

# The Church.

"HER FOUNDATIONS ARE UPON THE HOLY HILLS."

STAND YE IN THE WAYS, AND SEE, AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.—JEREMIAH VI. 16.

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[NUMBER XLI.]

## Poetry.

### THE CROSS.

GAL. VI. 14.—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"I glory in the Cross of Christ," the Christian's honest pride,  
Though fools the sacred symbol spurn, and scoffing tongues deride;  
For there my best Redeemer hung in direful agony,  
In cruel pains "endured the Cross" for mankind and for me.

"I glory in the Cross of Christ," the Church's sacred sign,  
By which she consecrates to God each offering at his shrine;  
Her seal and pledge to hallow them, and make them pure and clean;  
Invoking in Christ's name that Power which works in us unseen.

And who that on his infant brow hath had that token set,  
And felt the cooling stream of life, can to "life's end" forget  
The "solemn vow and promise made," full manfully to fight,  
Under the banner of the Cross, in "armor of the light."

Alas! as around the sacred font the lambs of Christ are seen  
Gazing with silent wonder there, and solemn awe,  
How still the heart with holy thought, that once to us was given,  
That healing tide, and sealing pledge, which mark'd us out for heaven.

Deep on each never-dying soul be graved that sacred sign,  
Illumined by the heart with love, the Spirit's light divine;  
And fast as Time's swift pinions sweep all earthly joys away,  
Be this still there, and waxing bright to everlasting day.

"I glory in the Cross of Christ," our fathers loved it well,  
And bore it in their daily paths, a sin-averting spell;  
In peril's forest, darkest hour, to it they firmly clung,  
The symbol of that faith in Him who on his arms-ouch hung.

And let us not esteem them fools whose every holy thought  
Found language in the sacred Cross on which our souls were bought;  
For they by its mute eloquence their grateful hopes expressed;  
Perchance as fervent as desires in living language drest.

It never in the hearts of martyrs "dainties when rack'd" with torments dire,  
When plunged in persecution's rout they were "baptized with fire"—  
And, as the gnawing flames roll'd on, it met their dying eye;  
As they who tread the furnace and the Son of God was nigh.

In all the winding paths of life, the Cross revealed the way,  
In death with Gospel light it shows all darkness changed to day;  
And need we tell what rapture filled the parting soul  
As lifted by a Hand she heard His fiery billows roll?

Pressed to the pale and quivering lip, most precious to her ear,  
His whisper full of peace and hope, which bade her banish fear:  
"Look unto me and be ye saved," see here the Saviour's blood,  
Which smooths before thy trembling feet, this dark and angry flood.

And when in some cathedral old, whose silent cloisters spread  
A holy atmosphere around the mansions of the dead—  
They laid them to repose awhile—the sculptured cross confessed,  
How glorious was the hope by which they "entered into rest!"

And let my slumber in the grave be watched by that blest sign,  
Which with an angel's eloquence will tell my hope divine;  
That on the resurrection morn—to everlasting day  
This sleeping dust shall rise in Christ—"the Life, the Truth, the Way."

"I glory in the Cross of Christ," and faint would I behold,  
Stretched o'er each sacred roof its arms, framed of the solid gold,  
And pointing out each hour to men—clear drawn upon the sky,  
That truth the living fail to teach, "Christ for thy soul did die."

God grant that youth and age may yield all reverence to the Cross,  
And for its glorious doctrines count all "earthly things but loss."  
In joy, in we, in life, in death, hold fast the sacred sign;  
Symbol of that great sacrifice, our Saviour Christ divine.

New York Churchman.

## THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

FROM A SERMON BY THE REV. J. BEDFORD, M.A.

The closing scene of Christ's humiliation is full of agonising interest. "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." There is no wailing, no resistance, no recrimination of the injurious language that assailed—no answer to the taunting questions that provoked—his patient spirit. No sooner was his ministrations perfected than he resigned his person to the tender mercies of the wicked, and underwent the baptism of blood, the obedience unto death, with the same submission and serenity that he had ever shewn where righteousness remained to be fulfilled, or God obeyed. "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me; and if this cup may not pass except I drink it, I will be done." It is true we may discern the symptoms of a natural reluctance, or rather I should say, a natural abhorrence at the prospect of his being associated in shame and agony with the officious of mankind. But there is nothing in our Saviour's conduct that partakes of hesitation—nothing that looks like halting—nothing that seems like a desire to evade the hideous catastrophe. His soul was only not insensible to superhuman terrors. In a word, he felt, but he did not complain; and trembled, but would not draw back.

