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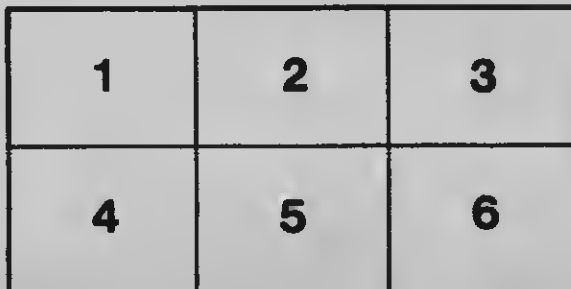
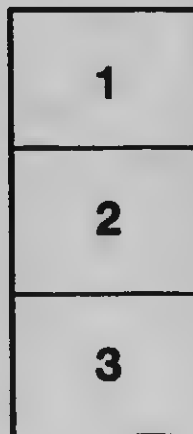
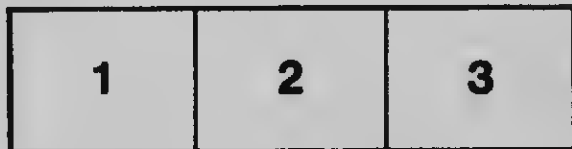
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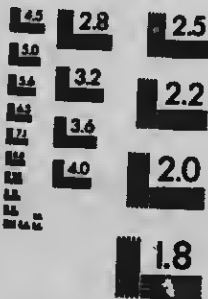
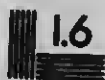
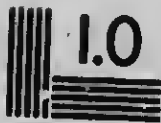
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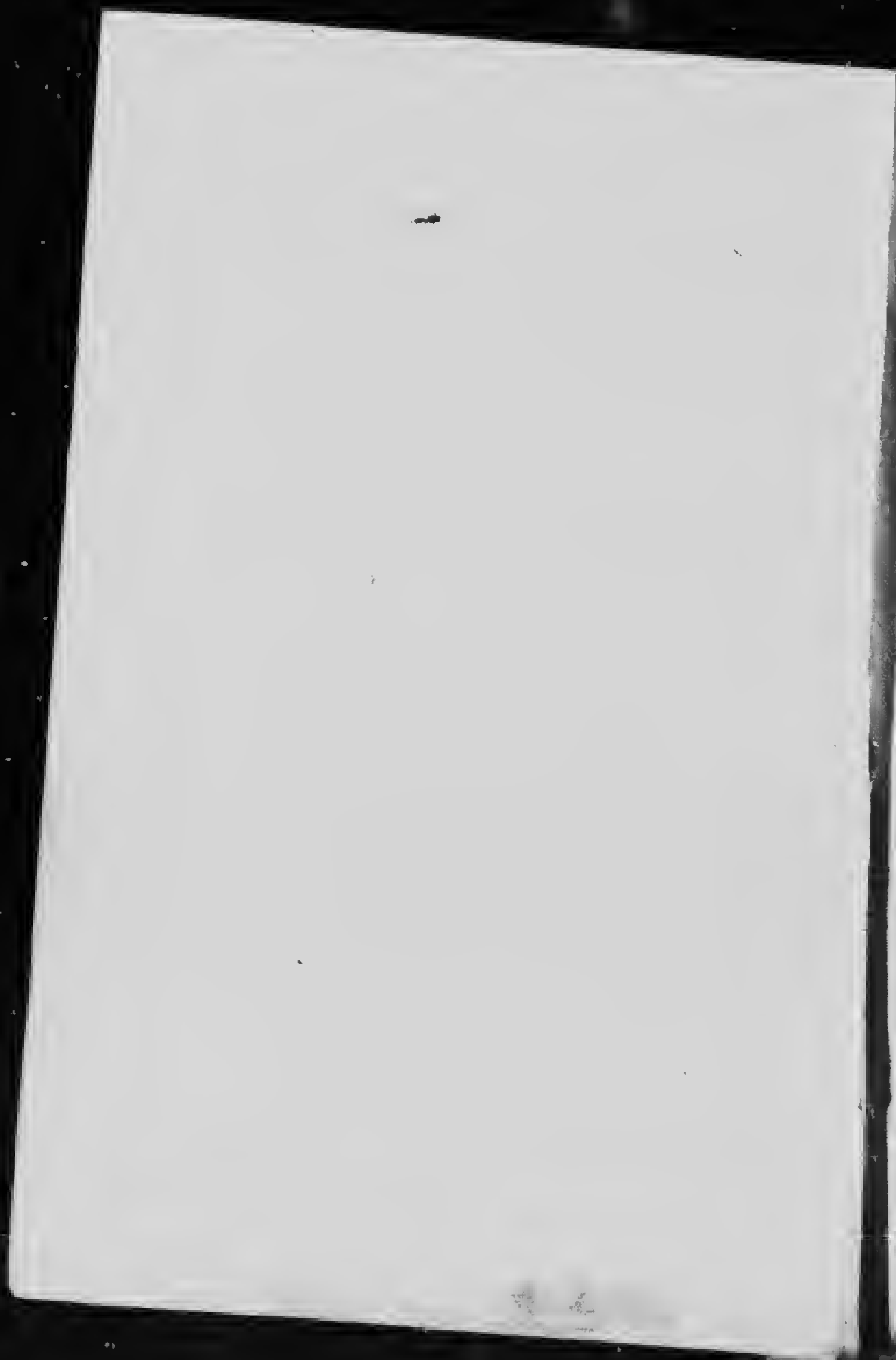
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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

AND LIFE THEREIN

BY THE LATE
REV. W. R. FORSTER
Rural Dean of West Simcoe, Ontario

Published on Request, by
REV. T. G. A. WRIGHT, B.A.
Barrister, Etc.

With Introductions by the Bishops of Toronto and Huron

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PREFACE

THESE sermons were delivered in the ordinary course of the author's ministry, and without any thought of publication. In addition to heavy pastoral work in a large parish he discharged the duties of rural dean in succession to the late Rev. Dr. Lett, of Collingwood, whose funeral sermon is in this book. These sermons are all plain and practical addresses, suited to the needs of his people, and they made a lasting impression on those who heard them. Repeated requests having been made for individual sermons, I have made a selection which covers the main doctrines of the Christian faith—the *incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the mystery of the Trinity*. In all of them unmistakable emphasis has been laid on "*the Kingdom of God*." The startling prominence of this theme in God's word, and its unaccountable absence from much of the teaching of the present day, give good grounds for publishing such a book as this. Look, for example, at the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus recorded in the *third chapter of St. John's gospel*. Christ was plainly speaking about "*the Kingdom of God*," and teaching that men must enter it by a *birth*. Preachers are never weary of talking about "*the new birth*," but rarely mention "*the Kingdom of God*."

Surely thoughtful Christians ought to ponder carefully what God's word says on this subject. "*Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it*" (Eph. v: 25), and no true follower of Christ will ignore it. It may

PREFACE

help some if I name a few *cheap little books* that have already exerted a wide influence and deserve a still wider circulation.

1. Foremost among these I mention "*The Kingdom of God*," published and sold by *Rev. C. C. Kemp*, the scholarly rector of Clinton, Michigan, U.S.A. He has published other little books on the same subject, and *his series* has won the approval of some of the ablest scholars in the church.

2. The late *Dr. Hugh Miller Thompson*, Bishop of Mississippi, wrote a clever and convincing little book on the Christian ministry entitled "*Concerning the Kingdom of God*." If this is out of print, it should assuredly be reprinted.

3. The late *Bishop's Randall's* little book, "*Why I am a Churchman*," is a masterpiece. As these lectures were delivered in a Unitarian chapel, they were written with painstaking clearness for the general public, and are well suited for general circulation.

4. *Canon Hammond's* little book, "*The Christian Church, What is it?*" is particularly awakening, and written in a clear, attractive style.

5. The subject of *Confirmation* is mentioned again and again in this book. On that subject *Dean Vaughan's* little book in the hands of *the teacher*, and *Rev. Dyson Hague's* "*Confirmation*" and *Canon Davidson's* "*Features of our Faith Position and Practices*" in the hands of *candidates*, will amply meet the usual needs of any ordinary parish.

The Rectory, Walkerton, Ont,

T. G. A. WRIGHT.

INTRODUCTION

Extract from the Address of *Right Reverend Arthur Sweatman, D.D., Lord Bishop of Toronto*, to the synod of his diocese on June 14th, 1887.

THE Rev. William Rabbeth Forster was born in London, England, in 1828, and was ordained by the first bishop of Toronto in 1866. His first charge was the mission of Mount Forest, but in 1870 he was transferred to Creemore. At that time the old churches of Creemore and Banda were the only places of worship in the mission, but he leaves behind him, as monuments of his zeal, the beautiful churchly structures of Stayner and Sunnidale, and the crowning effort of his life's work—the perfect ecclesiastical gem on whose erection and arrangement he bestowed so much loving care and cultivated taste, the new church of St. Luke's, Creemore.

Mr. Forster's character was marked by a genuine *fervent piety* pervading his daily life, a *winning gentleness* of disposition, and a most unassuming *modesty*, amounting to a depreciation of his own powers. And he was a man of no mean powers of intellect, as he was of singular graces of character. *I have reason to know that he possessed pulpit ability of the highest order, though he would be the last to acknowledge it.* His constitutional diffidence led him for a long time to decline the position of rural dean, which was pressed upon him by two bishops, but when he was finally appointed, in spite of his scruples, no one could have discharged the office with greater satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

to the diocese and the clergy. It was in the family circle that one needed to know such a man to estimate the truth worth of his character, and the charming home at Claverleigh, permeated by the very atmosphere of a close and bright communion with God, was, to those who enjoyed the privilege of being its guests, the very ideal of a refined, Christian, united, and happy household.

He died suddenly on Friday evening, January 14th, 1887, after preaching for the first and only time in his beloved church.

In him the church has lost a staunch and true servant; the mission board a judicious and reliable counsellor; his parish a trusted guide and faithful pastor; his family (most irreparable loss of all) a wise head, a loving father, a strong support.

Letter from *Right Reverend David Williams, D.D.,
Lord Bishop of Huron:*

LONDON, ONT., August 3rd, 1906.

DEAR MR. WRIGHT,—

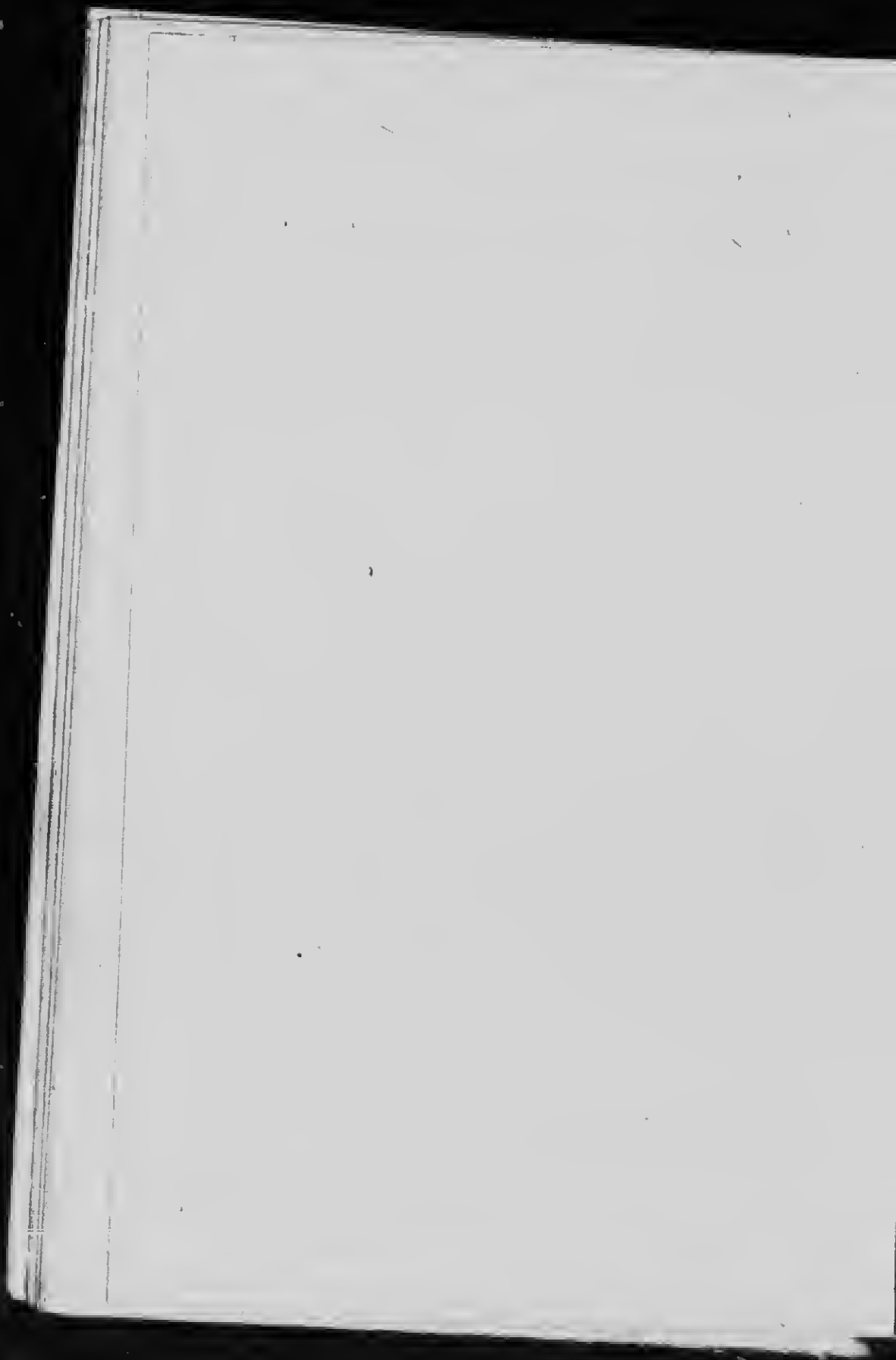
I have read Mr. Forster's sermons with much pleasure. To specially mention any, when all are good, would be invidious. He states his positions moderately, though firmly and clearly, and has, besides, the merit of keeping always in view the spiritual purpose of the sermon. In view of the somewhat confused idea many seem to have of the value of Christ's Kingdom, such sermons are needed, and I trust that the publication of these will help to clear the air for many.

Believe me, yours faithfully,

DAVID HURON.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE KINGDOM OF GOD - - - - -	1
THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM - - - - -	11
PREPARING FOR THE KING	20
THE KING'S MAJESTY - - - - -	28
THE KING'S GRACE - - - - -	36
THE SINNER'S NEED - - - - -	45
MIGHTY TO SAVE - - - - -	55
GRACE REFUSED - - - - -	63
SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM - - - - -	71
A TRUE CHILD OF GOD - - - - -	80
MINISTERS AND CONVOICATIONS - - - - -	90
A FAITHFUL MINISTER - - - - -	99
OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY - - - - -	106
THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM - - - - -	116
THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM - - - - -	124
HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS - - - - -	134
SOLDIERS OF THE KING - - - - -	142
THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR - - - - -	151
THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS - - - - -	160
A HARD BATTLE - - - - -	169
FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH - - - - -	178
THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY - - - - -	187
ABIDE WITH ME - - - - -	197
A DEAD SOLDIER - - - - -	205
DEATH - - - - -	216
REWARD - - - - -	225
THE KINGDOM OF GLORY - - - - -	234
APPENDIX - - - - -	243



I

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God." (Mark i: 14).

ON almost every *second Sunday in Advent*, it has been my custom to preach to you on the very important subject which is so fully brought before us on this day, namely—*the holy scriptures*. I have hitherto dwelt on such considerations as these:—“the *Comfort* of the holy scriptures”; “the duty of searching *there* for the evidence of life eternal”; “*faith* in them”; “joy and peace in believing *them*”; “the *church's system* for their study and for their interpretation”; “*Christ in them all*, both Old and New Testaments.” On this occasion, I desire to speak of God's Holy Word under the title which Saint Mark gives it in our text, and which Saint Matthew, Saint Luke, Saint Paul, and our Lord Jesus Christ equally agree to give it, namely—“*the gospel of the Kingdom of God.*”

We live in days wherein professors of religion exceedingly exalt what they are pleased to call “*the gospel.*” We hear of “*gospel hymns,*” and “*gospel meetings,*” and especially we are invited to hear “*gospel sermons.*” But is it not strange that, amidst all this high sounding talk about “*the gospel,*” the term, used by our Lord Himself and His Apostles, seems to be

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

almost lost sight of? Those who preach and those who listen to "the gospel" as it is commonly preached, and those who write religious books, rarely ever mention "*the Kingdom of God.*"

Now Saint Mark distinctly states that the gospel that our Saviour preached was the "gospel of the Kingdom of God." And if we now call, by *one* name, what our Lord called by *another* name, it is only too likely that we shall attach different meanings to the thing we speak of. If Jesus Christ said "I must preach the Kingdom of God," (Luke iv: 43), and if, having called His twelve apostles, He sent them forth to preach "The Kingdom of God," (Luke ix: 2), we had better *call* it exactly what He called it, and *know* it for exactly what He said it was, lest we fall into the modern and very dangerous mistake of preaching something other than He preached—"another gospel" (Gal. i: 8), and not "*the gospel of the Kingdom.*"

All bible readers must remark how frequently the terms—"Kingdom of heaven," "Kingdom of God," are used. One of two things is always meant by the expression—either our present state of grace, in the *Kingdom of His grace* now and here—or else, our future state of glory and reward, in the *Kingdom of His glory*, hereafter in the heavens.

