying, *Behold the Man!* You are heaping up your sins to the Heavens, but He hath surpassed them in His pity; you

have gone to the deep in your malice, but a yet lower deep hath found you in His love and His sufferings ; you have accumulated miseries on Him, but He hath surpassed His miseries by His mercies. And louder than your cry of ‘Crucify Him!’ has been His prayer of ‘Father, forgive them!’”⁸ God is love: “love suffereth long, and is kind;” love overcometh evil with good; “love covereth the multitude of sins.” God only is perfect love. *Behold the Man!* Man, indeed! the pattern Man, made in the image of God? “We hid, as it were, our faces from Him;” we cannot gaze on such a sight, overcome with amazement and sorrow; we hide, as it were, our eyes, but they turn the more inwardly, and in the depth of our hearts we find His Image there,—Would to God it might ever be there! “The priests stand daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices,”—daily, then, hourly let us meditate within on this sight, and it will be a good day—Good Friday—that day which alone is good, and makes all other days to be good.

But it is not enough: by the mouth of *the chief priests* our sins cry aloud, *Crucify Him!* And rightly, though with other meaning than they thought, do the *Jews* answer, *By our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.* Caiaphas prophesied, though he knew it not; Pilate unwittingly wrote things of Divine import: and now it was indeed true, “in the volume of the Book it is written,” it is the substance of the Law and the Prophets, that the Son of God must die for man.

Yet further does St. John again bring Him forth to us. *He saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they*

⁸ S. Bernard. Fer. iv. Heb. Sanct.

cried out, *Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? And again: And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. And it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.* The law of the Jews, the wisdom of the Greeks, the empire of the Latins, pass away and leave Him on His Cross the universal King. We Gentiles accept Him as our King, though Jews reject Him. We own Him for our King, may He own us for His subjects. By the Cross we know Him, and may He by the same imprint in our hearts through the Spirit His own laws of love: for we would wear His sovereignty, His laws in our hearts. For this is the fulfilment of the Apostle's words in this day's Epistle: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." In our hearts may He reign in power, "till His enemies be made His footstool," "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." May He thus by His Cross reign within us: it is we sinners who to this state have brought our King; it is we who have clothed Him with mockery and shame. We have crowned Him. By that crown we know Him for ours. The gems of that crown are drops of Blood; but love unspeakable is the radiance that surrounds it, and of infinitely more worth than rubies are those drops. The Jews acknowledged Him not, because, as says St. Augustin, heavy upon them was the hand of God. May the Father reveal His Son in us; to behold Him as our King, "fairer than the children of men."

Another circumstance in the narrative of St. John may be found suitable for our meditation in connexion with the

Epistle. "Let us draw near with a true heart;" "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;" "let us consider one another to provoke unto love;" "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." For now, when all had forsaken Him, and fled each to His own; when danger, and shame, and sorrow were all around, exhorting one another, and comforting one another, each by their mutual presence and support, and the love of their Lord, there were gathered before Him and by His side in nearest approach the first-fruits of His Passion—the little Church of the redeemed standing together under the dark cloud. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother!* Where shall we meet together, but where Christ is? What shall be our bond of union, but by the Cross? it is from His Cross that this grace flows of fidelity, of mutual love, and patience. Virgin purity is there in the blessed Mother; and in the wife of Cleopas the married state; and penitence in Mary Magdalene; and Divine love in St. John,—that in these may be represented the fulness of the Church in mutual aid and one heart united. And thee, O Blessed among women, the Divine word of prophecy hath there found. He has become "a sign to be spoken against" as foretold, and the "sword is in thine own soul;" but there is to be learned at the foot of the Cross resignation to the Divine will, and in deepest agonies the Will of God made to be our will. And there, too, even now is comfort; for from thence He says, *Behold thy son!* He is our elder Brother; from

henceforth we are as brethren, born, as it were, of one and the same mother, and His Father become our Father. By His Cross we are all made one. There, where we are gathered together in His Name, is He in the midst of us, and speaking to us from the Cross. O what a lively emblem is this of Christian united worship, when all the world speak another language, and look on from afar with other eyes, not to be ashamed of Christ Crucified, to hear His still small voice speaking to us from His Altar of the Cross! When the tempest, and the earthquake, and the fire have ceased; when the rage, and the tumult, and the fierce flame of persecution hath been lulled, with this last dying Voice He speaks to us, exhorting us to love one another, as He hath loved us; and that he that doeth the Will of God shall be to Him as brother, and sister, and mother.

And now, lastly, St. John alone records that which took place after death; and this too may be considered as the fulfilment of the Law, which mindful of this mystery has required throughout so much water and so much blood, all of which applies to ourselves in the words of the Epistle for to-day, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." For Christ is on the Cross even now after death, and for what purpose but that we may behold, and, as on the serpent in the wilderness, by beholding death may live. It is His own wish and request, through the Scriptures, that we should look on Him on the Cross: He invites us to do so. And there it is that the narrative of His beloved disciple continues with us. *Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came*

to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.

Here is the water and the blood of the Law. The water and the blood flowed from thence, "the one," says St. Augustin, "our cleansing, the other our redemption." The spear hath opened His heart, and thence hath issued the price of our ransom. It hath flowed on the earth, and sent forth from thence a mighty cry unto God—a cry not calling for vengeance like that of Abel, but for mercy. His heart was "pierced through and through with many sorrows;" "the iron entered into His soul," the sword was there; but more deeply was it pierced through and through with unspeakable love for us. All His words and His actions as He went about spoke this love that was in His heart; and as if this were not enough, He now hath opened that very heart itself, that thence might flow even unto the end of the world the greater gifts of His mercy. He shed tears for Jerusalem, and also for her His blood; and in His agony the sweat sent forth from His heart was, as it were, "great drops of blood," water it may be and blood; and now from His open side goes forth this mingled stream of expiation and cleansing. His side is open full of love inexpressible; the treasure-house of all mercy; the fountain of benediction and grace; the door of hope; the entrance into Heaven; His side is open that we may enter. "Thou art a place to hide me

in." Here in His manhood we may be safe, and see Him Who is our God and live. In the Rock may I be hidden, and behold Thy glory, that I be not consumed by it.

Not a bone shall be broken, as commanded in Exodus of the typical Lamb; and applied by the Psalmist to him who is in Christ, that though "great are his troubles" "the Lord delivereth him out of all;" "He keepeth all His bones, so that not one of them is broken;"—containing moreover a prophetic declaration that the Church, however outwardly marred and disfigured, shall continue even unto the end entire, and in substance unbroken; and that from thence shall flow the two living streams of salvation. And again, "*They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.*" His faithful ones shall thus gaze with love and penitence on Him Whom by their sins they have pierced; this shall be their place of meditation unto the end; this sight their safety and health; whenever they upward lift their thoughts to Heaven, this shall meet their eyes; and they who will not thus look on Him now, who turn away and pass by from the remembrance of His sorrows,—even they at last shall be constrained to meet this sight; for "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." But "let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," "exhorting one another, and so much the more as" we "see the day approaching."

SERMON XXXIII.

Easter Even.

I St. Pet. iii. 17—22. St. Matt. xxvii. 57—66.

BURIED WITH CHRIST.

Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death.

ROMANS vi. 4.

THERE is no day in the year has such an inexpressible peace as this day. We know what an awful calm there is in death, but this has connected with that an unearthly peace; it is indeed the great Sabbath, the Sabbath of Sabbaths. And as everything relating to our Blessed Saviour must have a part in us, and be set forth in our lives, so must this His peaceful burial in the grave; as it is so well expressed in this day's Collect. For it is by being "buried with Him" in "the mortifying of our corrupt affections," that we attain unto this Divine rest in Him.

It is better, says St. Peter, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing. Patience and resignation to the Divine will is the fruit of suffering, and especially if it be suffering after the example of Christ "for well doing," for then it partakes of this mysterious

union with Him, this burial with Him in the grave in release from earthly passions. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.* He hath taken out for us the sting of suffering, which is sin, being Himself immersed in an infinite sea of sorrows, that He might sanctify the few drops that reach to us, that He might reconcile us to God, and give us His own unspeakable peace. *Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* *By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.* For though His Body now lies lifeless in the grave, yet soon shall it be awakened from that sleep by that same Divine Spirit by which in mysterious likeness He preached unto the old world dead in sin, shut up as "prisoners of hope"¹ in that long night; and by which He now pleads and invites into that place opened in His bleeding side for us, the all-saving Ark of refuge prepared for us, which is His Body, in which alone we are secured from the coming wrath. But as then He pleaded in vain to an impenitent and unbelieving world, and as those of old to whom He preached are now in the prison of death, to which His saving power reaches not, so is it with the Jew now in darkness of spirit, which is the semblance of that death. For for forty years He now invites them into that saving Ark in vain, ere the floods come which shall cover the earth. As He said of old, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."²

By the same He preached to them of old,³ "*which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of*

¹ Zech. ix. 12.

² Isa. lxi. 1.

³ See Aug. Epist. Class. iii. clxiv.

God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls—the symbolic number of the resurrection unto life—were saved by water. Awful, indeed, and full of power is the allusion; for it seems to refer to what our Lord said, that “as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.”

The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,—for this our Christian Baptism is not like the mere external ablutions and baptisms under the law,—but the answer of a good conscience towards God). For by the Word and Spirit of God it extends to the inner man, as St. Paul says, having “the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience;” as well as “the body washed with pure water;” the conscience within being able in fidelity to support the baptismal answer unto God of faith, and repentance, and obedience; and able in all the life to make answer unto God that calls by His marvellous grace, saying, Abba, Father.

And all this through the quickening of the same Spirit, *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*; whereby He “hath begotten us again,” says St. Peter, “unto a lively hope,” “an inheritance that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven.” For “if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”⁴ And of this, adds St. Peter, the pledge and the power is His own ascension into Heaven, and Presence there for our sakes and in our behalf, *Who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand*

⁴ Rom. viii. 11.

of God; whereby, as He said on His Resurrection, "all power is given Him in Heaven and on earth," *angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him*; all things being put under His feet, whether in Heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, in His Kingdom as the Son of Man. Thus with His humiliation as Man is ever combined the mention of His power as God; with the dead Body in the grave, the living Body by the right hand on High.

O restless, anxious soul, which can find on earth no rest, no place for thy foot, return again into that Ark, and to Him that puts forth His hand to invite thee in: be assured thou canst find no place for thee, but there! O thou that art dead once, dead from sin in the burial of Christ; take heed that thou die not again in that second death!

Such is the doctrine of Scripture connected with this day, whereby the burial of Christ is by Baptism to be impressed on our lives, engraven on our spirits; and now we come in the Gospel to the narrative of that Burial. And all the detail of circumstances respecting it assists us greatly to realize that event, which, like all others connected with our Blessed Lord, is not to pass away, but to be ever present with us. We know what an impression is made by the sight of a dead body, especially if it is that of one who has been near and dear to us; there is a stern, cold, deep reality about it, which teaches us more than many homilies could do; teaches us what a feverish, vain dream this our life is, with all its eager anxieties and pursuits; its business, and its pleasures, and its greatness. The motionless, speechless, insensible dead corpse gives us to know what we are, and what we must come to. There is no teacher like it. And every one who has felt this lesson has been for the time, for the moment, it may be,

or hour, or day, if not longer, a different man. The world has lost its power, either to distress or please him, and appears in its true colours ; and he sees what sin is before God. Yes ; the one great truth of all truths is to know what sin is before God. Now this is the wisdom of the grave, yet of itself it is but a cold and lifeless wisdom ; but combined with the death and burial of Christ, and the contemplation of it, this wisdom is quickened by love : love is able to overcome the power of death, not by avoiding it, but by wrestling with it. I say it is the fact and reality of a dead body lying before us, which yesterday was like ourselves, that has power to impress us as no words can do ; or rather, to bring home to us what words otherwise would feebly convey. And such must it be by reflection to bring before us Christ's Body, to enter the grave with Him, and keep Sabbath there with Him, perpetual Sabbath.

When the even was come, says St. Matthew, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple : he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. What a change has already come with the stillness of death ! the tumult, and violence, and hatred seem for awhile to have ceased ; and the rich man, if he has little to hope, yet he has still less to fear. And how does this kind and good office of the holy Joseph set before us our poor weak human nature at the best ? When all is over, and the last remains of a friend lie before them, how earnest are men oftentimes to make amends for the past, to show that love which fear of the world or some other passion had hindered them from showing before. It may appear, indeed, as if it were all now too late, and humanly speaking it is so ; but, blessed be God ! it may not be so altogether with Him, as was the case with this apparently

the last duty of love which was shown to Christ when dead. It was His quickening Spirit that kindled this love. And what He inspires He Himself rewards, and it may be with Himself.

Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. Thus all was now over, as it will be with you and with me, my brethren, as it has been with all who have gone before us—the world with all its affections and its enmities for ever shut out. “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness, and in the deep. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.”⁵ It is good for us to be continually anticipating that time which must so surely come—who will be with us then? which of our schemes? which of our friends? which even of our children and nearest relatives? How does the thought even now calm and quiet our uneasy, restless spirits! Then, in the midst of such reflections, it may be in the dead and dark night, will that prayer be understood by us, “Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord : Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?” But “there is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared.”⁶ Yes; then we understand what sin is, and how great and awful is God’s mercy. Yes : there let us shut ourselves in, little children in Christ, and close the doors about us, and put out, as belonging to us no more, the mad and too-alluring evil world. Let us

⁵ Ps. lxxxviii. 5, 7.

⁶ Ps. cxxx. 4.

enter often by deep meditation and prayer ; but let it not be into our own tomb, but into that of Christ, to be there with Him ; that as the dead bones of Elisha revived the dead man,⁷ so the grave in which Christ has been may be that to receive our mortal remains, that they together with Him may be quickened, and that our mortifications and consideration of death may be with His burial. That in the Rock we may be hid, that our Baptism may be to us the "clean linen cloth" wherein His Body was wrapped with pious care. He had no sepulchre of His own, but is laid in that of another, that His sepulchre may be our sepulchre.

This reflection is, as I said, full of holy peace, very consoling, and even refreshing ; the dews condense in drops on that hard cold rock, and may give life to our dry spirits. Tears from the heart will collect there, and may refresh us ; tears for ourselves will blend with tears for Him Whose Body for our sakes lies thus mangled and broken before us. There is a sorrow that worketh death ; and there is a godly sorrow that frees from death.

The Scripture itself, in the words that follow, sets before us this duty in a living type, which seems ever associated with the memories of this day. *And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre.* What more touching emblem of penitential love which still steadfastly adheres to Him Who is out of sight, and seems to say, "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." With what an impressive image does it personify what should ever be the remembrance of this burial ;—night drawing on after that dreadful day, and the two holy mourners sitting together, watching where the stone hath closed the Rock.

⁷ 2 Kings xiii. 21.

Yet further ; we have in the account that follows a description of the unbelieving world, such as it will be unto the end, when, as the Prophet Daniel says, "the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand ;" yet all their designs shall be overruled to the greater confirmation of the faith ; they shall be "taken in their own craftiness," yea, "their own tongues shall make them fall." "And all men that see it shall say, This hath God done, for they shall perceive that it is His work."

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. So this is all that men can do ; they have done their worst, and it comes to this ; they had kept the prophecies as enemies keep them ; and they keep the sepulchre as enemies would ; but all this was needful, for it was God's doing, to the stronger establishing of that throne of which it is said, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Sion."

It is the Sabbath ; but is Christ altogether gone and departed from His own ? is He powerless in the grave, because His body lies lifeless there ? No, not at all so ; sin lies buried with Him ; all that is human and earthly lies buried with Him, in order that we may live to God :

it is our Sabbath, to be ever kept by us until we lay our bodies in the grave; nay, after that, until we resume them again, if the Will of God be so, at the great resurrection. It is the Sabbath-day; it was on this day that our Lord wrought His works of mercy, and pleaded for them that they should be done on this day, while the chief priests and pharisees, as now, were the more full of enmity against Him. And what do we learn from this, but that while we are by Baptism buried in the burial of Christ as to earthly hopes, desires, and affections, yet we are at the same time to be alive unto God, through the Spirit that quickeneth, in works of mercy and love; but that in the meantime the enmity of the world ceases not, we are not to expect it.

Now both of these points are most important to us; they teach us what is peculiarly Christian; and are correctives we much need. For there was an old heathen philosophy that taught deadness to the world; the thorough laying aside it required of all human feelings and passions; but what it inculcated partook of that awful and dead calm which nature itself derives from the grave of man; it had nothing of that peace which the Christian learns by the tomb of Christ, wherein there is release from sin by dying with His death; and in those fruits of righteousness wherein God still works, while He gives rest. There Christ "being dead yet speaketh," while by His Spirit He quickeneth our mortal bodies. The world invites us to live to it; philosophy bids us to be dead to the world, but Christianity adds, in order that we may live to God. We are not only to be dead with Christ, but to learn of Him, and live with Him, if we would find His rest for the soul.

The other point for consideration is, that though the

Christian be dead to the world, and so really unharmed by it, yet the world will not be dead towards him. This is a great and important truth; the world at this time, and at all times, lies upon the Church of God like a heavy and oppressive weight which would stifle and crush it if it could. It is so in the great public at large; as you will find in popular assemblies, in the books and daily records which speak its voice. It is the pharisee again and again consulting with Pilate, and speaking "of that Deceiver." And the weak Christian is harassed, angry, yet half-ensnared by it, and often shaken in his opinions and his conduct; for the world itself, even in its enmity, seems to be half-Christian, for it says, "that Deceiver saith, I will rise again." Though unwilling, it bears testimony; and from a kind of uneasiness and fear which lies deep within it is urged to deeds of ill-will and enmity, and this is a trial to the love and faith of good but over-anxious disciples, because it seems to dishonour their Lord. But our Blessed Saviour seems from the sepulchre to say, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God."

I speak of the world at large as to those whose eyes and ears in these days are open to what is going on abroad, as it were, on the great stage of this passing time; but the very same thing is taking place likewise in every private sphere, in each separate scene where man is. There is the world at enmity with God; its custom, its judgment, its principles. Now what is desirable is, not merely that we should not be troubled, but seeing, as in the history of this day, how God is bringing good out of evil, and making all things to work together for the good of those that love Him, that we should adore His unsearchable judgments, that with love and wonder

we should wait for Him ; that in the Divine teaching of that Psalm, which calls to Him out of the deep, the soul should wait for Him, "more than they that watch for the morning ;" yea, as the Holy Ghost emphatically repeats the words, "more than they that watch for the morning."

SERMON XXXIV.

Easter Day.

Col. iii. 1—7. St. John xx. 1—10.

THE POWER OF CHRIST RISEN.

If ye then be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD. — COL. iii. 1.

SOME good men among the Heathen recommend us to live a divine and heavenly life here on earth ; and beautiful indeed were the sounds of such wisdom in a forlorn world ; but, after all, they were but like sweet strains heard in a desert, as fair and bright clouds which drop no rain. There was no strength in advice so wise and good to lift up our poor fallen nature. But how different is it on this day to us, when it comes clothed in the language of the Epistle, and supported by the facts which the Gospel discloses ; when it comes to us in the majesty and power of Heaven, and the full revelation of the Incarnate Word, God made man. It constrains, it lifts up, it moulds into the living Body of Christ risen, every one that is worthy to stand. For the Gospel says, Christ is risen ; the Epistle, Ye also are risen together with

Him. On this day we are taken out of ourselves, and set on high, made new creatures in the second Adam. He "hath set my feet upon a rock, and ordered my goings. He hath put a new song in my mouth."¹

The Old Testament Lessons tell us what this day is in type; the Psalms what it is in prophecy; the Gospel what it is in history; but the Epistle for this Sunday, what it is in doctrine and precept, to be fulfilled in ourselves, without which, type, and prophecy, and history, will avail us not.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. We all naturally seek "the things which are above;" we seek to rise to wealth, power, and sitting at ease; but such desires are powerless and frustrate, because we seek not high enough; not to Heaven itself, but to something above us in these lower regions of sin, to the Prince of the power of the air, who raiseth up that he may cast down. We seek not to those heights where Christ sitteth in almighty power of Godhead to raise us up to Himself. We naturally seek rest; the soul of man always seeks rest, but that rest is only to be found "where Christ sitteth;" we seek honour, but where shall we find it except "on the right hand of God?" we seek power, but where shall we obtain it but with Him to Whom on this day "all power is given in Heaven and in earth"?"²

And here observe, in these words of the Epistle, how all is of Christ: *If risen with Christ*, here is strict union with Him in His Resurrection. And the things we are to seek are not only those "which are above," but *where Christ sitteth*; literally, "where Christ is, being seated,"

¹ Ps. xl. 2.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

or sitting, "on the right hand of God." All is in Him, is of Him, is with Him.

Set your affection, adds the Apostle, *on things above, not on things on the earth.* First seek the things above ; that is, let your actions be directed towards them ; and then "set your affection," or "mind," let your desires and thoughts be there also ; first let your treasure be there, and then let your heart follow. To this, moreover, the warning is added, "not on things on the earth," for the heart and affections cannot be in two places at once ; in the same degree that they are in Heaven, must they be withdrawn from earth and earthly things.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Here again all is Christ : *Ye are dead* as to things below, where Christ was rejected and crucified, and ye have a *life in God*, a life not now apparent, but hidden, and that life *with Christ, hid with Him* : that is, hidden as He is hidden, out of sight, withdrawn for awhile from view, but existing in power and efficacy. That life is hid together with Him, nay, more intimate still, He is Himself that life ; for it is added, *When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear*, "shall be manifested," *then shall ye also appear*, "be manifested," *with Him in glory.*

The life, therefore, which a Christian must have, the life which he bears about with him, is a hidden life ; but his dying daily, his deadness to the world, this is to be manifest to those around him here below ; as the crucifixion of Christ was indeed seen by all, but His rising again was hidden and in secret ; and His risen Body moved as it were in secret, and was rarely seen, and that only by the faithful, not by the world.