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the self-possession of the Son of God, amidst desertion, agony, and scorn: it is the climax of sublimity—the masterpiece of magnanimity. You would suppose, from the succession of disasters that pursued him from the wilderness to Calvary, our Lord must have presented the appearance of a dispirited, exhausted, broken-hearted malefactor. How different this from the composure and serenity of Christ our passover, sacrificed for us! Tormented, but not terrified; oppressed, but not cast down—our Lord beheld the apparatus for his execution with the same collectedness that he had seen the heavens opened unto him, and the eternal Spirit witnessing his proper Sonship to the eternal Father. This was "the hour," he said, "and power of darkness;" and with a dignified and awful sorrow, he surrendered to the destiny it was expedient he should undergo. Of all the deaths that malice has devised, and tyranny adopted, none so combines the shameful, lingering, and excruciating, as this of crucifixion. A fate so full of anguish and reproach was commonly reserved (and I believe exclusively) for felons of the lowest caste—slaves, and persons of like estimation. A Roman citizen, whatever his offence, might not be crucified; it was a capital offence against the honour of the Roman name. Does not this circumstance, I ask, betoken a Divine interposition in the appointment of the Saviour to a death which Jew and Gentile were agreed to brand with a peculiar infamy; and which the law of Moses, with a singular austerity, as though it were prophetic of the Messiah's degradation, has pronounced "accursed?" So ignominious was an execution of this kind, that its reproach pertained to distant generations; and the delinquent's self, as if, in being devoted to the cross, he was disfranchised of the rights of man, was treated with incredible barbarity, and made to feel, by every species of outrageous insult, that he was sunk too low for sympathy to reach, or pity to deprecate him.

Before he was conducted to the place of execution, it was usual to scourge the criminal with great severity; then, if his strength permitted, he was forced, in whole or part, to bear along the cross on which he was to die, amidst the hotings and incessant persecutions of a savage multitude, which is invariably gratified with scenes of horror, and always greedy of a chance to aggravate the

woes of the already too unhappy. It would appear that it was usual whilst the wretch was agonising on the cross, to offer him a medicated drink, the torture of the punishment inducing an intolerable thirst; but whether cruelty or pity, the wish to alleviate or to protract the anguish, was the motive of the custom, seems uncertain. Some think the action was compassionate, and that it owed its origin to that of Solomon, in Prov. xxxi: "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and let him drink and remember his misery no more,"—which would resolve it into a Jewish practice. However this may be, it seems that at the period of our Saviour's death it made a part in this revolting tragedy; and the circumstance betimes remarkable from its connexion with ancient prophecy. David, in speaking of the malice of his adversaries, says, "they gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." This, in relation to himself, was metaphorically true—it is a lively picture of unmerited distress and persecution; but in respect of Christ, whom David typified, it was, without a figure, meant to represent the ignominious circumstances of his death. Our Lord himself acknowledged it prophetic; and, in the very agony of dying, thought of its accomplishment, and said, "I thirst." The unconscious zeal of his tormentors hastened the fulfilment of the "sure word of prophecy;" a sponge was saturated with a mixture, as St. Matthew intimates, of gall and vinegar, and presented on a stick, or branch of hyssop, to the Saviour's mouth, who, having tasted, intimated that the book of prophecy was closed, that Moses and the prophets had secured their full accomplishment, and there remained henceforth for ever, "no more sacrifice for sin." For "when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished;' and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