The one is the *church militant* here in earth.

The other is the *church triumphant*.

Generally, the *first* is meant, as when our Lord likens His Kingdom to a *field of wheat*, infested with tares (Matt. xiii: 24-30); or to a *net*, in which bad fish are caught as well as good (Matt. xiii: 47-50). This is a state of things which can only be likened to

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

His Church on earth; for into His church triumphant shall enter nothing that is imperfect or unclean. *Occasionally, the last, the kingdom of glory, is meant, as when our Lord speaks of His "coming in His Kingdom" (Matt. xvi: 28), or when He utters this solemn warning:—"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Ahraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke xiii: 28).*

But the point I wish to press (because it is so generally lost sight of now) is, that the present state of grace is *generally* called, by Jesus Christ, and His apostles His "*Kingdom,*" rather than by any *other* name. And I want also to remind you what this term involves. Before the first Advent, at the announcement of the Saviour's hirth, *the angel* said—*'The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke i: 32-33).* When His *herald* went before Him to prepare His way, His call to repentance was, "*Repent ye for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. iii: 2). *Our Lord* began His own preaching in the *self-same words* (Matt. iv: 17). Those who will hear His words, He calls "*the children of the Kingdom*" (Matt. xiii: 38). Instruction in the deeper doctrines of the faith, He calls—"Giving them to know *the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. xiii: 11). The same term is applied to His instructions during *the great forty days* between the resurrection and the ascension. During this period He was "*speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*" (Acts

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

i:3). And, long afterwards, we come upon this record, showing that *Saint Paul*, up to the end of his life, preached *the same message* as the risen Christ:—"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, preaching *the Kingdom of God*, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xxviii: 30-31). I have given some of the leading passages, but there are many more.

Let us now consider what the term involves. Is this "*kingdom*" then, merely a *name* of little import which we may either use, or lay aside, in favour of some other, which means infinitely less, but happens to be more popular? Will it be the same thing to speak of preaching *the gospel* rather than "*the gospel of the Kingdom*," or to speak of preaching a *gospel sermon*, or preaching *Christianity*, or the *Christian religion*?

To the question, "What think ye of Christ?" will it do to say, merely, that He is the founder of a great religion, the preacher of a lovely gospel, and the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin? All this is quite true, but it is not *all* the truth. *He* came to preach the "*gospel of the kingdom*," and to send *heralds* out to preach it always, and to preach *nothing less*. We know Him to be the founder of an *enduring Kingdom*, of which *He Himself* is the *everlasting, ever-reigning King*.

Depend upon it, the bible calls things by the names which best describe their nature. And it were well not to forget or change the *name*, lest we forget the *nature* of the thing misnamed. Such a term as "*Christianity*," or "*the Christian religion*" implies only a *system of teaching*, such as may be easily contained

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

within the covers of a *book*. But such a term as "*Kingdom*" implies certainly *much more*. The word "*gospel*" merely means good news, glad tidings. But good news of *what*? Why, good news about the "*Kingdom*" and the "*King*" thereof. The "*gospel of the Kingdom*," and the things concerning *the Lord Jesus Christ*" were the themes of *Saint Paul's* preaching (Acts xxviii: 31). There are hundreds of systems of religion, but only *one Kingdom of God*. For think what constitutes any kingdom, as for example, our realm of England. A body of living men, with a *sovereign* to reign over them, to be the living centre of their *unity*; a principle of continuity, so that it should endure from age to age; a community of customs, institutions, laws; then officers and authorities, ministers and stewards to administer the laws, according to the *statute-book*. These, and much more, go to make up a kingdom. And such a kingdom our Saviour at His first coming set up here. He condescended to take upon Himself our nature, that as a *Man* He might be "*King*" of this new "*Kingdom*," and to associate Apostles as His "*ministers and stewards*" with Himself. He made its laws, ordained its institutions, and identified Himself in all points with His subjects, as a good sovereign would do who has the best interests of his people at heart. All this, at His first Advent, did Jesus Christ our King. What for? For this important, all-essential purpose that in this *Kingdom of His boundless grace*, He might fit and prepare His subjects for a higher, holier, happier and enduring life in the ever-enduring *Kingdom of His glory*. The laws and institutions of the *earthly*

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Kingdom were given to prepare us for the *heavenly* Kingdom, and so we pray, on this second Sunday in Advent, that we may in such wise duly ponder God's laws, found in the holy scriptures, so that we may hold fast our hope of everlasting life. What England's statute-book is to the broad realm of England, *the holy scriptures* are to the far broader realm of Christ. They are its *statute book*. They are "*the gospel of the Kingdom.*" I point out this plain fact to avoid confusion, for men will confound the *bible* with the *church*—the *gospel* with the *Kingdom*—as if the two things could be in any way compared or set against each other. Some teachers are sometimes accused of setting the church above the bible, others of setting the bible above the church. Or, in other words, the Kingdom above the gospel, or the gospel above the Kingdom. As well might one talk of setting England's *statute-book* above the *realm of England*, or England itself above its book of laws. To glorify and exalt *Old England* is surely to exalt *those laws*, the equity and wisdom of which have made her the great power she is. To exalt and glorify the blood-bought *church*, the "*Kingdom*" of our Lord, is surely to exalt the *law-book* of its King.

Christ came to earth to preach "*the gospel of the Kingdom.*" He sent *ambassadors* to preach exactly that. And no man can preach that without exalting, above all, *the King* who was its founder. "*I appoint unto you a Kingdom*" (Luke xxii: 29)—were the words Christ used to His Apostles, and when He spoke about its laws, He referred them to the holy scriptures. Let us reverence the scriptures and use

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

them, but let us not take the bible or the gospel for something other than it is. We should not banish it from our schools, nor should we withhold it from the laity, as the church of Rome in many instances has done. We must not take the *law-book of the Kingdom* from the *subjects of the King*.

"*Search the scriptures*" was the *King's command*; for "they are they," said He, "which testify of *Me*" (John v: 39). The Saviour's words set forth the real use and purpose of the scriptures—they teach the *subjects* how to know, and why to love, *their King*. They tell us that to save the world's fallen myriads, our King took on Himself human nature, and in that nature, suffered the agonies of the wrath of God, endured the sinners' shame and died the malefactor's death, fulfilled Love's royal law, and laid a *royal claim* upon *His subjects' love and loyalty*, compared with which the claims of *earthly* kings upon their subjects' allegiance must be poor indeed. And just as it is, with *the written law* He gave, so is it with the *institutions* He ordained. These also are essential to the preparation of His subjects, first to be true subjects of His Kingdom of grace here, and then accepted subjects of His Kingdom of glory hereafter. The *New Testament* shows us *three such institutions* in Christ's Kingdom. *Firstly*, the sacrament of *holy baptism* which enrolls and naturalizes the new subject, and gives him a subject's rights, in infancy. *Secondly*, *confirmation*, by which (in maturer years) he, personally, accepts the privileges and assumes the responsibilities of a subject, and in which he receives further royal gifts of grace. And, *thirdly*, the solemn *assem-*

bling of the subjects, for the breaking of bread, and for prayers. In this holy supper, the subjects are enabled and commanded to hold their closest, holiest, dearest intercourse with their exalted King.

As there is (with some) a sort of mistaken fear in regard to the *bible*, which would withhold it from the young or ignorant, so is there unhappily a false sentiment abroad about *the supper of the Lord* which deters many a conscience-stricken sinner from an ordinance which was ordained on purpose to be the vehicle and pledge of every sinner's pardon. Yet surely this is an essential portion of the written law itself, one of the plainest statutes in the statute-book. How can one preach "*the gospel of the Kingdom*," and not preach "*Christ, the Bread of Life*?" Surely, that is the gospel. Jesus called Himself "*the Living Bread*," and then added these words:—"The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi: 51). And again—"he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him" (John vi: 56).

How can anyone preach the gospel of *Christ crucified* and not remind his hearers that "the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it and said, 'Take, eat, this is My Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me'" (1 Cor. xi: 25)?

Parts of the gospel must not be substituted for the whole—the whole "gospel of the Kingdom." "The ministers and stewards" of God's mysteries, the

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

authorized ambassadors of the King, must declare the whole counsel of God. The "Kingdom" was not left without properly *authorized officers* to extend its limits and to administer its various affairs. "As *My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you*" (John xx: 21). He said, when He gave them their *authority* to act for Him, in His Name. And He distinctly made their *office permanent*, saying—"Lo, I am with you *always even unto the end of the world*" (Matt. xxviii: 20). Those *individual* men were, very shortly, all removed by *death*, and yet He promised them His own presence to the end of time. There must, therefore, be a *succession* of men to occupy their places and to administer the affairs of the great Kingdom until Christ comes again, in person. Down to the present day there has been such succession, and thus have our King's words been verified, and thus, visibly and openly, has "the gospel of the Kingdom" been continually proclaimed, by the setting forth God's true and lively *Word*, and by the right and due administration of His holy *sacraments*. He has appointed unto us "a Kingdom," of which He, in the first place, preached "the gospel." God grant us grace, humbly to accept this gospel, in every aspect under which His Holy Word presents it to us.

It is *the gospel of God* (Rom. i: 1), for "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii: 16). It is *the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, for it is especially the glad tidings of His loving, sacrificial human work for us men and for our Salvation. It is *the gospel of free grace*, for all it tells of was done freely, for us, and without our merit. And it is "*the gospel of the*

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Kingdom," for it is the record of the only perfect government on earth, a government established at the King's first coming to sanctify and prepare men *here*, for their appointed places in the everlasting *Kingdom of His glory*.—Amen.

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II

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

"For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart." (Judges v: 16).

"There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph. iv: 4: 5).

I GIVE you the former of those texts from the Old Testament, rather as my *reason* for preaching from the latter sentence, than because I have much to say about the text itself. As to what "*the divisions of Reuben*" were, we are not told particularly, but this at least we know: they were far less momentous than the rending of the body of Christ, which is His church. For *unity* is as strongly asserted of the *one body*, as of the *one Lord*, and *one hope* of our calling in Him. The divisions of Reuben were far less serious than the tearing of the Saviour's seamless robe, as *His Kingdom* is torn and divided now and *split up* into contending factions, against its own well-being and success. They were the *minor divisions* of one of the *minor tribes*. But if, for these comparatively insignificant divisions, of this minor tribe of Israel, there were "great searchings" and "great thoughts" of heart, what greater searchings should there be, and what far deeper thoughts, for the divisions of Christendom, for the dividing against itself of *that*

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

great Kingdom, which the King and God of Heaven set up, to consume all other kingdoms, and to stand for ever? (Dan. ii: 44).

"One body" and "one faith" we read of in God's word, but what do we see? Divided, alienated members, and rival and contending faiths, distracting and destroying one another. Shall there not be deepest thoughts and persevering searchings of the true heart of Christendom to find the cause, and, by God's help, to find the cure, for a state of things so sad, so antagonistic to the mind of Christ? These divisions, with their terrible effects, are punishments for human faithlessness and disobedience to God's laws. We see many sad instances of this in holy scripture. At the impious building of the Babel tower it was the Lord Himself who came down in His wrath and confounded the rebels' language so that they could no longer understand each other's speech. It was the Lord Himself who scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. And then the centuries rolled on, and generation after generation passed away. And the history of the nations is the story of their wars, and even the history of God's chosen people is the history of their manifold "divisions." And, though there were great thoughts of heart among God's thoughtful servants and searchings among the wise, men were still striving against each other and against their God, when the shadows of the evening deepened, and its night came on. And then there came the loveliest morning that the world has ever seen—the sunlight of the Messiah long foretold. "The Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings" (Mal. iv: 2).

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

"*The Day-spring from on high*" came down to visit and to bless His people, and "to guide their feet into *the way of peace*" (Luke i: 78-79). And "*Prince of Peace*" was one of the blessed names by which he was foretold. And ere he finished His appointed work He uttered for us all, His *prayer for unity*, for a peace too deep for human understanding—"that they all may be one; as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee." And then His work was shortly finished, and He sent forth His *Apostles* to *proclaim the gospel of that most sweet peace*, and He returned to heaven. And then came *pentecost*, and the *Spirit of peace* came down in "cloven tongues like as of fire" upon the church of the Redeemer's love. And lo, the miracle of *Babel* was reversed. He who confounded language so that men could no longer recognize each other's meaning when they worked against Him new, when they waited and prayed for God's promised grace, empowered them all to hear, in their own tongue, wherein they severally were born, the new-born gospel of *God's peace* and the story of His wondrous works! *The tumult of Babel was hushed.*

"The Holy Spirit, Who did brood
Upon the waters dark and rude,
Bade, then, all angry tumult cease,
And gave, for wild confusion, peace."

On the day of *pentecost* the *spirit of unity* was strikingly manifest; "they were all *with one accord* in *one place*" (Acts ii: 1). And ever since in the heart-depths of faithful members of the church, new born that day, there has echoed, like a sweet summer zephyr, the music of the Saviour's holy prayer—"That they

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

all may be one, as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John xvii: 21).

"There is one body and one spirit,—even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Those are the words we read; yet when we lift our eyes to look around, we see the histories of the former days repeated sadly in our own. We see Isaiah's prophetic words concerning Israel again fulfilled; we see our Zion almost a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation, and pleasant things of ours laid waste by the insidious sins of heresy and schism. God made His Body one, that with one mind, one heart, and with one mouth, it might draw many members into it and make all "one in hope and doctrine, one in charity." Christ bade His church go forth into all lands, and convert the nations to Himself. Like a great army, strong in the strength that unity in Him would give her, He bade her march against the world and sin, and reduce the nations to obedience in Him. He gave her, for her warfare, weapons of His own, "not carnal," but "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." Yet when we look around we see His soldiers pointing their weapons at one another's breasts. "Their weapons," I say—not their Lord's spiritual ones, but their own carnal ones—of pride, selfwill, and envy. The repetition of Israel's sins, brings a repetition of punishment. And the devil glories, and the angels weep. And it behoves the watchmen, standing on the walls of Zion, to sound the trumpet and to warn their people and exhort them by the Lord's past dealings with His disobedient children to attempt His

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

service only in His way Divine, to cherish a true faith "*in the unity of the Spirit, and in the bond of peace.*"

There were great thoughts of heart, because *Reuben* of old was divided. By reason of their divisions, the Reubenites sought not the general good. They shirked the hattle against Canaan's hordes—"Abode among the sheepfolds," in inglorious ease, "to hear the bleatings of the flocks" rather than the clash of spears and the din of arms. It is vain to cry "peace, peace," when there is no real peace. Men of good will and of good words, yet not of good works, in this day, have been doing that too long. And still there are *divisions*. Because men have not yet *laboured* for true *peace and union*, rather than division.

