

THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

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PASSION WEEK.—In the next week the Church commemorates events most awful and affecting, and most deeply interesting to man,—those which marked the latter days in the suffering life of our adorable Redeemer—‘his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, his precious death and burial.’ Those who are sensible of the inestimable love of Christ in pouring out his soul unto death for our sakes, will need no call to consecrate this solemn week to a devout meditation upon the greatness of that love as displayed in the greatness of his sufferings; and they will feel it especially proper at such a time to bow themselves down before God in the daily exercise of repentance and humiliation for those sins which had a share in swelling the sorrows of His beloved Son.—The piously disposed will be greatly assisted in such exercises, by a regard to the daily services appointed by the Church for this season. We extract the following from Wheatley on the Common Prayer:—

‘In ancient times this was called the *Great Week*, not because it had more hours or days in it than any other week, but because in this week was transacted an affair of the greatest importance to the happiness of man, and actions truly great were performed to secure his salvation: death was conquered, the devil’s tyranny was abolished, the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down, and God and man were reconciled. It was also called the *Holy-week*, from those devout exercises which Christians employed themselves in upon this occasion. They applied themselves to prayer, both in public and in private, to hearing and reading God’s holy word, and exercising a most solemn repentance for those sins which crucified the Lord of life. They observed the whole week with great strictness of fasting and humiliation; some fasting three days together; some four; and others, who could bear it, the whole six; beginning on Monday morning, and not eating any thing again till cock-crowing on the Sunday morning following. And several of the Christian Emperors, to show what veneration they had for this holy season, caused all law-suits to cease, and tribunal doors to be shut, and prisoners to be set free; thereby imitating their great Lord and Master, who by his death at this time delivered us from the prison and chains of sin.’

‘The Church of England uses all the means she can to retain this decent and pious custom, and hath made sufficient provision for the exercise of the devotion of her members in public; calling us every day this week to meditate upon our Lord’s sufferings, and collecting in the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels, most of those portions of Scriptures that relate to this tragical subject, to increase our humiliation by the consideration of our Saviour’s; to the end that with penitent hearts, and firm resolution of dying likewise to sin, we may attend our Saviour through the several stages of his bitter Passion.’

We call the attention of our readers also to the following extract from the same work, with respect to that ever memorable day in the coming week, which is called

GOOD FRIDAY.

‘This day received its name from the blessed effects of our Saviour’s sufferings, which are the ground of all our joy, and from those unspeakable good things he hath purchased for us by his death, whereby the blessed Jesus made expiation for the sins of the whole world, and, by the shedding his own blood, obtained eternal redemption for us.

‘The Commemoration of our Saviour’s sufferings, hath been kept from the very first age of Christianity, and was always observed as a day of the strictest fasting and humiliation; not that the grief and affliction they then expressed did arise from the loss they sustained, but from a sense of the guilt of the sins of the whole world, which drew upon our blessed Redeemer that painful and shameful death of the Cross.

‘The Gospel for this day (besides its coming in course) is properly taken out of St. John rather than any other Evangelist, because he was the only one that was present at the passion, and stood by the cross while others fled; and therefore, the passion being as

it were represented before our eyes, his testimony is read who saw it himself, and from whose example we may learn not to be ashamed or afraid of the cross of Christ.—The Epistle proves from the insufficiency of the Jewish sacrifices, that they only typified a more sufficient one, which the Son of God did as on this day offer up, and by one oblation of himself then made upon the cross, completed all other sacrifices, (which were only shadows of this,) and made full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. In imitation of which divine and infinite love, the Church endeavours to shew her charity to be boundless and unlimited by praying in one of the proper Collects, that the effects of Christ’s death may be as universal as the design of it viz. that it may tend to the salvation of all *Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics.*

‘How suitable the proper Psalms are to the day, is obvious to any one that reads them with a due attention: they were all composed by David in times of the greatest calamity and distress, and do most of them belong mystically to the crucifixion of our Saviour; especially the twenty-second, which is the first for the morning, which was in several passages literally fulfilled by his sufferings, and part either of it, or all, recited by him upon the cross. And for that reason (as St. Austin tells us) was always used upon that day by the African church.

‘The first Lesson for the morning is Genesis xxii. containing an account of Abraham’s readiness to offer up his son; thereby typifying that perfect oblation which was this day made by the Son of God: which was thought so proper a Lesson for this occasion, that the Church used it upon this day in St. Austin’s time. The second Lesson is St. John xviii. which needs no explanation. The first Lesson for the evening contains a clear prophecy of the passion of Christ, and of the benefits which the Church thereby receives. The second Lesson exhorts us to patience under afflictions from the example of Christ, who suffered so much for us.’