The Resurrection of our Lord, like His Transfiguration on the Mount, set forth the regeneration of the body, as

it is to be hereafter when changed and glorified ; and to this life therefore the regenerate soul is in Christ even now to aspire, and to live above the world in that blessed hope.

“ He was crucified,” says St. Augustin, “ that He might show on the cross the dying of the old man ; He rose again, that He might show by His life the newness of life that must be in us.”³ And another Latin Bishop : “ The Resurrection of the Lord was not the end, but the changing of the flesh. That body which before could be crucified, was now become incapable of suffering ; that was become immortal which was before made subject to death ; that was become incorruptible which before could endure wounds. Let, then, the people of God acknowledge that they are in Christ a new creation. Let no one fall back again into that state from whence he hath risen.”⁴

And observe how St. Paul ever makes us one with our risen Lord ; as if His Resurrection and our own were but one resurrection. “ The first Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam a quickening spirit.” “ The first man is of the earth, earthy ; the second Man is the Lord from Heaven.” And hence follows, “ as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy.”⁵ The first life, as earthy and of the earth, has objects seen and perishable ; the second, as heavenly and of Heaven, has objects unseen and eternal, which shall appear with the Lord when He appears from Heaven.

Mortify, therefore, proceeds the same Apostle in the Epistle for to-day, *your members which are upon the earth,* parts of the old man with the desires arising thence, and fruitful in sin ; such as *fornication*, and more generally

Par. Brev.

⁴ St. Leo, Par. Brev.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 47, 48.

uncleanness, inordinate affection; literally, “passion,” such affection as guides rather than is guided by the conscience; *evil concupiscence*, the “lusting after evil things;”⁶ and then he mentions the most powerful and subtle of them all, *and covetousness, which is idolatry*. It is “idolatry,” for it rests and leans on earthly substance, as the soul should upon God only, and has all the deceivable power and witchcraft of idol worship. The judgments on idolatry, and on the nations given to it, by the command of God, were but the signs of His wrath on these sins, however men may deceive themselves. In allusion to which the Apostle adds, *For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.*⁷

But all on this great day, this day of days, speaks of deliverance; and with this our subject terminates: *In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*

Such is this brief and sweet Epistle for Easter Day, which contains so beautiful an epitome of the Divine life hid in God; a life which bears about indeed “in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” and is known by signs of mortification; even as our Lord’s risen and glorified Body bore still, and was known and recognized by the marks of the wounds by which He died. Thus must the Bride yet for awhile fast and mourn in the absence of our Lord, while still clothed with this body of corruption; but purified by those sorrows, and partaking of His cup and of His Baptism, she obtains more and more eyes to behold Him, “Whom having not seen” she loves; “in Whom, though now” she “see Him not, yet believing,” she rejoices “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”⁸

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 6.

⁷ See the same passage in p. 278

⁸ 1 St. Pet. i. 8.

And now let us open that "bundle of myrrh,"⁹ full of sweetness though it savour of the grave; which hath combined with it the balm of immortality, and speaks of "love strong as death;" which comes of "faith out of a pure heart," with the sweet "frankincense," or the breath of early morn, which while it is "yet dark" sees "the day break, and the shadows flee away." Let us, I say, now open the short Gospel for this day.

The first day of the week; the first day was it indeed of the new creation, "the day which the Lord hath made;" the first of the days of Heaven; the day of the everlasting Light, though it be yet dark. *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.* She sought while "it was yet dark." How full of significancy, how much of faithful penitential love is contained in these words! She sought "when it was yet dark." What encouragement to ourselves sounds in the words! She sought, and "Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee."¹ "I sought Him, but I found Him not;" but love is kindled the more by seeking; and because she sought while it was yet dark, as soon as it was light she found. Who is he "that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God."² We also have to seek, and our best seeking is but as it were in the dark; but if we "see the stone taken away," and the sepulchre open, it is enough; for Him we have to seek elsewhere where He is to be found, which is at the Right Hand of God. It is enough for us below that the sepulchre is

⁹ Song of Sol. i. 13, et cætera.

¹ Ps. ix. 10.

² Isa. l. 10.

open and the stone gone. Worthy is she, the first to find, who first seeketh. "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee."³ To seek early is to have a double title to a blessing. And she that had "seven devils" hath known the depths of our mother Eve's inheritance of woe; "all Thy waves and storms are gone over me;"⁴ and when one deep calleth unto another, where the lowest depth is found, the deep of His mercy answereth first of all to the deep of our misery.

Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him. He that was slain by a death so miserable hath been thought unworthy of the rich man's sepulchre, and taken out from thence, and cast forth I know not whence. Desolation and misery could go no further than this: for she knew not as yet that the tide was already turned, and the overflowing seas of man's malice had come to their height, and were now to be driven back for ever. She knew it not, and therefore was endurance in this most perfected; and greater the joy that came in this bereavement. The heaviness which endureth for a night was yet upon her, for it was yet dark; and she knew not as yet the joy that cometh with the morning.⁵ She came—she came early—she came while yet dark—she came and found not—and fearing still sought—and her fears but kindled more her zeal; "she runneth," as first to bear tidings of that which for four thousand years creation had been listening to hear—that the stone was rolled away; "she runneth," for speed is well needed to keep alive the torch which is to kindle

³ Ps. lxxiii. 1.⁴ Ps. xlii. 9.⁵ Ps. xxx. 5.

the world ; which must first awaken Apostles, and guide them on their way while it was yet dark.

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together ; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre ; and he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in. The disciple whom Jesus loved “did outrun Peter ;” not that his love for his Lord was greater, as St. Augustin would say ; yet faith was stirred by hope, and hope added wings to zeal ; and hopeful faith does perhaps precede the love which is weighed down by penitential sorrow. In him who lay on Jesus’ breast, and who stood by His Cross in death, there may have been with love, greater knowledge of the Divine power which his Master had, even in death. Or more lively recollection of His oft-repeated declarations, which they understood not, of His rising again. Or may be that, setting aside spiritual significancy, it was but youth and age balanced together, each in turn to prevail ; the one preceding by the way, the other by entering in. Yet the “entering not in” was as of wisdom that feeds on contemplation, and seeks not evidence of sense. “Stooping down and looking in he saw,” but he entered not. All is expressive ; humility that stoops to look in, and reverential awe that stands aloof, are the parts of wisdom. While in St. Peter, that pastoral love to which it is given to feed the flock, is more bold in search, to investigate the evidences of truth. Thus both are alike, both running together ; one follows for a time and then precedes.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie ; and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. These were not

signs of indecent haste and irreverence, as in those who from hostile motives would disinter and dishonour the dead ; but of Him Who hath implanted in our nature the feelings of reverential regard for the poor clothings of mortality. Nay, far more ; it speaks of that awful veneration for holy things, which touched and handled with extreme care and circumspection the Ark of God, and all that pertained to the sanctuary.

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. That is, "he saw" those evidences of Christ risen, "and believed." The light of Divine grace within his heart giving him eyes to read these tokens aright ; "the Father of lights" within was revealing His Son and "the power of His Resurrection" to one who had kept so close to Him in "the fellowship of His sufferings;" and who already seemed to have died with Him in that keener martyrdom, which love supplied, when "the sword pierced through" his "own soul," as, together with the Virgin Mother, he watched his Lord's dying agonies.

Then the disciples, it is added, went away again unto their own home; leaving the faithful Mary there at the tomb. In the dusk of the evening, in the twilight of the morning, she is there ; if she departs, it is but on the same sacred errand and inquiry of love, and again to return. She, out of whom went seven devils, hath well known what it is to find, and what it is to lose ; and shall soon know what it is so to find as never to lose again her Deliverer.

And here we may observe what has probably occurred to us as remarkable in the selection of this passage for the Gospel of Easter Day ; that there is no mention in it

of Christ risen, no evidence beyond that of the open grave, no appearance of our Lord stated in it, not even the Angel's declaration that Christ is risen ; but the great end and object of it is contained in this which is stated of the beloved disciple, from whose Gospel it is taken, that "he saw and believed" though he had "not seen." It is the greater blessing, declared by our Lord Himself, and apparently with a reference to this very circumstance of St. John, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." It is, moreover, the duty and crown especially held out to ourselves, that we believe in Him while withdrawn from sight. It connects together the Epistle and the Gospel. For the Epistle exhorts us to believe in Him though we see Him not, so as to be risen together with Him ; and the Gospel shows us how Divine love is ready to do this, even from the very first, and while as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

"The absence of the Lord," says St. Augustin, "is not absence : have faith and He is with thee, Whom thou seest not." And the history of this great and glorious day itself will supply us with every form and variety of faith, in which He is found by those that seek Him. He was found this day by St. John through faith which needed not sight ; in that purity of heart which hath the vision of God ; He was found by St. Peter, the chief of Apostles, and the chief of penitents ; He was found in the assembling together of the Church and the Apostolic company, the doors being closed ; He was found and known in the breaking of bread ; He was also found and first seen by her who first sought Him, early and in the dark, by Mary Magdalene, by the loving, earnestly-seeking, mourning sinner, the returning daughter of Eve. She

first saw "the bright and Morning Star," and she wears for ever the crown of this great day. And what if on this day in all these ways we seek Him; ere the rise of the morning, in the setting of the sun, with loving penitence, with contemplative wisdom, in Apostolic fellowship, in the assemblage of the faithful, and in the breaking of bread.

SERMON XXXV.

Monday in Easter Week.

Acts x. 34—43. St. Luke xxiv. 13—35.

WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.

He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again.—
2 COR. v. 15.

BLESSED are these holy days wherein we walk with Christ risen ; would that they might abide with us always ; let us make the most of them while they last. An event which is passed in time, while kept in memory it passes not, is renewed and with us still ; such is the mystery of the human mind, making the things of time to partake of its own eternity. So is it with the Resurrection of Christ ; it is recalled year by year, nay, continues with us a lengthened Lord's day from Easter to Pentecost. Even on this day only how many things crowd upon us in the Church's service. In the First Lesson there is the bread from Heaven renewed every morning ; and in like manner in the evening First Lesson, the hands of Moses held up, and availing, like Christ's prayer on the Cross, till the going down of the sun. O significant type of this

our state ! Then in the Second Lessons there is carrying on of the same instruction by the history of our Lord's Resurrection in St. Matthew, and in the Acts the lame man walking. All these things abide with us still in commemorating our Lord's rising from the grave. But more than all, in the ancient and Catholic altar service itself we have St. Peter, the Apostle of the Jews, testifying to the calling of us Gentiles into Christ's marvellous light ; and in St. Luke's Gospel, Christ's walking with us unto the end, conversing with us, opening our hearts to understand the Scriptures, making Himself known to us in the breaking of bread.

Peter opened his mouth, as if in a solemn and authoritative declaration, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. How prone are our hearts to limit the mercies of God ; how slow was even St. Peter in casting off Jewish prejudices, and in seeing that Christ died and rose for us all. It needed that express vision of God on the housetop at Joppa before he thus spoke to Cornelius and his company at Cæsarea ; and in the baptizing of these Gentile converts he gives this short summary of the whole of the faith :—the ancient Israel keeping from the beginning the word and prophecies of Christ, Who is God over all ; the proclamation of the Kingdom throughout Judea ; the baptism of John ; the long-foretold Anointed One of God, manifested in putting under His feet the powers of evil ; and then the witness of the Church to these things in the Apostles. Then the Death and Resurrection of Christ, with full testimony to the same ; and commission to turn the hearts of all men to the coming Judgment, preparing them for the remission of sins in His Name, to which all

the prophets bear witness. Such is the beautiful epitome of our faith in St. Peter's emphatic words. *The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; "for He is our peace Who hath made both one," both Jews and Gentiles. (He is Lord of all;) That word (I say) ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: as the appointed messenger foretold of the prophets. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; fulfilling thereby in Him, as the Holy One of God, the typical anointings of the Law, Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: showing His will and power to heal every evil to which man is subject through the fall. For God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all that He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whereby He manifested Himself to be the Son of God. Whom they slew and hanged on a tree, "being made a curse for us;"¹ Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God; even to us who did eat and drink with Him; whereby He testified to us the reality of His glorified Body, after He rose from the dead. "Not to all," "for none of the wicked," as saith St. Augustin, "beheld Him risen." He manifests Himself not to the world, but to those who are found worthy through faith. So was it when He went about in the flesh, so is it now in His Kingdom of Grace. For His manifestation to the wicked will be their final destruction. But He made us His witnesses, and He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He Who*

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. "For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."² To Him give all the prophets witness, that we might have consolation, and a good hope, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.

Now, if it were allowable to compare together appearances of God and His dealings with mankind, we might well say that, humanly speaking, there has never been written anything of more deep and lively interest than the Gospel for this day; of the two disciples talking together by the way, and Christ walking and conversing with them; how does it bring down the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, to be the companion, as it were, of our mutual discourses and sad thoughts, and to make Himself our Guide and Comforter when we know Him not! *Behold, two of His disciples went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. They were in much darkness and ignorance, but their talking was of Christ, and of Him crucified; how many were conversing together on that day throughout the world, and even at and around Jerusalem; but these did Christ select to walk with them. And blessed are they who, if joined by Christ in their journeys and discourses, can find on remembrance that their words and thoughts had been blameless; that they were seeking for Him though they found Him not. And to such, indeed, does He always vouchsafe His presence; where two or three are together*

² Rom. xiv. 9.

conversing of Him, He is in the midst of them, though they see Him not.

And it came to pass, that while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. Their talking was of Him, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; from love of Him was their sorrow. *But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.* For thus He often hides Himself from us in His providences when nearest to us, but He knows our sorrows and enters into them, and inquires of our doubts, and in our imperfection leads us on to the knowledge of Himself and of His presence; while it is for Him we seek, for Him we mourn, of Him only are our thoughts. "They saw Him," says an holy man,³ "because they loved Him; but because they doubted, while they saw Him, they knew Him not." *And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?* He asks, in order that He may answer; He leads us to open our infirmities to Him, that in Him may be our strength; though He knoweth our thoughts long before. *And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?* It was they that knew not those things; it was they that were but strangers in that earthly Jerusalem, being citizens of a better city, the vision of peace; but they knew not this, and hence was their sadness. *And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:*

³ Ludolphus.

and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. Thus did He draw from them a confession of those things which He Himself, amidst His mighty deeds and words, had so often foretold, of His death and sufferings; they confess it in His own words of prediction,—to be “delivered up,” to be “condemned to death,” to be “crucified.” *But we trusted, we were hoping, that it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel.* They were sad because they had lost hope; and they had lost hope because their faith was but weak; they speak of Christ as a “Prophet mighty in deed and word,” but this was not enough; hence their sadness, their unbelief, their want of hope: they had not their foundation on the Rock of Christ’s Godhead, and therefore in the water-floods they were shaken. They “*trusted it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel,*” that is, they had now lost that hope; it was of the temporal Israel they thought; their minds had not been sufficiently purified from that which was carnal, and of the earth: for it is the pure in heart which shall see God; and therefore the dying thief, in the furnace of affliction on the cross, had that which was earthly in conceptions of the Christ purged out, and he believed in Christ as the Redeemer of Israel, and in His Kingdom after death. “The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth,” the blast of God’s displeasure hath passed over the flower, and Israel after the flesh languisheth, but the Word of God abideth for ever.

Yet even now there seemed to have been in them something of an undefined hope, as in the chief priests an uncertain fear, till the *third day* seemed to set its seal on their despair; so that not even a vision of angels, nor the evidence of holy women, with the wife of one of

them, "Mary the wife of Cleopas," being among them, were enough to dispel their unbelief. *And beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not His body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but Him they saw not.* In the full assurance of faith there is rest and joy; but half-belief occasions and increases sadness. The absence of that body to St. John confirmed faith, when he visited the sepulchre; to them it is but perplexity. Even the penitent Magdalene, who loved much, could say in much grief, "They have taken away my Lord." Tears had dimmed her sight; and the cloud of sadness had darkened her soul.

Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Often does He reprove, and in terms of severity, His own beloved disciples, but always for the same cause, in inconceivable tenderness and love; it is always for their sadness and their fears, which arose from want of faith in Him; so was it because of the storm, because they had no bread,⁴ because of their not sufficiently trusting in His power and will to support them, because of their doubts and troubled hearts in beholding Him. How different from the great and the wise among men! With the same humility as of old, He forbears, He instructs; He joins Himself to two wayfaring men, not even Apostles, but humble, doubting, indeed, and perplexed, but loving dis-

⁴ Mark iv, 40; viii. 17.

ciples; He reserves not His words, as proud men would do, for the great and the many, but teaches these two alone. O void of understanding, because slow of heart! *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?* Was it not needful from the predestination of the Father, the fulfilment of prophecies, the eternal wisdom and fitness of things, that “the Captain of our salvation should be made perfect through sufferings”? for there is no other but that narrow door into the life which is with God. *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* He admitted them, as it were, to that sight of Moses and Elias conversing with Him respecting His decease at Jerusalem;⁵ and the heavenly light which surrounded Him had kindled a fire in their bosom.

And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. It is as often in His spiritual dealings with us, He kindles in us the knowledge of Himself, He draws out our desires after Him, and then He seems to be leaving us, as when He would have passed by His disciples walking on the sea; as He passed by blind Bartimæus, and the Canaanitish mother. And all this to enlarge our desires after Him, for according to our want He fills us; according to our longings for Him He manifests Himself. We appear about to lose Him, in order that we may press forward the more; for He is teaching us by His providence, as by His word and grace, “always to pray, and not to faint.”

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

⁵ Luke ix. 31.

went in to tarry with them. O blessed and wonderful company to entertain as a guest their risen Lord! He was thus speaking by action as He does also by His Word; and affording a lively type of what He will always do in His dealings with the soul that mourns for Him. "If any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."⁶ It is not by hearing, but by doing; not in the unfolding of the Scriptures, but by charitable constraining and hospitality; thus Christ is received though unawares. "He appeared unto them," says St. Mark, "in another form;" it is as He will be Himself received by us in the poor; "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in." And when the sun of life is verging towards evening, and the day is far spent, how full of consolation, that we may constrain the Sun of Righteousness to abide with us! As with Abraham, as with Martha and Mary, as with the disciples at Emmaus, so it appears in the Apocalypse, which is the account of what He is now doing unto the end, our Risen Lord is with us, watching and conversing with each.

And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. It was for this that their eyes were holden so long; it was for this that He opened to them the Scriptures; for this He kindled and drew out their desires after Him, and went in with them. It was in them for our sakes: that in the Holy Eucharist we may have light, and find Him in the breaking of bread. As the eyes of the blind man He opened by degrees, and

⁶ Rev. iii. 20.

first anointed, and sent to the pool called Siloam, so now He holds their eyes, as it were, in darkness, while they put forth their hands and feel for Him, until they come to that His own appointed means of illumination, "Do this in remembrance of Me;" "The commandment of the Lord giveth light unto the eyes."

Again; still further instruction have we in this our Easter lesson. No sooner were their eyes opened to know Him, than He vanished out of their sight. To see Him therefore, and to know Him, is this to have Him depart from us? Oh, no! surely far otherwise. It is to have Him more intimately near to us in the Spirit, not needing sight. This is better and more blessed. It was true on this occasion, as He had said before, "It is expedient for you that I go away;" and as He said to Mary Magdalene this morning, "Touch Me not;" and as St. Paul says, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more;" "behold, all things are become new." What need had they of His bodily presence, to whom He hath given His Flesh to eat?

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? He had kindled the fire within them: He extinguished not the smoking flax, but cherished it into a flame, till in that light they discerned Him. The fire of Satan's words was instilled into our first parents—they ate, and their eyes were darkened; in these was inspired the fire of God—they ate, and their eyes were opened.

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jeru-

7 2 Cor. v. 17.

saalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. At the House of Bread, like another Bethlehem, they have found the Saviour of the world, led on by His gracious Presence, Who is "the bright and morning Star." But all issues from Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem they return, and in that City they now find the Church of the living God.

Many are the appearances of our Lord at His Resurrection, and each of them in itself like a type or parable containing in it much hidden instruction, unfolding its sweetness as we unbind its meaning; but none that so enters into our every day and domestic or social life as this incident, raising up to Heaven our familiar walks and conversations, investing them with a Divine life and character, as what may be in fellowship with Christ risen. He is revealed, no longer "as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night," but "the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble."⁸ No longer "as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day," for it has an abiding character; it partakes of His own eternity, Who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" the Sun that goes not down. Christ is risen; nay more, they also are risen with Him; for He is "the living Bread which came down from Heaven;" "if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever."

From that earthly Jerusalem we with Him are cast out, as travellers and pilgrims seeking a better country, and a

⁸ Jer. xiv. 8.

city that hath foundations, which are the twelve Apostles of the Lamb ; but now, if need be, in heaviness, we go on our way weeping, knowing nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But He will vouchsafe His Presence with us unto the end ; and though too often our eyes are holden by unbelief, and knowing Him we know Him not, yet our cold hearts burn within us at His Word ; and the Scriptures come home to us as the honey and the honeycomb at which the fainting eyes of the weary Jonathan were lightened. And ever and anon, if we keep His commandments, and with charitable and holy thoughts constrain Him, He will come in to us, and abide with us, and manifest Himself to us.

SERMON XXXVI.

Tuesday in Easter Week.

Acts xiii. 26—41. St. Luke xxiv. 36—48.

BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—ROM. x. 9.