But, now, thank God, there are "*great thoughts of heart*" and mighty "*searchings*" for the divisions of the church of Jesus. And not *thoughts* only, but there are *acts*, and *labours*, for the restoration of her peace and unity. There are some hopeful signs of the coming of the promised happy time, when Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, nor Judah trouble Ephraim. Many earnest Christians, feeling the desolating effects of her divisions, and mindful of her Founder's prayer, have pledged themselves to offer, daily, an *intercession* before the throne of grace that God would "behold and visit His vine," and, having regard to the pure faith of His holy church, would grant her that peace and unity which is according to His will. Many thousands are praying every day the Saviour's prayer—"that we all may be one, even as the Father and the Son are one, that the world may believe" in the messenger and in the message of redeeming love. Soon

after my ordination, preaching on this subject, I expressed a fervent wish that every synod, conference, presbytery or Christian council in the land would at least agitate, discuss, and pray—for this object of the reunion of our Lord's disciples. Even that wish seemed, then, to be almost Utopian, and its fulfilment something for the far-off future. Yet I have lived to see it. For the divisions of Christendom there have been great searchings of men's hearts, and great discussions in their various councils, during this year of grace (1886); and schemes of honourable union without sacrifice of essential Christian principles, are now *not* thought to be impossible. At the great *Synod* of the whole Canadian Church, held lately in *Montreal*, a *resolution* to search out such a scheme was passed unanimously, and addressed to all Christian bodies in the land. When it was passed, a spirit, almost pentecostal, fell on the assembly, and the whole concourse rose spontaneously, and sang to heaven with one mind and with one heart—"Praise God from whom all blessings flow." And, from the *first* answer to the resolutions, from an eminent *Congregational minister* of Montreal, I quote to you these hopeful, Christian words: "I thank God from the bottom of my heart," he says, "for the resolutions sent me, and for the spirit of the synod, lately held. The day is dawning when all the disciples of our blessed Lord shall be made perfect in one." And then he went on to say: "My father, my grandfather and I have all been Nonconformist ministers; but if terms of honourable reunion could be devised—or rather, if God, in His mercy, would but guide us to them—then all my heart and

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

both my hands should go for unity with the grand, old, historic church of England, the dear and venerable mother of us all." And so good men, of various names, are opening their eyes to the *great evils* of *divisions*, and to "an actual sin against our Lord of tolerating their existence. I believe that the religious heart of Christendom is sick and weary of division, strife and discord, and longs for the restoration of true peace to the great "*household of the faith*." I believe that the prayers of the thousands will surely be heard, "*for the peace of Jerusalem*," and that "*her righteousness shall go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth*," so that Isaiah's prophecy of the church of Christ may surely be accomplished, and *the heathen* shall see her righteousness and all kings her glory (Is. lxii: 1-2).

My brethren, the exaltation of Christ *among the heathen*; and the making His name known on earth, and His saving health among all nations, is the Church's *one great work*. For *this* Christ prayed that His disciples might be *one*, "*that the world might believe*." Forgetting this, men tolerate "divisions" which oppose the prayer, and render impossible the world's believing; because they set before it no "*one faith*," of which they can say, with the delegated authority of Jesus Christ. "Ye must believe it as ye would be saved." The fragments of a kingdom, divided against itself, attempt to subdue the kingdoms of the world to Christ. And heathendom, infidelity and scepticism make reply—"You call upon us to adopt your system, while you are not agreed among yourselves as to what that system is. Your conflicting statements of your own religion

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

neutralize each other, and there remains *nothing* that we can *certainly* believe at all." And so, the *heathen lands* are unconverted; and so, *the heathen, in our midst*, increase.

I spoke of *cause*—and *cure*—for these "divisions." One word of these and I have done. The cause is selfishness. The cure is love. *The cause is selfishness.* Men make the religion of the self-sacrificing Saviour quite a *selfish* thing, by treating it as a matter that concerns *their own souls* only. "Christ died for me: I shall be saved, then, by my faith in Him, no matter of what sect I am." That is very plausible, but also very selfish. Saved you may be, by God's abounding grace, but what high place of honour can you hope for in His coming Kingdom, if you forget the responsibility which, as a subject of His Kingdom here, you have towards kingdoms that are not yet His? Christ died for you, to save your soul. Blessedly true for *you*, but it's the merest fraction of the whole blessed truth. And if you forget the duty of *love to others*, you may even find yourself, at last, among those hapless ones to whom the Lord will say, "I never knew you." Compare with *such selfishness* the records of *redeeming love*. God so loved us as to send His Son into the world to be "*the propitiation for our sins*" (I John iv: 10), and "*not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (I John ii: 2), for the sins of the Jews and the Turks, the heathen Chinese, and the infidels here in our midst. Christ died to wash away the whole world's sin, and you have to help to make that gospel known to all the world. The Lamb was slain that all the world might live, by being taught

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM

the knowledge of His great salvation. Christ sacrificed Himself to set up, on His sacrifice, an *enduring kingdom* which should gather into itself *all other kingdoms*, to constitute a body which should include all men as members, to raise a *mighty army* which should bear forth His standard into all lands. "*One body with one faith*," can soon do this. Divided kingdoms, or divided armies, never can. Wherefore Christ prayed that we might all be one. Love would soon make us one. "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, and then we should be one.*" "All one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity."

And may God grant unto us all, in the great wide charity of His unfathomable love, that, while we are ever true to the *one unchanging creed* of His *divinely-instituted church*, we may, in things not necessary to salvation, show more and more of that sweet *forbearance* and that *love* which our Redeemer showed, a charity which shall indeed hasten His Kingdom and show forth His divinest attributes to men.—Amen.

III

PREPARING FOR THE KING

"*Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*" (John i: 23).

DID it ever strike your minds as *strange*, or inappropriate, or hard, that in the *seasons* which precede the two great Christian festivals, *Christmas* and *Easter*, the church should call her children to the naturally unwelcome duties of *watchfulness* and *penitence* and *prayer*? These *duties*, to the mere worldling, seems so opposite to the bright, joyous character of the *feasts* themselves. Is the *world* wiser than the *church* in the way it prepares for the annual recurrence of a happy Christmas? Have the *butchers*, who deck their stalls with the fattest of fed beasts; or the *grocers*, who display their abundance of earth's kindly fruits; or the *toy-vendors*, who set forth such beautiful stores of their treasures to delight our little ones—have these a better foresight than the church, when they make such ample preparation that all may celebrate the Christmas festival merrily? Do our *homes* outstrip *the church*, in extending a warm welcome, or sending a kind invitation, far and near, to kinsfolk and acquaintances, to friends and neighbours, to join the smiling circles around the cheerful hearths of many a dear old home? Has the old church of Jesus no wishes for a "Merry Christmas," to send forth far and wide; for a "happy and prosperous New Year" for all her

PREPARING FOR THE KING

innumerable sons and daughters? Has she no sympathy with *human* joys, no share in human friendships? Must humanity go apart from *her* to seek its pleasures, or does she refuse to hallow them, or to respond to the sweet songs of human happiness? Then why does she appoint her weeks of watchfulness, and utter her cries of judgment, her preaching of repentance, her warnings to solemn, serious meditation, and anxious, pious preparation?

We may be sure the church does not at all object to, but sympathizes with, and rejoices in the joyful anticipations of each returning Christmas. But, *her preparation* is rather for *spiritual and enduring joy* than for a feast of sensual delights. In doing this she is, really, wiser than the most prudent caterer of worldly feasts; more truly affectionate than the fondest of earthly parents; more sincerely faithful than the staunchest of earthly friends.

Solemn it may be, and *sad*, but the advent teaching is nevertheless salutary and *true*. It teaches us that to put on a smiling face at Christmas, while the heart is heavy with a load of *unrepented sin*, is a bitter mockery. That the merry game with innocent children ill suits the man burdened with guilt which he is neither sorry for, nor striving to forsake. That the Christmas carol and the mirthful fire-side story, from the lips of one who has not, in his heart, Christ's peace, is a song of sadness to the singer, a tale of weariness and woe to the reciter. That he who can feast his body, while he starves his soul, has with him a ghastly skeleton at the festal board. That the joys of Christmas, the blessed birthday of the pure and innocent Christ-

PREPARING FOR THE KING

child, can only be truly known and thoroughly enjoyed by those who are willing to make a Christ-like preparation for it.

If all were spotless saints, we should need to keep no advent, nor give the advent admonitions to repentance. Needless, for perfect saints to pray the advent prayer for grace to cast away the works of darkness. Among modern religious adventures there are (you know) one or two little coteries who deem themselves *all saints*, who fancy that they have *done with sin*, that they are saved already, and that they should have nothing to do with sinners. They keep *no advent* and *no lent*. They scorn our *litanies*, and would not pray an advent prayer like ours. But *the church* of Jesus, like *Jesus Christ Himself*, loves *all* her children, the sinful, the wayward, even the lost and the abandoned, as well as she loves the righteous. She was sent forth, by her Lord (even as He Himself was sent from Heaven, by the Father of us all), to seek and save the perishing and the lost, to rescue the dying and the "dead in trespasses and sins"; to announce to them all the glad tidings of the Saviour's birth; to invite them all to the *great family gathering* that she will surely make; to call them all to meet in peace and good-will around the dear *old homestead* of her holy altars, that none may be excluded from the feast she spreads, or from listening to the *old, old story* she has to tell, or from joining in the *carols* that she delights to sing.

And how shall she do this, but by preparatory calls to watchfulness, and penitence and prayer? "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*," was the direction of our Lord's

PREPARING FOR THE KING

forerunner. "Make straight the way of the Lord," was his message. But how is this to be done? The text tells us—"as saith the prophet Esaias." When we turn to that prophet we find these well-known words—"Every valley shall be exalted; and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight; and the rough places smooth; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together" (Is. xl: 5). There is the general invitation that I spoke of to the great family gathering of the Redeemed in Christ, "all flesh" shall see their Lord's salvation. But mind, that follows the preparation, of which the prophet speaks, as surely as Christmas follows advent. Suffering with Christ must come before rejoicing with Him ever can come.

Study carefully then the preparation which the prophet sets forth.

(First) "Every valley shall be filled." Our lower nature must be overcome; must be exalted to conformity with the pure will of God. The lusts of the flesh tend to debase the soul and make the purity of Christ distasteful to it. "What concord has Christ with Belial (II Cor. vi: 15). What Christmas joy can the Divine Infant bring, in His infinite purity, to the man who is unready to subdue his lusts? As one on a high mountain can hardly breathe the light, thin atmosphere, so does the man, accustomed to the foul atmosphere of vice, stifle and gasp for breath in the rare, pure air of childlike, Christlike innocence with which Christians should and would surround him. Fill up the depths, the valleys, the low places of your sins with your repentance. This invitation is for

PREPARING FOR THE KING

victims of ungodly lusts. Exalt your nature to the higher level of the Incarnate nature of God's son. "Put ye on Christ," by following the innocence of the infant Christ, that so your flesh may see the salvation of your Lord on Christmas Day.

(Secondly) "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low." Pride, poor ambition, inordinate love of money or place, or power—what have such things to do with Christ, or what agreement have they with the pure spirit of the religion that He came here on the first Christmas day to teach us? What place have these beside the lowly crib where lies the majesty of Heaven, the weakest and the lowliest, among all His creatures? Repent, then, any of you, dear brethren, who may be self-satisfied, or proud—any who are greedy, avaricious, too covetous of this world's good things, or place, or name, or changeful fleeting fame. Lower your proud wills and conform them to the word and will of the Incarnate Christ, and so shall Christmas bring holy Christmas joy to you, and you shall be of those who see their Lord's salvation.

(Thirdly) "The crooked shall be made straight." The distorted and false conscience must be rectified. The intentions of your acts must be examined by the standard of the Christ's teaching. Oh, brethren, how few of us are always right and "straight" in heart! How few of us serve God and keep His holy laws with an unselfish love and an absolutely upright heart, doing to others exactly as we would have them do to us! How many of us serve God (even with the poor, miserable service that we do render) rather for the many gifts which He bestows, than because we love

PREPARING FOR THE KING

the Giver! Repent of these errors then, my brethren, in the appointed time. Rectify the false conscience that has allowed you, too easily, to wander from the straight, narrow way. Amend the errors of a "crooked" and perverse intention. Lift up your eyes (in this holy advent time) to the hills, whence cometh your sufficient help! Behold the Saviour cometh! He who, in the hour of His nativity, was weaker than the weakest among you, cometh to give you strength (according to your need)—strength to make and keep all your ways straight according to God's word. As you do this, in singleness of heart, the purest pleasures of old Christmas shall be yours, and you shall surely see the Lord's salvation.

(Fourthly) "*And the rough ways shall be made smooth.*" And what are our "*rough ways,*" in the sight of God, but the ways of *stubborn hearts*, and the *wilful ways of sin*? Those who have travelled much on rough roads will know what is meant here. "*The way of transgressors is (proverbially) hard*" (Prov. xiii: 15). And what sort of preparation for a happy Christmas is the possession of a hardened heart? As the Canadian traveller on rough roads longs for the snow to make the rough road smooth, and clean, and pleasant, so must the travellers on life's journey, who have gone on too long in the rugged ways of sin, look for God's grace to take away the stony heart out of their flesh and give them hearts of flesh (Ezek. xi: 19), so that they may walk henceforth in pleasant ways and peaceful paths (Prov. iii: 17). Let tears of a true repentance soften those hard hearts of yours, dear friends, so that the grace of the Christ-child may

PREPARING FOR THE KING

enter in and dwell there. Prepare the way for Him by *advent meditation* and *fearless self-examination*, and so shall you bring forth the worthy fruits of penitence; and the joys and the glad tidings of the Saviour's birthday shall be yours.

Yes, brethren, advent is the season for meditation, penitence, and prayer, in view of the approaching Christmas. We seek a closer and a dearer union with our Lord. And for this, our repentance must be entwined with prayer. To *prayer* the church endeavours to incite us, by the beautiful language of the *last advent collect*, which brings us up to Christmas day:—"O Lord, raise up (WE PRAY THEE) *Thy* power and come among us." So may He come among us, in the exercise of a mighty *unseen* power. So may He—Who (as at this Christmas time) took on Himself our nature and became the child of a pure virgin (being at the same time the Everlasting God, Creator and Redeemer)—so may He "come among us, and, with His great might, succor us." A little atom, He, of human flesh, at Bethlehem; yet ruler of the universe, and infinite God. A helpless infant, He, wrapped in the swaddling clothes and lying on the mother's knee; yet His hands uphold and guide the universe; and His precious blood wins the salvation of the world. Well may we *pray* Him, in our *last advent collect*, "with His great might, to *succour us*, that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are, indeed, sore let and hindered in the race set before us, His bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us."

For this object we make our advent preparation

PREPARING FOR THE KING

for a happy Christmas. *Christmas Day* brings a *great message* to a sin-stained world. It tells us that God came to earth in the form of a little child to teach us that *every human life* from earliest *childhood* belongs to God. God was manifested within the compass of *a single body* to teach us the wondrous possibilities of every *single life*. The Christmas story places us on holy ground, and we must come to it in a reverent and devout frame of mind. Not with a guilty conscience must we come. Not with hearts burdened and defiled with sin. Not with fleshly lusts unpurged, unpardoned. Not with the gaps and valleys of our souls unfilled. The mountains of false pride must be brought down. The crookedness of our ways must be made straight. And the rough ways of our many sins must be made smooth before the Lord. *We* must *prepare* for Christ's coming, as *John the Baptist* bade Israel to prepare for it. Let us repent and bring forth the worthy fruits of our repentance. Let not the cares of life too much distract us. Let not its follies turn us from the narrow way. Let not our souls go heavily, or sluggishly, in our Master's service. Let not the trials and dangers of the way dismay us. Let us lift up our eyes to the holy hills for help. Let us lift up our hearts to Him whose great might can succour us. And the best Christmas cheer—"peace on earth, goodwill towards men"—shall certainly be ours. The sins and sorrows of the past shall be remembered never more against us. And we shall *enjoy Christmas* as true *followers of Christ*, living in constant fellowship with Him. Amen.

IV

THE KING'S MAJESTY

"I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." (Rev. xxii: 13).

FROM the *first*, this was ever our Redeemer's title; and to the *last* it ever will be. The Name which God gave Himself, when speaking to Moses, was "*I am*"—a name which includes all past, and comprehends all future, and is but a synonym of the Name before us in the text. "*In the beginning, God*"—these were the first words that Moses wrote of God. "*In the beginning was the Word*"—this was Saint John's testimony of the same God, "*made flesh*," and dwelling here among us according to the blessed message of Christmas day. The question which we should ask and answer for ourselves is this—Is Christ to be, for us, that which His Name implies?

"*The beginning and the end*"—these words have an especial meaning for us just now, when we are brought to the *end* of one year, and to the *beginning* of another. Although *advent* is the beginning of the church's year, still we are forcibly reminded, by our *almanacs*, and in many other ways, of that *secular division* of our time, which brings another year to an end and calls the next day, "*new year's day*." Every

THE KING'S MAJESTY

new year's day, like a birthday, or any other event of special import in our lives, emphatically marks a period, passes a station on life's journey, comes to a turning point whence we may well look backward as well as forward on our way. The young care chiefly to look *forward*; but as we grow older, it is perhaps easier to look *back*. And I am sure it is a very wise thing to look back often, to review the pages of a *closing year*, to see how God has led you through its various events, to ask how far your Lord has been "the beginning and the end" of all of them for you; how far you have begun, continued and ended all your works in Him, under His favour, and looking for His help; or, how far you have been living lives and doing deeds He hates—such lives and deeds as you deplore and would fain forget, but which you know He must remember, and has written down against you. Turn back, for example, the leaves in the *last year's record* of your lives. Learn and treasure up their lessons in your hearts. Ponder them in your minds in the light of the Christian faith; and many a past event, which you little understood at the time, will give its evidence of God's guiding hand, and shall be, as it were, to you the voice of one who "being dead, yet speaketh."

