

follows: "That we being absolved from the bonds of our sins, may be protected from all adversity." The allusion in the present Collect to charity as "the bond of peace and of all virtues" was perhaps intended to contrast with "the bonds of our sins" mentioned in the former one. The expression is no doubt based on Col. 3: 14: "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" and upon which Dean Alford remarks: "The idea of an upper garment, or perhaps of a girdle, seems to have been before the Apostle's mind. This completes and keeps together all the rest, which, without it, are but the scattered elements of completeness." Thus, with the girdle of a true Charity about our loins, the other garments of a Christian's righteousness will always cover our natural nakedness.

While the season of fasting before Easter is of very primitive origin, yet the commencement of the season has varied very much, as certain days in the week have or have not been accepted as fasting days. The season now begins with us on Ash-Wednesday, being accepted by the Western Church shortly after the time of Gregory the Great. It comes this year on February 7th, and has received its name because on this day ashes were blessed by the Bishop, and received by the clergy and laity present, the Bishop repeating the sentence, "Remember that thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return." Our English word *Lent* is merely the Anglo-Saxon *Lencten*, i.e., spring, and with reference of course to this penitential season coming in the Spring. So also is the Dutch *Lente*; but in all other languages of the Latin and Celtic groups the name of the season is some corruption of *Quadragesima*, i.e., forty. This preparatory fast before Easter must have existed in some form, nearly if not quite, to Apostolic times; for Irenæus (about 180 A.D.) not only speaks of the disputes in his time as to the length of the fast (from forty hours to several days), but also adds that this state of things had existed long before his time.

The Collects for this season consists of the most part of confessions of our own weakness and sinfulness, and prayers for Divine grace and pardon. That appointed for Ash-Wednesday is used more than any other of these special Collects in our Prayer Book, as the rubric orders it "to be read every day in Lent, after the Collect appointed for the day." It is thus no doubt familiar to every member of our Church, and should be one of the most important lessons of recitation imposed upon our scholars. It was composed in 1549, though the opening of it closely resembles that in the Sarum Missal. It consists of (1) "A confession of God's readiness to forgive the penitent;" (2) "A prayer for new and contrite hearts." It contains very clearly all those five parts which we have shown to be necessary to the formation of every complete Collect, and which we may well allude to here. (1) The invocation—"Almighty and everlasting God." (2) The doctrine or declaration which is to be the foundation of the prayer—"Who hast nothing that thou has made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent." The first part of this declaration sounds indeed more like the "Sarum Missal" period, than that of the Reformation; yet while it might have been necessary for Christians of three hundred years ago to remind their God that 'He hated nothing that He had made,' as a plea for daring to come to Him for mercy; yet we are glad to believe that such a reminder would hardly find a place in a Collect of the present day. God's supreme love for the world, and for every creature in it, as revealed in the whole story of the Incarnation, has become so preeminently the keynote of the Gospel preaching of this nineteenth century, that the mere possibility of a "hating" God could hardly enter our thoughts. Thus the second part of the declaration—"Who dost forgive the sins of

all those who are penitent" is accepted as the precious reminder of a forgiving God, upon which (3) The petition is made to rest—"Create and make in us new and contrite hearts." [4] The aspiration naturally follows—"That we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness;" and all [5] "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The subject of the Collect for the First Sunday in Lent is "The Purpose of Fasting," and consists of [1] "A commemoration of our Lord's fast of forty days;" [2] "A prayer for grace to use such abstinence that we respond to the divine impulses to righteousness and holiness." It was composed in 1549, and is certainly a great improvement upon that in the Sarum Missal, which may be translated as follows: "O God who dost cleanse Thy Church by the yearly observance of Lent, grant to Thy family that what it strives to obtain from Thee by fasting, it may follow up the same by good works; through, etc." "Thy Godly motions" in our Collect must be understood to mean, the impulses of the Holy Spirit. We pray that our flesh may be subdued to the Spirit, that we may obey the Spirit.