THE Scriptures to-day for the Epistle and Gospel, the same as in other Churches, are but a continuation of those for yesterday. On Easter Monday we have St. Peter's account of our Lord's Resurrection; to-day that of St. Paul: St. Peter's to the Gentiles at Cæsarea; St. Paul's to the Jews at Antioch; in both what may be expressed in St. Augustin's words, "After His Resurrection He called the Church from the whole world, no longer weak upon the Cross, but strong in Heaven."¹ By the accounts of our Lord's death and sufferings our hearts are knit to Him; but in His Resurrection is our hope. "It is not," says the last-mentioned writer, "the praise of the Christian faith that they believe Christ died,

¹ In Ps. cii.

but that He rose from the dead. Even the Heathen believes that He died.”² For this reason on these days the Church does not set before us reflections on Christ’s rising, from the Epistles ; but the evidences of it from the Acts of the Apostles.

Men and brethren, says St. Paul, in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, *children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God*,—that is, and Jewish proselytes also,—*to you is the word of this salvation sent*. It is to them, especially, “to the lost sheep of the House of Israel,” it is sent ; “salvation is of the Jews ;” and what our Lord says in the Gospel for to-day, of their “beginning at Jerusalem,” applies to the synagogue in every place.

For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath-day,—in all their synagogues throughout the world,—*they have fulfilled them in condemning Him*. If they had known Him they would have understood the Prophets ; and if they had understood the Prophets, they would have known Him. But they “knew not the wisdom of God, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world.”³ *And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him*,—for all things were pre-ordained of God, all spoken of beforehand, all fulfilled, though through the evil passions of men,—*they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre*. They had done all, and He was crucified through weakness ; the seal of death was upon Him ere

² In Ps. cii.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 7.

He began as God to manifest His strength. *But God raised Him from the dead: and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people.* They who were with Him in weakness behold Him in power; they who in the days of His humiliation had seen His miracles throughout, and to whom He had so often foretold His death, beheld Him risen as they were able to bear it.

Such being the case, we are heralds to you of that Divine Kingdom to which your fathers looked forward. *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.* Words spoken indeed first of our Lord's eternal generation, secondly of His Incarnation, but thirdly of His Resurrection; which indeed the whole passage indicates, for the Psalm proceeds to speak of the Heathen given Him for His inheritance, and the reference here appears to be to the whole of that Psalm, as descriptive of Christ's rejection and exaltation as King of the Jews. For the expression "this day," as St. Augustin says, signifies eternity; and in the power of this His eternal Godhead He arose from the grave to be "the First-born" from the dead.

And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Of this His resurrection to eternal life God speaks by the prophet Isaiah,⁴ when, in describing His Kingdom, He promises to those who will come to Him, and obey and

⁴ Is. lv. 3.

live, the "everlasting covenant," and mercies that cannot fail to be found in David. In allusion to which David himself speaks more particularly: *Wherefore he saith also in another place, i.e. in the sixteenth Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One, the Anointed of God, to see corruption, which David could not have spoken of himself. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, Whom God raised again, saw no corruption.* He was "free among the dead," as the Psalmist says;⁵ He came again with the same body changed and glorified by indwelling Godhead, the fount of life; raised by the Father and quickened by the Spirit; with a like change of the same Body as He showed beforehand at the Transfiguration on the Mount.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. "Through this Man," as He Himself said in doing away the Jewish Sabbath, "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which—"for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof"—ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, as in Isaiah and others, and in these words more expressly in the prophet Habakkuk: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. Great is the power of Divine words, and still more remarkable and more exact is their fulfilment in the entire expression of the Prophet, "Behold, ye among the Heathen, and wonder marvellously;"⁶ words now addressed to their

⁵ Ps. lxxxviii. 4.

⁶ Hab. i. 5.

synagogue in the midst of a Heathen city. They shall behold, and beholding they shall wonder, and in wondering shall perish. *For I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* As the prophet Isaiah says, "A marvellous work among this people and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."⁷

That which serves for the condemnation of the unbeliever, setting at nought all his wisdom, works in every way for the good of the faithful; and so is it with this the marvellous fulfilment of these things. It was such as quite surpassed all the thoughts even of good men: so that when our Lord so often spoke to the Apostles of His sufferings and resurrection, it is said they "understood it not," "the saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."⁸ And after He was risen, when the women brought word to the Apostles of what the angels had declared unto them, "their words seemed to them," it is said, "as idle tales, and they believed them not."⁹ The events themselves were such as "entered not into the heart of man;" so much so, that when they heard of them repeatedly and fully spoken of, they could not understand them; and when they were fulfilled, they could scarcely believe them on account of their great and marvellous nature. Now, if that was the case then, so, my brethren, will it always be in the fulfilment of those things of which Scripture speaks: the great mysteries of Godhead, the wonders of redemption, things which lie before us, and are around us, and beyond us in Christ's spiritual Kingdom; such as no

⁷ Isa. xxix. 14.

⁸ Luke xviii. 34.

⁹ Luke xxiv. 11.

senses are cognizant of, no thought of man hath conceived. Such is this the mysteriousness, the utterly incomprehensible nature of the great and good things of God. There is something in this consideration which greatly tends to repose of mind ; it quiets our anxious imaginations and the restless curiosity of our natural thoughts. "The peace of God passeth all understanding." Never was greater faith or peacefulness of mind expressed than in those words of Abraham, when finding how utterly beyond him were all God's promises, and the mode of their fulfilment ; when God said to him, "Fear not, Abram ; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward ;" looking up, as it were, in adoring love and wonder he said, as a child would to his parent, "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me?"¹ In this entire uncertainty of what God is about to do with us, and for us ; this our natural inability to comprehend His promises, which we most surely believe ; there is the greatest source of joy to a humble and confiding spirit. If we look abroad ; if we look forward and beyond ; if we try to fathom what is to be ; if we let our too high imaginings and inquisitive speculations form to themselves ideas of the great things of God, with regard to this world, or to the next, of ourselves and of others, we shall disquiet ourselves in vain, and, perhaps, like the Jews, be deceived by our own wisdom, and make shipwreck of the faith ; but if we commit ourselves into God's hands, labouring to do His will, as those who know nothing now as we shall know, God, Who makes known His mysteries unto babes, will reveal unto us "the secret things which belong to Him."

Now this the inscrutable nature of the things of God is especially the case with our Lord's Resurrection and His

¹ Gen. xv. 2.

risen Body, and the rising again of our own in connexion with it, for He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." We cannot understand how He should still have the same Body, so much the same as to be recognized and known by those who had seen Him before His death, and still bearing the marks of His wounds; and such as could be touched and felt as a substantial Body, and so that He ate and drank with His disciples in proof of this; and yet withal so changed and spiritual as to appear in the midst of them when the doors were closed, to vanish out of their sight, and again in another place to appear. And further yet, that from some inscrutable powers, by the secret indwelling of His Godhead, He should give us His Body and Blood for us to eat and drink; to be our spiritual food and sustenance, and thereby to work in us some heavenly and Divine transformation, and implant in us the seed of immortality: that He should thus convey light to the understanding, and love to the heart, this is a great mystery; to call forth our admiration and faith, while it sets at nought and defies all the wisdom and understanding of man. By mysteries such as these it is that our souls are trained and taught to look forward unto that Unknown Future, into which we enter by the door of death: and to repose ourselves upon God in those things which are "fearful and wonderful" beyond thought. "We know not yet what we shall be," says St. John, "but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."² And now all that we can say in the contemplation of these great truths, which we believe, but cannot understand, must be like the expression of St. Peter, when dazzled and overcome by

² 1 John iii. 2.

the light of his glorified Lord, he said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," beyond that knowing not what he said. And as St. Paul exclaimed, lost in deep adoration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"³

Let such, then, be our adoring love and wonder when we proceed to the Gospel of this day, and open our hearts as the thirsty earth for the dews of His blessing, and to receive the fulness of His peace. It is the continuation of yesterday's account, while the two disciples who had returned from Emmaus were yet speaking, and all ears and hearts were no doubt intently listening to their wondrous narrative. "As they thus spake," it is said, *Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.* So difficult is it for man to believe in the Resurrection of the body; so far is it beyond the deserts of our fallen nature that we should be raised again from that death which hath passed upon us. We have no faculties to comprehend it; our knowledge is made up of images of varied death; death is stamped on every thought we can entertain; we must then believe what we can in no way understand; nay, we shall understand it by believing better than by any wisdom we know of. Our life here must be that of daily dying according to this law, until the Spirit shall bid us rest from our labours. These considerations will explain how it was with the Apostles; that though their Lord had so often foretold this His rising again; though the angels had this morning announced it to them; though they themselves had just said that He had ap-

³ Rom. xi. 33.

peared unto Peter ; though the two disciples were just now witnesses of the fact of His Resurrection, and had the Scriptures explained to them ; yet, as when they saw Him in the storm at sea, they “supposed they had seen a spirit,” and were too much alarmed and troubled to receive His peace. O Blessed Saviour, Thou art always in the midst of us, Thy words always are of peace, Thy presence always is of peace, “It is I ; be not afraid :” but we are troubled about many things, we cannot raise our hearts to take hold of Thee, to apprehend the substance and reality of God-Man with us. “Why art thou so vexed, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ? O put thy trust in God, for I will yet thank Him, which is the help of my countenance and my God.”

And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. Yes, it is ever thus, by marks of His sufferings his Saviour is known to the sinner; it is in these He is loved, acknowledged, and embraced; “Behold, it is I Myself;” He that was “acquainted with grief;” Behold from these wounds, that it is I Myself; in these am I known; it is no counterfeit, but the Man of Sorrows. Yea, even on His throne is He known as the Lamb that was slain. “I know My sheep, and am known of Mine,” as the true Shepherd; for the Good Shepherd is He that layeth down His life for the sheep.

And while He bids us raise up our hearts to meet Him, He descends also to meet our weak thoughts, and to raise them to Himself; “Behold” My wounds, nay more,

“handle and see Me;” that we may be able to receive, to apprehend, and know His Presence, which is peace. What a marvellous mystery of condescension; what a continual miracle of His grace, that so it is still, at the Holy Eucharist! It is not only “sursum corda,” raise your hearts to Heaven, but also, put forth thy hand. “This is My Body” Which was wounded, “Which is given for you.” The day of Light is the day of His Body rising from the grave. And He Who is the Resurrection and the Life, as God and Man, is the Light that lighteth every man. And what if at this Sacred Feast we see not with bodily eyes; yet by faith we apprehend His Body, we see and feel His wounds with joy unspeakable and full of glory. “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto them that dream. Then said they among the Heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them.” He is known to His own by marks of suffering; and by marks of suffering are His own known to Him; they that mourn in Him are comforted; they that labour and are heavy laden are called to Him; by being conformed to the likeness of His death, they know the power of His Resurrection, and are united to their Risen Lord.

And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. The same meek condescension to their infirmities as of old; and thus He quiets their fears, He confirms their faith in His Resurrection, and then He opens to them the Scriptures. It is He that overcame death, who bears the keys of David. But faith must precede knowledge; and before He opens their understandings He gives them His peace.

And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. He removed the veil from their hearts, and they beheld Him Who spake by the Prophets; it was not the fulfilment of these things that explained to them the Scriptures, but a more blessed knowledge; as He had said to St. Peter, "it was not flesh and blood, but His Father Which is in Heaven." For every good and perfect gift is from the Father of lights. Be Thou therefore our illumination; Thou Thyself art the true Light; give us that light in which there is love and peace; that knowledge which is beyond knowledge.

And He said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer. "It behoved," "for it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."⁴ It behoved Him to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. These words spoken to them are, in some sense, addressed to us all; we too that now speak and hear, all of us are "witnesses of these things." It began at Jerusalem, and hath reached even unto us, and we bear witness to what then was spoken in that upper room in Jerusalem. But our external calling is not sufficient that

⁴ Heb. ii. 10.

we take part with "the faithful Witness, and the First-begotten from the dead;" for external visible testimony to these things the Jews themselves bear. We must have within ourselves a more sure and gracious testimony, that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."⁵ For "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."⁶ This is the witness within us that gives light, that opens the Scriptures, that gives light to others, that brings them also to the truth, and fills the Church of God with that living light which is the light of the Lamb. Such are they that walk in the light of the Resurrection; the light is around their steps; and their feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. "For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God."⁷

It is remarkable that St. Luke in this account considers it sufficient to mention merely in general terms that "*repentance and remission of sins,*" which was to be proclaimed to all nations; but St. John in the Gospel for next Sunday, in giving his account of this same interview with the Apostles, states the commission of binding and loosing then given unto them. It was sufficient in this earlier Gospel that those ministerial powers were then delivered to faithful men, and the doctrines with which they were connected; nor was it necessary that these should, together with the Gospel, be published to the world; but the Holy Ghost afterwards, "in the spirit of prophecy," hath thought it needful to guard this sacred

⁵ Rom. viii. 16, 17.

⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

deposit in the Church by a fuller declaration in St. John. "Repentance and remission of sins" are the living waters that are to go forth unto the world, and "everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live;" but in the Jerusalem which is from above, is that fountain. Oh, that we might be so risen with Christ as to walk worthy of these things! "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in" this "the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power."⁸

God "hath brought us out into a wealthy place;"⁹ to us, my brethren, Lent is passed; if passed by us well, we are risen to a new life, new hopes, new desires; "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them"¹ again?

⁸ Rev. xx. 6.

⁹ Ps. lxvi. 11.

¹ Song of Sol. v. 3.

SERMON XXXVII.

The First Sunday after Easter.

I St. John v. 4—12. St. John xx. 19—23.

THE FAITH THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that JESUS is the SON of GOD.—I ST. JOHN v. 5.

THE Epistle for to-day carries on, in somewhat of a subdued tone, the sublime and triumphant strain of last Sunday, but, as it were, confirming the same victory over sin and death, with even fuller knowledge and experience, by the voice of him who stood by the foot of the Cross. *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Some of our Lord's last words to His disciples had been, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And now, when St. John wrote this Epistle, they had found in very truth that they also in Him could do the same. It is a calm but firm tone of triumph that pervades all he now writes. To be "born of God," or to believe that "Christ

is the Son of God," this our faith, exclaims the beloved disciple, this our new birth in Him from above, "overcometh the world." And then he proceeds to describe, not this faith as it is in us—the fruits of it, or the proofs and signs, or the means of promoting it in ourselves—but directs our eyes to Him Who is the object of it, and states how in and through Him there is this power and victory.

This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood; "not by water only," which throughout the Law speaks of cleansing, but by "blood" also, which speaks of suffering; this faith which overcomes the world is by suffering; not by water only, that of Baptism, by which we are washed, but by Water and Blood, by which we are nourished at the Lord's Supper,—that "awful cup," says St. Chrysostom, "by which we are made as it were to approach and drink out of Christ's side." Thus speaking of our new Birth and our New Life in Christ as God, St. John immediately refers to Him as that Second Adam Whose side was opened to us in death, as He showed us on this day after His Resurrection; Who, though God and Man, has made us to be one with Himself, "of His flesh and of His bones." This is He that came by Water and Blood; *and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* It is remarkable, that when our Lord's side was pierced, and St. John himself saw the Water and the Blood as he stood by the cross, he makes a very solemn protestation in recording it of the truth of this his own testimony, as of a matter of the very utmost importance which on that occasion he witnessed. But here in his Epistle, speaking of the same, he says, "and the Spirit beareth witness." The Spirit beareth witness below, as

combined with these two sacramental pledges of our life in Christ. And then he adds,

For there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One. And there are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one, or it might be “are for one,” for one end and object, that is, the Life which we have in God. It is by the Spirit and the two sacraments that this Life is; by these we enter as it were into Christ’s side, as Noah into the ark, and are saved; a new life is formed in us which partakes of His life, as Eve was formed out of the side of Adam. Or again, these words are capable of another meaning, as representing Him the Second Adam, in Whom we are born again to the new inheritance of light. By the Spirit which at death He delivered into His Father’s hands, by the Water and the Blood which flowed from His side in death, He showed Himself perfect Man; and as such one with us; these “three agree in one,” as bearing this testimony of His perfect Manhood.

But all this is of importance infinitely too great to be supported by mere human testimony, though it be even that of an Apostle, for eternity is built on this Rock. And therefore St. John proceeds, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son.* When the voice of the Father was heard on three occasions bearing witness to the Son; as also by the many wonderful works which He did in His Name; and by His raising Him from the dead; and by sending the gift of the Holy Ghost, and His miraculous powers in the sight of men; by these God “hath testified of His Son.”

But more than this, for as St. Paul says, “and because

ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts,"¹ so not without only, in His Church and Kingdom of Grace, but within the soul also, is the testimony of God. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.* To believe God, to have His word abiding in us, this is our righteousness; to believe Him not, for His word to have no place in us, this is our condemnation. For all whom the Father hath given Him shall come to Christ; and flesh and blood reveal Him not, but the Father which is in Heaven.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. In Him is life full and entire, so that there is no other life worthy of the name but that which is in Christ, and in Him alone; so that there is no other Name but this, in which is salvation; all that is not in Him shall not see life, but abideth under the wrath of God. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* So full, so explicit, so wonderfully high and divine, and withal so awful, is this short summary of the mystery of Godliness, contained in the Epistle for to-day. And I think, my brethren, that no attentive Christian can hear or read it without some serious reflection with regard to himself; so many questions must occur to him. This "faith overcomes the world;" do I overcome the world? for otherwise I have not this faith. Have I this true birth of God? have I the witness within myself of this sonship? For he that believeth on the Son of God hath this witness in himself. Have I "the Son," as St. John speaks? for if

¹ Gal. iv. 6.

not I have not life ; I cannot have it. This is the still : nall voice of God in the heart, which the noise of the world would endeavour to stifle, which our own desires and passions will lead us to turn away from, but it is the voice of the Spirit pleading with us.

But from the contemplation of ourselves we are called upon at this season to look on Him Who is our life and peace. And from these statements of doctrine by St. John in the Epistle, we turn, in the Gospel, to his own account of first beholding his risen Lord after he had witnessed His sufferings and death. It was now late in the evening of Easter Day ; our Lord had early on that morning appeared to Mary Magdalene by the grave ; later in the day He had shown Himself to St. Peter ; and when this great and glorious day of days was now verging towards evening, He walked with two disciples going to Emmaus, and there in the house made Himself known to them in breaking of bread. These two immediately returned to Jerusalem, which was about seven or eight miles from where they had seen Him, and had just now entered the room where the other disciples had assembled ; they immediately heard from them of His having appeared to St. Peter, after which, no sooner had they themselves mentioned at length all His conversation with them by the way, and His making Himself known to them in the house, than while they were yet speaking, He Himself again appears, as St. John here describes.

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. On His taking leave of them, He had said, " Peace I leave

with you ; My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. I go away and come again."² And now He returns and finds them again in the evening, for the first time, together ; and pronounces and bestows His great blessing of peace—peace beyond all understanding, the gift from above.

And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. O the gracious, the heart-moving sight ! as if to say, " You saw it all three days since, you saw it all—the agony, the mockery, the wounds, and now you see it was for your sakes. He that could overcome death could easily have refused such pains ; but I, Who bore it, suffered it all for your sakes. Here are the signs ; here passed the nails, as you saw ; and here the spear." Many, my brethren, are the wonders of Christ's Resurrection ; mighty indeed the gifts He then dispensed, the promises He made, the powers He declared, the manifestations of His Risen Body for a period of forty days ; but, after all, nothing was so affecting as this—His bearing and showing His wounds ! Other things showed greatness, and power, and victory, but these love ; love unspeakable ! the door of that heart open for us, and open to us ; *here*, by all that I have suffered, by that dreadful night, by that more terrible day, by the remembrances of all, here in My wounded side you may find refuge and shelter for evermore ; a refuge from evil spirits ; a refuge from the world and all its cares, its allurements, and its enmities ; a refuge from your sin-laden, sorrowing, fearful selves.

And already did this sight of redeeming love, and His gift of peace operate in them, for St. Luke mentions that

² St. John xiv. 27.

they were, at first beholding Him, greatly terrified. Jewish enemies without, and, for a moment, alarm within. But all troubles and fears, as St. John intimates, were at once dispelled. *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* Already were His words fulfilled, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man taketh from you."

But as we have observed that the Epistle for to-day is full of high and heavenly doctrine, so in like manner is the Gospel. It contains the account of those mysterious gifts whereby Christ is to dwell in His Church unto the end. For the appearance of our Lord on this occasion is not to mere witnesses of His Resurrection, but, like the Last Supper, to Apostles, and the imparting of a gift. It is by the power of His Resurrection, and as the first fruits of it, in the presence of other disciples, to convey, as it were, and transfer to them His own mission from the Father, of which He had so often spoken.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you. This iteration of the gift was the fulness and confirmation of His own peace; that very form of benediction by which they hereafter were in His Name to confer His peace, even in like manner as Aaron and the priests of old were commissioned to bestow the blessing and peace of God. "Peace be unto you," as *My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.* Of which an ancient bishop beautifully says, "As my Father Who is God sent Me Who am God, so I as Man send you who are men. As the Father loved the Son, yet sent Him into the world to suffer, so have I loved you by the same love, though I send you My disciples into the world to suffer."³ And oh! the blessed

³ St. Greg. Hom. in Evang. 26.

words of this Divine appointment, whereby His own gracious mission of health and peace is still continued in His ministers unto the end of the world ; and our merciful Saviour is still present in them, imparting His own mysterious gifts !

And when He had said this, He breathed on them. As He had of old breathed into Adam the breath of life, so now, by the same creative breath, He breathes the new gift of life into His Church. "When His breath goeth forth," says the Psalmist, "He shall renew the face of the earth."⁴ And how else can it be renewed but by removing sin, that covering which is over all nations ? "He breathed on them," *and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

This great gift of the forgiveness of sins, which He had purchased for us by His death, and which was from henceforth to reside for ever in His Church, seems connected throughout with the lesson from the altar on this day. Such is that expression of St. John, "This is He that came by water and blood, and the Spirit beareth witness." And again, such is our Lord's showing them His side, from which that water and blood had flowed, and twice bestowing on them His gift of peace. And then, thus having given them His peace, He bequeaths to His Church this ministry of reconciliation ; this power of the Holy Ghost for rejecting and absolving sinners, which the Church at her Ordination Service commits in the same solemn words to every one admitted by her into the order of the priesthood. These are the gifts of which the Prophets speak so much ; these are the living waters that

⁴ Ps. civ. 30.

were to go forth from beneath the temple of Jerusalem to the four quarters of the world.⁵ "On that day there shall be a fountain opened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."⁶ These are the keys of hell and of death,⁷ committed to Him Who appears in the dress of the High Priest on the great Day of Atonement.