A careful minister keeps careful record, in his *parish register*, of the changes in the lives of individuals and families committed to his care, the *baptisms*, *marriages* and *burials* among his flock. What a host of lessons and admonitions might be gathered from the record of a single year! For some there have been the memories of bright, happy faces, and the music of *mar-*

THE KING'S MAJESTY

riage bells. For some, the remembrance of a *sick chamber*, sadness, suffering, watchfulness, weariness, and woe. Perhaps the stillness and the silence of the *deathbed* have followed as the best relief, and then there is the memory of the white, still face, passionless and peaceful, and then the *beloved dust* returning to its kindred dust. For one, the year has been brightened by the beginning of a *first happy love*. For another, it has been saddened by *separation*, or grievous sorrow, or irreparable loss. For one, there have been the laughter and the loveliness of *baby lips*, the little cares that are such pleasures too, the little cryings that a caress can comfort. For another, there have been lamentation, and weeping, and mourning, the bitter sorrow that refuses to be comforted because the *little ones are not*. But all these things have been as teachers, brethren, to the patient subjects of them. They are *holy teachers*, sent in truest love from Him who is "the beginning and the end" of all that ever happens to us in our heavenward way, "the author and the finisher" of the Faith that is to see Him and own His over-ruling hand. All these are teachers sent to dispose our hearts, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, to attain to safer and securer things, to induce us not to cling too closely to the things of earth, "to set our affections on things above" (Col. iii: 2), and, as the years fly past, "to apply our hearts to wisdom" (Ps. xc: 12)—to the wisdom that is "above rubies" (Job xxviii: 18), the knowledge of God's will, the knowledge of God's Son, the knowledge that shall enable us year after year so to pass "through things temporal"—

THE KING'S MAJESTY

temporal sorrows or joys, temporal losses or gains, temporal pleasures or pains—so as not finally to lose, but blessedly to win and everlastingly enjoy, the things eternal (Collect for Fourth Sunday after Trinity).

Be assured then, brethren, of the *good providence of God*. Through all the year past, there was never a sorrow nor joy, never a danger nor deliverance, never a reason for care nor any cause of happiness, which was not sent by our Great Teacher to be a *precious lesson* to the eyes that see, and the ears that hear what the Spirit has to say unto the church of God. Review carefully the record of the past. On *God's* part, you will see *blessings*, more than you have ever deserved. On *your* own part, you will see many *sins committed* and many *duties left undone*. You will remember the unjust thought, the unkind word, the unfair deed that cannot be altered or amended now. But though they cannot be recalled, they can be repented of. And, brethren, if only you will indeed *repent* of them, they shall be all forgiven,—and you shall *end* each passing year with Him who is "*the Omega*," the end of all. If only you will repent of and forsake the follies and the sins that you remember, you shall be enabled to start fresh in each New Year, run better than you ever ran before the race that is set before you, "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. xii: 1-2). "*Pardoned*," shall be His gracious whisper to you for *the year that is gone*. "*Strengthened, helped and prospered*," shall be His gracious promise for the *New Year* begun.

"The race that is set before you, *looking unto Jesus*"—these words remind you that you must look before you into the *future*, as well as backward into

THE KING'S MAJESTY

the *past*. Indeed, our looking back is useless unless it helps to make our going forward better. It is of little use to *end* the old year with penitential thoughts of Him who is *the Omega*, the End; unless we *begin* the New Year by looking unto Him who is *the Alpha*, as well as the Omega, the Beginning as well as the End.

"Behold," says your King, who sitteth on the throne, "*Behold, I make all things new*" (Rev. xxi: 5). Then ask Him now, at the beginning of another year, to "*make all things new*" for you—to create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you (Ps. li: 10). Then *begin* the New Year with Him. If you are sorrowful, He will inspire you with *new hopes*. To the sordid, He will give *new aims* and higher objects of desire. To the worldly, He will give *new thoughts* and better, purer, worthier interests. To the doubting, He will give *new light*, increase of faith, a clearer knowledge of His word. To all, He will give *new resolutions* for a higher life and renewed strength to keep them. Are you not all, in varying degrees, dissatisfied with your past way of life? Then look to Him, who is the beginning of all good within you, to enable you to change it, to *end* the evil of it, and to cultivate the good. If you have been thinking only of yourself, walking in your own ways, seeking your own pleasures, working your own wills (which have been often very evil wills), *begin the new year* with Him, who is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end," by saying, as He said—"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Bow down no longer, as multitudes do, before the miserable idol, Self, but with the

THE KING'S MAJESTY

little flock of true worshippers, adore, and follow Him who "pleased not Himself" (Rom. xv: 3).

There will be *many paths* before you in the coming year. Avoid each path where work, or pleasure, or pursuit prevents you "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. xii: 2). He says He is "the Alpha and the Omega." Then let Him be "*the beginning and the end*" of all *your* hopes and plans and schemes, of all your work and all your life, throughout the coming years. How often have I reminded you that each passing year begins by naming the name of Jesus—that our *new year's day* is also the *circumcision day* of Jesus, when *He received His name*. In that sense He, with His Name, which is above every name, is at the beginning and the end of all our years. As every *book* must have its *title* on its title-page, so every fresh volume of the record of your lives has on its title-page the Name of Jesus. May every passing year be in harmony with this sacred Name. Remember the *circumcision collect*—"that our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may, in all things, obey God's holy will, through Jesus Christ His Son." Mark the words of this collect, "*In all things.*" I have known men who were good at business, but good at nothing else. I have known others, good in the domestic sphere, good husbands and kind fathers, who yet were "slothful in business," or dishonest and untrue, and, surely, not "serving the Lord." But the *circumcision collect* should rectify all that. "*In all things obey God's blessed will.*" And what is that, but to have *Christ* with us as "*the beginning and the end*" of all? As business men desire to have upon

THE KING'S MAJESTY

their books good names, let us inscribe the Name that is above every name, the Name of Jesus, on the books of our lives, and so shall all our intercourse with that holy life be blessed and sanctified. At *home*, set up that matchless name, which is above all names, "the Alpha and Omega" of all home cares and pleasures. Make the Child Jesus known among *your little ones*; and mercy and truth shall meet together, and righteousness and peace shall kiss each other there (Ps. lxxxv: 10). Blessed shall be that house where, like the *home in Bethany*, the *Saviour* is always made a *welcome guest*, where *every day begins* with prayer and praise to God, and *ends* with the thank-offering for mercies received and the confession and absolution of its sins. Whether it be the luxurious mansion of the rich, or the barely furnished hut of the poor, it shall be equally the glorious *palace* of the *great and mighty King*, adorned with the ornaments of grace, and beautiful with the beauty of holiness.

Accept these reflections, dear brethren, as my message to you for the opening year. And may our Blessed Lord, of His great grace, come into many hearts and homes and *reign* where hitherto He has been a stranger. May the light of God's Holy Spirit shine into your hearts to convince you of your many blessings received, and your many faults committed. And may you henceforth "do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah vi: 8). May He be indeed the Alpha and the Omega of the New Year to you. At its *beginning*, trustfully *commit your ways unto the Lord*. At the beginning of its *every day*, *renew this trust*. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him

THE KING'S MAJESTY

and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii: 6). So long as He directs them, they can but lead you to that end which is everlasting life and peace. We may find sorrow and trouble here, the necessary trials of the way, hut in the *end* we shall find the *peace* which passeth human understanding, and the *joy* that knows no end. *Amen.*

THE KING'S GRACE

"Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." (John vi: 37).

HERE is the *substance of the gospel* of our Lord and Saviour in a dozen words. The gracious assurance of *salvation*, given repeatedly throughout the entire word of God, is nowhere given more concisely than in the words before us. Mark well the words, "*him that cometh.*" There are *no exceptions* as to who may come; and God is evidently no respecter of persons. The text includes all sorts of persons, in all ages, from all parts, and therefore includes all sorts of *sinner*s in its comprehensive words. Are we not reminded of the faithful saying, worthy to be received of all, and regularly rehearsed in our communion service, "*that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (I Tim. i:15)? Liars, harlots, drunkards, thieves, sinners of every sort, whose sins are as "*scarlet*" or "*red like crimson*" (Is. i: 18)—all are included in the Saviour's gracious words, on the condition that they "*come*" to Him. What then is this "*coming*" to Him, and wherefore do we come? It is easily named and, at first sight, it may appear as easily done, but I tell you, dear friends, that it demands the *constant, steadfast effort* of your whole lives to do this seemingly easy thing; for it will be the constant,

THE KING'S GRACE

determined endeavour of your unslumbering enemy, *the Devil*, to keep you ever far *away* from Him who thus invites you to His presence, and He will use every allurement, and every subtle influence in his power to carry out his purpose.

No one will ever come willingly to the Saviour until he *feels his need* of Him, and realizes wherefore he is asked to come. Until you are thoroughly convinced of *sin*, and of the incessant struggle against it which you must make, you will not even begin a conscious approach to Christ. Until you are watchfully aware of *sin around you*, and convicted of its presence, too, *within you*, you cannot even, really, wish to come. Unless you know you are in danger, you are not likely to cry out for help. Until you feel the pangs of actual want, you are not likely to go forth to beg. It was when he "*began to be in want*," and not before, that the repentant *prodigal* cried out—"I will arise and go to my father." It is the sense of sin acquired by examining your hearts and lives, and judging your actions by their secret motives, which alone will induce you to accept the invitation of the text, which will bring you thankfully to Him whose love for sinners is so boundless that its breadth and length and depth and height pass human comprehension (Eph. iii: 18), and whose sacred name of Jesus was given unto Him because He would "*save His people from their sins*" (Matt. i: 21).

Oh, from what foolish errors many would be saved, if they would remember the meaning of their Saviour's Name! How often does one man ask another, "*Are you saved?*" and glibly talks about *salvation*, while

confusion reigns in the minds of both, as to the first principles of true religion! What they talk about is merely salvation from some *future penalty*. They know that the Gospel proclaims salvation; that, from the first, the good news for every soul has been that "all might be saved"; but do they ever consider *what* it is that they are saved *from*? Let us ask that question now: *From what is a soul saved by the Saviour?* The far too common answer is—"from punishment." The pulpit is not blameless here, for half the truth is often stated for the whole, and preachers quite commonly declare that Christ gave up His glory and came down from heaven—*merely* to save men from the *punishment* of sin. He did indeed come down to save them from sin's punishment, but only as a *secondary* result. His supreme desire and object was to save them "*from their sins*." Deliverance from punishment follows as the direct result of Christ's deliverance of His people from their sins. This was made very clear when the holy angel announced the *Saviour's name* (Matt. i: 21). That heavenly visitor said quite distinctly, "*He shall save His people from their sins*"; not *in* their sins, nor from the *penalty* of sin. The error that I speak of is widespread. It should not be found among church people, because the wording of our *scriptural liturgy* should save us from it. But, alas! how few heed the careful scriptural teaching of our prayer book, and so the faith of many has been enfeebled and emasculated by novelties and false teaching from which their prayer book might have protected them. The gospel, it is true, teaches deliverance from future punishment, but only as the result of Christ's

THE KING'S GRACE

deliverance of His people from their sins. See how this idea is forcibly presented in *the Litany*. After the *invocations* to the Trinity, for *mercy* upon us all as sinners, we pray:—"From sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil, from Thy *wrath* and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord deliver us." Here the *deliverance from sin* precedes the *deliverance from wrath*. Then we go on to particularize the *leading sins*, such as pride and fornication, and pray the Lord to deliver us from *these*. Later on, we plead the mighty *miracles of grace* performed for sinful man by *God the Son* and *God the Holy Ghost*"—"By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation, by Thy holy nativity and circumcision, by Thy baptism, fasting and temptation, by Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, Good Lord deliver us." Then, at last, we pray in gospel order, "in the *hour of death*, and in the *day of judgment*, Good Lord deliver us." In asking deliverance from our sins, we do *not* expect to become *absolutely free* from all sin *in this world*, or be absolutely perfect, but we ask to be delivered from sin's dominion over soul and body, we ask to be delivered from sin, and then from wrath, and thus enabled to stand before God in the great day of judgment.

It is a mean, abject and degrading view of the religion of Christ Jesus, which practically regards it as meant merely to deliver us from future punishment, which would debase the holy gospel into a mere *fire-escape* by which the soul should be delivered from the burning wrath of God.

THE KING'S GRACE

The gospel is the proclamation of deliverance from a *present* curse. It is the promise of blessing to be had *here and now*, as well as in the *future*, and that blessing is *salvation* and *deliverance* in *body, soul* and *spirit*, from iniquity, from wilful transgression, and from rebellion against the Lord Almighty. Christianity, surely, is not lower, but something higher than *morality*. Who is there who walks uprightly with his fellows, and behaves honestly in worldly work, and scorns unworthy actions of all sorts, who does it from the mere fear of *penalties*? Does not such an one act from self-respect rather than from fear of punishment? And shall the standard of *the gospel* be lower than that of *mere morality*? Will we come to the Saviour only to ask Him to save us from punishment? Will it not be better, nobler far, to come to Him, "who is able and willing to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think," and pray for His help to save us *from those sins* which would entail the punishment? Will you cry only—"from Thy deserved wrath, good Lord, deliver us," and not pray first, and more earnestly, that He would graciously deliver you from the rebellion or the deadly *sin* that has deserved the *wrath*. Salvation, then, for which you are invited to come to Jesus, is salvation from *sin*, deliverance out of sin, victory over sin, mastery and conquest of the enemy within you, which if not conquered will ultimately destroy your spiritual life. The salvation you seek belongs to *this world* and to *this life*. Here you must pray for it and work for it. Here, says Saint Paul, you must "*work out your own salvation*" (Phil. ii: 12): now, in the accepted time, you must win it

THE KING'S GRACE

if you would hope hereafter to enjoy it. Be clear, dear brethren, and be honest with yourselves about this matter, for error here may fatally deceive you. If you take the low view I have condemned, if you esteem salvation as merely an escape from penal suffering, then you will postpone repentance, defer amendment, and make that most miserable, most ruinous mistake—a blundering and tardy death-bed preparation. Oh, do not so postpone your preparation for the hour of death and for the day of judgment, if you desire your Lord's deliverance then! He, by His holy gospel, calls you, now, to come to Him for salvation from the sins that beset you, and "*to take the water of life freely*" (Rev. xxii: 17), to live in Him, and with Him, as His servant here, that so, hereafter, where He is, even there also shall ye be, and live for ever with Him as His friends. Nay, even *now* He says to you, "*Ye are My friends if ye do what I command you*" (John xv: 14).

By the *precious privileges of His holy church*, by heartfelt confession, solemn chant and lowly litany, and highest eucharistic praise, you acknowledge His benefits, and the service and adoration that are His due. Will any of you, then, refuse *these means* of His present grace? Will you regard salvation merely as an escape from punishment for which, since it is future, you need *not come to Him* as yet? Will you leave His work undone in your best working days, while yet you accept and enjoy His bounties? Can you, dare you, expect that after such negligence, a whine for pity on your dying bed, shall give you "*life*," the life that you have heretofore refused? Our Lord,

THE KING'S GRACE

in the parable of *the ten virgins*, described such a belated cry under the figure of a foolish virgin's knock at a closed door. Remember, God's rewards are only offered to His good and faithful servants. Half-truths about salvation not only result in deferred repentance, but directly encourage infidelity. Hard-headed men will not believe in a salvation which they are told is offered to mankind while they remain *in their sins*, and merely as a *release from punishment*. And so, without carefully discerning between the right and wrong exposition of the gospel, they disclaim the whole blessed revelation and seek refuge in rationalism and agnosticism. We must be careful not to think or speak of God's salvation as being merely from punishment. The salvation that God offers is *from sin*.