But in pursuing the details and circumstantialities of the passion, it is not enough to dwell on the amount of agony and shame, the abstract suffering to which the Saviour was subjected; but we must take into the calculation the essential dignity and glory of the sufferer. Considered merely in itself, the immolation of Messiah is replete with horror and disaster. Think on the frantic infidelity of Israel, his own, his chosen, his peculiar people; think on the perfidy of Judas, the apostasy of Peter, the desertion of the rest; think on the preference vouchsafed to an assassin and a robber—"not this man, but Barabbas;" think on the sorrow even unto death; think on the bloody drops that emanated from his breaking heart; think on his passionate entreaties, that were it not impossible, this death, this only death might pass away; think on the bitter scorn this meek and lowly one, this silent, innocent, and uncomplaining Lamb of God, went through; think what it was for spotless holiness to be the object of a nation's curse, with almost none to pity, and absolutely none to save; think what it was for him, whom Satan's self could not convict of sinful imperfection, to be numbered with the outcasts of society, be crucified between two thieves, and made so conspicuous in infamy; think on the exceeding great and bitter cry, the railing of his vile associate, the exulting mockery of the lookers on; think on the bitterness, the wormwood, the gall, the complications of misfortune, sorrow, and disgrace, that settled darkly on the exit of this Sun of Righteousness,—and ask yourselves if Jesus might not righteously appropriate that lamentation of his Church, and say, "Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by? behold and 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?" But, I repeat, this load of degradation and endurance, if considered in itself, is but the half of the Redeemer's passion; it was the majesty of the relation that subsisted between the "Man of sorrows" and the Great Invisible, that gave its poignancy, and I may add its dignity and value, to the expiation we commemorate. It was not an angel, principality, or power, that condescended to these lowest depths of humiliation and distress—it was the "Lord from heaven."

In Jesus Christ we behold the Godhead prostrate in the dust; we behold the equal with the Father full of intensest anguish and rebuke; we behold the Almighty's fellow, as the prophet speaks, reduced below the level of the meanest and the vilest of mankind; we behold Him "of whom, and by whom, and for whom, are all things," denounced as a confederate of Belial, and crucified with every aggravation of contempt and contumely, as an impious impostor. Considered in this view, the sacrifice of Christ is overwhelming; the sternest language is too feeble to express its awfulness, and inspiration itself is unable to do justice to its merit. This does away the difficulty of believing that Jesus, by "one offering of himself, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" and this facilitates the conviction, that the redemption thus completed was, as the apostle speaks, "eternal." It behoved not that the Saviour's punishment should be precisely similar to that which God determined on the sinner whom he represented; it was enough that he should suffer an equivalent; that he should make, in other words, a compensation to the Deity, equivalent to the dishonour and indignities that man had offered to his majesty. For it is monstrous to suppose that Christ should undertake the very letter of the penalty that was pronounced against the sinner, which was nothing less than everlasting death; for if, as the apostle argues, he could not be holder of the pains of temporal, how much less of an eternal death? We therefore must be fain to abide by the conclusion, that our Lord's divinity has stamped a great and most exceeding preciousness—should not I say an infinite, eternal value—on his cross and passion; so that the death of Christ involves a full acquittal and deliverance from the pains of hell, and an effectual passport to eternal blessedness, to as many as "with true faith and hearty repentance turn unto him." This, brethren, I conceive to be the primary and most important signification of the expression "It is finished;" to wit, that Christ, by the one oblation of himself once offered, had perfected whatever was required to set the creature free from the law of sin and condemnation. These words imply, moreover, as we have already hinted, as well the abolition of the ceremonial dispensation, as the complete accomplishment of all that the prophets prophesied concerning him. The law of sacrifices, as you know, was an expedient for a time. It was in fact an exhibition, in a figure, of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—of the expiation purposed and decreed, indeed, from all eternity; but that remained to be accomplished once, in the end of the world, in the person of the crucified Redeemer. When, therefore, Christ was lifted up, and made, as it was prophesied, "an offering for sin;" of course there was no longer need of types and shadows to prefigure the atonement, then substantial and fulfilled. It had