St. John ever delights to speak at the same time of his Crucified and Risen Lord. Thus in the Revelation he begins, "Peace from Him Who is the first-begotten from the dead." . . . "Unto Him be glory, Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."⁸

To conclude, the Epistle and Gospel for this day are so full of Heaven, of high truth, of deep mystery, that it would take long to unfold, a whole life to contemplate. But what is of more importance than barren speculation or study, let us ask in what is it all most realized to us in the present day and unto the end of the world; surely it is at the Holy Eucharist. There do the words of absolution fall like drops of dew on the dry heart of the penitent; there is our faith nourished in the Son of God, so that we may overcome the world; there is He that came by water and blood, inviting us by that water and blood to be made in very deed one with Himself. There is the Spirit of Truth, without which the flesh profiteth nothing. There are the Three that bear witness on earth, by which we are raised into unspeakable communion with the Three that bear record in heaven. There by faith the penitent refreshed hath the witness in himself. There he hath the Son, and he that hath the Son hath life. The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel abundantly testifies to all this.

⁵ Ezek. xlvi. 1—12.

⁷ Rev. i. 13, 18.

⁶ Zech. xiii. 1.

⁸ Rev. i. 4, 5.

And again, take the Gospel likewise as fulfilled to us in this feast of love ; it is here that the disciples are assembled on the first day of the week, and have shut the doors of their heart against the world ; here Jesus stands in the midst of them gathered together in His Name. It is here by His Ministers He proclaims peace and forgiveness of sins ; it is here that He shows unto them His hands and His side.

These are not, my brethren, mere figures of speech, they are not images and representations from what once took place on Easter Day, but they are all solemn truths contained in the words of Christ ; and we know that Heaven and earth shall pass away, like shadows of a cloud over a summer field, but His words shall not pass away.

SERMON XXXVIII.

The Second Sunday after Easter.

1 St. Pet. ii. 19—25. St. John x. 11—16.

FOLLOWING THE LAMB OF GOD.

Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.

1 ST. PET. ii. 21.

A DEVOUT bishop of our Church, in his private prayers, entreats God to remember and bless those who had done him good in various ways, by their writings, or their examples, or their conversation, or their prayers,—but among these he makes especial mention of those who had benefited him by injuries.¹ Among his chief benefactors he numbers his enemies. This, I think, may serve as the best commentary we can make on St. Peter's words with which the Epistle for to-day commences: *This is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.* And here we may observe, that this expression "thankworthy" is our Lord's own word.² "If ye do good," He says, "to them which do good to you, what thank have ye?"

For what glory is it, proceeds the Apostle, if when ye be

¹ Bp. Andrewes, Dies Quinta.

² χάρις. St. Luke vi. 33.

buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? "buffeted" even as Christ was, we may add, for the very word seems intended to remind us of Him³ Who was so smitten in the hall of the High Priest; but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable, or thankworthy, with God. He is pleased to account Himself your debtor for this; and as St. Peter afterwards says in this Epistle, "Happy are ye" if ye thus suffer. But our Lord Himself affords the greatest encouragement. "Your reward shall be great," He says, "and ye shall be the children of the Highest;" an expression which, in accordance with the subject of to-day's teaching, we may thus explain. "Ye shall be thus like the Son of God Himself." For it is on His Divine example that the Epistle here proceeds to dwell at length. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps; Who, before He thus suffered for us, called upon us to imitate Him especially in this point, this heavenly temper of mind, saying, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. It is St. Peter that says this; he who himself once exclaimed, on hearing of the cross, "That be far from Thee, Lord;" he who drew the sword to defend his Master, and yet the same night denied Him. But now, taught a better wisdom, he dwells on his Lord's example as a cure for all impatience. And well, indeed, may it be so,—it is the remedy of all

³ *κολαφιζόμενοι.* St. Matt. xxvi. 67, *ἐκολάφισαν.*

remedies; and for this reason the sick soul in the Canticles says to her Lord, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth." "My well-beloved is a bundle of myrrh unto me."⁴ All the balm of Gilead, we may say, is here in this example. Holy men have found that to read over the account of Christ in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah has been the best antidote against the temptations of pride and impatience of spirit. For it is not merely His long-suffering, but His unspeakable love to ourselves throughout the whole, which draws our hearts and fixes them upon Him, and as we meditate and gaze upon Him, heals within our souls the wounds of the Old Serpent. And therefore, when speaking of this His example of meek endurance, St. Peter proceeds to speak of this His atoning sacrifice, combining both together as they are in the Collect for to-day. *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed.* This the Prophet had said of old, and this the Apostle repeats. He bore stripes; He endured them patiently and without a murmur! but why? because we were all of us worthy of them, and that by these wounds all over His sacred Body our wounds might be healed. For from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet were we corrupted, full of wounds and putrefying sores, and no soundness in us, as the same Prophet Isaiah bears witness.⁵

But St. Peter, still using the words of Isaiah, proceeds, *For ye were as sheep going astray*, when "the Lord," says the Prophet, "laid on Him the iniquity of us all;"⁶ *but ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

⁴ Song of Sol. i. 3. 13.

⁵ Isa. i. 6.

⁶ Isa. liii. 6.

Thus terminates the Epistle for to-day, speaking of the lost sheep who have returned to the Shepherd of the soul; and then the Gospel gives our Lord's own account of the good Shepherd who dies for His sheep, Who knows them all, and brings them that have been scattered abroad into one fold. And thus again is He brought before us in a new and endearing character and relationship, over and above all that was said in the Epistle. For in the Epistle He is as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; He would fix our eyes on Himself in His sufferings, that when we see Him upon the Cross we may learn to be of the same spirit, and derive inexpressible comfort and strength from His atoning Blood. But in the Gospel for to-day the Lamb that was slain hath become the good Shepherd. And indeed, in the Book of the Revelation, St. John describes the Lamb that was slain as Himself feeding His sheep, and leading them unto living fountains of waters.⁷ The same He Himself teaches us in the character of the good Shepherd; for already He hath shown His love in dying for them. As the Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world, so is He ever the good Shepherd that gives His life for the sheep; it is His own inseparable attribute.

I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. He that died for us, and gave us that proof of His love, has not gone away, and departed, and left us in the wilderness, but is even now with us as the good Shepherd. He is not indifferent about us, of our ways and doings, but as a man careth for his own, which he hath bought at an exceeding high price, so He, as the

⁷ Rev. vii. 17.

good Shepherd, careth for us. Nothing can describe this to us more forcibly than His own parable of the lost sheep. He knows no rest until He has found it; it is the object of all His care and thoughts; He wanders seeking for it; and when He has found it, what does He do? He bears it, rejoicing, on His shoulders; He cannot withhold His joy; He calls on all to rejoice with Him. No less tender and affectionate are the many descriptions of Him as the good Shepherd through the Old Testament, where, as if in allusion to our Lord's taking little children into His arms, it is said, "He shall gather the Lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom;" to which is added, "and shall gently lead those that are with young;"⁸ as with a particular watchful care for each one, as if He had none other but that one to care for.

Blessed is he who knows Christ, not only as the Lamb of God, but also as the good Shepherd, Who once died and now careth for him, and in Whose care he can lack nothing.⁹ He gave His life for the sheep, that they by His dying may live; that they may feed on Him and have life. And what if in this new life in Him He should require them to die with Him to their former life; to be "dead to sin?" what if after recovering His sheep that had strayed He should hereafter make a hedge about Him with thorns, is He less on that account the good Shepherd?

How soothing and comforting to us all to think of God under this His gracious title! When the evil spirit was upon Saul, the shepherd son of Jesse was the minstrel at whose strains he was comforted and refreshed. And what if his twenty-third Psalm sounded even then in the melodies of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel"? What could

⁸ Isa. xl. 11.

⁹ Ps. xxiii. 1.

have been more healing balm to the wounded spirit, or more like a gale from Heaven, than those harmonies which speak of "the Lord" as "my Shepherd," Who shall lead me forth by the still waters; Whose pastoral rod and staff shall comfort me, and through the valley of the shadow of death shall keep me from evil. As were those strains to Saul, such to us are the accounts of the good Shepherd; such soothing in the words of Scripture that speak of Him as such; the troubled spirit of pride and envy, of lust and anger, are fled as we listen to its Divine accents so full of consolation.

And now let us hear the contrast. *But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.* This, I think, we may apply, not only to the unfaithful pastor who serves God for gain, and to the false prophet, such as Balaam—to those who for profit's sake or pride enter into the office of the ministry—but also more generally, to everything that for a time pretends to be as the good Shepherd, but will flee and forsake us in the season of danger, and when the wolf is seen approaching. And, indeed, my Christian friends, I know of nothing that will not do so except the good Shepherd: for we are His, and His only; nothing else can be to us as He is; He lays an especial stress on this, that we are His own, in a way that we cannot belong to any one else, or anything to us. If we have forgotten this, He has not; if we have forgotten it, we have gone astray from Him, but He has not forsaken us; He is still seeking us, because we are His own. Everything else will forget us, but He will not. No one else can care for us as He does.

The hireling fleeth, adds our Blessed Saviour, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. This, again, is the mark of Himself as the Good Shepherd, as distinguished from anything besides; that He knows each one of His sheep with a very intimate, peculiar knowledge. He searcheth the inmost thoughts. As the sunbeam in a dark room, so is His eye in the heart of hearts. And now, this point of His intimate knowledge might be to each of us no subject of comfort and encouragement, but of alarm and despair, were it not that He is "the good," the merciful and loving Shepherd. His eye in the heart is not only light, but it is likewise love. Therefore, He says not only that He knows His own, but also that He is known of them. They that are His by intimate communion with Him, know Him with a Divine and unearthly knowledge; they know Him as "good"—as good in a sense that nothing else can be good. They know Christ as the good Shepherd, for they know Him as God, Who only is good. To know God, is to know that God is love. The faithful Christian has a knowledge of God, not merely from the study of His Word or His works, but from a secret revelation of Himself which God makes to the heart. In the same way as you may know a man from reading an account of him, or from his writings; but this is a very different matter from knowing him by long intimacy as a friend. Nay, the knowledge of God is infinitely more than this—that pearl of great price—that hidden manna which the Christian gains, when he knows Christ and is known of Him as His own. This union is not like that of man with man, but is like that of the Blessed Trinity, which is unspeakable.

As the Father knoweth Me, adds our Lord, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. He says, on another occasion, in His prayer to the Father, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be One in Us." And, again, "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." And, "the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me." So now His own unspeakable knowledge of the Father, and the Father of Him, is connected with His laying down His life for the sheep.

*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; others which are not of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but among the Gentiles throughout the world, even unto the end; them that "have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."¹ He has them in His eye from the beginning; He has them in His hand, even each one of us that are His; they are His own in the predestination and foreknowledge of God. *Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice;* all that the Father giveth Him shall come to Him; they that are of God hear His words, they hear His voice, they "know not the voice of the stranger," but their own Shepherd they at once know by His voice; they hear, they obey, they follow Him. Oh, the wonderful mystery of God, by which the soul of the penitent is knit to his Saviour, and is made one with Him in everlasting union! And, as made one with Him, they are made one with each other also, and know no earthly distinction of Jew or Gentile, of rich or poor, of learned or ignorant, on account of a far greater, more intimate, eternal union and fellowship.*

They shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold,

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 12.

and one *Shepherd*. Not only hereafter, when the Lamb Which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, but even now, amidst all the divisions of the world, they are "one fold."

O blessed bond of that one true fold! O sweet harmony of heavenly music, heard in the heart amidst the jarring discords of this world! peace without we need not; nay, rather, peace from without our own good Shepherd had not, and the more that we may be like Him, let us too have it not, so that we may have more abundantly His own peace within. Nay, moreover, neither peace nor love from without do we need, for His love burned the brightest when there was no love for Him, but enmity on every side; and it is under such circumstances that He most of all vouchsafes His blessing of peace. If we are His sheep, if we are His own, His words to us are, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."

If only the good Shepherd will but take us for His own, make us more like unto Himself, and keep us in His own one fold—keep us as His own for ever!

"I hearkened and heard," says the Prophet, "but they spake not aright."² So it is with us; "we speak not aright;" we have a language of our own, which is not that of God; we imperceptibly contract a mode of talking of things as if the world were true, and God were not true; as if the truth were not according to "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." We speak of disappointments, of troubles, of enemies, and quarrels; nay, even of death itself, in another manner to that of Scripture. For what is sorrow of heart within but the voice of the good

² Jer. viii. 6.

Shepherd seeking us? what is affliction but His struggle in order to free and disentangle us from the thorns of the world? what are dissensions and ill-will from without but the means by which He would mould us more in conformity with Himself? what are worldly dangers but occasions of His drawing us more nearly unto His side? and what is death itself to the good Christian but the gathering of His own more securely into His arms, from which nothing hereafter shall ever draw them away?

Only let us be "as He was in this world," as followers of "the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth," by a lamb-like spirit under all provocations; then shall the good Shepherd know us for His own, as belonging to that "little flock" to whom it is their Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom; and when He separates His sheep, then shall He set us at last on His own right hand.

SERMON XXXIX.

The Third Sunday after Easter.

1 St. Pet. ii. 11—17. St. John xvi. 16—22.

A LITTLE WHILE.

What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith.—ST. JOHN xvi. 18.

WHAT a wonderful power there is in these words, “A little while”! In the season of affliction, or the hour of worldly temptation, or amidst quarrels and disputes, how soothing and calming is this mysterious expression of our Lord’s, “A little while”! But a little while and all will be over; a little while, and this trouble, this joy, this passion—all this scene will have gone by.

And the Epistle for to-day begins with the same lesson, although differently expressed, of our transient and fleeting condition. *Dearlly beloved*, says St. Peter, *I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims*. It is like our Lord’s own saying, “A little while;” for in the sight of God we are as strangers and pilgrims. “We are strangers,” says David, “before Thee and sojourners.”¹ It is before God, in His presence, as He sees things; it is

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 15.

our Lord's "little while," which men, like His disciples of old, understand not. But oh that we may come to have the mind of God on this subject, to know, as He does, that our days on earth are but a shadow that abideth not!

As strangers and pilgrims I beseech you, *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*; as "strangers" who are travelling through a foreign and dangerous country, replete with watchful enemies ever lying in wait against your immortal and better part; and those enemies "warring in your members," in your very soul itself, for they are the desires of the natural mind. And thus, as altogether of another spirit, abstain from worldly lusts; *having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; i.e.* as strangers of this world, among the nations with whom ye sojourn, having your course of life so fair and good; *that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers*; although Satan will always raise slanders and an evil report against good men; yet, *they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*. Notwithstanding all they say at the time, your good lives will be observed by them; and if God should visit them hereafter, as He is often in His mercy wont to do, by awakening the consciences of men in some hour of trial, then nothing will have greater power to turn them to God than the instances of Divine grace which they have seen in you. Thus may ye "shine like lights in the world," even while ye are passing so rapidly through it, though ye be as strangers and pilgrims who have here no home.

And next, with regard to the civil government under which ye are placed. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*; as strangers upon earth and citizens of a better country, for the Lord's sake be

faithful subjects to those state-appointments under which ye dwell. *Whether it be to the King as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him; for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well;* not only to the king in person as set in the chief place, but to his ministers also and officers, to whom is committed the sword of God, and the protection and encouragement of the good.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Ye have a cause to maintain, a victory to seek, but this is by silent, patient endurance. As our Lord was given up to Pontius Pilate as one who raised seditions against Cæsar, so the early Christians were often accused of being ill-affected towards the state by those who knew them not; and the will of God in Christ was, that the answer they should give to these charges was by their blameless lives.

They had indeed as Christians a higher law of their own; they belonged to another kingdom, had another King whose service was perfect freedom, and they knew that in God's sight, and in respect of His eternal kingdom, all men were equal; but what! were they to confuse this with a poor earthly liberty and equality? God forbid. *As free,* adds St. Peter, *and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness,* as a pretext for wickedness, *but as the servants of God;* always being under His fear, as doing Him service, and therefore as rendering unto all their dues.

Honour all men; i. e. whatever their state in life may be, high or low, rich or poor in outward or inward endowments, Heathen or Christian, yet honour all as creatures of God. As St. Paul says, "In honour preferring one another."²

² Rom. xii. 10.

And "in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."³ Honour all, *love the brotherhood*. This only distinction will you know among all fellow-citizens in this world ; honouring all, but having a peculiar and Divine love to the brethren in Christ.

And then again, with regard to your heavenly and your earthly Governor, observe this rule and all will be right. *Fear God: honour the king*. The first of these precepts will keep the other in place ; for if it be said, Am I to honour the king in all things, even so as to obey him in doing what is wrong ? No ; this the fear of God will not permit. For it is first said, "Fear God ;" it is not said, Fear the king. No ; fear no man, but fear God only ; honour the king in the fear of God.

But now to all these duties we must carry on the first expression of the Epistle for to-day ; be "as strangers and pilgrims" upon earth, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Kingdom of God. "As strangers and pilgrims," says the Apostle ; "it is as such that I beseech you, my dearly beloved." This will form a connexion with the Gospel for the day, which speaks under circumstances the most affecting, and language of the deepest interest and beauty, of the short period of this mortal life.

The occasion upon which they were spoken is familiar to us all ; it was now at the Last Supper, when our Lord was taking that solemn leave of His disciples on the night before His death, and speaking in mysterious words which they could scarcely understand, of His departure from them. *Jesus said to His disciples, A little while, and ye shall not see Me*. To the disciple who loves his Lord it is

³ Phil. ii. 3.

not the shortness of this life, of its business and pleasures, his own short continuance in the world, and that of all his friends that are dear to him ; it is not this consideration which lies nearest to his heart, but his absence from Christ, the "little while" during which his Lord is removed from his view. Thus St. John says, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus !" *i. e.* it is His absence that appears long to him ; and St. Paul, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Thus the bereavement and sorrow of these disciples would be from not seeing their Lord ; it is this which they think of with such heaviness, and therefore He says in consolation, It is but a little while that I shall be absent. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me," as ye now do ; *and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me ; because I go to the Father.* On which St. Augustin remarks, "For but a little while is the whole space of this rapidly fleeting present world ; even as this same Evangelist says in his Epistle, 'It is the last hour.' To them, therefore, who then saw Him in the body, He saith, 'A little while, and ye shall not see Me,' because He was about to depart to the Father, and they should no longer behold Him as a mortal man, conversing with them as now He did."

Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me ; and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me ; and, Because I go to the Father ? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while ? we cannot tell what He saith.

They knew not of His disappearing for a little while in the grave, and their seeing Him so soon again ; they knew not of His ascending to the Father, and after but a little while coming to be with them in the Comforter ;

they knew not yet of His coming again after a little while with the same body glorified at the Last Day, when they should see Him as He is. But more than this; in the difficulty of comprehension, in the questioning and inquiry among themselves respecting the little while of which He spake, seem to be represented all Christians unto the end of the world. There is nothing of which our Lord seemed to speak at various times more strongly, and to repeat more earnestly, than the shortness of the time before His return to Judgment. "The hour cometh," He said, "yea, even now is, when all the dead shall hear His voice." And again, "Surely I come quickly." But from that time when He thus spake, unto this day, all Christians appear to be saying, "What is this that He saith, A little while?" We feel that there is some mystery in it which we cannot understand, and that, in fact, the time is not so long as it appears to be. "What is this that He saith, A little while," and I shall call all men forth from their graves? "we cannot tell what He saith." Is it not eighteen hundred years? how is it a little while? "It is not," says St. Augustin, "that the Lord delayeth His promise; a little while, and we shall see Him, at that time when we shall have no more to pray for, no more to inquire after; because nothing will remain to be desired, nothing hidden to be learned. This little while appears to us long, because it is still passing; when it shall have come to an end, then we shall perceive how it hath been for a little while."

Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me? It is with us now as it was then with those who sat at the table with

Him, and gazed on His gracious but sorrowing countenance. Christ knows all these our inquiring thoughts, and He Himself comes to the secret heart of good men, and gives them to know and feel how it is indeed but a short while. He converses with their thoughts, He suggests the answer, by giving them to know what the mind of God is. Of Him in all our doubts are we to seek for an answer; He giveth the wisdom which is from above; the understanding heart to consider our latter end, and to know the shortness of the time.

Verily, verily I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. As when our Lord was hidden for three days in the grave the disciples lamented and wept, while that evil city rejoiced; yet after a little while their sorrow was turned into a joy that fadeth not away; so the Christian now, for the most part, "goeth on his way weeping;" the Bridegroom is taken from him and he fasts, and the more he loves the Bridegroom the more must he be in a state of mourning at His absence. Christ's blessing is with the poor in spirit, with them that mourn, and with them that weep. Such is the temper of a Christian in this world at his best estate; it must be that of sorrow and patient waiting. Yet this, his suffering condition, is but for a little while. "The time is short," says St. Paul, "it remaineth, that they that weep be as though they wept not." "Now for a season," says St. Peter, "if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." But what does it signify? it is but for a while, and your sorrow shall soon be turned into joy.