Often, as it was in David's case and many others, *punishment* and *pain* are *over-ruled* by God for His own glory, and by them the sinner is brought *closer* to His Saviour. To deliver man from the dread slavery of sin, Christ suffered His bitter pains and endured the sharpness of a very cruel death. To suffer and to die for man, came the Holy Lamb of God to earth. And men must *suffer* with Him *here*, if they would *reign* with Him hereafter. The same voice that said, "*Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out*," said also, "*If any will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*" (Matt. xvi: 24). He told the rich young man that he must give up his one darling sin of *covetousness* and so, suffering loss, come after Him (Matt. xix: 21). And in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, He paints the picture of

THE KING'S GRACE

the broad and narrow ways, and so teaches us that a man cannot indulge in the *pleasures of sin* here on earth, and yet expect deliverance from punishment and everlasting life hereafter. No. "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die,*" we read; but we also read, "*When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*" Jesus, we may be very sure, made no mistake. He knew the enemy. He felt the curse. A wise physician, He treated the cause of man's disease, rather than its effects. He came to "save his people from their sins." He saved them at the inestimable cost of His own precious blood. If we *follow Christ*, we must likewise live a life of *sacrifice and service*, we must work out and win that which His priceless sacrifice has placed within our reach. And, therefore, dear brethren, if you are in real earnest concerning your soul's salvation, you must realize that you have entered on a *lifelong warfare* with the curse of *sin*. You must remember that it will ruin you, utterly, if you do not get rid of it, and therefore, in Christ's name and in His way, you must stand up against it and "*quit you like men*" (I Cor. xvi: 13). As soldiers of Christ, you must fight manfully under His banner, against it; must fight and conquer your great spiritual foe. Christ will in no wise cast out one who comes to Him for help.

Salvation is the Lord's *free gift* to all; only, like all His other gifts, as the *sunlight*, the *summer rain* or the *fruitful field*, it becomes an *individual* blessing by *appropriation* and *use*. But far more surely than patient toil produces harvest fruits, shall every soul's

THE KING'S GRACE

salvation be wrought out by that soul's own toil and tears.

Pray, therefore, in your spiritual warfare (as the church prays in hers)—that because you cannot continue in safety without God's succour, He would preserve you ever more by His help and goodness, through Jesus Christ your Lord. (Collect 16th Sunday after Trinity). *Amen.*

VI

THE SINNER'S NEED

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
(I John i, 8: 9).

I SUPPOSE that not many of us would say in so many words, "*that we have no sin,*" but for all that, we are apt, too generally, to ignore, forget and lose sight of our sinfulness, and so may really "*deceive ourselves,*" in the manner stated by Saint John. To correct this error and guard against this danger, is *one* of the leading *objects* of these *lenten days*. Watchfulness is a safeguard against it. Self-examination, contemplation, and confession of our spiritual state, and the penitential duties to which those exercises lead, supply another. The *Ash Wednesday collect* which we offer all *through lent*, is a prayer that we may so *lament our sins* and *acknowledge our wretchedness* that we may obtain perfect remission and forgiveness. And the text says that if we confess them, God will forgive them.

"If we confess them." Then *confession* is essential, And since the subject is so frequently discussed and so much misunderstood and misrepresented, it may be edifying and desirable to consider what the church

THE SINNER'S NEED

does, and does not, teach, concerning it. With the *opening sentence*, "If we confess our sins," and the *general confession* which begins our worship, in our minds, we must all see that the confession of our sins is meant to be a *regular portion* of our *devotional system*. It is the practical and habitual recognition of our sinfulness. We confess not only our *sins*, but also our *sinfulness*, or our proneness to commit sin, even though we do not commit it. That is a good thing to own because it must help to humble us. "*This infection of nature doth remain*" (says our ninth article) "*even in them that are regenerated.*" Baptism does not remove it. "It remits the condemnation, but does not remove all taint of original sin," as Bishop Harold Browne remarks. It merely gives grace to resist it. Nor does the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's supper remove it. It only gives strength to know it, and fight it, and conquer it. Nothing removes it from us here below. And therefore, unto our lives' end, we are to endeavour "*worthily to lament our sins and to acknowledge our wretchedness.*" Of that, the text reminds us, plainly. If, then, confession is really to be a portion of our religious system, it must not be a mere *general self-accusation*—vague, unsearching and indefinite—but the result of honest, close, and sifting self-examination. And such self-examination, to be honest, close, and sifting, must look, not only at the sin, but at the sinfulness, must look, not only at the *actions* done, but at the *motives* of the heart from which the actions spring—the dangerous "*devices and desires of our own heart,*" of which the general confession speaks. It is called "*the general confession*" be-

THE SINNER'S NEED

cause it eschews all *details*, and its language is adapted to *universal needs*. But like all the other common prayers, it is intended to be made particular by each individual's application of it to himself and his own sins. In our confession we plead the "*promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.*" On Jesus Christ our Lord are *laid* (or more literally *are caused to meet*) *the iniquities of us all* (see Is. liii: 6—margin).

The old figure was, that *the lamb*, or "sin-offering," stood *in the midst*, and the elders of the congregation, standing around him, made their hands meet upon his head; while all the people stretched their hands out towards him, as towards a common centre. And so with our true worship of the true "sin-offering," Christ Jesus, and so with our confession, in His Holy Name. He is the sacrifice for sin once for all offered, and now present in the midst of us, gathered in His Name. On Him do we desire to lay our sins. Our contrite hearts encircle Him. Each brings his own burden; each individual heart its private woes, its special sorrows, its peculiar temptation or besetting sin. And, thankfully, each lays it, with the *outstretched hand of faith*, upon the Saviour's sacred and devoted head. "The Lord hath made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him" (Is. liii: 6—margin). *Each soul's iniquity*, of which that soul alone is conscious, is made to meet with that of others in the *common centre* of Jesus Christ's atonement. And that is *public confession*, according to the *bible pattern*, and the *church's rule*. And when it has thus been made, and ended with the safe appeal to the Divine promises, "declared

THE SINNER'S NEED

unto mankind in Jesu Christ our Lord," the priest rises from his knees (the congregation still remaining in the humble attitude of supplication) and, under Divine authority, delegated to him by virtue of his apostolic ordination, he solemnly and officially announces *pardon and absolution*.

But to whom is this announcement made? Is it for all the people? Is it for those who are just straggling late into the presence of the sin-offering? Is it for those who have been sitting carelessly, taking no heed of, or part in, the confession? No, no; for the minister has no such priestly power—but it is for all those who "*truly repent and unfeignedly believe Christ's holy gospel*." To each of these, each heavy-laden, sin-burdened heart, does Christ's ambassador declare that the victim has been slain for it, and that "*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth it from all its sin*." And this is *public absolution*, based on the bible and declared by the church's ancient rule.

And now we come to a *question*, which we ought not to shirk, because there is so much misunderstanding of it among the church's members, and such gross misrepresentation of it by the church's foes. And that question is, "Does or does not England's branch of the catholic church recommend to her members, in this matter of confession, something of a more specific character than that which has been mentioned? And I take my answer directly from her prayer book, and reply:—"As a general rule, No; in exceptional cases, Yes." And the *exceptional cases* are two. One is that of *serious sickness* and the probable approach of death, the patient's conscience being very sorely bur-

THE SINNER'S NEED

dened with the remembrance of unrepented sins. The rule is written in plain language in the order for *the visitation of the sick*, and has not materially been changed from the first ages of the church:—“*Then shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.*”

The *other* exceptional case refers to that sacred rite, so much mistaken and so sadly slighted, but which God's holy word and church alike assure us is essential to salvation—the *holy communion* of our Saviour's sacrifice. In the *first invitation* to the holy table it is distinctly said:—“*Because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you who by this means (i.e., by self-examination, previously referred to) cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort and counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with spiritual counsel and advice to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.*” Now, what is there here but the plainest of common sense? The extremely unhappy case supposed may not be very common among those who desire communion, but that there are such cases, most clergyman must know. And if self-examination and acknowledgment of sin were but more general and honest, more consciences would be awakened, and more souls would be disturbed and alarmed *here*, to their “*great and endless comfort*”

THE SINNER'S NEED

in the world to come. Look for a moment at the matter by the well-known rules of analogy. We are all distressed more or less, at times, in *mind*, in *body*, or *estate*. If it be *the body*, and the distress be grievous, we go to *the doctor*. If it be *our estate* which is in disorder, we go to *the lawyer*. And in both cases, we seek those persons to consult them privately. We speak, under God, to their ear alone. We make, in fact, to them, "auricular confession" as to the state of our health, or our affairs. Now, Christ's ministers are spiritual physicians sent by Him to apply His healing balm, the medicine of His holy word and sacraments, to every sin-sick soul, to every troubled or care-harassed spirit. And if the conscience of one of Christ's poor members be so sorely troubled, so burdened that he cannot ease or quiet it himself, cannot find rest unto his soul!—by reason of what may appear to him conflicting statements in God's word concerning the sinner's position in the sight of God—where shall he turn, and to whom shall he go for counsel and advice, if not to the "ambassador" of Christ, whose bounden duty, and whose joy it is, to lead the sinner to his Saviour? "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ" (says Saint Paul, speaking of the ordained ministry) "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. v: 20). In this "ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. v: 18), the spiritual pastor is often baffled by the impenetrable reserve of those to whom he ministers; and, on the other hand, our ministrations to the sick and dying are more or less hopeful, intelligent and fruitful, when there is confidence, and openness, mani-

THE SINNER'S NEED

fested by the patient, as regards the real state of his spiritual health.

Is it reasonable for a sick man to expect help from a *doctor* from whom he will yet reserve the knowledge of his symptoms? Is it fair for a client to claim legal help, and yet keep from his *lawyer's* ear important circumstances of his peculiar case? As fair and as reasonable is it to treat a doctor or a lawyer thus as for a weary, heavy-laden sinner to look for the consolations of a *pastor's* visit, while yet he will in no way "*open to him his grief,*" and by keeping him in ignorance of his spiritual ill-health, will force him to confine himself to vague and pointless generalities. But some may deem that all this is something like the Romish doctrine of habitual and compulsory confession. For since all are sin-sick—and we all admit that spiritual health is not in us—should we not all resort *regularly* to our spiritual adviser?

Brethren, I say no, emphatically. The doctrine of confession, set forth in our prayer books and bibles, is essentially and fundamentally different from that of Rome. With *Rome*, it is *the rule*; with *us*, the *exception*, as you have plainly seen. With Rome, it is compulsory, and therefore likely to be abused. With us, it is purely voluntary, and therefore only likely to be employed where the need of it is felt. With Rome, because it is compulsory and a rule, it often becomes crystallized into a mere dead formality, the lamentable effect of which has been to throw the soul upon man's wisdom, man's mediation, and man's most miserably erratic judgment. With us, because it is exceptional and so purely voluntary, *Christ's minister* takes his

THE SINNER'S NEED

proper and appointed place, as one commissioned to expound God's word and to apply its healing balm to every really troubled, sorrow-stricken, anxious soul. Anxious souls only are invited, and they only when they desire spiritual advice, and are unable else to quiet an uneasy conscience.

You are not *compelled* to send for a *doctor*, although you may be sick. You are not *compelled* to employ a *lawyer*, although your affairs may be deranged. And neither are you *compelled*, by any rule or rubric of the church, to send for the assistance of any of her *ministers*, so long as you honestly consider you can do as well without them.

I think the analogy that I have employed holds good throughout, and that I have set before you plainly and exactly what the church holds and teaches about this duty of confession. These are days in which the doctrines of the church are being more and more looked into, and, thank God, better known, and consequently more approved. What all her doctrines really are, not only we, her members, but all who can read the English prayer book, may for themselves find out. We invite the examination, and ask a careful and close comparison of the prayer book with the holy scriptures. And if any of her members cannot conform to, or believe the church's teaching, they should not in common honesty remain her members. But, in this matter of confession, to whom will they go? Almost *every denomination* of Christians practises it in some form or other. In some, you will be expected to *retail your experiences* of religious feelings. In others, before each administration of communion you

THE SINNER'S NEED

will undergo a somewhat *searching interview* with the pastor. And it will be only as you come back to the really *ancient system of the church* you will find that, though you can have confession if you want it, or if it will be of any comfort to you, it is not imperative, it is not compulsory, it is not even the common rule. And in regard to the church's chief ordinance, the holy communion, though you will indeed be *warned* most solemnly against the irreverent or careless reception of it—*or* “*not discerning the Lord's Body*”—there will be *no other test* applied, and you will be left to the guidance of your own awakened and instructed consciences. As you obey their spiritually guided dictates, you will find yourselves all invited to the sacred feast, all urged to come as *sinner*s to the *sinner*s' Friend.

Irrespective of *compulsory confession, rehearsal of experiences, or any human interference*, of what kind soever, you will be *bidden*, in the Name of God you will be *called*, in Christ's behalf you will be *exhorted*, as you love your own salvation, to be *partakers* of this holy communion. The poor, *weak* conscience, the poor, distracted, devil-tortured soul may often require to be *privately* admonished, and *privately* encouraged. But in *private* interviews or *public* worship the *church's* voice will always be *the same*.

And *this* will ever be its message—“*Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.*” (Heb. xii: 1-2).

“*Looking unto Jesus*”—in *public*, or in *private*, this is the church's constant cry. Jesus is *her* only

THE SINNER'S NEED

Way. He is her *Truth*, her *Life*; therefore distrust her not.

"*Look unto Me,*" He cries by the mouth of His holy prophet (Is. xlv: 22). "*Look unto Jesus,*" His church faithfully and unceasingly repeats, and she points her heart-broken, sin-burdened children to the cross. The outstretched arms of the crucified Christ bespeak the same loving invitation which often fell from His lips—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Amen.

VII

MIGHTY TO SAVE

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." (Luke xxiii: 43)

TO the Saviour, dying on the cross, there came *two cries*, from the two malefactors who were subjected, like Himself, to the extreme penalties of the Roman law. The *first cry* was—"If Thou be Christ, save thyself and us" (Luke xxiii: 39). It came from a hard, unrepentant heart, derisive, faithless, hopeless,—and received *no answer*. The *second* was, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke xxiii: 42). It came from a heart touched by the Saviour's love, and longing for His grace, convinced of sin and owning the justice of its punishment—and was at once answered in the *blessed promise*, "*To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*" Very differently did *Christ's death* affect those *two thieves*. The one, to the last, joined in the abuse and coarse derision of the Jews, while the other savingly yielded to the attractive influence of the dying Christ. And yet, surely, that sweet attraction must have extended to them both alike, for He had said, in reference to that very hour, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto Me" (John' xii: 32).

Such is the influence of the holy gospel *always*. It is preached equally to all. The self-same message of salvation is offered equally to all, and on the same

unalterable terms. And Christ assumes to all men the self-same attitude of love. But some, like the scribes and pharisees before His cross, will heedlessly deride, and practically despise His love; while His least word will stir the slumbering pulses of the sin-laden hearts of others, and bring them all broken, penitent and contrite to sue for mercy at the Saviour's feet. And so, to the one, the gospel is "*a savour of life unto life,*" and at the same time "*a savour of death unto death*" to the other. (II Cor. ii: 16). This *separating effect* does follow even the most faithful *preaching of the cross*; and we do see constantly repeated the same work that went on in the hearts of the two malefactors, who were alike in so many of their circumstances, and yet so unlike in this: that *the one yielded himself to God's grace*, and laid hold of the salvation offered, while *the other turned from the grace* and from the flowing flood of pardon, and derided, and despaired, and died. The lesson is that the sinner is kept from his Saviour by *his own* perverse and hard impenitence. Turn from *the hardened thief* and see *the scoffing crowd*, and mark the same lesson there—so needful for us all to learn. I need not point you to *the Roman soldiers*, for they were mere instruments in others' hands. But look at *the Jewish rabbis, the chief priests, the elders*, those who had caused the crucifixion, and now gazed on it with hatred and contempt of their meek, willing victim. Remember that these men were reputed the respectable, religious, educated men of their day. Remember that they led a life of outward blamelessness and rigorous sanctity, and you will see that *what unfits men's hearts for the reception*

MIGHTY TO SAVE

of their Saviour, what prevents them from simple, needful trust in His atoning love, is, very often, *not gross profligacy, not heinous crime nor flagrant sin*, for these are often absent, but rather the miserable *self-complacency*, the dangerous, fatal *self-sufficiency* of which Christ had so frequently convicted the religious leaders of His day. As He condemned it, and despised it *then*, be sure, my brethren, He must detest and abhor it *now*. "*We are the men*," said they, in their pride of heart—"we are the men who know the laws of Moses and the traditions of the elders, and we judge this man's teaching—no: as it affects our hearts or consciences—but as it tallies with our rabbinical learning and our ideas of the ancient laws. Let common people be guided, or be gulled, by what affects the common human heart, but we, in our superiority of learning, need no such plain and practicable gospel as this man taught, and we reject it utterly." "Dost Thou teach us?" (John ix: 34) said such as these, to one whom Christ had healed, and who, for this, believed in His almighty power divine. They pronounced the man whom Christ had cured a sinner, and then scornfully rejected his testimony, saying, "Dost thou teach us?" Thus, nursing their spiritual pride, they turned *from* the message which the Saviour brought, and their derision deepened into hatred, and their threats issued in His crucifixion. They would not admit their sins, nor acknowledge that their inward parts were full of ravening and wickedness (Luke xi: 39), and so their worship remained a dead ceremonial, and their religion a mechanical observance of stated rules.