served its purpose and design, to shew the nature of an acceptable sacrifice, and keep alive the expectation of Messiah; who now accordingly pronounced it superannuated, and signified its abolition—"It is finished." I am come, that is, to finish the transgression, and bring in everlasting righteousness; henceforth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." Again, our Saviour's "It is finished" had respect to the accomplishment of those predictions by which it was intended to identify to future times the person of the promised seed; or, as he is described in other terms, the "offspring of the root of Jesse." The evangelists have been very careful to point out the exact coincidence which exists in the circumstance of our Saviour's life and death, with what was previously revealed concerning the Messiah's ministry. The accordance of the Saviour's history with the prophetic Scriptures is astonishingly striking: from his birth at Bethlehem, until the time of his being put to death "without the gate," as the apostle speaks, all came to pass precisely as it was foretold. Our Lord continually corroborates the prophets' witness as respects himself, and speaks as though a moral obligation were imposed upon him to be "despised and rejected of men," and "pour out his soul unto death," in order that the Scriptures might receive their full accomplishment. Hence we infer that, at the time our Lord pronounced these memorable words, he saw that every Scripture which alluded in whole or part, directly or remotely, to himself, was duly and entirely fulfilled. "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. All things are now accomplished. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

This leads me to observe, that our Lord was under no compulsion in effecting our redemption; but that freely, and of himself, he laid down the life he had assumed, that he might become the Lord both of the dead and of the living. "He bowed his head," says the evangelist, "and gave up the ghost." Now this surrender of his soul was accompanied with actions that sufficiently and powerfully attest a voluntary agency in this, as in the other parts and circumstances of the passion. We behold in Jesus crucified a glorious combination of submission, love, and self-possession. To the rather ostentatious boast of Pilate, that he had power to save him, or destroy, our Saviour meekly answers, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Our Saviour next for a moment lost the recollection of his proper dignity. His conduct was as full of majesty throughout the process of his trial, as when he bade the winds and waves be still. And in the terrible extremity to which he was at length reduced; when you might think that the intensity of the temptation had obliterated every thought, and blunted every sense but that of anguish—then, even then, love reigned triumphant above every feeling, and the consideration of his people's guilt prevailed above his own calamity: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Suspended in unutterable torments, behold him promising eternal life to the relating malefactor; behold him tracing the accomplishment of prophecy—revolving in his mind the past and present; and putting forth, if I may so express myself, a hiping hand to the accomplishment of the latest unfulfilled prediction.—"This done, he instantly dissolved the tie that bound him to mortality, and gave up the ghost."

Interpreters, like Pilate, have expressed surprise that Christ should have so soon ceased; that what was usually a work of time, should in the Saviour's case have happened in the course of three short hours. They explain the apparent difficulty by supposing that the excess of previous suffering, the fulness above measure of indignity and hardship that preceded his oblation, had exhausted nature, and in consequence accelerated his departure to the world of spirits. I rather should resolve his rapid dissolution into a fulfillment of what himself before had spoken, saying, "I have power to lay down my life; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." For, to be indebted to the learned Dr. Stanhope, we may observe that "every step in this last act of his life was taken regularly and with deliberation. He bore a constant regard to all the mysterious purposes of this important death. He would not die till they were all fulfilled; and when they were so, he would not, because there was no occasion that required he should live any longer. Never was, never can there be, such a death in any instance; so perfectly free, so entirely at the person's own disposal; for he who struck his enemies to the ground with his majestic presence, and afterwards gave them leave to apprehend him, could likewise if he had so pleased, have come down from the cross. He could have continued insensible to all the pains of it; he could have survived the sharpest anguish; and had he not suspended his Divine power, death itself could not have taken hold upon him, nor have bound this strong man, this infinitely more than man, in these chains which he therefore submitted to, that he might break and burst them asunder shortly after, in a more glorious and triumphant manner." In a word, my brethren, Christ "laid down his life that he might take it again;" that he might resume it in a glorious capacity of more than conqueror; that he might become, as it is written, "thy plague, O death; and O grave, thy destruction." For "to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." Such is the honour God hath put upon the free-will offering of his Son, such the exultation consequent upon the voluntary resignation of his soul to me destroyer. "God hath given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