A woman, says our Lord, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is

delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. Our present state is like that of a woman travailing with child; one of "earnest expectation," but of sorrow. "The whole creation," says St. Paul, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together;" "and not only they, but ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit; we also groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption."⁴ That is to say, the mystery of child-birth, "she shall bring forth in sorrow," explains it all; the whole creation sympathizes with her suffering Lord, for never were there such sorrows as in those pangs of travail which our Lord endured for our sakes, when He brought in the New-birth and regeneration, when by His agonies and dying children were born to God; and if nature itself suffers with her Creator, much more must the state of Christians in this world be that of suffering with their suffering Master—the Man of Sorrows. But it is only for a while, and He will return Who wipeth away all tears, and the anguish shall be remembered no more; sorrow which was but for a moment, and therefore a light affliction, is swallowed up in joy—an unspeakable weight of glory. Even as the dew-drop which was upon the thorn passes away in the rising of the summer sun.

But in the exceeding tenderness and affecting interest of this day's Gospel, it is all spoken of as a Christian should most love—of the absence and presence of his Lord. *And ye now therefore,* says our Lord to His grieving disciples, *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* This was His consolatory answer

⁴ Rom. viii. 22, 23.

and explanation to those who were desirous to ask Him what He meant by the words, "A little while." When He returned to them from the grave, and all things were so changed by the Resurrection, it must indeed have appeared to them but "a little while" that He was absent, but a short season of sorrow. To us likewise He says, "I will see you again," it is but a short time; we cannot in any adequate sense understand His words; but when we look back on life, when we see how quickly our friends have passed away, and the days are gone by which to ourselves once appeared long, we begin to understand in some degree that Christ speaks aright, and that our thoughts, when engaged in this world, are altogether wrong, in our estimate of time.

Yet still, even unto the end, in understanding we are as if we understood not; and so different do the words of God on this subject appear to all that we witness in the world around, that our thoughts continually are suggesting, "What is that He saith unto us, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith."

SERMON XL

The Fourth Sunday after Easter.

St. James i. 17—21. St. John xvi. 5—14.

THE GIVER OF ALL GOOD.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the FATHER of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.—ST. JAMES i. 17.

THE Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for this Sunday, which are found the same in our own and other Churches, combine to form one lesson, the object of which seems to be to prepare our hearts for the Unspeakable Gift. And surely it is impossible to conceive anything more divinely sweet and heavenly than the mode in which this subject is thus inculcated throughout. If on Sunday last we were taught to look forward for “a little while” from earth to Heaven, on this we are taught to make a heaven of earth itself; “among the manifold changes of the world” to have our hearts at anchor within the veil, and so to be at rest.

Every good gift, says St. James, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

All mankind are seeking for some good ; but whatever good this world can afford is but imperfectly good at best, if it were but for its very transient and perishable nature ; everything beneath the sun hath its shadow accompanying it, and that shadow deepening into night, in which it soon is lost. But not so with the good and perfect gift which God bestows from above, which partakes of His own unchangeableness—a light which never wanes, has no shadow, never goes down. And therefore the Psalmist, after stating this unceasing want, saying, “ There be many that say, Who will show us any good?” himself gives the answer, or rather turns the answer into a prayer, “ Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.”¹

And speaking of the Father of Lights, the Author of all good. the Apostle adds, *Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.* For how did we obtain this New birth, that we should be the children of the light? Not of our own merit, or by any works of our own, but of His own free will. “ Of His own will begat He us.” And in distinction from all the vanities and shadows of this world, it was “ with the Word of truth,” the Word of God which abideth for ever. The “ first-fruits ” of old were by the Law hallowed to God, and offered up to Him at this season of the Passover ; so are they who are thus sanctified and “ redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.”²

And to this St. James, ever clothing the highest doctrine with precepts of practical duty, adds, *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear ;* that is to say, since it is of the will of God that we are made His

¹ Ps. iv. 6, 7.

² Rev. xiv. 4.

children; since it is from Him, and not from ourselves, that every good gift cometh, the disposition suitable to us is that of listening, and waiting upon God. "I will stand upon the watch;" "I will watch to see what He will say unto me."³ "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me."⁴

"Let every man be swift to hear," *slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* This temper, ever ready to obey, is contrary to zeal and forwardness in dictating to others; and to that passionate earnestness which partakes more of human infirmity than of Divine love. By such the cause of God is not promoted. They are not congenial to that spirit which is conscious of owing everything to the undeserved goodness of God; which hangs upon Him, which looks to Him, leans upon Him; which has nothing, hopes for nothing but in Him; has no strength, no good but from above. "Swift to hear, slow to speak;" this characterizes the meekness of wisdom which is in the sight of God of great price.

And again, St. James, as his custom is, comprises it all in a few memorable words: *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness; or, rather, "having laid aside,"* as washed from all stains, and having put on Christ in Baptism, as circumcised in Him,—in spirit, in heart, in tongue, from the superfluities of carnal affection. For wickedness arises from superfluity, from seeking what is not needful for us. Having laid aside these, *receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls;* "the Word able to save," the gift of all gifts, the good gift from above. O that we may

³ Hab. ii. 1.

⁴ Ps. xl. 1.

ever cherish and keep this treasure of great worth, which is only preserved in this spirit of meekness !

Thus, in this short passage of the Epistle, are we spoken of throughout as not our own ; as begotten by His Word ; as receiving His Word engrafted into us as a new life ; as looking up to Heaven for the only good and perfect gift ; as having nothing of our own but what is evil ; no earthly good but what is transient ; and therefore possessing our souls in meek and patient reliance on the Giver of all good.

The Gospel for to-day is, like that of last and of next Sunday, taken from St. John's account of our Lord's last conversation with His disciples on the evening of His betrayal. *Jesus said unto His disciples, Now I go My way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But, because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.* The great remedy for all sorrow is to have our treasure and our hearts in Heaven. Our Lord had been speaking to His disciples of the persecution and hatred which they would meet with in the world, as He had done ; of the bitter cup which He was about to drink, and of the tribulations which awaited them when He was gone. And their hearts were, in consequence, filled with sorrow. What greater occasion, humanly speaking, could there be for heaviness than such bereavement, under such circumstances ? Yet afterwards, when He was indeed parted from them, and they beheld Him ascending into Heaven, no more to be with them, no more to enjoy His gracious converse, they "returned to Jerusalem," it is said, "with great joy."⁵ And here our Lord seems to imply that,

⁵ St. Luke xxiv. 52.

notwithstanding all the trials that were drawing on, and the sad scene of suffering which they would have to undergo, yet if they would but raise their hearts to Heaven, and consider Him as going to the Father, it would greatly mitigate their sorrow.

Nor was it only that their hearts should be in Heaven with Him Whom they had loved, and Who was going to prepare a place for them, that they might be with Him ; He was also going to prepare a place for Himself in them below ; it was for this purpose He was about to depart ; it was in order that He might send down from thence Him Who should be more to them than His own bodily Presence in the flesh had been or could be. *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* Much must it surely have been to them to have had Him with them Whom they so much loved, to have seen His countenance, to have heard His voice, to have had His example before their eyes, His miraculous support and guidance ; to have witnessed His works of mercy, and listened to His precepts. Nothing upon this earth could ever have been equal to this at that time. Yet better than this, and more to their advantage was it, that He should be withdrawn from sight and present in spirit, even as He now is with us. That He should send down the Comforter to be with them. For while our Lord was with them visibly in human person, as the Son of Man, they would not raise their minds to the higher gifts of the Spirit. As St. Paul says, “ Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, henceforth, know we Him no more.” “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”⁶

And when He is come, He will reprove, or convince, the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. It took place exactly as our Lord here described. When the Holy Spirit first came down, it was like a great flood of light from Heaven, disclosing all around the region and shadow of death, and the whole world lying in wickedness. For all *sin* was at once seen and comprised in this—that men had both seen and hated God and Christ. They saw, and yet seeing they believed Him not. “If I had not come,” He said, “and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.” This the Holy Spirit showed at His coming, so that, “pricked in their heart, they said, What shall we do?”⁷ And then also the Holy Spirit supplied the answer, as here our Lord had likewise mentioned, for He had thereby convinced us, that there was no *righteousness* but by believing on Him Who was out of sight, as He Himself testified, “blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed;” no *righteousness* but in raising the affections from earth, and seeking “those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, at the right hand of God.” And if such *righteousness* is there to be found in Christ, there will be *judgment* also in them who find it not. “This is the condemnation,” says St. John, “that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness.” And this also the Holy Spirit showed, when “the prince of this world” was “cast out,” from the bodies of

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

⁷ Acts ii. 37, 38.

men by the finger of God, from his heathen oracles and temples, from the souls of men, and of nations which he had before led captive at his will. All this *convinces* of the universal *Judgment* that shall be, for the wicked cannot hope to escape when the devil himself is judged.

So vast was the difference, as we may well observe, in the knowledge of the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit, to what it had been when they attended on our Lord, while He went about in the flesh, as we read in the Gospels. "Thus did He well know," says St. Augustin, "how much better for them was that inner sight by which the Holy Spirit should console them."

I have yet many things, He adds, to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. He had been, as He describes Himself in the Old Testament, like an eagle bearing her young ones on her wings, and so, by little and little, teaching them to fly.⁸ And even after His Resurrection, it is said, "then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." "As if He had said," observes St. Augustin, "It is expedient for you that this form of a servant be withdrawn from you; the Word made Flesh, I dwell within you; but I am unwilling that any longer ye should love Me after the flesh, or, content with that milk, ye will desire ever to be as babes."⁹

Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: literally, He will "lead the way," like the pillar of fire in the wilderness; like the voice from behind, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left, saying, "this is the way," "the living way,"¹ which is Christ Himself; He will lead you the living

⁸ Deut. xxxii. 11.

⁹ Hom. xciv. ad loc.

¹ Heb. x. 20.

way, not as the example of dead men, but with the power of Christ's Godhead to mould to Himself. "Into all truth shall He," the Spirit, "guide you:"—

For He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He will give you understanding to know, and a heart to love the truth; and, as He proceedeth from the Father and from Me, what He heareth He shall teach; so shall there ever be a Oneness in the truth; it is but one truth throughout. So shall it ever be unto the end; the Holy Spirit within the Church speaks only what He hath heard. Being of one essence with the Father and the Son, He bringeth all things into intimate union: and in the Church, as in the hearts of men, He will be the one "good and perfect gift from above," coming down "from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning." Thus in the Church, and in each member of it, the Holy Spirit shall bring all things into harmony and peace; one faith, one truth, one Lord, three Persons in one God, and bringing all Christians into that unity which is in God. When He speaks of the past, He "shall bring to remembrance"² what Christ hath taught; and when He foretells things to come, "the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."³

He shall glorify Me: our Lord adds; for as the mission of the Son was to the glory of the Father, so the mission of the Holy Ghost is especially to "glorify" the Son, by bringing all men to acknowledge Him, by uniting them to His body, by dispensing His gifts purchased by His death, by preparing men for His return in glory.

He shall glorify Me: *for He shall receive of Mine, and*

² St. John xiv. 26.

³ Rev. xix. 10.

shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shew it unto you. And here we may observe, that our Lord is in this place comforting His disciples respecting His own departure from them, which had filled their hearts with sorrow; and, therefore, in speaking of that Divine Person, the Spirit of Truth, Whom He would send from the Father to be with them, He dwells especially on His intimate union with *Himself*, of supplying *His* place in their bereavement, of teaching them those very things He had wished to do, if they had been able to bear them; of glorifying Him, of receiving of Him, and showing unto them those things which were His in His union with the Father.

What, therefore, is the point we are taught, the one chief lesson which the Church would inculcate on us this day? We live under the dispensation of the Spirit, and it is, I think, this—that if we would live in the Spirit, would wait and pray for and seek His guidance, it will bring us more and more to the love of Christ, as revealed to us so fully in the Gospels. There we read of Him; we hear Him, as it were, and see Him; He is manifested to us as the Son of Man, our example, our advocate, the Sacrifice for us; in His parables and precepts, in His miracles of mercy, and His daily life, we have Him, as it were, before us; it is to the love of Him, and obedience to Him, to His likeness, the Holy Spirit must conform our unruly wills and affections.

There have been some good men, especially in the last age, who have habitually dwelt, in their meditations, and prayers, and sermons, on all parts of Scripture; the Epistles, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Revelation; but on all these rather, and more fully than on the Gospels;

because they have been more inclined to what is spiritual and devotional than what is practical, but these cannot be separated without detriment. The Spirit is One with the Incarnate Son of God.

The unity of the Godhead, the Three Persons in One God, is not a barren truth in any sense; the devout consideration of it promotes unity in us. Our Lord's prayer for Christians to the Father is, "that they may be one as We are One;" all love, all harmony, all union, worthy of the Name, is in the knowledge of the Three Persons and One God.

When our Lord was with His Apostles, there was as it were a veil upon their hearts; but when the Blessed Spirit was given this veil was taken away; from which time they and good Christians are thus described by St. Paul: "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."⁴ This is that "Living Way."

And here we may observe, that the "perfect gift" which is given alone by "the Father of Lights," is so much higher and better than anything we can behold on earth—the highest and best of earthly affections. For what could have been more holy and heavenly than that love which the Apostles bore to Christ? To say nothing of the beloved disciple who lay on his Lord's breast; what tender earnest affection does St. Peter often evince? even St. Thomas, slow to believe, when his Lord was going into danger said, "Let us go, that we may die with Him."⁵ In all this there was something of human as well as Divine love; but when the Holy Spirit, coming down

⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 13.

⁵ St. John xi. 16.

from the Father of Lights, turned all their hearts to Him Who had ascended into Heaven, this was better, more spiritual and Divine, and partook more of the unchangeable, where there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

We all of us, my brethren, have to go out of the body, to leave it behind us here to decay, before we can be with Christ; and the more we wean our hearts from everything that is transient and visible, the more shall we be prepared to meet that great change.

SERMON XLI.

The Fifth Sunday after Easter.

St. James i. 22—27. St. John xvi. 23—33.

REQUISITES OF EFFECTUAL PRAYER.

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.—ST. JOHN xv. 7.

WE observed on Sunday last, that there was a danger of persons being taken up too exclusively with what may be considered spiritual in religion, to the neglect of what is practical. It is against this that St. James warns us in the Epistle for to-day. *Be ye doers of the Word*, he says, *and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*. For he had said just before, as we read in the Epistle for Sunday last, “receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.” But how is it able to save the soul? surely not unless it is received in obedience; unless obedience follows the reception of it; otherwise it is not a real reception of the Living Word, but only a self-delusion of the heart.

For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.

For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straight-way forgetteth what manner of man he was. The Word of God is like a glass, wherein a man may behold what he is, as in the light of God; how far he has fallen away from the image of Christ; how many wrong things there are in his temper and daily conduct; how excellent are the things of God; how important the objects of eternity. He sees, he acknowledges, he is perhaps for the moment feelingly affected. But what avails all this, if in his conduct the day after he is as if he had never known it? Alas! the feelings of yesterday compared with the conduct of to-day are often like coming down from Heaven to earth. Yet there is no man, however corrupted, who has not that within him which must at times approve of the things that are more excellent; and on the other hand, there is no one so perfect, but that the struggles of an evil nature will not at times obscure and cloud the vision of God. Indeed, the danger on this subject is so vast and extensive, that we may observe in the two longest discourses which are given us of our Lord Himself—the Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew, and His discourses at the Last Supper in St. John's Gospel—there is nothing on which He so much dwells throughout, continually repeating His exhortations and warnings, a son the danger of saying, Lord, Lord, and doing not His will; of hearing His sayings and doing them not; so as to be like a house built on the sand: of abiding in the Vine by obedience, and of bearing fruit; of continuing in Christ's love, which can only be by keeping His commandments.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty. That is, the spiritual law of the Gospel; when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and “His commandments are not grievous;” when we love what God loves; when we

are loosed from the chain of our sins, and having no other will but God's will, we find in His service perfect freedom ; when thus beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are in beholding changed into the same image by obedience. Whoso thus "looketh into the perfect law of liberty," and continueth therein, abideth in that law, and in so doing abideth in Christ; ¹ *he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed, or rather in his conduct, in all that he doeth* : "look, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper."

But on the contrary, *if any among you seem to be religious, i. e. a worshipper of God, a devout person, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* The first indication of the heart not being right with God is the tongue ; and this will show itself in apparently religious persons, when the "candle of the Lord" ² is used by them, not "to search the inward parts," but to see the faults of others ; when they behold others in the glass of God's Word, not themselves ; are given to censure, envious judging, and other worldly converse. Their "religion," *i. e.* their worship of God, must be "vain ;" their prayers are not heard ; there is no love of God, and therefore no real devotion.

What, therefore, is that "meekness" wherewith we are to receive the engrafted saving Word ? St. James describes it after his manner in a few words : *Pure religion, and undefiled, the acceptable sacrifice without blemish, before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* It is that same acceptableness which the Judge Himself describes at the last day, "I was sick and

¹ St. John xv. 4, 5.

² Prov. xx. 27.

ye visited Me;" it is the law of love as Christ hath loved us, viz. "to comfort all that mourn;"³ it is to be in this world even as Christ Himself was. This is the love of God; these are its unfailing fruits. But together with this charity to others must be the keeping of our own heart; "to keep himself unspotted from the world"—from the touch of that wicked one—any secret love of sin; for "if any man love the world," says St. John, "the love of the Father is not in him."⁴

Now it may be observed, that this short lesson from St. James is to teach us what will render our religion substantial and our prayers effectual. "Ye are My friends," says our Lord, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." This friendship with God, as our Lord is pleased to express it, this having His ears open unto our prayers, depends on this life of active charity and purity of heart. As St. John also says, "Whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments."⁵ This is especially to be noticed on this Sunday, because it is Rogation Sunday—the Sunday of prayer and supplication—the season in which we wait for the coming of the Comforter; the pledge and promise of Whose coming is attached to this obedience. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

And now we come to what our Blessed Lord Himself says to us, in that His last discourse on the subject of prayer. This lesson from the *Altar* is like the Voice of God speaking to us from His mercy-seat between the cherubims,—the words of Christ in His own Gospels.

³ Isa. lxi. 2.

⁴ 1 St. John ii. 15.

⁵ 1 St. John iii. 22.

And these His last words at parting, come before us on this Sunday with a new and peculiar interest, as we are filling up the season of the forty days, when our Lord was with His disciples on earth after the Resurrection, and was now again about to leave them and to ascend to the Father. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* In our own name we can ask for nothing of God; after all our doings and deservings we have no plea to make; it is only as penitent sinners at best that we can venture to look up and ask for anything, and then only in the Name of Christ. In His "Name," that is, in Him as He is, the Son of the Most High, the everlasting God. "In the Name of Christ," says St. Augustin, "is signified the right opinion concerning Him;" and "whatsoever ye shall ask," he explains to mean, "everything that is not contrary to everlasting salvation." Ye shall receive it—it is not said *when* ye shall receive it, for the answer may be for a time delayed—but ye shall receive at the time most convenient for you. And surely with such a promise we ought to ask for the best of all things, even this fulness of joy, which is the Comforter Himself, having our hearts and desires there, "where true joys are to be found."

These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. When our Lord spoke to His disciples of that all-prevailing Name in which their prayers should be heard, it was in great measure as a dark saying or proverb to them; for they knew not as yet of the great mysteries of Godliness—of the Atoning Sacrifice He was about to make—of

His interceding as Mediator between God and man ; the veil was not yet rent, nor the Holy Place opened.

At that day ye shall ask in My Name; and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you. I need not tell of My intercessions for you at the right hand of God ; I must not speak of My praying to the Father, as if I loved you more than He does. *For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.* Their faith is thus spoken of as consisting in their belief that He “came from God,” because this contained all ; if from God, His mission was Divine, His words were true, His doctrine to be accepted, the mysteries He spoke of beyond question. Here our Lord seems to say, such is My union with the Father, that whosoever loveth Me is loved of Him, and whosoever believeth in Me is of Him received. The love of Christ in our hearts is itself the gift of the Father ; and our belief in Him is because it is revealed to us by His Father in Heaven. It is in Christ’s Incarnation, in our being one with Him, parts of His Body, and quickened by His Spirit, that we are beloved of the Father ; it is in Him that we are at all times the objects of the Father’s love, if we break not this holy bond. As a beloved child always receives benefits from its parent, and is the object of his tender regards, whether he is asking for them or not, so as long as we are in Christ by obedience, God ceases not daily to watch over and bless us ; and the prayers that we make, the faith which suggests those prayers, the love which renders them importunate and fervent, these are nothing else but the workings of His own good Spirit in the heart. The Spirit asks, and in asking knows that He shall receive, and gives us to know that we shall have what we ask for. He Himself gives us to love Him ; “we

love Him because He first loved us.”⁶ If we seek Him it is because He is seeking for us, and therefore we feel His constraining power within us.

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly. Already “speakest Thou plainly,” as Thou hast promised to do by the Spirit of truth hereafter. And speakest no proverb. There is in this no dark saying. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God. There is a difficulty here; for how is it in those our Lord’s words, of coming from and going to the Father, that the disciples say there was no longer any proverb, and that they were convinced by this of His coming from God? it cannot be that they now clearly understood concerning His Incarnation and His Ascension. The passage seems to refer to what had gone before. It is said that the disciples were perplexed and reasoning among themselves respecting two mysterious expressions our Lord had made use of; the one, of His being with them for “a little while,” the other of His “going to the Father.” This was the subject of secret reasoning and discussion among themselves, of which to Him they had said nothing; but He, knowing their hearts, as the all-knowing, heart-searching God, to Whom alone the thoughts are known; He answered what they were desirous to ask Him before they had expressed it to Him. On this they said, “Now already Thou speakest plainly, and it is from this Thy knowledge of our hearts that we know Thee to be of God.” There is no

⁶ 1 St. John iv. 10.

miracle, no manifestation of Godhead so startling and overpowering to man, as this secret knowledge of his own thoughts. It was upon the faintest intimation of this that Nathaniel at once exclaimed, "Thou art the Son of God!"⁷ It is this that makes many of us tremble at the Bible, because we find God's eye to be there; and sometimes at the whispering of the Spirit within, or some unwonted Providence from without. This, my brethren, this knowledge of the secret heart, such as no creature has, is the one great manifestation of God in Christ, which is reserved for the last and great day. "Thou hast searched me out and known me;" and it is of this that the Psalmist exclaims, in adoring wonder, "Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it."⁸

It is this belief in Christ as God which would be all in all to us, and our certain salvation, if we could steadfastly adhere to it; but, alas! it soon passes away as a cloud, or rather, I should say, though it be life-giving as the sun in the heavens, yet it is soon hid from view, and lost to us by earthly clouds that arise. We behold, as in a glass, and then go away and forget. And so was it with these disciples; they had all along before confessed their faith in Christ as God; they had done so more than once, and were blessed of God for doing so. And now again do they make this strong confession of belief; yet this sheet-anchor of the soul was soon lost. When many believed, on one occasion, St. John said, "But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them; for He knew what was in man."⁹ So was it now. *Jesus answered them, Do ye*

⁷ St. John i. 49.