MIGHTY TO SAVE

Now, brethren, just change the name, and for *blind pharisee* read *professing Christian*, and see how true the picture is of many among us. God forbid that I should ever make light of *sin*. But we are warned by the behaviour of the sanctimonious Jews who rejected Christ that the sins which raise impassable barriers between the sinner and His Saviour are often cloaked with *self-righteousness*, and hidden under a thick veil of *self-complacency*, and so kept out of sight and out of mind. They are not open and manifest, like other sins, and yet they stifle all faith, all penitence, and therefore all hope. In these days the customs of society affect all but the most reckless of our people, and almost compel men to outward respectability and decent manners. It is, therefore, necessary for a Christian preacher to tell his hearers, as Christ told the pharisees, that *respectability* is of *no avail* in settling their position in the sight of God. This is *more needful* than to thunder against *heinous sins*, which few of them are ever likely to commit. *All sin*, little as well as great, must separate us from a God all-holy, so long as it remains, but it is the wilful ignorance and persistent blindness concerning the sin which make the separation last, and keep us from the *confession* of the dying thief, and so debars us from his *absolution*. *Self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, the pride of an imaginary goodness*, are subtle sins, and therefore all the more treacherous and fatal. *These* caused the *Jews* to crucify their Saviour. And they have wrought the ruin of many a promising young life. I would warn you of these as being very real, albeit hidden,

MIGHTY TO SAVE

dangers. If you are living a life of *surface blamelessness*, and trusting your future happiness at all to that—apart from *Christ* and his *holy ordinances*, and the *spiritual life* which His gospel demands—remember the superficially religious *scribes and pharisees*; look also at the poor *thief*, caught and brought in red-handed, with blood upon his sword and rebellion in his heart, and nailed up there by the short, summary process of the Roman law. Observe how the *first*, so well taught and so wise in their own conceit, could yet see nothing but *danger to themselves* in *Christ*. And how, on the *other* hand, the poor profligate, convicted *criminal*, saw all *Christ's innocence*, believed in all His *love*, and trusted to His *power*. Observe how his heart burned until his tongue spake, and he cried unto His Lord to be remembered—how he laid hold firmly of his one great, strong hope, as a drowning sailor grasps at the rope cast out to him, and it held him and drew him to his Saviour, and drew from the Saviour the precious promise, “To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.”

Beware, then, of self-sufficiency and spiritual pride, which will not admit the existence of transgression, and builds a fatal barrier between the soul and God.

And now another thought or two before we close. Few are the words which this poor malefactor speaks, but yet how perfectly they show the working of God's Spirit in his heart. When he hailed Jesus as his “*Lord*,” and *prayed to be remembered by Him*, he cut himself off from the *strong current* of opinion around him, and openly cast in his lot with the despised and doubted Galilean. Think of the scene, dear friends,

MIGHTY TO SAVE

and in your darker hours you may take pattern by the faith he showed. They had *crowned* the Lord with thorns *in mockery*, and for a *sceptre* given Him a *reed*. And yet the dying thief could see a *veritable Kingdom* and a *coming King*. His faith embraced both *the Kingdom* and *its King*. The *crown of thorns* became in his eyes the diadem of the universe. The *worthless reed* in Jesus' hand became, in his eyes, the *sceptre of love and power* over every believing heart. Convicted by Pilate, *hanging on the cross*, dying an ignominious death, He was yet exalted to be a Prince and Saviour. And when the image of this *dying King* is shown to us, we must be careful to see, too, as the thief saw, the *King who cometh* shortly in His Kingdom, that we also may be "remembered" then.

The story of the malefactors not only fixes our minds on the historical facts of the Saviour's *death* on Calvary, but also reminds us of the prophetic fact of *His coming* in His Kingdom, with all His royalties around Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand saints and holy angels with Him. We must therefore think of *the Kingdom* and of *the judgment seat* (a juster one than Pilate's), and of *the crown*, a crown of glory, then, and not of thorns. And of *the crowd*, not gathered then for derision, but for judgment. We must think of the unalterable *sentence* and the solemn *final separation of that day*. And as we think of these, and of the repentant malefactors' prayer and answer, we may so live in fellowship with Christ below, that we may have boldness before Him in the judgment day. We, too, *may cry—must cry—"Remember me,*

MIGHTY TO SAVE

O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom." And when the parting breath comes slowly, and the sights of earth grow dim, unspeakably precious to us then will be these gracious words, "*Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" This answer of our Lord was a beautiful example of what we may well call the *prodigalities* of the kingdom of heaven—this answer, so infinitely larger, so far more liberal than the suppliant ventured to suggest. The prayer was, "*Lord, remember me.*" But Christ, who said, "*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,*" drew this man as the first fruits of the attraction of the cross, and his answer was not merely, "*I will remember thee,*" but "*to-day thou shalt be with me.*" Christ's answer was—not the promise of some far-off, future joys beyond the judgment day, but of the immediate rest and recompense of the blessed intermediate state, of the instant peace in the happy home of the departed saints; "*to-day,*" at once, this very day, "*shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*" I need say nothing to prove Christ's willingness to receive true penitents whenever they may come to Him. But I must remind you that they must really be true penitents. They, who pervert this scripture and find in it the least encouragement for deferred repentance, grossly deceive themselves, meanly and shamefully entreat their Saviour, and almost certainly are not, and never will be, true penitents. *For how can repentance be genuine which has been wilfully postponed?* I warn you against such a miserable perversion of this blessed story, and against the dangerous snare of trusting that repentance which is purposely postponed, can be made

MIGHTY TO SAVE

up at death. "*Be noi deceived, God is not mocked*" by any such insulting folly, and such conduct is, at any rate, quite different from that of this dying thief.

As soon as he heard the dying Christ's passionate appeal for His enemies, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke xxiii: 34), as soon as this new knowledge of the Saviour began to draw him, he yielded to the holy influence at once; but you the Saviour has been drawing to Himself through your whole lives. There is indeed no limit to His mercy or His love, but equally limitless are His truth and justice. One was saved upon the cross (an old divine has written) that none might utterly despair; and only one, that none might at all presume. I cannot better close this sermon than by reminding you that "*now*" is the only certainly accepted time; now is the day of salvation, which, if neglected, may become for any of us the day of doom.

Whenever you pray "*Thy Kingdom come,*" pray also, like the thief, "*Then, Lord, remember me.*" And when you pray, "*Thy will be done,*" strive, with all your heart, to do that will, and thus remember Him. Amen.

VIII

GRACE REFUSED

"Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life!" (John v: 40).

TO *the Jews* our Saviour said this in earnest, sad expostulation, to the skeptical, hard-hearted, unbelieving Jews. And the beloved disciple noted the touching words and wrote them in his gospel, that *Christians* might read them, and, if applicable, apply them to themselves throughout all time. And if it was hard-hearted of *the Jews* to have deserved such words by reason of their rejection of His love, who spake them, what shall be said about those *Christians* who deserve them *now*? What shall be said of those who, having been born again in baptism, and having, in confirmation, acknowledged those gracious favours, and received life more abundant, shall yet forbear or neglect to *come continually* to their Saviour, for the preservation and continual increase of that essential life without them?

Bodily life is a *free gift* of God, yet must its possessor avail himself of such appointed means, as *food*, for its *continuance*. Exactly so it is with spiritual life. Christ gives it freely. Baptism is His pledge and evident assurance of the gift. *A birth*, He calls it, of *water and the Spirit*. *The outward sign and inward gift together, conjoined by Him, not to be put asunder*

GRACE REFUSED

by His people.* Then, being given, it must be preserved, continued, and increased in strength. It must be fed. God, who gave us spiritual *life*, gives us also spiritual *nourishment*. For this, the Body of our Lord was broken for us upon the cross, and His blood shed for our sakes. These, symbolized by consecrated bread and wine, He bids us (all, without exception) take and eat, that we may have life. If we do this rightly we have eternal life, Christ declares, and if we do it not, "*we have no life in us*" (John vi: 53). Christ says this plainly in His gospel, and His words are well known.

And now I ask most earnestly this simple question: If we refuse to seek life, or to sustain the life we have in His way, on the food He gives, and according to His positive and sure appointment, how can we hope to find it or support it in any other way? Shall not the great *Giver* of the incomparable gift of "life eternal" prescribe the *means* whereby it pleases Him to execute His gracious covenants? Can words be plainer than those written in Christ's gospel, which tell us that if we *refuse to eat* of that bread which is His Body, and drink of that cup which is His Blood, we do in effect *refuse to come* to Him that we may have life. If any say to me that this is too literal a rendering of our Saviour's words, and that there is a spiritual eating and drinking which is of the first importance, I say to them that Christ anticipated just such an objection, and said to the doubting Jews at that time, "*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life*" (John vi: 63).

* See Appendix.

GRACE REFUSED

As He, evidently in these words, linked the *outward symbols* and the *inward grace* together, we can have no right whatever to separate what He has joined. He who, in wisdom, joined our immortal *spirits* to our material *bodies*, has also chosen, in consideration of our weakness, to unite His *blessings* with their *outward pledges*, to order a religion which, from the beginning, from the very fall of man, has ever been *outward*, as well as *spiritual*, in its nature, has ever been, in fact, a *sacramental faith*.

But I must not omit to speak to you of the *true* spiritual eating and drinking of the bread of life, which consists in doing from the heart Christ's will, and I speak of it for the very reason that we don't do Christ's will if we neglect the *outward tokens* of our affection, which He prescribes. For what is the true reason why so many will not come to Christ, at His own sacred feast, but that they do *not purpose*, steadfastly, to lead such lives as they rightly deem they are bound to by His blessed sacrament? The real, deep-seated (albeit secret) reason for neglecting holy communion is a reluctance to bear (and manfully and openly to pledge themselves to bear) *the yoke* of their Master, Christ—a reluctance to *follow Him* and *learn of Him*, and to renew continually their old allegiance to Him, and their baptismal renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil.

We *welcome* the invitation, "*Come unto Me and I will refresh you,*" or "*I will give you rest*" (Matt. xi: 28). And we believe the sacramental refreshments of earth are the pledges of eternal life and eternal rest, yet we *can not endure* the words which are written

GRACE REFUSED

with the invitation, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me*" (Matt. xi: 29). We dislike submission to any *yoke* at all, and we look jealously, almost suspiciously, at the great gift of life eternal, because though it is called "*free*," and is so freely offered, yet it is offered *conditionally*; it is offered in that way alone in which a righteous God could offer it—"the way of *righteousness*."

We hear and read of Christ's self-denying love, and the pathetic story easily and frequently affects our hearts. Why, then, does it not also affect our *lives*? Because of the "*yoke*" connected with it, which, though it be called "*easy*," seems to us so hard; and because of the *conditions*, which, though they be entirely reasonable and unquestionably wise, are yet conditions. "*Free gifts!*" we are ready to exclaim whenever we are told about "*Conditions!*" We think of Christ's service as free, and yet we sometimes find it a heavy yoke. If it is *free*, we think we should not be required to do anything. We want no "*fear and trembling*," no *working out our own salvation*, no *self-denial*. We want our ease and comfort now, and to have things our own way, to follow in all things our own will, and enjoy all the pleasures of this world to the full, and then have "*life*" hereafter. We want, in short, to continue in sin that grace may abound. Though Christ has *suffered*, we wish only to *rejoice*. Though Christ has died to save us *from* our sins, we desire a Saviour who will save us *in* our sins. And because the gospel says no word of such an one, but points to a "*suffering, toiling, self-denying Christ*, and bids us know Him as our perfect ensample, as well as our all-

GRACE REFUSED

sufficient sacrifice for sin, we find it a bondage and "*will not come to Him that we may have life.*" This is the far too frequent language of men's hearts and lives; these are the true (albeit secret) reasons why vast numbers hesitate to worship Him in His *life-giving sacrament*, and show forth His death for sinners in His appointed way.

And now, having spoken thus plainly to those who "*will not come,*" let me in charity say a word of warning to those who *do come*, that not only may they "*have life,*" the spiritual life which Christ delights to give, but "*that they may have it more abundantly.*" Our familiar communion service warns us against the unworthy reception of the rite. But because the *service is familiar* and your *attendance is constant and regular* (as of course it should be), there lies a certain *danger* in our regular reception of the Lord's supper which we must remember. I will not compare it with the danger of refusing to partake, which, if persisted in, may be the refusal to take life eternal at the Saviour's hands, but still it is a real danger which we must all remember.

I mean the danger of "*feeding without fear*" (Jude i: 12) which *Saint Jude* calls a "*spot*" upon the feast of love, and against which *Saint Paul* admonishes the Corinthian church. When *first* a Christian comes to this holy sacrament he will be almost sure to come with awe and reverence, and some anxiety of heart. He will examine himself, and pray for grace to receive the divine gifts worthily. He will feel that he is bound more closely to a religious and devout life, that he is brought nearer to Christ, more directly under the

GRACE REFUSED

influences of His Holy Spirit, and that he has this further grace to answer for. But with repeated attendance this godly fear and reverence may somewhat wear away. The solemn ordinance *may* seem less solemn, and its awful, yet glorious, import, its sacred, sacramental, spiritual character may be to some extent forgotten. And then follows the danger, of which Saint Paul speaks so strongly, of "*not discerning the Lord's body,*" of not realizing communion with Christ Himself—Christ's real, spiritual presence in our souls, "*Christ in us the hope of glory,*" and hence eating and drinking irreverently and receiving the pledges of God's love as a mere thing of course, without awe, without heartfelt gratitude, and without deep self-abasement.

"*For this cause many are weak and sickly, and many sleep*" (I Cor. xi: 30)—they *sleep* in dangerous and false security. Whereas it is only as we jealously and continually watch ourselves, and check the faintest risings of carelessness or want of love, that we are really safe from being betrayed by our deceitful hearts. Before, during and after reception of the sacrament, let us guard well our hearts. Having shown forth our Saviour's precious death, having been made communicants of its priceless benefits, let us not heedlessly forget their great importance, as though we were simply actors in an outward rite. Let us not so despise this sacrament of His dying love (even if we know not as yet all its value), lest the *quenched, life-giving Spirit* should return unto Him void, "*should not accomplish that which He pleases, and should not prosper in the thing whereto He sends it*" (Is. lv: 11).

GRACE REFUSED

Only remember, I do earnestly entreat you, that of all the dangers in connection with it, there can be none so great as wilfully *refusing* your Lord's invitation to His gospel feast. It was of such our Lord said, "*None of these men which were bidden,*"—no matter how plausible their excuses may be,—"*shall take of My supper*" (Luke xiv: 24). And do not suppose that by *once or twice* seeking your Saviour's presence in His gracious ordinance, you can *sustain* your spiritual life forever. His sacrifice indeed was offered once for all, but the ordinance he founded upon it was for a *continual* remembrance. "*Seek the Lord and His strength,*" says the Psalmist, "*seek His face evermore*" (Ps. cv: 4).

If you are only an *occasional* communicant, ask yourself if the cause of your lagging footsteps be not a *halting* between two opinions; a *hesitation* to make, or to adhere to, the bold choice of the *Lord Jesus Christ* to be *your very God*. Listen to the musings of a wise old Christian. This holy sacrament, he reflected, is either a *blessing*, or *it is not*. If it be *not*, why do we *ever* come to it? But *if it be*, how can we *ever* turn away? Did our Lord say of it, "*This do in remembrance of Me,*" or did He *not*. If *not*, why do we *ever* do it? But if He *did* say so, then how can we, being in any sense at all His people, *refuse* obedience to such a sweet, affectionate command?

"*As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup,*" says Saint Paul, "*ye do show the Lord's death till He come*" (I Cor. xi: 26). Think of the significance of those three words, "*the Lord's death.*" Remember that they are the *sum and substance* of all the holy

GRACE REFUSED

gospel. How then can you, hoping for life eternal through its effectual means, refuse to show forth or commemorate that wonder-working, soul-redeeming death?

"*Till He come*"! A *perpetual* commemoration it must be by all who love Him, until the *pledges* which remind us of His first coming, and assure us of His second coming, shall be *no more needed*, until we shall no more need to seek Him, by *faith* in His invisible and spiritual presence in His earthly sacrament, but shall *see His face* evermore, and praise and worship Him in His glorified and bodily presence forever. Amen.

IX

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii: 14).

IT is needful, at the outset, to explain away a *wrong*, though common, acceptance of the words, as well as to set forth the *right*.