My brethren, have ye well considered this? have ye considered Jesus as the mediator of a new and everlasting covenant, by which "whosoever believeth shall be saved, and whosoever believeth not shall be damned?" Does it never cross you in the solemn hour of sober contemplation, I am a ransomed criminal, I am the price of blood? Can ye behold the portrait of your Saviour's sufferings, nor draw one righteous inference, nor form one virtuous resolve? Are ye alike unmoved by the vicarious sufferings of Jesus the deliverer, and the prospect of his final coming in the character of Jesus the avenger? Let me persuade myself, my brethren, ye have not so learned Christ. Let us endeavour to believe that ye are filled with the conviction that it is Jesus that hath made you whole; that Jesus is at once your Lord and Master, your Maker and Deliverer, your Pattern and your Law. But rest not, I implore you, in the abstract faith of Christ's salvation. Let not your heads dictate an orthodox profession of regard, while in your hearts you mean none to the God who loved you, and gave himself for you. Remember, it is one thing not to be an infidel, another to obey in love "the word of this salvation;" one thing not

to cavil at the Saviour's expiation, another to embrace it and adorn our calling; that many flatter Christ who never honour him, and many arrogate his name who never do him service. Christ's kingdom is less endangered by its open enemies than by its lukewarm friends; and of all our Lord's invectives, none are so tremendous as against the man that "says, and does not." Let, therefore, ours, my brethren, be the faith that puts on charity; and while others are content to name the name of Christ, be it ours to depart from all iniquity. God grant us this for his sake who died for us, yet rather, who is risen again, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## A MEDITATION FOR THE COMMUNION AT EASTER.

O my soul, adorn thyself with the garments of gladness; prepare thy most triumphant hymns to go forth and meet this great returning Conqueror. Thou didst rejoice when he was pleased to undertake the combat, and didst celebrate his entrance into the lists with praises; how then wilt thou not behold him come off with such success and honour? His warfare is now accomplished, and he hath passed through the scorn and cruelty of men, the malice and rage of devils, the just but severe anger of God, the shadow of death, and the regions of eternal horror; and after all this thy surety is set at liberty, for he hath paid all thy debts, and cancelled all those dismal bonds by which thou wert forfeited to eternal ruin. Thy champion is victorious, and as the trophies of his conquest, he hath the keys of death and hell, and leads them both in triumph, vanquished and disarmed. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We receive thee, O our Saviour, as born to us a second time; and this shall be thy birthday also, the day thou shalt be born anew in the hearts of thy people, thy brethren, as a living and mortal. Thy former birth did shew thee to be the Son of man, but this declares thee to be the Son of God; and now we know that our Redeemer liveth; he that loved us so infinitely as to die for us, doth now ever live to intercede on our behalf; he that expressed such kindness to us in his passion, hath so fully demonstrated his own power in his resurrection, that we are sure he is able as willing to deliver us. Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, for this is the day that the Lord hath made, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance, a time destined to jubilee and rejoicing. Behold how nature is raising itself from the grave of winter, and seems annually to celebrate the memory of her Lord's resurrection, in her green and fresh attire—a season chosen by God for festival three thousand years ago, and observed ever since by Jews or Christians, or both, with the greatest solemnity. See how those blinded Jews rejoice over their paschal lamb (in the midst of all their calamities), for the deliverance of their fathers. But we have a nobler passover for a greater deliverance; Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast; and that upon the precious body and blood of the Lamb of God, who was slain, but is alive again, and behold he lives for evermore. Wherefore I will go to thy altar with joy, and tell out thy works with gladness, O most mighty Saviour, who has not only died for my sins, but risen again for my justification; and, indeed, what comfort could I have found in this memorial of thy death, if it had not been for thy resurrection? This sacrament would have only remembered thy sufferings, and renewed my sorrow to think that so excellent a person had perished in the attempt of my deliverance; but now it is become a feast of joy, because it is an assurance of thy resurrection, as well as a commemoration for thy passion. And since thou livest, sweetest Jesus, we live also; thy resurrection raised our hearts from sad despair, it gives a new life to our hopes, it makes our sorrows light, our labours easy, our lives cheerful, and our death advantageous, because it hath lost its sting, and is become the gate into immortality. We can charm all our fears and troubles with this one word—the Lord is risen—yea the Lord is risen indeed, for thou hast washed us in thy own blood, and made us kings and priests to God, to offer up at this thy altar never ceasing praises.

## GEBEL MINNEGIA, PERHAPS MOUNT SINAI.

There can be no doubt, I think, that the Israelites encamped on the plain El Raha; it is the largest, indeed the only large plain in all this district, a noble expanse, covered with shrubs fit for pasturage, and a gentle slope. The mountain in question rises directly in front of you, as you descend El Raha, closing the vista formed by the valley on the slope of which the convent of St. Catherine stands.

