

That citation from Pascal is characteristic of Bersier. He has a natural kindred with elevated spirits like Pascal. His second illustration— that drawn from universal human experience—similarly involves an allusion to Bossuet :

“ When one feels as if lost in the crowd, when (is not this the experience of many among those now listening to me ?) one walks there solitary, unknown, seeking in vain for sympathy, and finding nothing but the empty exchange of superficial sentiments, when one suffers without hope, when one has prayed without winning reply, when one has come on purpose to kneel in the church and goes out more sceptical and more forlorn than he entered, when one muses, as Bossuet has expressed it, that he has appeared here below only to make up number, and that the piece would not the less have been played if he had remained behind the scenes, one repeats, with a sombre bitterness, the saying of the text, ‘ What is mortal man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him ? ’ ”

Thus, as has already been hinted, the introduction ends. The link of transition from introduction to discourse is simply this :

“ It is to this cry of your troubled hearts that I would respond, and my response, need I say it ? I wish to seek here in the Book of Life, in the eternal Word of the true and living God.”

It is one of the recognized traditions of French pulpit oratory, followed also, for example, by the English Liddon, that the discourse be divided into parts such that the typographical device of numbering them with Roman numerals across the page will be appropriate. Here commences Bersier’s

“ I.”

This first part consists of the statement, confirmed and illustrated by citation of texts, that although the Bible itself contains the most impressive affirmations conceivable of man’s nothingness in the presence of the vastness of the universe, the same Bible reveals a God greater than the universe, who yet has the concern of a Father in men as His children.

Bersier’s second part consists of an antithetic complemental exhibition from Scripture of the greatness of man in paradoxical combination with his littleness. In the course of this he makes a fine, effective return upon those men of science who, in one breath, belittle human nature to make it seem absurd that human nature should be the object of a Divine revelation, and, in the next breath, represent human nature as sufficient to itself without a Divine revelation, nay, even without a God by whom such a revelation might be given. It is the glory, he says, of Christianity to meet at once both the one and the other of these two contradictory attacks. He recalls the word of Pascal : “ If man exalts himself, I abase him. If he abases himself, I exalt him.” After a splendid passage of ascription to the powers of the human mind, Bersier exclaims finely :

“ What matters it then to me that man is but an insignificant atom in the material universe ? Does the genius of Napoleon or of Galileo require the body of a