⁸ Ps. cxxxix. 5.

⁹ St. John ii. 24, 25.

now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own. Even this very night, notwithstanding your high assurances of faith, when the enemy cometh, ye all shall have fled.

“Ye shall be scattered,” and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. This, indeed, from that time may be said of every good man when friends desert him in the hour of tribulation—that he is not alone, because Christ is with him; he is, in this high and sacred sense, never less alone than when alone. But it was of Himself, in the mystery of Godhead, that Christ spake of His union with the Father; as on another occasion, to His Jewish enemies, “He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone.”¹ But here, as a matter of very sweet and Divine consolation to His grieving disciples, “Ye shall forsake and leave Me; I shall be bereaved of you all whom I have loved, in the trial that approaches, but I am not alone, or deserted of God.” And then He adds those gracious and memorable words, the most gracious and memorable last words ever spoken by man,—His last farewell benediction to His disciples, before He turns to God in that solemn prayer for them.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In Christ we may have peace passing understanding, beyond human thought, not only in the midst of troubles, and in spite of them, but all the more in consequence of them; and it is, we may here learn, that through His word we may find in Him this peace. “These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace.” Strange must the words have sounded unto them, when He had just told them that they should

¹ St. John viii. 29.

so soon desert Him. Ye shall not flee from Me, as now ye are about to do, in order to find peace with the world ; but ye shall flee unto Me, even when out of your sight, and in Me ye shall find peace and refuge when the world is most at enmity with you.

In the world ye shall have tribulation ; new and strange gift of a King to his faithful followers ! “tribulation !” this is the best legacy which I can leave you, the highest reward for continuing with Me in My temptations, the most precious mark of My love that I can bestow upon you whom I have chosen out of the world ; “ye shall have tribulation,” ye shall have to drink of My cup of suffering, and to be baptized with My Baptism of blood. If the dearly beloved of the Father, Who is in the bosom of God, hath on earth no portion but this—to be more than all men “acquainted with grief,” and “a Man of sorrows,” be assured there is no outward mark of sonship more certain.

But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Tribulation, but with joy ; distress, but with victory ; mourning the pledge of the Comforter. And hence St. Paul, “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation !”² And full of confidence from his own experience of the victory over the world here pronounced by his Lord, he exclaims, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”³ And St. John, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?” “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”⁴

Such are indeed great consolations, most gracious en-

² 2 Cor. vii. 4.

³ Rom. viii. 37.

⁴ 1 St. John v. 5. 4.

couragements ; but the one practical lesson of this Sunday is prayer ; that we ask in the Name of Christ, with all that earnestness and humility which becomes those who would not take that saving Name in vain ; that in order that we may pray effectually we abide in Him, and His words by obedience abide in us ; that, as St. James says, we be “ not hearers only, but doers of the Word,” in order that we may worship God with pure and undefiled worship, lifting up pure hands in faith without wavering.

So may we, in the words of the Collect, not only “ by His holy inspiration think those things that be good,” but also, “ by His merciful guiding, perform the same.”

SERMON XLII.

The Ascension Day.

Acts i. 1—11. St. Mark xvi. 14—20.

ASCENDING WITH CHRIST.

And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.—
ST. LUKE xxiv. 50, 51.

THE Scripture appointed for the Epistle to-day, and likewise the Gospel, consist of the narrative of our Lord's ascent into Heaven. And this is well; for that event itself suggests all doctrine and all reflection connected with it. The ordering of His Church, and the fact of His Ascension, contain everything.

The first of these accounts is taken from the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, where St. Luke, alluding to the Gospel which he himself had written, says, *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the Apostles whom He had chosen.* That is, of all our Lord's miracles and

precepts, while "anointed with the Holy Ghost," He "cast out devils by the Spirit of God," until the day of His Ascension, when, having breathed on the Apostles and conferred on them the Holy Ghost for the fulfilment of their mission, He left His Church to their charge.

To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs; by appearing in the midst of them through closed doors; by making them to feel His wounded Body; by eating with them; by conversing; by much familiar intercourse; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. During the space of forty days while He continued on earth, not as before, always visible with them, but at intervals appearing, He so habituated them by degrees to endure His bodily absence, and to know His spiritual presence; making these various manifestations of Himself from time to time, and discoursing with them concerning the regulation of His Church on earth, which He usually designated as "the Kingdom of Heaven," or "the Kingdom of God." Thus they conversed with Him; even as Moses conversed with God for forty days in the mount, receiving the laws of His Church, and saw Him "face to face," unconsumed in the mild majesty of the Incarnate Son.

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For after His Resurrection, our Lord had sent His disciples to their own quiet home and country in Galilee, where He would manifest Himself to them in the scenes of His former intercourse with them. But now, at the end of forty days, He had summoned them again to Jerusalem and appeared amongst them there; that the

Holy City might be the place not only of His mission, His Crucifixion, and Resurrection, but also of His Ascension, and the descent of the Spirit, and the first seat of His Church; and being evidently about to leave them, He commissioned them to continue in the Holy City until Pentecost. *For John truly, He added, baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.* Ye have been baptized with the Baptism of John; but John himself spake to you of another entrance into My kingdom, a Baptism "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He says, "not many days hence," not mentioning the exact time, but leaving it uncertain, as He always does "the times" and "the seasons," to preserve the temper of watchfulness and prayer.¹

When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? The disciples were filled with the expectation that Israel was to be restored; so that the two walking in sadness to Emmaus expressed their disappointment by saying, "We trusted that it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel." Being therefore now appointed to meet at Jerusalem, they understood not how the Israel of God was a spiritual kingdom, now indeed to be established in grace and in suffering—the unseen kingdom of the Spirit—but hereafter, when Christ shall return, in glory. They saw not as yet, as St. John afterwards describes, "the holy city, new Jerusalem," descending "from God out of Heaven."² Our Lord, therefore, gives them no direct answer respecting the restoration of this temporal Israel, whether it was to be or not, but teaches them to wait upon God for all these things, to be fulfilled in His own good time.

¹ St. Chrys. ad loc.

² Rev. xxi. 2.

And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power; for of the day and the hour knoweth no man, nor angel, nor the Church of God, but the Father only. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. “Ye shall receive” not honour, nor station, nor ease, nor riches, as in a kingdom; but “ye shall receive power”—power to be witnesses and suffering martyrs for the Name of Christ; and first of all, in the great city itself of persecution, stained with the blood of the Prophets and of Christ.

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; while their eyes were fixed upon Him there on the Mount of Olives, to which they had walked, in the act of lifting up His hands and blessing them, as by some unseen power He was gradually borne aloof from the earth. And a cloud received Him out of their sight. Their eyes still followed Him upward as He arose, till an intervening cloud—perhaps it might be of descending angels—hid Him from their view; but they still gazed and gazed upward, as loath to lose that sight. *And while they looked steadfastly, or intensely, toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.* “In like manner,” with the same visible manifestation, the same glory and majesty, or rather, more particularly with the same human body, as man. “He shall come,” says St. Augustin, “in like manner as He went; that is,

in the form of man, in which He was judged, shall He come to judge." "In like manner," *i. e.* "with a body," says St. Chrysostom, "but with glory far greater."³ With the same Body indeed as bearing His wounds, for they who pierced Him shall see Him; the consolation inexpressible of His friends, the confusion unspeakable of His enemies. He shall return, "this same Jesus," said the Angels, bearing the same saving Name; the same Jesus that taught, and healed, and gave you His laws, is He Who shall return as Judge. Again, He departed in "a cloud" that received Him out of their sight, and in clouds He shall return; and angels and men shall witness His coming as now His going.

In like manner the Gospel for the day is taken from St. Mark's narrative of the same event, and the circumstances preceding our Lord's Ascension. It may be observed that St. Mark's account of these forty days of our Lord's stay upon earth after His Resurrection differs from those of the other Evangelists in this, that he does not enter into any point in detail, either of our Lord's appearing to Mary Magdalene, or to the two disciples going to Emmaus; nor to St. Thomas; nor of His manifestations of Himself by the sea or on the mountain of Galilee; nor of His leading forth His disciples from Jerusalem to Bethany, before He was parted from them. But, instead of describing any one of those occurrences, St. Mark, in a short and summary way, comprises the whole, touching slightly on particulars, and giving a general statement. His account, therefore, is most suitable for this day's Gospel.

³ Act. Ap. ad loc.

Jesus appeared unto the eleven, he says, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. This probably alludes to our Lord's first appearing, after the Resurrection, to the whole of the eleven assembled together with St. Thomas. It was on the Sunday after that of the Resurrection. And His "upbraiding them with their unbelief," which St. Mark here mentions, may apply chiefly to St. Thomas, to whom more especially He spoke on that occasion; or it may also include those to whom on the Sunday before He appealed, saying, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"⁴ The general statement, however, in St. Mark, here implies that the disciples were slow to believe of their Lord's Resurrection, so that it was to Him the occasion of reproof. And this their incredulity adds to our faith. "For, on account of their doubting," says St. Gregory, "the resurrection was shown by many proofs; so that, by their doubts we are the more strongly established. For Mary Magdalene, who believed more quickly, hath done less for me than Thomas, who doubted long."⁵

To this St. Mark adds the establishment of Christ's spiritual kingdom, which He now made by His mission below to the whole world; thus, while He sat at the right hand of God, receiving "the utmost parts of the earth for" His "possession." *And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* As St. Paul afterwards testified of "the Gospel being preached to every creature under Heaven."⁶ It is

⁴ St. Luke xxiv. 38.

⁵ In Ascen. Dom., Par. Brev.

⁶ Col. i. 23.

like the sounding of the trumpets, the sending forth of the heralds, the gathering together of the elect from the four winds, against the day of His appearing. Meanwhile, during this its publication, it is the savour of life in every place, and also unto death. As it is added, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* The Church visible and invisible combining together, stretching forth the cords of their tent to the ends of the earth, and the condemnation of them that receive not the witness of God. "Who-soever shall not receive you, nor hear your words,"—"it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgment, than for that city."⁷

And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. Our Lord is here speaking of the first miraculous planting of His Church by the gifts poured down upon it on the day of Pentecost, that it might be established "as a witness to all nations;" like a carrying on of His own wonder-working mission on earth; and like a visible sign to men of His sitting at the right hand of Power till all enemies are put under His feet. "In My Name;" it is His own mantle falling in power from above on them who behold Him after His departure,⁸ when ascended on high; "His Name—through faith in His Name"—working without what it was doing far more wonderfully in the souls and hearts of men; casting out evil habits; giving a new tongue to praise Him; turning death into life, suffering into joy, sickness into spiritual health.

⁷ St. Matt. x. 15.

⁸ 2 Kings ii. 10. 14.

Such is St. Mark's narrative of what our Lord did during the forty days, in which He was speaking to them of the things concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, and this he sums up by saying, in the same general mode of statement, *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.* Here then we have, in the Ascension and Session at the right hand of God, the confirmation and substance of all our faith. Our High Priest entering into the Holy of Holies, to appear in the presence of God for us; "On the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."⁹ Here is all our strength, all our confidence, while in prayer we wait without for His again appearing.¹

And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following. Thus did He supply His Church with this threefold testimony; the witness of those who often saw His risen Body upon earth; the witness of those who saw Him ascend; the witness of the Holy Spirit that went forth in power below. "That salvation," says St. Paul, "first spoken by the Lord, and confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost."²

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said our Blessed Lord, "will draw all men unto Me;"³ these words, although they may have been spoken of His Crucifixion, may apply in some sense to His Ascension also. And when the disciples understood not of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, He said, "What and

⁹ Heb. viii. 1.

¹ Ecclus. i. 19, 20, and St. Luke i. 9, 10.

² Heb. ii. 3, 4.

³ St. John xii. 32.

if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before," as if the power of His Ascension was connected with the Holy Communion. And, in speaking to Nicodemus of the other Sacrament also, He makes the like allusion to His Ascension. "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but the Son of Man which is in Heaven." Thus, my brethren, it is a great mystery, and far more than a figure of speech, when it is said of Christians that they are ascended, and are made to "sit in heavenly places together in Christ."

What great constraining power to raise us thither? *This same Jesus*, Whom ye see ascend—He bears in Heaven this Name. Thus St. Gregory well applies to His Ascension the words of the Canticles, "because of the savour of Thy good ointments, Thy Name is as ointment poured forth." "Draw me; we will run after Thee."⁴ They saw Him ascend to Heaven, and we, by faith, may see Him now ascended thither. "We see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour."⁵ We may see Him there with that prevailing Name. They that see Him shall have power, and the pure in heart shall see Him. Thus St. Augustin well says, in a sermon on this day, "Thou sayest unto me, Show me thy God. I answer, Attend a little while to thine own heart; remove from thence whatever thou seest displeasing unto God; and He has promised to come and make His abode with thee."⁶ If the taint of earthly affection be removed, the soul and spirit of man will, as the flame, again aspire and rise heavenward; and the body too, when it hath put off the old man and the burden of this corruption, will ascend also, together with

⁴ Song of Sol. i. 3, 4.

⁵ Heb. ii. 9.

⁶ St. John xiv. 23. Serm. Aug. cclxi.

Christ's Body, to the God Who made it, and fashioned it anew like unto Himself.⁷

I will conclude with the words of an ancient Bishop, once spoken on this day, "Let us therefore exult, most beloved, with spiritual joy; and rejoicing unto God with worthy thanksgivings, let us lift up the free eyes of our heart unto that height where Christ is. Let no earthly desire depress those minds which are called to things above; let not the things that perish occupy those who are pre-elected to things eternal, nor deceitful allurements impede those who are entered upon the way of truth; but let faithful Christians so run through the course of things temporal, as knowing that they are but travellers in this valley of the world."⁸

⁷ "Facile corpus levabitur in alta cœlorum, si non premat spiritum sarcina peccatorum." Aug. Serm. cclxiii.

⁸ S. Leo. Serm. 72. De Ascen. Dom. Brev.

SERMON XLIII.

Sunday after Ascension Day.

1 St. Pet. iv. 7—11. St. John xv. 26 ; xvi. 4.

THE DAYS OF EXPECTATION.

The end of all things is at hand.—1 ST. PET. iv. 7.

WHEN our Lord ascended into Heaven, the Angels spake of His return, He “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven.” And indeed our thoughts of His departure are necessarily connected with the subject of His coming again. Scripture is wont to combine the two events together. It was just before His leaving His disciples that they asked Him whether He was then about to restore the kingdom to Israel ; for all His preparations looked so like some immediate manifestation of Himself, when He told them that the times and seasons were the secret of God, but that they were immediately by the descent of the Holy Ghost to prepare the way. All things in Scripture, all things in nature, all things in the world around, point, as with the finger, to this the Lord’s return. And the rapidity with which we seem to pass one after another from this

visible scene, suggests to a thoughtful mind that the great winding up of all is to be very soon. Well therefore does our¹ Church on this Sunday take up the warning note with which the Epistle for to-day commences.

The end of all things, says St. Peter, is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. It is very much to the same effect that our Lord Himself speaks in one of His last discourses: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man." And St. Peter's expression, "be sober and watch," seems best explained by our Lord's words on the same occasion: "Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged," not merely by surfeiting and drunkenness, but "by the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."² What can better express the feelings which they ought to have, who, after gazing on their Lord ascending into Heaven, turn their eyes again down to earth, with the words of the Angels in their ears, "He shall so come as ye have seen Him go"? And so it was with those disciples; "they returned to Jerusalem, and were continually in the temple."³

And above all things, adds St. Peter, have fervent charity among yourselves. In like manner St. Paul says, "And above all these things put on charity."⁴ This brotherly love is the great requisite in preparations for the Last Day; for without it watchfulness and prayer are of no avail, or rather cannot exist. It was so with the early Church warm with first love, and should be with that which is last in waiting. On Advent Sunday, there-

¹ The words of the Text are prefixed in our own Church to the Epistle. In the Missal it commences with "Be ye sober."

St. Luke xxi. 34—36.

³ St. Luke xxiv. 53.

⁴ Col. iii. 12—14.

fore, as well as to-day, the Church sets before us this same lesson; for then, when it sounded the Advent trump, "Awake out of sleep, for the Day is at hand," the admonition given was, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."

For charity, it is added, *shall cover the multitude of sins*. This needs must be so; for true love—the love of God and man—being ever combined with humility, is ever confessing its sins; and if we confess our sins, God will forgive us our sins and cleanse us. Blessed is he whose sins are covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not sin. And our Lord has pointed out the way: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." Add to which, that love will also cover the sins of others—by forgetting and forgiving them—by seeing them not; and then the promise is, that the merciful shall obtain mercy, and he that judgeth not shall not be judged; and if we forgive others, God will forgive us our trespasses. So that the love which, as the Book of Proverbs⁵ says, covers the sins of others, shall cover also its own; and charity never seeks its own pardon more effectually of God, than when it is seeking that of others. As St. James also says, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Use hospitality, the Apostle proceeds, *one to another without grudging*. And St. Paul, in like manner of connexion with fraternal charities, "Let brotherly love continue; be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for

⁵ This Book has sometimes a new sense given to it in the New Testament. Compare Prov. xxv. 7, with St. Luke xiv. 10. Prov. xxv. 22, with Rom. xii. 20. Prov. x. 12, with St. James v. 20.

thereby some have entertained Angels unawares.”⁶ As if thereby suggesting the Lord of Angels Himself, Who says, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.” “I was a stranger and ye took Me in.”

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Our Lord, speaking of His departure and return, described the state of Christians by the parables of the Pounds and of the Talents, implying the distribution of gifts, which, during His absence, they would have, as faithful stewards, to improve. These are here spoken of as the various gifts of the Spirit, which, as St. Paul says, are “given to every man to profit withal;” that is, for the edification and salvation of his neighbour and of himself. And these St. Peter here ranges under two classes.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man speak by the gift of the Spirit which was in the early Church, by preaching, or by prophecy, or by hymn, and which is now by the manifold ways of Christian teaching, and by all the uses of the tongue, in these let him be as one not speaking his own words or seeking his own profit, but as guided by the Spirit of grace and wisdom.

If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; if it is not given him to teach, but in some other subordinate office to minister to the good of others, “let him do it,” not as if it were anything of his own, but as of a power entrusted to him from above. That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be

⁶ Heb. xiii. 1, 2.

praise and dominion for ever and ever. Let him attribute all to God; let him, in the various gifts of His grace, refer all to Him in Whom all fulness dwells; that the streams of Divine goodness be again replenished in Him Who is the Fountain of all; may by thanksgiving be restored back to Heaven, that so, sanctified and refreshed, they may again more abundantly bedew the earth.

Thus, while the Gospel assures us of what will be done, and what is done for us, the Epistle exhorts us of what we are ourselves to do, as in preparation for the great Harvest that is at hand; watching in prayer with all perseverance, as looking forward to the end of all things; that by charity all gifts of the Spirit may be regulated, and in charity all sins forgiven, that so all may redound to the praise of God.

The Gospel for this Sunday, as likewise for all the Sundays at this season, is taken from our Lord's parting discourse in St. John's Gospel, on the coming of the Comforter, and on those sufferings and persecutions in the disciples of Christ, which may well make them to long for the consolations and support of their Heavenly Guide. *When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me.* This is a remarkable verse from the great fulness of Divine doctrine which it contains. Our Lord Himself, He here states, will send the Comforter after His Ascent to Heaven; and from the Father He will send Him; and, again, that He proceedeth from the Father. These are very wonderful expressions of Divine union. Add to this the very Name of Comforter, or Advocate: how much is contained in it? how much that outweighs all the cares, all the opposition, all the

sufferings of the world ; to have One with us Who is God, Who is sent down especially for this purpose, to be the strength and refuge of those that believe in Christ? Nor is there less in that other name, "the Spirit of Truth." How do falsehoods and disguises, how do all the deceits of the world, and all the arts of him who is the father of lies, and the slanderous accusations of the wicked, nay, even the unrealities, and vanities, and fleeting shadows of the world, how do they seem to flee away at the very Name, the Spirit of Truth? of Him Who is God, equal to the Father and to the Son? God Who hath come down in all the armour and power of God? Nor is this all ; for the office of the Holy Ghost and the object of His Coming are also expressed in this verse, "He shall testify of Me." He is called "the faithful witness ;" as the faithful witness He shall come, and the object and end of His testimony is Christ.

And again, yet further ; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, by His mysterious union and indwelling fills His Church also, and the members of Christ's Body. For our Lord's declaration thus proceeds : "He shall testify of Me ;" *and ye also shall bear witness.* He shall communicate to you of Himself, of His own truth, and shall make you also faithful witnesses, like Himself ; shall bring all things to your remembrance which I have spoken ; shall bring His own light on what I have suffered and have wrought ; so that He in you, and you in Him, shall bear witness of what ye have seen and heard. *Because ye have been with Me from the beginning.* The life of Christ on earth, His Incarnation,—the presence of Him Who is God and man, as set forth in His words and works,—this is the rock and foundation on which all our hopes are built ; and for this we need the highest testi-

mony, that of men like ourselves, the twelve witnesses, and of the Spirit of Truth, enlightening and strengthening them. Our Lord spake of what He had seen and heard of the Father—of that He bare witness; and the Apostles of what they had seen and heard of Him.