There is a common notion, wrong and dangerous because unscriptural, that none are, in any true sense, "*sons of God*," save those who, at some certain time, have undergone a spiritual and generally sudden change, known as *conversion*, a sudden and known transition from darkness into spiritual light, and from a worldly to a godly mind. These claim to be the only "*sons of God*," according to the meaning of such a scripture as the text before us. But I want you to notice that Saint Paul says *not* in this place, "*as many as have been illuminated or converted*," but "*as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*." He speaks *not* of some *past* event, but of a *present* influence.

Then, there is a kindred error, also common, that those who have once really received God's grace, whether suddenly or gradually, *cannot fall* therefrom; and a text like this is erroneously used to neutralize all that the whole gospel teaches about our birth into the kingdom of God's grace by holy baptism. The

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

common talk about a baptized person who has fallen into a sinful life, is often something like this—"If he had been indeed born again in baptism, he could not have avoided leading the rest of his life according to that beginning," or "he is not walking as a son of God, therefore he is not one, and never really has been," or "he is not now being led by the Spirit, therefore he is not, and never was, a son of God." In words like these will some people calmly and complacently annul the healthful, comfortable and evangelic doctrine of baptismal grace and the gradual growth therein.

But, brethren, is this language scriptural? Will it bear the light of scripture upon its narrow doctrine? Had God no *disobedient sons in Israel*, who were yet *His sons*? Who but God said, "*Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? . . . I do earnestly remember him still. . . . I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord*" (Jer. xxxi: 20). Has God no "*prodigals*" under the gospel who are *His dear sons* yet, and over whom the angels in heaven are to rejoice and to make merry at the words, "*for this My son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found*" (Luke xv: 24)? Well may we sing, as we do at the reading of the Sunday gospel, "*We thank thee, O God, for this Thy holy gospel*"; for *God's gospel* is broader and more merciful than *man's*. The scripture before us does not say, "*As many as are sons of God do always follow the leading of His Spirit.*" Let us thankfully read it as it is—"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Yes, indeed, these are the sons of God in a very high and very blessed, because saving, sense; but in

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

order that we may understand exactly in what sense they are sons of God, we had better look over our bibles and examine how variously the term is used therein. There we shall find it to have *four* separate and distinct significations, four separate *degrees of sonship*, which may lead into each other, or may not. In some of which we all, in others of which only some of us, are sons or children of God. *First*, there is the *sonship by creation*, into which we, and all men, enter by our *natural birth*. *Secondly*, there is the higher *sonship by adoption*, into which the entrance for all is made by *baptism*, as in Israel's day it was made by *circumcision*. *Thirdly*, there is the still higher *sonship by sanctification*, or following the *guidance of the Spirit*, which is that referred to in our text. And *fourthly*, there is the highest and perfect *sonship of the future*, when we are to be indeed, as Saint Luke says, "the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx: 36); into which happy state the previous relations are intended gradually, step by step, to bring us, and from which state there will be indeed no falling away.

This may be likened to that "*crown of righteousness*," to which Saint Paul looked forward, the *condition* of obtaining which was, as he knew, the *continuing faithfully* in the previous probationary state, and increasing in the Holy Spirit more and more (Phil. iii: 12-14). In all these four ways we are, or are intended to be, sons of God. To the *first*, Saint Luke refers when he says, "*Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God*" (Luke iii: 38), and *Adam's sons* were called the *sons of God* (Gen. vi: 2). All who are

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

born of Adam share *this* sonship. It may be the amiable custom of the present day to begin to convert sinners by telling them that they are children of the devil, heirs of hell. But the church tells her *baptized little ones* that, though they were indeed *born in sin*, even as the first Adam sinned, yet were they thereafter made by their baptism *the children of God's grace* and heirs of heaven. And when *Saint Paul* wanted to convert *the heathen* of that very heathen city, *Athens*, which was "wholly given to idolatry" (Acts xvii: 16), he made his *first appeal* to them as "*sons of God*."

Instead of an "unknown God," he declared unto them one who had "made all nations of one blood" (Acts xvii: 26), in whom we live and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets" (he reminded them) have said, "*For we also are His offspring*" (Acts xvii: 26-28). Being "*His offspring*" the intelligent offspring of an intelligent Creator, they should not degrade themselves, and Him, by the idolatrous worship of an "*unknown God*." So the apostle to the heathen began the work of their conversion: not by *denying*, but by *asserting* that they were *sons of God*, and so establishing *God's claim* upon them as their Father. And so we must begin with the more *ignorant* and with *the heathen* in our midst.

We should remind them of all that the good God and common Father of us all has done for them that they do know about, namely, their *creation* and *preservation* to this hour, and then lead them on to the far higher subject that they do not know about, namely, *redemption* by the free grace of God. This brings us to the *second* bible meaning of the term "sons of

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

God"—our *sonship by adoption*. A higher and more important theme, since from this sonship the apostle argues with and convinces *Christians*. Out of the sonship of the whole family of man, God has seen fit to gather and adopt a number to be, in an especial sense, *the family of God*. From Abraham's day, He has had this family, or *church*, on earth.

Before Christ came it consisted of *one nation* only. The *token* of entrance into it was *circumcision* (Gen. xvii: 11), and the token of *continuous membership*, the *eating of the paschal lamb* (Ezek. xii: 47), which was the symbol of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. After Christ's coming, the Kingdom of God's grace, that is His family or church, was opened freely unto all who should believe. The *token* of entrance into it was *baptism* (Titus iii: 5), and of a *continuous and lively membership*, the *eating of the bread and drinking of the cup*, ordained by our Lord as the symbol of His sacrifice, made once for all (I Cor. xi: 26). This membership, begun in baptism, constitutes all *the baptized*, the sons or children of God, in the second bible sense; for, says Saint Paul, "as many of you as have been *baptized into Christ*, have *put on Christ*" (Gal. iii: 26-27).

This is that new and higher relationship with God which is spoken of in the verse following the text as, "*the spirit of adoption*, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." All who receive baptism receive the spirit of adoption. This grace, if they will retain and use it, will lead them to the still higher sonship, the *third* sonship, to which the text refers—namely, the life of righteousness, or *following Christ*. But if they do not retain, and

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

nurture, and increase it, then must they expect condemnation.

Saint Paul invariably writes to *baptized* Christians as *answerable for grace received*. Invariably he argues with them by the grace they have received, and when they have fallen into sin, invariably he reproves them as having fallen from grace. When he rebuked the baptized Galatians for falling back under the Jewish yoke, he used the very words and said—"Christ is become of no effect unto you—ye are *fallen from grace*" (Gal. v: 4). So much for the second degree of sonship referred to in the bible, the sonship by adoption.

But grace retained, not lost by disobedience, leads to the *third degree* of sonship, namely, *sanctification*, or following the guidance of the Spirit, as described in the text, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." When the apostle wrote those words he was evidently not referring to a *past conversion*, or to a *past initiation* into the number of God's sons, or to *any past event whatever*, but to a *present way of life*, and to a *present habit* of obedience. The vital question is not only "what have we *been made* by our baptismal grace?" but, "what *are we*, in God's sight, *now*?" Are we *led by the Spirit* He gave us? Are we *habitually following its guidance*, now? If we are not, be sure the fault is all our own. God never yet withheld His grace from one of His adopted "sons," though far too many have received that grace in vain. *Graceless and wicked* were the baptized Corinthians to whom Saint Paul appealed in those strong words, "Know ye not that your bodies are the

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

members of Christ. . . . the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?" (II Cor. vi: 15-19.)

Thus did Saint Paul appeal to the degenerate sons of God, by reminding them of their *regeneration* into the membership of Christ. And never once does he, or any other writer in the bible, use the word "*conversion*" to designate the *beginning of the spiritual life*. In fact the word "*conversion*" occurs but *once* in the whole New Testament, and then is spoken only of the *unbaptized or heathen* (Acts xv: 3). Saint James speaks of *converting* one who had wandered from the truth (Ja. v: 19-20). His words show that conversion was *not* the *beginning* of a Christian life, but rather a *turning back*, or repenting of one who had been in it and had wandered from it. It was the restoration of the prodigal into the true sonship of obedience.

If men would study their bibles and use bible language about spiritual things, "*conversion*" would not be put in the place of, and exalted above, *baptismal grace*. Baptism is the "*washing of regeneration*"* (Titus iii: 5) or "*being born of water and the Spirit*"* (John iii: 5), and should be followed by a gradual growth, "unto a perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv: 13). The *gradual growth* is the being "*led by the Spirit*," to which our text refers. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And, to be sons of God in this sense, the bible does not demand *particular views* or *feelings*, or *frames of mind*, or *experiences*, or any absolute and present assurance

* See Appendix.

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

of salvation; but it does demand some plain, *practical duties* which are apt to be forgotten, or ignored, by those who decry Christian works. Mark well *such texts* as these: "Blessed are the *peacemakers*, for they shall be called *children of God*" (Matt. v: 9). "*Love your enemies*, bless them that curse you. . . . that ye may be the *children of your Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. v: 45), "*Do good*, and lend, hoping for nothing again. . . . and ye shall be the *children of the Highest*" (Luke vi: 35). These and other such texts show us that to be "*led by the Spirit*," is to *follow in the footsteps of our Lord*, and that they who are not so led, and who do not so strive to follow, are not God's children in the high sense of our text, but that (whatever may be their *spiritual feelings or experiences*) they are *disobedient or prodigal sons*, receiving the grace of God in vain. If you have made *no use of your baptismal grace*, if you are not God's true children, in the high meaning of the text, it is *not God's fault*, but yours. God has not withheld this grace from you, but you have refused to use the grace bestowed upon you. This is a faithful saying, says Saint Paul, and ordered to be constantly affirmed, "*that they which have believed in God must be careful to maintain good works*" (Titus iii: 8). To do this faithfully is to follow the example of your Saviour, and to be made increasingly like Him.

"Baptism," says the prayer book, "*representeth unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ.*" And this the *grace of God* doth enable us to do. *By the grace of God I am what I am*" (I Cor. xv: 10), said Saint Paul, and *His grace*

SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

will lead us on, step by step, in our spiritual life unto that *highest sonship* of the future, when the children of God's grace shall be also the children of His glory—when the "sons of God" shall be all "*like Him, for they shall see Him as He is*" (I John iii: 2). Amen.

X

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

"*And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him.*" (I Sam. iii: 19).

I HAVE been asked to speak particularly to you, my *younger friends*, my young fellow-Christians, my young fellow-soldiers in the great army of Christ's church, and fellow-combatants in the great battle against the world, the flesh and the devil; and the church's *first lesson for this evening (third Sunday after Trinity)* brings before us the story of a *young lad* to whom there happened that good thing which your teachers and friends would most sincerely wish might happen unto you. *As he grew, the Lord his God was with him.* It has been my custom to search among the *scriptures for the day*, for something which, by the help and blessing of Almighty God, might interest and profit my people; and I ask you to accept what I shall say to you this evening, rather as the *church's voice* to you than mine—or rather as a message from *Jesus-Christ your Saviour by His church.*

The Lord was with Samuel. In your *childhood days*—as you *grow older* and go forth into the busy world—and as you *advance in life* and go down softly towards the grave—may the Lord be *with you all*, as He was with Samuel. May you, like Samuel, *continue His* for ever, and may His Holy Spirit daily increase

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

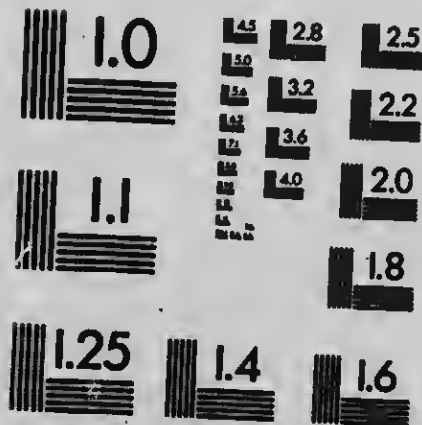
in you more and more until you come to His everlasting Kingdom. And *that* is no unreasonable prayer; it is *no unlikely thing* to hope for in your case any more than it was in Samuel's. Your situation with respect to God is as favourable to your spiritual welfare as was his. You have read, and I daresay many of you know his history. From the day of his birth his mother *dedicated* him solemnly to the Lord. "*I have lent him to the Lord,*" she said; "*as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord*" (I Sam. 1: 28). And so have you been solemnly *dedicated* by your parents to your God. In holy *baptism* you have been "*lent unto the Lord*" for as long as you shall live. You were enrolled as "*Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end.*" Since Samuel's days, the *God of Samuel* has taken upon him human flesh like yours, has visited this earth and been a *little child* like you, subject to all your sorrows, sufferings, trials and temptations, so that, in every least particular, He can sympathize with you.

Of *Christ's* childhood it was said, just as it was of *Samuel's*, that "*He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*" (see I Sam. ii: 26; and Luke ii: 52). When the Saviour grew up He was so *fond of children* that He called them around Him, took them in His arms and *blessed* them. He told *grown men* around Him that if they would enter heaven, they must be pure, and meek, and innocent, and humble *as those little ones*. He *warned men* lest they should *offend* or *injure* one of those little ones, whose angels (as he said) beheld His Father's face in heaven (Matt. xviii: 1-14). In these and many other



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ways He showed His love for children. Above all, He ordained His rite of *holy baptism* whereby He enters into an *actual covenant* with them and accepts them as *His own members, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*. And does not all this place each of you as favourably as the child Samuel was placed? Surely it does; and now I want to show you from *our first evening lesson*, that although your daily station is not actually to minister in the temple, as was the case with Samuel, yet *God is with you*, and you are brought constantly into communication with God, even as Samuel was.

You may not always think of it, or know it; neither did Samuel know it till he had been taught it. But when he was taught it he never afterwards forgot it, and if you, being also taught, would carefully remember it throughout all your days, they would be days of ever-increasing happiness, tending to and surely terminating in that rich inheritance which *prophets* (like Samuel) dimly pointed to, but which *Christ* positively promised to the children of His love.

Notice carefully *what Samuel was doing* when the Lord called him (I Sam. iii: 3-4). He was not saying his prayers, nor tending nor trimming the lamp where the ark of God was; nor performing any service connected with the temple, nor doing any particularly good act at the time. He was simply *lying in bed*. He had lain down to sleep. So that you may learn from that that you can never tell *how* or *when* God may see fit to *speak to you*, or call you. A voice may fall upon your ears, a good thought come into your heart, you cannot say how or why, it comes apparently

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

of its own accord. It comes by chance, as the common, but erroneous, phrase is. But it is *God's voice* addressing you, you may be well assured, and your true course is to take care how you *hear it* and to be prepared to *heed it*.

God called Samuel. But the child *knew not* that it was God. He thought rather that it must be Eli, and ran to him. He was mistaken, as you see, but still he acted rightly. Would you thus *promptly and readily* arouse out of your first sleep, and run to the father or the friend who might have called you? 'Tis but a little thing, but it is just one of those little things which show a willing and obedient spirit. You may not often be called on to do *great* things, even in Christ's service; but you will constantly be called on to do *little* things, and see that you do the little things heartily, and cheerfully, and at once. That is to *act* in the spirit of *your Saviour*, who when He came here to do so much for you, confessed *His ready obedience* in those memorable words, "*Lo I come, I delight to do Thy will, O my God*" (Ps. xl: 7-8). And when you read that He "*grew in favour both with God and man,*" you may depend upon it that when He went down to Nazareth to live in a carpenter's cottage, He always did *readily and willingly* the many *common and humble duties* to which His parents called Him. You may be sure of this because one of his *parables* was spoken afterwards to impress this very duty (Matt. xxi: 28-32). You remember His story of the father who desired *his two sons* to work one day in his vineyard. *One* of them said he would, but "*went not*"; while the *other*, who at first refused to go, *repented* afterwards

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

and went. They were both wrong. The first lied and was disobedient, too, and so was all wrong. The other obeyed tardily, after repenting his unwillingness, and so was better than the first. But how much better still it would have been for both of them to have gone *at once*. We notice that Samuel answered His call at once. He did not know who called him, but thought it was *Eli*. You may fancy that he might easily have known the difference, and distinguished between God's voice and the familiar tones of Eli. But the fact is we are *all* very apt to fall into the *same mistake* as Samuel. Whenever you are *called* to any *real duty*, it may be merely to hurry off to school, or to bring in wood or water, or to give any common necessary help within your power, do not let there be any mistake in your mind as to *Who* it is that *calls you*. It may be your father's or your mother's voice, or your employer's, which with your outward ears you hear; but the *call to the duty* is in reality the *call of God*. You obey God and serve Him in serving those whom He sets over you. But if you are unwilling and disobedient, you offend not only your father and mother, but also your God. You sin directly against God, and you do evil in His sight. So whenever you read of Samuel mistaking God's voice for Eli's, take good care that you do not fall into the very same mistake.