The Israelites, encamping in El Raha, would camp directly in front of Gebel Minnegia, as we are told they did before Mount Sinai.

There is not space enough in the narrow precipitous ravines from which alone the peaks of Gebel Monsa and St. Catherine are visible, or in any other plain or valley in the whole district, for the people to have encamped with such regularity and comfort as it is evident they did, nor for their having removed and stood afar off, as they had apparently ample space to do, when trembling at the thunderings and lightnings,—nor after the golden-calf idolatry, for the tabernacle to have been pitched without the camp, afar off from the camp—when all the people rose and stood, as we are told, at his tent-door, and looked after Moses, till he was gone into the tabernacle.

Moses went up to the "top of the mount," and the glory of the Lord was "like devouring fire on the top of the mount," "in the eyes of the children of Israel," "in the sight of all the people." Neither Gebel Monsa, nor Gebel Katerin are visible from the plain, but the Israelites could have seen the top of the mountain, and the cloud, and Moses's entrance into it, from every part of the plain, supposing that William's conjecture be correct, and Gebel Minnegia be really Sinai. I climbed up it this afternoon; the highest point is a sheet of dark sunburnt granite, and from thence I looked over the convent, directly up the El Raha; the mountain stands single, isolated by deep ravines, on three sides very precipitous.

It would appear, moreover, from the account of Moses, that he went and returned, communicating between the people and their God, without much difficulty of ascent; a hale old man, as he was till his death, could easily ascend and descend this mountain twice or thrice in a day,—certainly not either Gebel Monsa or Gebel Katerin.

There is nothing in the Bible to lead us to suppose Mount Sinai a very lofty mountain; yet that it was some distance from the camp, though visible from it, we may gather from the account of Moses's return with the two tables; "Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and as soon as he drew nigh unto the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing." &c.

The directions to Moses, before the audible utterance of the commandments, were, that the bounds should be set unto the people round about, "that they go not up to the mountain, or touch the border of it," on pain of death. And, on the third day, Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God—(probably leading some of them up the valley of the convent, and sending others by a most circuitous road to the other side of the mountain.)—and they stood at the nether part of the mount, &c.; and when the people heard the voice out of the midst of the

\* From Dean Comber.

darkness, &c., they removed, and stood afar off,—retreating, I take it, to the plain, from which they could see just as well; indeed, the divine command was, "Get ye into your tents again."

Yet what, after all, avails the inquiry, if we think merely of the stage, and not of the action performed on it? This is the wilderness of Sinai—there can be no doubt of that; and, whichever the individual mount was, every hill around heard the thunder and quaked at the sound of the trumpet, waxing louder and louder as God descended in the cloud,—and trembled at the "still small voice," that, deeper than the thunder, and high above the trumpet, spoke to every man's ear and heart that fiery law—holy, and just, and good—existing from all eternity, which requires of man that spotless obedience which he cannot yield, and at the first transgression, even in thought, of its purity, lays him under the curse of eternal death.—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself."

Once only of Adam's seed, the man Christ Jesus, has fulfilled that law; we must travel to Jerusalem—we must look to the cross on Calvary, to know how His righteousness may become ours.—*Lord Lindsay's Letters on the Holy Land.*

For the Church.

## THE CROSS OF CONSTANTINE.

The commencement of the fourth century was marked with a restless and sanguinary persecution of the Christians. Every tortoise that the most cunning ingenuity could devise was employed to compel them to the crime of apostasy. No respect was paid to age, rank, or sex; and many of this innocent and inoffensive race suffered death on their refusal to depart from the path which their Lord and Saviour had pointed out to them. But the Almighty Ruler of the Universe hadler permitted this persecution to continue sufficiently long to show, by the valour of the first Christians, that the most cunning ingenuity could devise was employed to extirpate a people under His own gracious protection, and to the fury of the incensed Pagans, and bestowed on the Church a long and grateful peace. This was produced by the conversion of Constantine, and his subsequent accession to the imperial throne. The change in the religion of this first Christian Emperor,—a change productive of such happy consequences to the Christians, —is attributable to the following circumstance.