Now these our Lord's words, in this promise, are not for us to explain, nor to understand them in their fulness, but so to dwell on them as to humble ourselves under a sense of those inscrutable mysteries which they contain; to adore the Three Persons in One God as thus set forth; and by awe and devout carefulness to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Comforter; or rather, by the love of God shed abroad within us, to receive Him into our hearts and lives, as already come,—for He is already come to us,—and so to dress, as it were, and awaken our souls for the celebration of His first Coming.

But the highest and best gifts of God are usually accompanied with outward troubles and afflictions: the very name of Comforter implies the need of comfort; the very name of the Spirit of Truth implies the need of guidance and direction. Our Lord therefore proceeds to prepare His disciples for these tribulations. They who bear witness to Christ, must expect to meet with the same treatment from the world as He did. The disciple is not above his Master. He that would be perfect must be as his Master. And surely, if, as the saying is, to be forewarned is to be forearmed, strong should we be in the armour of God, from the multiplicity of warnings which He has given us.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. If ye expect great things in My kingdom on earth, except the great things of suffering for My sake, ye will fall away when the hour of trial arrives. If ye

expect to render the truths of the Gospel acceptable to the world, it can only be by betraying them, and betraying yourselves, and betraying Me. I have told you the truth beforehand, that ye may know it must be so; it cannot be otherwise: he that would be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Expect, therefore, persecutions.

They shall put you out of the synagogues: i.e. will excommunicate or put you out of the Church: *yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.* From the time when our Lord spake these words, even unto this day, and as it will be unto the end of the world, and more especially in the last and evil times, the sufferings and ill-treatment of good men have not been so hard to bear from any other cause as this—that they are always condemned as evil. The world which persecutes them is its own advocate, pleads its own cause, and then itself sits as judge and condemns them, as perverters of some great truth, as disturbers of society, as, in some way, enemies of God. This was the case with the martyrs and saints of old. And even in these days of lukewarmness, where there is but little of such saintly or martyr-like spirit to stir the enmity of the world, when the good are censured, it is as being evil; sometimes altogether falsely, sometimes from some accidental danger exaggerated, sometimes from some natural infirmity made the occasion of reproach, sometimes from some peculiar arts of the great enemy, one knows not how: as St. Paul was once persecuting the saints. Time will, indeed, in some cases, remove these false impressions; but, no doubt, some of the best of men who have suffered and died for the truth of God, and for being faithful to Him in their lives, yet are misrepresented; have false statements and

false characters attached to their memory, as it is carried down in the stream of history ; have their names evil spoken of even now, and will have until that Day when Christ will confess them before men and angels. Oh, false and evil world ! who can love and admire thee when thou coverest even the good with a cloud, which will not be removed from them but by the Judge's Presence ? Time indeed does often bring truth to light, but not always. False religions, for the most part, prevail in the world ; and, pleading their own cause, denounce as unfaithful those that are true ; and the good are often for this reason unknown to each other, and will be unto the end.

And these things will they do unto you, says our Lord, *because they have not known the Father, nor Me.* They knew Him not because they knew not that God is Love ; for how could they know Him when they cast Him out of their synagogues, and said that He was mad, and had a devil, and ridiculed the very thought of His having seen or being seen of Abraham, and condemned Him as guilty of death because He declared Himself to be the Son of God ? And if the world knew Him not, it will not know us, as St. John says, if we are of God. O blessed misunderstanding ! O welcome misinterpretation of us, if it arises from our knowing God ! O acceptable hatred, if we have to suffer it because we love God ! But our gracious Lord seems to mention this in this place as a motive for patience and forbearance. As He said Himself, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," so would He also use this same plea with us, to disarm us of that ill-will which is so strong in the natural heart. What a constraining motive for our compassion is it, enough to disarm every thought of anger, that if we suffer for righteousness' sake from men, it is because they

know not God! How long-suffering ought we to be with others, when God is so with them, while they know Him not! It is indeed, in one sense, the condemnation of the wicked that they know not God, when from wilful blindness they have put out the light within them; but it may not be altogether so, and this is a great reason for our forbearance in the meanwhile; for God may yet vouchsafe to give them the knowledge of His Truth.

But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. These words, although mostly applicable to the Apostles themselves, who must continually have been remembering their Lord's words, which they understood not at the time; yet to us also, even unto the end, they speak of an inexpressible source of comfort. To find how much things are exactly as our Lord Himself represented that they should be—to find this more and more, day by day, continually, as we come to know more of ourselves and of the world—this greatly confirms our faith in Him, and indeed our love of Him. This knowledge has a peculiar power in knitting our hearts to Him; it kindles our loving, wondering, and adoring thoughts of Him, as we read what He says, which we see, and feel, and know, to be going on in a thousand ways,—in ourselves, and in others, and in the scene around us. It strengthens us also greatly against those trials when they occur. It seems as if His knowledge, which wrapped us all around, was our very strength against the things He speaks of; our very tower of refuge, into which we may flee as into His Presence. If we belong to Him, our Head is above in Heaven, and we, the members of His Body, are below: the Head is one with the Body, careth for it, feels with it by most mysterious, intimate sympathy; guides, protects,

and governs it. That which is below groans under a weight of corruption; and well is it that it should be purified by tribulation, that it should fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ; and oh that the Spirit Whom He sends may not be sent in vain to sanctify those sufferings!

SERMON XLIV.

Whit-Sunday.

Acts ii. 1—11. St. John xiv. 15—31.

THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE.

The SPIRIT of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.—ST. JOHN xiv. 17.

THE fulfilment of this our Lord's promise forms the Epistle for to-day. *When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. "The day of Pentecost,"* that fiftieth day after the Paschal Lamb was slain, when the Law was given out from Mount Sinai, written on the stony tables; for now the better law of the Spirit was, by the finger of God, to be written on the heart; when they had come to the heavenly Mount Sion,¹ on the fiftieth day after the true Passover. "The precious ointment poured upon the Head"² was about to descend "to the skirts of His clothing;" for all was union, "they were with one accord in one place;" the one place and one mind setting forth "the Holy Catholic

¹ Heb. xii. 22.

² Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

Church," and "the Communion of Saints," to which the Spirit is promised.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. "Suddenly," as the Angel voice at Bethlehem; "suddenly," as the Lord Himself will descend; a sound, not of wind, but like "as of a wind;" not, like wind, from either of the four quarters of the earth, but down "from Heaven;" it came not, like wind, on the corners of the house without, but filled it within; not, like the wind, ranging abroad, but confined to one room; like "a mighty wind," soft, irresistible, but unseen. Not as the storm without on Mount Sinai, exceeding terrible; but rather as the vital and vocal breath of man; as a friendly guest within the house; gentle as the approaches of our Lord Himself, when He appeared in the midst of them after His Resurrection.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. They heard, they saw, they spoke; the fire was kindled within, and seen without. A fire like that of the Burning Bush, which burned but consumed not; appearing not as one, but as many, from "the Father of lights," expressing the manifold distributions of the Spirit; "cloven tongues," as "rightly dividing the word of truth," as dispensing and distinguishing many languages; "dividing to every man severally as He will." A light to guide and lead, not as the pillar of fire of old, but with the tongue of human agents, as in the dispensation of the Son of Man; tongues on fire with living love. And "it sat upon each" as coming to make His abode, filling the heart with the Holy Ghost,

while it ascended upward to Heaven, from whence it came.

And now to the house of Israel the appeal is made, collected together for Pentecost, as lately for the Passover, when they read the title of their King upon the Cross, "in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin." For the Feast of Pentecost is for the offering of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, which are taken from the sacred people scattered abroad. The Lord of the harvest saith, "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." It is at the Holy City that they are all assembled, "For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."³ *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men or proselytes, out of every nation under heaven, gathered together by the secret law of God's Providence, by which "the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times."*⁴

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. Not the awful, thrilling trumpet, not the sight and sound of Mount Sinai, which all alike could understand, but the bars removed from the human tongue of persuasion. Soft as the dew of Hermon came the promised blessing of Mount Sion,⁵ suspending the curse of Babel, and setting forth the one heart, one mind, and one voice in which the many nations of the world shall combine to glorify God in the Church of the redeemed. "The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of the preachers."⁶ "Their sound is gone out into all lands."

And they were all amazed and marvelled—all was

³ Isa. ii. 3.

⁵ Ps. cxxxiii. 3, 4.

⁴ Jer. viii. 7.

⁶ Ps. lxxviii. 11.

wonder, not alarm, as of old, for they heard the voice of God, and yet lived,⁷ so marvellously was it attuned with the tongues of human utterance. It was the coming of God with the gentle tenderness of the Son of Man; and in the midst of the miraculous interposition was heard, as it were, the voice of Him Who spake in the storm, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." "They marvelled," and "were troubled;" but it was not without a holy and glad wonder, *saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? men of that obscure country, illiterate and untaught? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? in all the varied languages of the East and West, and their dialects unintelligible to each other, versed in each and conversing, as if it were his native tongue? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, the many provinces of the far East; and in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, the dark-browed child of ancient Nile, and many-tongued colonies of the southern coasts; and strangers of Rome, Jews, and Proselytes, of the ancient stock of Israel, expatriated Jews, and conforming converts; Cretes and Arabians, Grecian Isles, or the unchanging descendants of Ishmael; we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Such is the harmony; such union in variety is there in the ways of the Spirit; He assimilates not all to one language, but adapts Himself to each, conforming Himself to every clime, preserving national distinctions, in like manner as individual character. "Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself," but thither go up the twelve Tribes. "The Holy City,

⁷ Exod. xx. 19.

coming down from God out of Heaven," of which the Lamb is the light, hath stones of every hue which earth and sea supplies. "Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold wrought about with divers colours." She is clothed with the clothing of God, inestimably precious within, yet with variety of colours adorned without; of many nations, many characters, many tongues. Union formed of diversity, and harmony of various notes.

All is jubilant, for the great Jubilee hath come; the debtor is let loose; the forgiveness is sealed.⁸ They speak, and their tongues are of fire, and the hearts of those that hear "burn within"⁹ them as they speak; and manifold are their voices, but all one the subject of their speech, which are the wonders of God; of Man gone up to Heaven; of God come down below; of Christ having taken our weakness, and giving us of His power; of His putting on our flesh, and clothing us with His Spirit; of the door of Heaven opened, and gifts coming down from above. The house of Israel is gathered from abroad; the dead bones are come together; and now the Breath from the four winds has come. Fulfilled is the promise, "I shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live."¹

Such is the outward manifestation which attends the coming of the Comforter, and may well serve as a preparation of our hearts for those gracious words with which our Lord Himself promises the unspeakable Gift. *Jesus said unto His disciples, If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father.* As your Advocate with God, as your High Priest, offering up His own Blood, and plead-

⁸ Levit. xxv. 9, 10.

⁹ St. Luke xxiv. 32.

¹ Ezek. xxxvii. 7. 9. 14.

ing His own Sacrifice; "I will pray the Father." *And He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.* Keep My commandments, and He shall be given you Who shall enable you to keep them better; "another Comforter," "another Advocate" with the Father, for Christ Himself was one; and He will not leave you, as I Myself now am about to do, but will continue with you unto the end. "If ye love Me," the condition and the covenant was of love; if they had love, He would send the Comforter; and the Comforter Himself is Love. "To desire to love God is to love Him," says St. Gregory, "and to love God is to have Him Whom we love." Love is itself the keeping of the commandments, the new law, and the true Pentecost of Mount Sion, which is engraven on the affections of the new man, fulfils the law which it gives, and in so doing is a law unto itself.

He will give you the Comforter, *even the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.* The world without, and the world within: what is the meaning of this word, "the world"? it is an awful word, for it is something which can neither see nor know God, and may be in our hearts putting out the eye of the soul. The pure in heart alone shall see Him; without holiness none shall know Him; and therefore it must be everything that is impure and unholy. *But ye know Him.* Yet surely these lowly disciples, to whom our Lord spake, little thought at that time that they could know Him; but they had His assurance, "Ye know Him." *For He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* He was with them, and about to be with them and in them more abundantly; and what they could better understand, it was, with their Lord Himself He would

come, or as Himself. *I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you.* I Myself the Comforter, and with Me “another Comforter.”

Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more ; I shall soon be no more visible upon earth, being removed from the eye of flesh ; but ye see Me : because I live, ye shall live also. But in the Spirit ye shall still behold Me, in the Spirit shall live that life which is in Me ; a new life which is bound up in My life, “because I live.” Even after He was risen from the dead, while He stayed on earth, He was not beheld by the world, but by disciples only, as in pledge of this His secret manifestation of Himself at all times to them that love Him ; and of that beholding Him in faith, to which this Divine life is promised.

And ye yourselves shall be conscious of that life, when that time shall come. *At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.* As St. Paul testifies so often, “our life is hid with Christ in God ;” “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.” And if this be in the experience of St. Paul, it will be so in the experience of all His saints unto the end ; they will come to know of the doctrine of the unity in Trinity ; of our life in the Incarnate Word ; of Himself by His Spirit coming to be within us.

And all this, not by learning, not by zeal, not by party, but by obedience, and by love, the crown of obedience, and which bringeth to the vision and the fruition of God. *He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me ; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.* I will fill his heart and affections ; I will fill his

understanding and thoughts with Myself. It was the joy of Abraham to see the day of Christ afar off; it was the prayer of Moses to see His glory;² and His goodness was made to pass before him, but he could not see His face and live; but now He says, "I will manifest Myself unto him;" and that manifestation is not death, but everlasting life.

Judas saith unto Him (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? St. Jude could not yet understand what a spiritual manifestation was, which the bodily eyes could not behold, for they who had been used to the Jewish law were slow to comprehend what is spiritual and Divine. And, indeed, it is so still in great measure with us all; how little do we reflect or realize the fact, that in one parish, in one family, in the small society in which we may live, there may be to one person this manifestation of Christ, which others have not, and know not of? And yet surely it must be so. In what manifold ways does our Lord speak of it, singling out one among many, whom, on account of his obedience, He will thus honour and bless? I will come unto him. I will abide with him. I will give him to eat of the hidden manna. I will give him the Morning Star. I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me. These words must mean something; they must have some fulfilment worthy of them; some inestimable secret which God reveals by His Spirit; something real, although beyond what the senses can reach, or the mental faculties explain, which Scripture expresses by saying, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man," except as it is so by His Spirit revealed. We think much

² Exod. xxxiii. 18.

of the joys of Heaven which will be hereafter, of that bliss unutterable, those pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, for those who shall be thought worthy to inherit that Kingdom; how inconceivably great they must be; but oh, what promises are there, even in this life, to the meek and obedient Christian! Are they ours? are they yours, my brother? are they mine? Are they, indeed, ours in fulness? or, if not, do we press after them? do we seek after them as for hidden treasure? And yet we have not to go to the end of the world to seek for them, nor to rise on high, nor to dive to the bottom of the deep. It is very simple and very near. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words; he will treasure them, he will act upon them, they will be as seed within his heart, cherished, enfolded there from every enemy, and bearing fruit. And My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.* It is a great unspeakable mystery. The high and lofty One That inhabiteth eternity, can thus make His abode in one meek and contrite soul, as the circuit of the starry Heaven is mirrored in the apple of the eye that gazes on it without hindrance. *He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings, and the Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's Which sent Me.* All is order, all obedience and union. By keeping His sayings we love Him; by loving Him we obtain His abode within us; and His Word which we keep is not His own, but His Father's Word; and by keeping His Father's Word, we obtain His Father's love and His indwelling also; and all this is with the promised gift of the Spirit Which He will send. The Holy Ghost, the bond between the Father and the Son; the bond of the Godhead and the Manhood in Christ; this golden bond must also unite us unto

Him; the Spirit must mould us into His one living Body, and make us to keep His Word.

We may observe how our Blessed Lord continues to dwell upon this subject, of the coming of the Comforter. He returns to it; He repeats it with every variety of expression; He unfolds it with all fulness, lingers on it, and under other names again impresses on them the same source of consolation—one indeed on which a human preacher has little to say, for he understands but little of its unspeakable weight of goodness.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, Which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. We know what Christ is, a living Person of Whom we read, and reading cannot but love; we see and hear Him as clothed with all the attributes of man, like ourselves; and there can be nothing good in us, nothing Divine, nothing human, if we love not Him thus manifested in our flesh. And here He assures us that the Comforter also, Whom we cannot thus see and know, is like Himself, will be sent in His Name, will teach us of Himself, will bring Himself to remembrance, will set the seal to His own words.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you; no idle wish, no vain promise, no false peace. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Where that peace is no trouble, no fear can come nigh: he that hath this peace is “not afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.”

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice,

because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. These are wonderful words. He would have His disciples to share in His joy, even as friend with friend: the Almighty God seems to descend, and ask for the sympathy of His poor creatures, that in His joy they may be glad and forget their sorrows. He asks this proof of their love, that in their own bereavement they should rejoice in His joy. O amazing lowliness, and tenderness of human, indeed, yet of more than human, affection! Nor is this all, for He covers with a cloud His sorrows; He hides from their view the sad scene of His approaching agonies, and talks to them of “the joy that was set before Him,” that of that they might be partakers with Him; that this His last parting supper might be refreshed throughout with the cup of consolation. “If ye loved Me ye would rejoice.” O blessed love, which can even now “enter into the joy of thy Lord!”

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. With what force do these words come to us on this day; when as with twofold power we have the promise of the Comforter in the Gospel for the day, and in the Epistle the fulfilment of that promise in His coming. And now, when our Lord warns them of His approaching trial and conflict, with what gentleness and forbearance does He allude to it; speaking rather of release and of victory, than of those inexpressible sorrows by which that victory was bought! *Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.* This was the power of darkness; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: to all he comes, none shall escape the trial; and henceforth he shall find nothing in those that are in Christ. “Thanks be to God Which

giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He "cometh" bringing death, but "hath nothing in Me" worthy of death, and I shall again arise.

But that the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Where love is there is obedience ; where there is submission there is order ; and thus is wrought throughout the bond of Divine union and concord.

And surely, my brethren, nothing ever written by the pen of man can equal what is spoken of in the Gospel for this Sunday ; which no tongue on earth could have recorded but such as came on this day in fire from Heaven ; full of matter so infinitely sublime and great that no thought of man can reach, yet withal so gracious and condescending ; speaking of mysteries which angels desire to look into, yet at the same time so simple and plain as to be received by babes. Where else is truth so vast to be found ? where else is love so tender expressed ? This teaching is the well-spring and fountain-head which may replenish the whole of our life on earth ; nothing is wanting in it ; and it well might be the measure of every part from childhood to old age. Nothing is wanting in it for the comfort of the penitent, or for the perfection of the highest saint. Accept and embrace what here is written ; let the Finger of God write on the heart this law of love, and all will be well. Let this Gospel as a Divine light be in the heart, and that heart will be the House of Prayer ; let it be in the understanding, and there will be no more disputes and controversies in religion ; let it be in the affections, and there will be an end to envy and ill-will, and all that is engendered by the love of this world ; let it be on the daily actions and conduct, and all will be to the glory of God.

And now, dear Christians, as the Gospel for this day contains in it such doctrines as render it more worthy of being written than all else which the world contains, so in like manner does the Epistle for this day record an event which is as great in importance as anything which has occurred since the foundation of the world. It is indeed the new making of the world—the coming in of the “new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” As it would have been better for man not to be born unless he be born again, and better were it that the world should not have been made unless it were made anew; so the Light of this day’s Creation is better than the light of the first.

Thus the Scriptural narrative appointed for the Epistle on this Sunday is but the account of that which St. John in other language describes, saying, “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven.” “And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.”

The promise contained in the Gospel is in the Epistle fulfilled; and the fulfilment which the Epistle records is a pledge and assurance to us, that the heavenly truths spoken of in the Gospel may be in like manner fulfilled in us.

Christ had promised that if they kept His words and loved one another, He would send to them the Comforter. In obedience to His words, they were assembled together “with one accord in one place” when the Comforter came. He told them that He should bring knowledge and love, and in token of these in light and fire He came. He said, that though manifested to them, the world should not know Him; and when He came with miraculous power,

the multitude were confounded, for they knew Him not.

And what if the Church be now so broken that this Apostolic unity of mind and place is not to be found? Inconceivably great, doubtless, is the loss; yet shall the mantle of His power, the coat without seam or rent, the Spirit of love, no longer descend on us? Let us labour after that union, nor harbour so unloving a thought. If we fail not Him, He will not fail us. Where the doctrine and fellowship of Apostles is; "where two or three are gathered together" in Christ's Name, there is "the one mind and the one place;" and He that "maketh men to be of one mind in an house" is there in the midst of them.

SERMON XLV.

Monday in Whitsun Week.

Acts x. 34—48. St. John iii. 16—21.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BAPTISM.

Then remembered I the word of the LORD, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the HOLY GHOST.—ACTS xi. 16.

THE Epistle and Gospel for these two days are from the same passages of Scripture as they used to be ; but our Church has added to the beginning of the Epistle for to-day that for Easter Monday, before the latter part which speaks of Baptism ; and has taken from the Gospel that which used to stand as the beginning, alluding more particularly to the conversation with Nicodemus ; but it has reserved to us a part of that discourse. Baptism therefore did stand even still more distinctly as the subject of this day.

