

thunder rolling above her, on an angry sea, and with adverse tides. Soon her strength and vigor becoming enervated and weak, her zeal and godliness declining, almost dying away, and scarcely struggling on with a relaxed energy and a stained innocence. Yes, often has the Church been in troubled waters, and often has she seen exceedingly anxious times,—troubled sometimes by the fires of persecution around her; sometimes dark, it may be, from her own iniquity; sometimes the dearest blood of her children shed in her behalf; sometimes mourning and sore lamentation that her vineyard is desolate, her fire all but out. Aye; but mark even then the attitude of Christ. Never for a moment has he deserted her. In her very darkest seasons, when storms and persecutions, when hostility and violence everywhere assailed her, still is he found cheering her on, succoring her valient ones, and consoling her mourners,—the captain of our salvation! He never once deserted the post of danger, or left the Church to herself in a trying moment. Never, surely, did parent tend with greater solicitude and concern the children committed to his charge, than did our Redeemer with his beloved flock. Pour through the whole course of that Church's history and all its events, whether in infancy or in manhood, in strength or weakness, in persecution or safety, amid good report or in bad, still Jesus appears, nourishing and cherishing, standing at all times her truest friend, her strongest stay at a time of need. And if it be so in her adversity what shall we say of her wanderings from his paths? For, even then, he forsook her not forever. Marvellous forbearance and compassion that was ever ready to receive his erring flock to his fold, and enrich them with new treasures of his grace!

Christ loved the Church! In the past that divinent sympathy most plainly appears.—But the evidence, great as it is, is not summed up even in the past. See that Redeemer now, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour of men: and even in his exaltation we can still see his continued care. Even now, he only carries on the work he began on earth; his time spent in guarding and protecting the interests and welfare of his Church, in binding up the many bleeding hearts which may be in her, in consoling her sorrowing ones, in relieving her distressed. Blessed exaltation! for now “we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ Jesus, the righteous,” “seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Now is his guardianship confirmed and extended, and the Church rejoices in the favor of an elder Brother, whose love passeth all knowledge, and whose watchfulness is incapable of change: That eye “never slumbers, never sleeps.”

In the present, then, Christ loves his Church! And how shall we tell of that future, encircled, as it is, with that halo of blessed hopes and glorious anticipations—a

future of which it is said that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” But now we may rejoice—having the Redeemer's promise that he is preparing a place for us, and that soon he shall come again to take us to himself, that where he is there we may be also, and be forever. The exact nature of that future we know not now; but great indeed must be the glory which God has prepared for his people in a better home; marvellous indeed the honor when Christ does present this flock—a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Christ loved the Church! Say, then, what more could our Redeemer do than has been done? See how he has led that Church on from the very beginning of its history; guarded it in sunshine and cheered it in storm; borne with its shortcomings, granted it the light of his pure and holy truth; nay, spared not himself, but freely gave himself up a ransom for many. And then is not our Saviour even now pleading that cause of ours in Heaven, nourishing and cherishing his flock, and with the promise that at last he should come and take that Church home to himself?

My dear friends: Need we be reminded of the debt of gratitude we owe? Surely such unexampled self-sacrifice has power enough in itself to move us, without a word from man. Ah! never let it be said that such a marvellous display of love and mercy has been given a display—such as not the angels of heaven heard of before, and likely never will again—and yet that our hearts should remain unmoved. Never may the charge of such base ingratitude be laid to us. Nay; but may this very love of Christ constrain us to devote ourselves as living sacrifices to God, for it is our reasonable service—a service and duty incumbent on all. In accordance with that duty then let us at all times act. By it let every motive be regulated, and every day be spent. By it should we engage in the ordinary duties of life, and by it should our spiritual ardour be rekindled into a livelier flame.

Press on then, Christian friends. Fight manfully the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life. Be strong. Forgetting the things that are behind, the very acquisitions you have made, press onward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ; and although there should be many difficulties to be met, many enemies to be fought, many opposing forces to be subdued, yet with our trust in God and in his might, let us seek to do valiantly. And with his promised aid and energy what need we fear?

Met together, as we are about to be this day, as a Court of Christ's Church on earth, doubtless this very attention and care of Christ toward his people will weigh upon us, increasing, on the one hand, our feel-