In an ‘Exhortation to the Religious Observance of Good Friday,’ by the late excellent Bishop Porteus—after speaking of the benefits derived from the death of our blessed Lord, he says—

‘Consider, I beseech you, what kind of return such invaluable mercies demand; consider whether that very day on which these mercies were conveyed to you, ought in reason, in justice, in gratitude, in common decency, to be treated with neglect. ‘I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say’ and determine for yourselves. ‘Greater love’ you must allow, ‘hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ Suppose then, for a moment, that some friend of your own had actually done this for you: that when your life was forfeited by some crime against the state, he had voluntarily substituted himself in your place, and suffered the punishment incurred by your offence: what would be your feelings, what would be your behaviour on this occasion? Would you suffer the annual return of that day on which your friend died for you to pass unheeded, undistinguished, unhallowed by a single tear or sigh, by a single reflection on that most transcendent act of kindness, to which you owed your very existence? There is not a man amongst you that would not think himself injured and insulted by such a suspicion. Yet this supposed act of kindness (great as it undoubtedly is) falls far below what you have actually experienced from the love of your Redeemer.

It was not when you were his *friends*, but when you were his *enemies* that he sacrificed his life for you. ‘For God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’ We believe, or profess to believe, that this is true; and yet what is our behaviour in consequence of it? Why, on the anniversary of the day when it is supposed to have taken place, too many of us, alas! are as easy and unconcerned, as much devoted to business, or to pleasure, as if nothing in the world had happened with which we had the least concern! Is this right? is this fitting? is it Christian like? is it decent? is it creditable? Does it shew that veneration, love, and gratitude, which malefactors reprieved from death are wont to testify toward their benefactor and deliverer?

‘How then,’ you will perhaps say, ‘would you have us observe this day?’ In the manner certainly prescribed by the Church, and in which it used anciently to be observed, with as much seriousness, solemnity and devotion; with as absolute a cessation of all

worldly business and pleasure as usually takes place on a Sunday.

‘The fast on which the primitive Church seems to have laid the greatest stress, and which was anciently observed with great seriousness, is that of Good Friday. And surely, if ever any restraint on our appetites and pleasures can be proper, if ever it can be a reasonable duty ‘to turn to the Lord with weeping, fasting, and prayer,’ and to bewail our sins with every inward sentiment and every outward expression of the deepest humiliation and contrition, it must be on that day, when to deliver us from the power and the punishment of these sins, Christ Jesus offered himself up as a sacrifice on the cross: when ‘he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.’ It would certainly be decent, and probably useful too, to make some little sacrifice of our common indulgences on Good Friday to him, who then made so great a one for us. They who cannot wholly omit their refreshments, may at least delay them a little, or partake of them more sparingly. This, one would think, must be consistent with the tenderest constitution and most delicate health.

‘But they who are incapable of complying with the injunctions of the Church in this respect, are certainly able, and ought to be doubly careful to conform to them in all others. If men cannot fast they can pray; if they cannot abstain from their ordinary food, they can abstain at least from their ordinary labours, cares, and amusements; they can put this world and its concerns out of their minds, and give themselves up to God; they can attend divine service both parts of the day; they can dedicate the remainder of it to private meditation and prayer; they can examine into their past and present conduct; they can possess themselves with a just sense of their own natural weakness and depravity; of the infinite need they have of a Mediator, a Redeemer, a Propitiator for their sins; they can adore the goodness of God in providing, the goodness of Christ in consenting to become the very Sacrifice they so much wanted, the ‘Lamb slain’ to expiate their guilt, to restore them to the favour of God, and render their best services acceptable in his sight. For let them, let all the world know and acknowledge, with the deepest humility and gratitude, that ‘not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God saved us; and that it is by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.’

BOOK OF COMMON-PRAYER.—We copy the following testimony to the excellency of our Liturgy from the Christian Watchman—a respectable Baptist paper published in Boston:—

‘We are not in favor of the use of written forms of prayer in leading public devotions. We nevertheless hold the English Book of Common Prayer in the highest estimation, and could wish that it had a place in every family library and especially in the library of every minister, to be read as a devotional book for the purpose of incorporating its sentiments, and forms of expression, with their own thoughts, and manner of addressing the throne of grace.

‘For chasteness and elegance of diction, for pureness of sentiment, except on some few points, the Book of Common Prayer is without a rival in the English language.’

We have very high gratification in laying before our readers the following beautiful composition:—

‘TO THE ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND CLERGY OF THAT PORTION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND, WHICH IS BY LAW ESTABLISHED IN IRELAND.

‘We the Bishops and Clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Scotland, during this dark hour of trouble and anguish to our sister church in Ireland, hasten to assure the bishops and pastors of this pure branch of Christ’s Holy Catholic and Apostolical Church, of the lively interest which we take in the sufferings of a body of men, of whose heads, through no fault of their own, the waters of affliction have been poured out.

‘Being ourselves the decendants or successors of men who suffered long under unmerited persecution, we should indeed be undeserving of the rest which the Lord in these