Constantine being on his march towards Rome against Maxentius, at the head of an army much inferior in number to that of his opponent, beheld in the air the figure of a luminous cross with this inscription legibly conspicuous:—"In hoc signo vinces." Being as yet unacquainted with the truths of Christianity he was unable to interpret this extraordinary appearance, and on application to the Pagan priests, found them as much perplexed as himself; but he did not remain long in suspense, for the Saviour of the world appeared to him that night in a dream, ordered him to adopt the cross as his standard, and promised him victory under its auspices. Constantine obeyed the heavenly injunction, and caused the emblem of the Christian's faith to be engraven on the shields of all his soldiers. After this miraculous vision and dream, his army full of confidence, advanced against Maxentius, and at the very gates of Rome gained that signal victory over the tyrant which placed the conqueror in undisputed possession of the imperial throne.

Though this relation has been transmitted to us by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, a historian of great celebrity, and distinguished for his uncommon erudition, and who moreover was the intimate friend of Constantine, its authenticity has been questioned by many, particularly by those who are opposed to the faith of which the cross is the emblem.

Gibbon, who stands foremost in the ranks of those who doubt this miracle, impeaches the veracity of the historian, as regards the appearance in the heavens, and declares that it is very probable that the dream was only the natural consequence of an agitated state of mind. Even admitting Gibbon's account to be correct, we may reasonably suppose that the conversion of Constantine was effected in this way; for it required but little to induce him to adopt the rational and simple belief of the Christians, dissatisfied as he was with the dark and abstruse mysteries of Paganism.

The emblem of inveterate hatred to the followers of Christ still lay smouldering in the breasts of the Pagans; and though their general was inclined to favour this persecuted race, the same benevolent disposition did not exist in the heathenish part of his army. The relation of the dream would neither have been received with joy nor believed with avidity. The engravings of the cross on their shields would have urged the Romans to revolt, and leave their general with a small band of Christians to resist the overwhelming force of his powerful enemy. Nothing but the wonderful and open exhibition of God's miraculous power could have elicited that simultaneous burst of enthusiasm, erased all enmity from the Pagan heart, and rendered the army united and invincible.

The occasion was worthy of a divine interposition. The prayers of Cornelius came up to God, and we cannot doubt that that of Constantine did the same; we are assured in his life that he did pray with much vehemence and importunity, and to fix his wavering mind, a miraculous assurance was vouchsafed to him. Men who fill so remarkable a place, and accomplish such important ends in the Providence of God, as Constantine did, are in an especial manner the objects of his watchful care; and as Paul was favoured with a peculiar manifestation of the Saviour for the purpose of convincing and emboldening him in his Apostleship, so Constantine, Emperor of the World, and first Imperial nursing father of the Christian Church, was not deemed unworthy of an analogous and visible revelation.

Another circumstance which, if we discredit this well-supported history, would excite our surprise, is that Paganism, with a much larger number of followers than Christianity, though it perceived its extinction impending, made not one effort to avert its fall. When the *labarum*, after Constantine's accession, was substituted for the imperial eagle, we have no account of one dissentient voice being raised to resist the innovation. It is a phenomenon that can only be accounted for by the intervention of Divine Providence: the Pagans, awe-struck by the wonderful manifestation of the power of the God of the Christians, began to doubt, the truth of their own religion, and to regard the Church, hitherto despised, with respect and reverence.

They who are inclined to doubt the veracity of Eusebius may allege in defence of their objection, that this historian related the circumstance after the death of the Roman Emperor, when he himself could neither attest its truth, nor expose its falsehood. But can they affirm that Constantine alone, if the narrative were untrue, had the power to confute it? The thing is said to have taken place before an army, composed of Pagans and Christians, and it is asserted that Constantine consulted the augurs who were unable to give him any satisfactory interpretation. Eusebius declares that he had the narration from Constantine's own lips, confirmed by an oath. Had the tale been fictitious, there were doubtless many living at the time that Eusebius gave publicity to it, who would have contradicted it immediately. One of the arguments for the divine mission of Moses is the fact, that he incessantly appeals to the whole Jewish nation as witnesses of his miracles, and the miraculous appearances described by him, which he never would have done, had they not really witnessed them.