The subject of the Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent is "God our Protector." With the exception of two clauses—"in ourselves" and "which may assault and hurt the soul"—it is taken from the Sacramentary of Gregory, and consists of [1] "A declaration of our inability in ourselves to help ourselves;" [2] "A prayer to be kept from harm in body and soul." (One more Sunday—"The Third in Lent" comes during this month [25th]. The subject of its Collect is "The Christian's Defence." It is likewise taken from the Sacramentary of Gregory, and consists of a prayer that [1] "God may look upon our hearty desires;" [2] "Defend us against our enemies." As may be seen from the Gospel, the special reference is no doubt to our spiritual enemies. On the 24th, we are called upon to celebrate St. Matthias' Day. The subject of its Collect is "Faithful and True Pastors." It first appears in the Prayer Book of 1549, and consists of [1] "A commemoration of the choosing of Matthias in the place of Judas;" [2] "A prayer that the Church may be always preserved from false apostles, and ordered [ruled] and guided by faithful and true pastors." This festival, the only one in which feelings of sorrow are mingled with those of joy, always falls either within, or near, Lent, and is full of valuable lessons to the candidates for ordination at the Lenten Ember season; for in the story of Judas we see how the secret nursing of a bosom sin may nullify the greatest external advantages which a man can enjoy, and lead to the basest and most impious of crimes.

#### THE EVIL OF SUNDAY DESECRATION.

*An Essay read before the Archdeaconry of the Susquehanna,*

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(Continued.)

Why have people forsaken the assembling of themselves together on the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection?

One receives various answers as he seeks for information from those who no longer look Zionward. It is hard to get to church in time; there is so much to be done on the farm. It is a habit acquired through occasional neglect. They do not see the good of church-going, any way; they can be just as upright by staying at home. They do not like the minister. Comparatively few really despise the day. Some, it is true,

absent themselves from worship because their daily life is such that their conscience will not permit them to sit still and listen to God and His ministers declaring temperance and righteousness and the coming of a day in which God will judge the world by that Man whom He hath appointed judge of quick and dead. The root of the Sunday desecrating habit is self-ease, self-indulgence, selfishness.

If the facts are as we believe them to be, what remedy is to be prescribed to cure or to alleviate disease? What answer shall we give the man who says it is too far to drive to Church Sunday morning, but who will nevertheless rise on that day before dawn and be ready to drive his family ten miles or more to visit some cousins whom he has not seen for several weeks? What reply shall we make to the man who reads the Sunday paper two or three hours on the holy morning, but who complains that the type in the Prayer Book tires his eyes after he has followed it three-quarters of an hour? What rejoinder shall we make to the man who spends the forenoon in the bar-room, but who is unable to go church because Sunday is the only day he has to rest during all the week? What shall we say to the man who begrudges an hour and a half's presence in God's house because that business which belongs to six days has elapsed its uncanny fingers upon the hours of eternal rest? What conviction can we bring to the man who says he can be just as good by not going to church, while you know his life to be a denial of the very words he utters? What shall we do to help these and the wretched beings who "don't care any way," and are willing to "take their chances" with the Christians any day?

A priest may sometimes console himself with the reflection that if his Master's appeals in the course of His earthly ministry were disregarded, much more will his own be despised. He may recall the fact that he is not responsible for the rejection of the Gospel when he has used all his powers in commending it, and he may remember that Christ Himself put the thrilling question: "When the Son of Man comes shall He find faith on the earth?" At the same time he cannot but have a saddening sense of the end of those men who defy God to his face and set up themselves in their self-estimation and wilfulness as lords of their own destiny.

One with a high perception of his duty must seek to bring the erring back to the Father's house, to the hallowing of hours forgotten and profaned amid the whirl of business and the seductions of pleasure.

How shall we do this? Would to God we might give an answer that would at once and forever solve the riddle. But its solution is not easy. We may silence the tongue and not control the will. We may prove to one that if he can rise on Sunday in time to spend the day for his own gratification, he can do it to satisfy the command of God. We may prove that the saintliest men, the benefactors of the race, were Christians, yet not persuade the unbeliever to accept the Faith. We may demonstrate that Sunday is necessary for rest of body, mind, and spirit, and yet fail to win men to practice that to which reason and revelation bear consentient witness.

But we must not be discouraged. Something can be done by that gentle influence that distils from loving hearts like the dew from heaven on a starlight summer night. We must have the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. Can we not charm so wisely that men will incline their ears to catch another note of that strain first heard on Bethlehem's hillsides? Can we not incline the callous ear to that sound of great joy outside the walls of Jerusalem, where an open and empty sepulchre proclaims a Risen Lord, and consecrates forever the day that saw Him rise? Can we not, with the inspiration of such a faith to cheer us, make