

by the thoughts which it suggests, span the entire circle of time, and connect the glorious end with a beginning, which was glorious too, but soon overclouded. And yet this virtue is not in the ordinance itself, but in Him, God manifest in the flesh, whose sacramental symbol it is; and He is the First and the Last; the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Therefore it is, that even as subjects of human thought, all things are gathered together in Christ. But the commemorative, or retrospective part of our Christian Passover is already concluded; and it behoves us now, as the beloved disciple in the text invites us, to turn our thoughts to the *now* and the *hereafter* of those who have solemnly and sincerely dedicated themselves to God. Now, are ye the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what ye shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, ye shall be like Him; for ye shall see Him as He is.

Now are ye the sons of God. The title is a noble one,—the noblest of all titles: but it is that of a nobility which you have this day claimed as your own. Whatever you may have heretofore deemed of yourselves, or wished others to deem of you, in point of alliance or relationship, your conduct this day, as communicants, has put an end to all ambiguity on the subject. Unless you be contented to believe and have it believed, that your worship at the Lord's table was a piece of mere masquerading, or at the best a spiritless form, then you must be ready to admit that you have served yourselves heirs to the dignity of which the text speaks, and that with the most solemn and stringent rites. Yesterday, I might have addressed you as Christian brethren, or as sinful and suffering mortals. But to-day, you have yourselves furnished me with the authority, on the strength of which I say, "NOW, are ye the sons of God." If, in any case, I am in error, then the error lies with you and not with me, for in speaking to you by this style, I merely call you what you had first called yourselves. Should there be, therefore, among you, a single individual, who after eating of the children's bread, would shrink back from this title—"sons of God," let such an one look personally and seasonably to it; for either his sacramental engagement was a mere outward show—a sin of presumption to be deeply repented off, or, after all, he is that which he shrinks from being called. But I will neither mutilate my text, nor despise the faithful among you, of the advantages which you may expect from a full consideration of it,—for the sake of those, if such there be, who are bold enough to come up to the very altar, and to claim the privileges of adoption, while yet they are no sons of God. Commending them to the mercy of Him, whom they have thus grossly offended, and beseeching them for their own sakes, to remember and repent. I shall for the rest address myself to those of you who knew what you were doing when you took your place as

communicants, who understood the magnitude of the honour to which you were aspiring, and felt your own unworthiness of it, but who nevertheless, confiding in the love of God, and the worthiness of our Advocate, and the all-sufficiency of Divine grace, ventured, with a trembling humility, to advance your claim, to be registered on earth and in heaven, among the sons of God. You who have acted thus, have doubtless been accepted, and are numbered with his sons. Nor can you be unaware of what this relationship implies. I am not, therefore, to tell you what you do not know, but to stir you up by way of remembrance.

And, without saying much of the origin of this worship, or of the means by which it has been secured for you, I cannot omit noticing that it is not a dignity you were born to. As the creatures of God, all men are, in one sense his sons; but as his fallen and guilty creatures, though he may still have towards you, the large and open heart of a Father, yet you have not towards him, the confiding and obedient affections of children. He may continue to love you tenderly as his offspring, nay, He actually does so, but what is that to those who have strayed, as outcasts and prodigals, far away from his hearth, and forfeited their inheritance as heirs of His glory. And *to* what is it, that, as the children of a corrupt race you are born? Why, to the most deplorable and desperate fortunes, to struggle and disappointment, to sorrow, and suffering and death, to the curse of the land, and the condemnation of hell. These, of proud man, are the natural inheritance. Of a truth, sin is a hard task-master; and there is a mighty famine in the land over which it rules. Sons of God, then, are all men by virtue of creation, but this worship, of which the text speaks, is not that of birth and of nature, with only misery for an inheritance. Here is the new worship of the repentant and returned prodigal, created again by the spirit, and through the grace of God, living and acting in Christ, received back by adoption to the home which he had forsaken, with all its privileges. It is on account of the death of Christ, that which you have this day celebrated, that you have attained this high relationship. He is the Everlasting Father, whose adoption of you as His children, and death in your room, and intercession on your behalf, have reclaimed you from sin, and restored you to God. He is *the way*; for it is only through Him that you have access to Jehovah. Not, however, the highest God, even the Father is excluded from this work; for in His love, it has its source; and *the way*, Jesus, viz., sent and crucified is a way of his devising and appointment. And he is still God over all, even in the work of the sinner's. To as many as receive his son, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe. And as in that parable, so still, the Father's love is an eternal and unfathomed fountain of grace and