The Scripture for the Epistle proceeds with the account of what took place at Cæsarea, after St. Peter had been sent there to Cornelius from Joppa. The great sheet let down thrice from Heaven to earth, knit at the four corners, containing all manner of living things, had shown

him that the Church come down from Heaven was, in the doctrine of the Trinity, to embrace all nations from East and West, and North and South.¹ St. Peter, therefore, after stating to this little company at Cæsarea all the doctrine of Christ, such as we considered on Easter Monday, adds, *And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He Which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.* God Himself, the faithful Witness in Heaven, took up, while he was yet speaking, the Preacher's words, and confirmed the same, as it were, by another Pentecost, that of the Gentiles. "Twice also have I heard the same, that power belongeth unto God."² This was His second Coming; first for all Israel gathered together at Jerusalem; now at Cæsarea, the city of Cæsar, for all the Gentiles in the household assembly of the Roman soldier. This is the earth which "drinking in the rain," and answering the tiller's care, "receiveth blessing from God."³ For this Gentile was "fearing God with all his house, giving alms, and praying always." Like that other centurion, the great leader of the Gentiles into the Kingdom, he was full of mercy to man, and lowliness toward God; and like those wise men from the East, he made offerings which were not forgotten before God, but were come up "for a memorial."

St. Augustine speaks of this gift of tongues, as denoting the unity of the Church of all nations. "What then was signified," he says, "is now fulfilled. For then one of the

¹ Augustin, Serm. Pent. cclxvi.

² Psa. lxii. 11.

³ Heb. vi. 7.

faithful spake with all tongues; now the unity of the faithful speaks with all tongues. For all tongues are now ours, inasmuch as we are members of that body in which they are.”⁴

*And they of the circumcision, which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. All is of God; the tongue to speak, the heart to understand: “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.”*⁵ Miraculous gifts from above, are as the star that leads the way to “the wells of salvation.” “They of the circumcision were astonished,” for nothing is so marvellous as the extent of God’s mercies in man’s redemption; as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts than ours; as far as East from West is the reach of His mercy. “They were astonished,” as even of Christ Himself it is said, “He marvelled” at the Centurion that surpassed Israel in faith, and “magnified God.” They were “amazed at the strangeness of their salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for;” so gradually did the mystery of redemption break on the mind of the Jew: so slow were they fully to comprehend the spiritual nature of His Kingdom.

Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? As he afterwards says at Jerusalem, “God having given them the like gift as He did unto us.” That on a matter of such moment no one might say it was of men; God Himself hath led the way, testifying by His gifts, and thus demanding that by Baptism they should “put on Christ.” By “preparations of the heart

⁴ Serm. cclxix. in Pentec.

⁵ Isa. xlv. 8.

which are of the Lord," by repentance and godly fear, and fasting, and alms ; and now by supernatural powers of the Holy Ghost on hearing of the word of Life, they knock as it were at the door, and ask for the new birth. As the Holy Baptist, called and sanctified while yet in the womb, leaped for joy at the presence of the Virgin Mother; so now at the coming of Peter bringing Christ, they anticipate the new birth by prevenient grace "magnifying God." As the Gentile centurion at Capernaum, as the woman of Canaan, they are brought unto Christ "by the Father which sent" Him. They ask, they knock at the door by faith, they constrain Him ; they take the kingdom by violence, and the violent enter by force. As St. Paul baptized not, lest any should say that he baptized in his own name : so this Baptism by the signs of the Holy Ghost is shown not to be of St. Peter, but of God. The Spirit of adoption hath indicated His election by the fiery illapses of the tongues from above, as on the Jews "at the beginning," and by the cry of Abba, Father, claims of the Church to ratify and confirm the choice. For "the wind bloweth where it listeth," and the Spirit at His own free will can anticipate the saving Word in Baptism, the burial in Christ connected with it, and rising again in Him. But thereby God does the more honour to His own appointed ordinance, for He supersedes it not, but by the first voice of the Spirit, and of the Church confirming the same, He calls for the regenerating laver of life.

And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord ; not himself baptizing. "In the Name of the Lord ;" "For there is none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,"⁶ baptized with Christ's Baptism, into His Body, putting on Christ

⁶ Acts iv. 12.

inwardly, and His Name outwardly ; born again in Him to a new life. " In the Name of the Lord," the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Who are " not Three Lords, but One Lord."

Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. Then was the separation between Jew and Gentile at an end ; the partition wall between was broken down, and they were all one in Christ. There is from henceforth neither Jew nor Gentile, neither clean nor unclean. Such was the stay of St. Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, and his company, with the Church at Cæsarea from the Gentiles. It was not the Baptism of John, nor the Baptism of the Jewish Church, but the Baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, which testifies to Christ's own ordinance and command, of baptizing all nations in His Name. But it is grafted on the stock of Israel ; it is not apart from, but one with St. Peter : he himself opens the door and receives them ; he continues with them ; they are all one in the same Lord. It is one faith ; one Baptism. The prayer of Cornelius at Cæsarea, and the prayer of St. Peter at Joppa, were both of the same God, leading both into one, till they form one stream ; it is the stream which goeth forth from beneath the threshold⁷ of the temple at Jerusalem, like the river of Paradise parted thence into four heads to replenish the four quarters of the world.

We are of the same stock ; we with the household of Cornelius were grafted in at that time in the predestination of God : we that were not of Jerusalem, but of Cæsarea, under the Cæsars of the world. Does God testify to us that we are His by the gift of the Holy Ghost ? Not by His many gifts, as of tongues, and prophecies, and miracles, but by His one unspeakable Gift, which is called " the

⁷ Ezek. xlvii.

gift of God," as the highest and best of all gifts, Which is Himself. For what gift can be higher than this? what gift can be wanting, if this is present? There may be miraculous powers which are not of God; but the gift of God is to us the witness that we are His children, and are come to the living Jerusalem, the true Mount Sion. "If thou knewest the gift of God," said our Blessed Saviour, speaking to the woman at the well of Samaria of the water that He should give. That Divine gift shall be in him to whom it is given as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Thus He spake of the Holy Spirit Which He should give, when He said to her, "Salvation is of the Jews: but the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And often on other occasions, especially as mentioned in St. John's Gospel, does our Lord speak in high and mysterious language of this gift of life which is through His Spirit. So was it in the Gospel for this day, when He spake to Nicodemus of the entrance into the Kingdom of God, which none can see but he that is born of water and of the Spirit. And we know how often, and how intimately the gift of the Spirit is spoken of as connected with Christ, and with the offering up of Himself for us. It is as sons of God, as made one with the Son of God in intimate union, so that His God is our God, and His Father our Father, that we make that prevailing prayer for the Holy Spirit, of which He says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

God so loved the world, said our Lord to Nicodemus, when He spake to him of Baptism and the Spirit, *God so*

loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. "This is love" which we "being evil" cannot understand; it is infinitely beyond us. But if He hath given us His Son, sent forth from the secret bosom of His unspeakable love, shall He not with Him also freely give us all things; nay, even give us Himself by His Spirit? And He Himself is Love; and by the gift of Himself only can we understand this His love, His love to us in Christ. And thus as only by being in Christ can we receive of His Spirit; so by the Spirit only can we know the love of Christ. "For no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." For as no one can know the Son except the Father Which is in Heaven reveal Him; so neither can any one know the Son in a living and saving faith, but by the Spirit, Who giveth all understanding, because He is Love. For to love is to understand; there is no understanding but that of love in things of God. "This word 'say,' " says St. Augustin, speaking of the declaration of the Apostle, that "no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,"—"this expression 'say' is used emphatically, and with an appropriate sense; as implying deeds, and not words only. For they may say that Jesus is the Lord, of Whom He Himself declares, 'Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;' but they must say that Jesus is the Lord in that sense in which He Himself adds, 'but he that doeth the will of My Father Which is in Heaven.' Then therefore," adds St. Augustin, "may ye know that ye have the Holy Spirit, when ye are conscious that your mind through love unfeigned doth preserve the unity."⁸

⁸ De Pentec. Serm. cclxix.

What, then, if it be the case that Christ be manifested but not loved ; that Nicodemus should come to Him under the covering of night ; that the way to life be narrow and found by few ; that the beholding of Him be oftentimes a savour unto death, not of life ; is this against the infinite love of God, for that God is Love is what we are called upon to understand and know ? It is not so ; for God in His purposes towards us in Christ is nothing but infinite Love. It is we that of ourselves frustrate His gracious designs of Love. *For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* It is indeed a matter of most awful moment to behold Christ manifested ; for if we behold Him, and love Him not, it were far better for us not to have seen Him. Therefore of such infinite importance is it that in beholding Him we have the Gift of His Spirit, which is Love. The Passover without Pentecost were the year without the first-fruits, and all the promise of the year were as “the grass withered before it be plucked up ; whereof the mower filleth not his hand, neither he that gathereth up the sheaves his bosom.” And such were the Baptism of Christ without the Spirit. Let not man put asunder what God hath joined. “Ye have the Baptism of Christ,” says St. Augustin in the last-mentioned passage ; “come that ye may have also the Spirit of Christ. Fear that which is written, ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’”⁹ Ye have put on Christ in the form of the Sacrament ; put Him on by imitating His example ; for Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. See that ye be not as they who, ‘having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof.’”¹

⁹ Rom. viii. 9.

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 5.

Such intimate union with Christ is wrought by belief in Him ; nourished by prayer, deepened by repentance, quickened by love, increasing ever with the knowledge of God ; and all this by His Spirit, by Whom He was sanctified ; by Whom He offered up Himself to God ; by Whom He was raised ; by Whom He unites our souls unto Himself, and will quicken our mortal bodies ; and by Whom He now sanctifies us unto Himself, that we be not condemned with the world.

He that believeth on Him is not condemned,—the Spirit that cannot lie bearing witness with the spirit of man. For “ hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit ;”² and “ to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but according to the Spirit, there is no condemnation.” *But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God.* Thus was it when our Blessed Saviour went about in the flesh ; all men were weighed in the balance, all were received of Him, or were found wanting and rejected, according to their faith. Degrees of faith marked degrees of acceptance or of condemnation. And thus was it set forth in visible and sensible tokens what was to be in this the dispensation of His Spirit, where faith is all in all ; by faith beholding Him are men changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord,—the Spirit, bearing witness with their spirit, exhorts, comforts, strengthens. And therefore the Spirit convinceth of sin where they believe not in Christ.³

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. The manifestation of the truth,

² 1 John iv. 13.

³ John xvi. 9.

says St. Paul, commends itself to the conscience; and therefore if the Gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost, because "the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not." It is needful that we always put forth the light; but always must it be with love, and faith, and the spirit of prayer, that it may be loved and believed in, and received with the power which is of God, lest it be unto condemnation to ourselves and to them that hear. For otherwise it would be as when Satan would bear witness to the Holy One of God, not in love, but knowing that to behold Him, and not to love Him, is condemnation. And in ourselves any unhallowed affection or inordinate desire indisposes the heart to the light, the Eye that seeth in secret; it withdraws from prayer that strengtheneth, and alms that cleanseth, and fasting that humbleth in the presence of God. But these all are of the Spirit, the Baptism of fire, which descends from Heaven, and thither again ascends—the fire which burns unconsumed in the world even unto the end, whose light reveals good and evil, and from which the Voice of God is heard calling from bondage. "This is the condemnation" of every degree and kind, so that the consummation of all evil at last will be to deny the Son. And He cannot be denied, except where He is manifested; and according to the degrees of manifestation will be the guilt of denial.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. "Are wrought in God," having His will as their end, His love as their source, His laws as their rule; they are wrought in His Spirit, by faith in His Son, to the glory of the

Father. He "cometh to the light," walking in the light as He is in the light, being the child of light, he hath no darkness in him but what he seeks by that light to expel. And thus ever coming to the light he increases his light more and more, ever looking for and longing for that time when he shall understand that saying, "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

SERMON XLVI.

Tuesday in Whitsun Week.

Acts viii. 14—17. St. John x. 1—10.

LET ALL THINGS BE DONE IN ORDER.

And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes.—EZEK. xxxvi. 27.¹

THE precious ointment upon the head of Aaron went down to the skirts of his clothing; and so was it with the anointing of the Spirit by which the Church was sanctified. He came down on the day of Pentecost on the assembled Church at Jerusalem, and thence through the Apostolic ministries was diffused by degrees and spread abroad, to the furthest reach of the hallowed garments of Aaron. But all was order, and union, and harmony. “For there the Lord promised His blessing and life for evermore.” Then indeed was that Psalm in the highest sense fulfilled, “Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity.”¹ And well indeed might it be so, for He Who came down

¹ Ps. cxxxiii.

Himself was Love. And where love is all must be order and submission.

When the Apostles, it is said, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. It is after the death of St. Stephen, when Philip the deacon had been preaching there and working miracles; and here we may observe, that the planting of the Church throughout the world, which arose in consequence of the persecution at Jerusalem, was not like a vessel or mirror shattered and broken in pieces, of which fragments were found here and there full of light; but all was under the orderings of God, in perfect harmony. It was from Jerusalem, it was from the company of the Apostles, wherein the Holy Spirit and Christ Himself was, that the Mission came; and it was not, as it were, at random, or by an irregular miraculous effusion, without Divine order and law, on account of their faith, that the Spirit was poured forth on Samaria, but through Apostolic hands. As our Lord had sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare for Him a chamber there, when He would institute the Eucharist, so now does He send them forth from Jerusalem to prepare a place for Him among the Gentiles. To Samaria, as to Cæsarea, there was a mission from God by His Apostles; and through His Church the gifts were given, that all might be in order.

Then Peter and John, *when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus.* The gracious influences of the Spirit and the New Birth of Baptism had indeed been given; but the sensible attestations from above by the power of miraculous signs had

been as yet withheld from them, till the Church should afford its recognition, and all should be in Apostolic order. And that it might be evident that all was from above, from the Father of lights, from Whom is every good and perfect gift, they first prayed for them. Thus was it brought about, by a higher and better fulfilment, what John together with James had asked, that they might bring down fire from Heaven upon a city of the Samaritans, because they received not their Lord. Now with Peter he asked, and was heard. He asked in the spirit of love for those by whom Christ was received. *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* Such was the laying on of hands in Confirmation; and it was needful that this should be established in the Church by outward and visible manifestation of miraculous gifts. For outward signs are the testimony of God to His own appointments; so was it at our Lord's Baptism, and so at Pentecost, and at Cæsarea, and at Samaria. Thus when the Apostles were, as it were, themselves confirmed on the day of Pentecost, and in the baptizing of the Gentile Church at Cæsarea, it required what was equivalent to a Voice from Heaven by these sensible tokens, as well as the inward gift, to attest the approbation of God. And these signs were before all men, so that Simon the sorcerer saw and wondered.

So awfully important, my brethren, and blessed is this rite of Confirmation; an impress as by the finger of God stamped and sealed once for all indelibly on the soul; a shield against the fiery darts of the wicked one; a tower of strength amidst the dangers of youth; a mark of Christ's sheep which we must bear about us, whether we will or no, through life, and in death, and at the Judg-

ment ; a mark seen of Angels that love us, and seen of devils who would rob us of it.

But is it only this? is it only a sign for praise or condemnation,—a treasure once for all received, and then, it may be, once for all squandered and lost? No, blessed be God! the gift of God is rather a living well within, springing up unto everlasting life ; and although, alas! the streams of that Heavenly Fountain may become as they flow sadly polluted with the world, yet still ever within that fountain dwells, of infinite purity, the well of life. That mirror of God is still within the soul, however spotted and stained, and may even yet be more and more cleansed and brightened, till it give back once more the Image of Christ. What St. Paul says to Timothy of Ordination may be said of Confirmation also, “Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the laying on of my hands.”² And again, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee” “with the laying on of hands.”³ Thus though it be but once for all that there is this gift by the imposition of hands, yet it is of Him, the Spirit of Love and of Truth, of Whom our Lord says, “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you ;” that Spirit of Love Who, though grieved by us, yet is long-suffering and kind, not easily provoked, but enduring all things ; and very unwilling to depart ; and if He hath departed from us is yet very desirous to return.

Thus was fulfilled that memorable discourse of our Lord’s with the woman of Samaria, and that His declaration, “If Thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that asketh of thee, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” Thou wouldest

² 2 Tim. i. 6.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

have asked, and He would have given ! gracious promise ! so was it now ; they of Samaria asked, and they received. For not in Jerusalem only, nor on the mountain in Samaria, but in all the world, the Father seeketh such as shall worship Him in spirit and in truth, and giveth the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Him. Thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given ! Hear these words, O my soul, and forget them not. He sitteth by the well, and speaketh unto thee, and is more ready to bestow than thou to ask.

We have observed how this incident in the Acts indicates what care God has taken to bestow His gifts through the appointed channels, being the God of order and peace ; “as in all Churches of the saints ;”⁴ deacons preach and baptize, but Apostles only confirm ; and that this should be so, it is by an express mission from the Church at Jerusalem, and by supernatural tokens the Spirit sets seal to the same. Now this being of old not only the season of baptizing and confirming, but also, as with us, the Ember Week, the Gospel for to-day carries out this maintenance of order and authority in the Church, by which these spiritual blessings are still vouchsafed to us. As the union and harmony which pervaded the Church of Israel was likened to the fragrant oil, which, coming on the head of Aaron, diffused itself all over the sacred vestments ; so the order which regulated the Jewish sanctuary is the type of what is to be in the Christian Church ; wherein “no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

Verily, verily, I say unto you, said our Lord to the Jews at Jerusalem, *He that entereth not by the door into*

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. Our Lord not only often spoke of Himself as sent by the Father, but also appealed to John the Baptist as the witness of this His mission from God. And they who received Him not as such, in the way of God and His Scriptures, would take away from Christ His own sheep, which the Father had given Him. Thus did those Pharisees of old; "submitting not themselves to the righteousness of God."

But he that entereth by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. Such was our Lord Himself, the Scriptures and Prophets, and His own works, and the testimony of John, all designating the true door and authority from above; and afterwards Peter and John, having commission from Christ to feed His sheep and rear His lambs, they came likewise by the true door. *To him the Porter openeth;* to such the Holy Ghost bears witness, admitting them to their office as through Christ the Door, and opening the windows of Heaven by the miraculous outpouring of His gifts. Thus was it at Samaria when "they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Thus the Porter opened to them, for shepherds of the sheep they came by the true door. And what thanks can we render unto God that He has reserved unto us in the ends of the world, and to these last times, the divinely-appointed ordinances of His grace! The olive-trees which supply the oil fail not; and the candlestick still retains the lamps that burn.

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. This is only true of the One good

Shepherd ; yet, in some sense, it must be fulfilled in all faithful ministers ; in them also must the good Shepherd so speak, that the sheep in them may know His voice : “ Christ speaking in me,”⁵ as St. Paul says. Amidst all the corruptions, and divisions, and scandals which prevail, it is still like a continued miracle in the world—that the One good Shepherd and His little flock know each other : “ I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes ; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.”⁶ And so is it with every other good shepherd partaking of his Lord’s anointing, and governed by His Spirit ; he comes in by the door, and goes before the sheep, that they may follow. Thus St. Paul could say, “ Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.” And St. Peter exhorts all Bishops and Priests not only to feed, but also to be “ ensamples to the flock.”⁷ They follow the true pastor, they know his voice, for it is One Spirit in both, in him and in them ; and his voice is as his example, speaking of humility and self-denial, of the Cross of Christ, and of the love of God. And thus throughout the world, though many sheep, they are but one flock ; though many shepherds, yet all are one ; of One, and in One, the Chief Shepherd.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers. That which knows and accepts the true, rejects the false. For the good Spirit leadeth into all truth, and a right judgment in all things ; and the heart that is under His guidance flees from that which is alien to the Spirit of Christ, and the doctrine of Christ. For His Spirit dwells

⁵ 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

⁶ Exek. xxxvi. 27, 28.

⁷ 1 Pet. v. 3.

with the humble, and they in Him are safe from false seducing spirits.

But if the shepherds are to be of this high and heavenly pattern, to be like the Chief Shepherd Himself in the world, how earnestly at this season ought all men to pray for them ! How does One Spirit, working together with all the Church, call on us all to labour for this one great end ; that the precious anointing which came upon our Head of old, may sanctify His Priesthood, and set them apart, and make them more unlike the world than they of late have been ! Oh, that the Spirit of love and understanding, “the Spirit of counsel and might,” may move us all to mutual intercessions for each other, that we may again be One in Him, and He in us !

While our Lord was speaking these gracious words,—that He is known of His own sheep, that they follow Him and know His voice,—they were fulfilled in those that heard Him ; for He was about to go forth before His own little flock, and to lead them to other pastures. *This parable, says St. John, spake Jesus unto them ; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the Door of the sheep. The door, the way, the end ; the gate of Heaven, the way of holiness, the crown of life ; neither is there salvation in any other. All systems, all teachers going before Him, have been unable to show us any good. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers ; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the Door ; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* This is our inexpressible comfort and stay, that from Him and in Him are all things. In Him all fulness dwells ; the inexhaustible riches of His Spirit. In His own words,

“He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”⁸ Thus by faith in Him of His fulness do we receive, of grace and truth. In the words of an holy man, “Lord, it is my only comfort to know, that without Thee I can do nothing, and that by Thy assistance I can do all the good which Thou requirest of me, and avoid all the evil which Thou hast forbidden.”⁹

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. In every undertaking let us enter by Christ the door; in Him let us go in and out; let Him go before us and lead the way in all that we do; and in all let us hear His Voice. So may we not only have life in Him, but have it more abundantly. For faith in Him is ever progressive; and righteousness in Him must be ever increasing; and works that are done in Him must ever more and more abound; His Word in us cannot be void or barren, but if it dies not away, nor is lost, nor choked, must be fruitful thirty, or sixty, or an hundredfold. He rests not, but ever works; and if the branch beareth fruit, He leaves it not, but purgeth it that it may bring forth more abundantly, and partake more abundantly of the Living Vine.

⁸ John vii. 38.

⁹ Quesnel ad loc.

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