Our *first evening lesson*, as well as *to-day's epistle* (I Peter v: 5-10), gives us also *another* important lesson. Again and again, through the lonely hours of the night, the voice came to the child, saying—"Samuel, Samuel!" And his prompt answers, "Here

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

am I," "Here am I," "Speak, for thy servant heareth," showed not only *readiness*, but *watchfulness*. To this duty our Saviour exhorts us all when He says, "*Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching*" (Luke xii: 37).

We sing about it in some of our well-known hymns as—

"Ye Servants of the Lord,
Each in his office wait,
Observant of His Heavenly word,
And watchful at His Gate.

"Watch! 'Tis your Lord's command,
And while we speak He's near,
Mark the first signal of His hand,
And ready all appear."

And (as I told you) the church utters the *same warning* in the *epistle* for to-day.

"Be sober, be vigilant." Why? "*Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour—whom resist, steadfast in the faith*" (I Peter v: 8-9). One result of watchfulness is *steadfastness in the faith*, which means, in plain words, keeping all God's commandments. And that is the true way to resist the devil, for he goes about "as a roaring lion," and in other disguises, tempting you to break them.

Let me tell you a *story* to impress this fact upon your minds. A detachment of an *army* was *encamped amongst some savage Indians*. At one post, a *sentinel* was found, one morning, dead—*stabbed in the back*.

It was supposed that he had slept upon his watch, and another sentry, with this startling warning to true watchfulness, undertook the post. In the morning *he, too*, was found dead—stabbed in the back. The regiment became excited. The *steadiest and trustiest man* was told off for the duty, and with all confidence and boldness, entered on his watch. But in the morning *he, too*, was found dead and stabbed, like the two others, in the back. The excitement became intense. This third man's character for vigilance had been well established. The general in command could not afford so great a sacrifice of valuable lives. He proposed to double the watch, and put *two* of his best men on sentry duty. An officer stepped forward and, deeming it a disgrace that *two* British soldiers should be required to fight *one Indian* (for there had only been one wound each time, and no other mark of violence) asked urgently to be allowed to take that watch *himself*. The commander reluctantly consented. And now you can imagine this man's *vigilance*. He felt as if the honour of the army was at stake, and he had made himself alone responsible. You may imagine how carefully he looked to his ammunition and his arms, and kept his watch-fire bright.

Hour after hour passed. It would be morning soon, and all was well so far, and there was neither sight nor sound of any evil as up and down his beat the soldier walked. Only, in the gloom, at a good distance off, a *great black hog* was seen rooting up the ground. That caused no alarm, and up and down his beat the soldier walked, and as he walked he

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

watched it intently. And now the *hog* had come a good deal *nearer*, and it was a very large one, he could notice, even in the dark. Up and down he walked, still watching intently. And now he noticed that every time his *back was turned*, the great ugly rooting hog came gradually a little *nearer*. "I don't like the look of this," thought he, and "crack!" went his rifle at the hog, and, with a terrific yell, up sprang *an Indian*, and then *fell dead* upon the spot. The treacherous foe, disguised, you see, so as to be almost unsuspected in the darkness of the early morning, had been thus hutchering even the most trusty sentries. "*The devil walketh about*," as Saint Peter tells us in to-day's epistle, "*seeking whom he may devour*" (I Pet. v: 8); and *what I say unto you children I say unto all*, "*Watch!*" Your *hearts are camps*, and around them your *powers of soul* are set as *sentinels*. Your *foe*, "your adversary *the devil*," comes in various disguises. They lure you on to disobedience to one or other of the commands of God. By pride, vain glory or hypocrisy; by envy, hatred, malice, or some deceitful manner of uncharitableness; by sloth or gluttony; by stealing, or coveting, or lying, or uncleanness, or some other deadly sin, he comes, as it were, *behind you*; and, if you be not watchful, or do not recognize him in his familiar disguise, he stabs you, wounds you, if not, indeed, to death, still dangerously, most dangerously to your eternal life. And because *Samuel* was watchful, ready and obedient, I take him (as he is brought before us by the church this evening) as a *pattern* in these things for you.

And for a further warning consider those *sons of Eli*

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

of whom we read to-day. The call to Samuel was to an irksome task. It was no less than to carry the message of God's wrath to Eli. Not *careless children* only, but *careless parents* are addressed in this, and therefore in love I ask you all to lay it to your hearts. Eli was a God-fearing man, but in this matter of *training his children*, in nurturing the good, and restraining the evil in their disposition, *he sadly erred*. And so God said to his young prophet Samuel, "Behold, I will do a thing at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle. *I will judge Eli's house*, for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." For this the severe punishment was that both Eli's *sons were to die* in one day, and the high *priesthood* was to be *taken away* from Eli's house for ever.

And now, my dear young friends, I must not detain you longer. Only, let us see before I close what I have been telling you from Samuel's story. Remember that *God very often speaks to you all*, although you may not always *know His voice*. You cannot always tell how, or when, or through what means He will speak to you, and He communicates His will in diverse ways. Remember also when those who are *set over you tell you to do something*, it is not simply *they*, but *it is God* who speaks to you, and therefore in all the little common matters of your daily duty, "*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men*" (Col. iii: 25).

And mind, dear children, that although we have been reading and talking about *young Samuel* to-day, we have also spoken of that other and only perfect

A TRUE CHILD OF GOD

child, *Christ Jesus*; who also, as He grew in stature, grew in God's favour, too. You are *growing* rapidly in stature; you cannot remain children long, but must go forth, as indeed some of you are going forth, to take your parts as men and women in the world. May you always *increase in favour both with God and man*. May you always be respectable and *useful to your fellow-men*, and steadfast. *faithful members of Christ's holy church*. Obey your *parents* and be subject unto them, as *Christ* was in His home. Learn willingly and heedfully from your *teachers, spiritual pastors and masters*, as *He* did. Do *little* duties faithfully when you are called to them, and so shall you come in God's good time to do *great* things like Samuel for the welfare of mankind and the glory of God.

And when *life's work is done* and you are called up higher, many good men shall *mourn* you—even as it is written of the prophet Samuel, that "*all the Israelites lamented him*" (I Saml. xxv: 1), and, better than all, He who shall *judge* you according to your works, He shall receive you to Himself, shall welcome you with His own glad words, "*Well done.*" "*Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*" (Matt. xxv: 21). Amen.

XI

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

"Ye My flock, the flock of my pasture are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord." Ezek. xxxiv: 31).

DID you ever read more plainly, did you ever hear set forth in periods of more startling plainness, "*the goodness and severity of God*" (Rom. xi: 22) than in the *thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy*, selected for our *first morning lesson to-day (20th Sunday after Trinity)*? To the *shepherds of Israel*, God says, "*Woe be to the shepherds*" who seek their own good, who "*feed themselves*," but "*feed not the flock*," and regard not the good of their sheep (Ezek. xxxiv: 2-3). And then, to the *flock*, God says: "*As for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle*" (ver. 17)—*between the strong and the weak, between the rich and the poor, between those who are Mine, who follow and know Me, and those who are merely pretenders*. God's severity is seen in these sharp words of judgment found in the *earlier part* of this chapter, and His goodness shines out in its *later part*. In its later part we meet with *gracious words* like these: "*I will save My flock, they shall no more be a prey, and I will set up one shepherd over them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd*" (Ezek. xxxiv: 22-23). And again: "*I the Lord their God am*

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

with them, and ye My flock, the flock of My pasture are men, and I am your Go' saith the Lord God." The whole chapter is a startling one, and the familiar story of *the wedding garment* in *to-day's gospel* is an *appropriate comment* on it. In that story, we see God's "goodness" in His *bountiful provision* for His flock. Under the figure of the feast prepared, we see the blessings of the gospel freely offered by the True Good Shepherd; but alas, they are made light of, rejected and despised. Then we see God's "severity" in the *armies* that *destroyed His wicked servants*, and in the *casting forth* of the *ungrateful guest* who did not wear the wedding garment. Observe the beauty of this figure, *the Shepherd and His flock*, used in Ezekiel's prophetic message. God's *flock* is a common and familiar thought on the sacred page, and is very full of comfort. His "*flock*," His "*kingdom*," and His "*church*" are terms synonymous.

"All we, *like sheep*, have gone astray," says *Isaiah* (liii: 6), and we repeat his words in our *general confession*. The *ninety-fifth psalm* tells us: "*We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand*," and we sing *this psalm* as our *first song* of praise. Our gracious Saviour re-applies this comfortable figure of the older scriptures *to Himself*, and tells us, in tenderest accents: "I am *the Good Shepherd*, the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep" (John x: 11, R.V.). He tells us all His sheep will be gathered into "*one flock*" (John x: 16; R.V.), and that "*one flock*" is the *church of God*. *Saint Paul*, speaking to the elders at Miletus, likewise made use of the same figure when he said: "Take heed therefore unto your-

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

selves, and to *all the flock* over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx: 28). Those words of the Apostle Paul re-echo the warnings and instructions which we find in God's message to the prophet Ezekiel, which is the subject of our study to-day. None but He, who thus laid down His life, can be referred to where Ezekiel says: "I will set up *One Shepherd* over them, He shall feed them, and He shall be *their Shepherd*" (Ezek. xxxiv: 23.)

Seeing then that *Ezekiel* was uttering the same message as *Christ* and *Saint Paul*, let us ponder his words carefully. Are there any *evils* in the *church of God* in our day which are at all like those evils which *desolated and distressed the flock* in Israel, in the days in which Ezekiel prophesied? We observe *the rulers* and *the teachers* are there admonished; *the princes* and *the priests* are there reprov'd. They are addressed as *shepherds*, careless of their flock and seeking nothing but their own advancement. Most severe and uncompromising is the language used: "*Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, ye clothe you with the wool, but ye feed not the flock*" (Ezek. xxxiv: 2-3). These words (applied to our own day) would refer plainly and directly to *the clergy*—to those who, having been lawfully *ordained*, are *charged* "*to feed the church of God*" (Acts xx: 28). So far as any of us esteem our sacred ministry a mere profession, or the care of our respective flocks a mere source of income, or our present position in the church

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

merely a stepping-stone to some more lucrative appointment, so far must we come under that terrible denunciation against Israel's shepherds who did but "*feed themselves.*" In proportion, too, as any of us are guilty thus, there follow those miserable effects we read of in the lesson. The *spiritually sick* are *not strengthened.* The *driven-away* are *not brought back, nor the lost found.* The sheep wander through all mountains and upon every hill, yea, they are "*scattered upon all the face of the earth*" (Ezek. xxxiv: 4-6). We dare not say such words do not apply to us. I humbly believe, and in my soul I feel, that, measurably and in their spirit, these monitory words must touch *us all*, because *we all* are, measurably, *guilty* in the matters mentioned. Then let all who hold God's high commission—to *set forth His true and lively word by their preaching and living, and rightly and duly to administer His holy sacraments*—tremble as they read the words which the church appoints to be read to-day. And I ask you, as Saint Paul asked his Thessalonian converts, to "pray for us." "*Brethren, pray for us*" (I Thess. v: 25). "Pray for us," that we may watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that we may do it with joy and not with grief; with the joy of the good servant, who had been faithful in his charge, not with the grief of the neglectful shepherds at whose hand Ezekiel's God declared that He would require the flock.

But there is something more to do. I have asked you all to support and strengthen with *your prayers* those called to minister to you in holy things, but remember there is something *more* for you to do than

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

pray. You are required also to help. Not on one class alone is the blame laid, in the remarkable chapter we have read to-day. And I think this fact suggests such practical questions as these which follow. Is the fault *all* and *always* with the *shepherds*, and are *the clergy* only to be blamed for all the evils that exist in spiritual Israel, the church of Christ, to-day? Are the ungodliness, the terrible iniquity, the rampant sin, we see and know to be about us on all sides, the results of the *imperfect delivery* of God's saving word? Are the unbelief, the self-glorying pride of unbelief, which stalks amidst our people with such a brazen face, the consequences of an *unlearned* and *inefficient* or *deceitful handling of the word of God*? Are the ignorance, the prejudice, the irreverence, the disobedient and perverse neglect of means of grace and holy ordinances which God has given to His flock, and lovingly commanded them to use—are these to be attributed to any *unfaithful ministering* of the holy things by those in charge of them? Does the fault *all* belong to *the clergy*? Or has *the flock* gone wrong? Or (to fall back upon Ezekiel's very words) has the "*flock of God become a prey*"—a prey to the world—and every sort of *worldliness*. Has it become *meat to every beast of the field*"—to every *lust* and *evil passion* of the flesh? Has it become the spoil of the subtle and deceitful devil? Has all this happened "because there was *no shepherd*"—none willing, ready, anxious, to search out the sheep and feed them upon Israel's mountains and by Israel's streams—in the wholesome pastures of Christ's holy church? Or have these evils resulted from the perverseness of *the flock*. Let every congre-

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

gation ask itself these questions: Had the Lord's chosen *shepherds* been all and always faithful, would there then have been *none* of the *practical heathenism* which is so common in our midst? Would our land, then, have been *full* of light, instead of being (as it really is) a dark place, with the light shining in it? Think out for yourselves the answers to these questions by carefully reviewing your own lives and actions. Have *you* all, and always, acted according to the light you have received? Have you hungered for the best and richest pastures that have been provided for you? Have you been thirsty for the purest streams that have been drawn forth for you from the Rock? Observe that the blame is *not all* laid upon *the shepherds*, in the awakening lessons that we have before us. There is a plain, severe and unmistakable reproof of *some* among *the flock*, too, who acquiesced in an evil state of things, who helped, indeed, to shorten the supply of those who would have gladly drunk and fully eaten of the good things provided.

"As for you, O My flock, saith the Lord, I will judge between cattle and cattle" (Ezek. xxxiv: 17), between the *faithful* and the *guilty*. To the *guilty* ones, he says: "Seemeth it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures, and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet." And of the *faithful* ones among them, He says: "They eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet" (Ezek. xxxiv: 19).

The *erring* of the flock, you see, (and not the shep-

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

herds) are *here rebuked*. And how far, my friends, have you to seek to find a parallel to this? Do none here feed, just as they fancy, in the good pastures of Christ's church, and then foul with their feet the rest? If you *neglect* the commanded *public worship* of your God, and so, by *your influence*, depreciate in others' eyes its value, what is this but *befouling it* with your feet for others? If you *use, in part, the holy ordinances*, while some *other part* (as the feast of feasts, the Lord's supper) remains *unused*, and is thus *dishonoured* by bad example—what is this but befouling the "good food for others? And as with this *holiest rite*, so is it with *all Christian graces*; so is it with the various *duties* of our *daily lives*. We are all too prone to *forget our influence* over others. But as surely as it is true that men seeing our good works will glorify our Father, so if we *neglect* the exercise of such "*fruits of the Spirit*," as love, long-suffering, meekness, or temperance, men will think less and less of religion and of Him whom we profess to follow.

We may call ourselves "*the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand*," in the language of the ninety-fifth psalm, but we are practically *treading down the pastures and fouling its waters* with our erring feet.

"*Ye, My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God*," saith the Lord. It is well for us to remember that *we men* are, by God's grace, reckoned as "*His flock*," and so pledged to follow where He leads, to feed beside all waters that He gives, to forsake no duty, to shirk no responsibility that He lays upon us. We must make good use of all God's mercies so that

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

no portion of His flock may have to eat what we have trodden, or drink what we, in any way, have fouled. Dear friends, I referred at the beginning of this sermon to the "goodness" and the "severity" of God, found in Ezekiel's prophetic words, which we are considering to-day in their bearings on our own Christian life. But the more I read this chapter and think of the concurrent teaching of the other selected scriptures for this day, the more I fear lest I should undervalue their warnings. *To-day's epistle* warns us to *redeem the time*, and not as fools to waste it; to understand truly what is God's will and do it. *To-day's gospel* warns us to *accept* (not thanklessly refuse) its *gracious calls*; to put on—not to reject—the garment of a higher holiness than could be, naturally, ours. And in *to-day's collect* we pray that "we, being ready, may cheerfully accomplish what He would have us do."

"*We, being ready.*" All comfort, peace and blessing to those who are *ready cheerfully to serve*. The *early part* of this chapter promises woe to the *unready sheep*, the *unwilling followers* of the Shepherd's lead. The *last* and more comfortable portion of the chapter keeps the distinction between the *ready* and the *unready* before us still. The *faithful* are spoken of as separate, and are expressly called "*His flock*" (ver. 22). For their sakes will He cause the evil beasts to cease that they may dwell securely even in the wilderness, and in the woods sleep safely (ver. 25). These are words of great grace, but how far may we appropriate them? So far, and so far only, as we ourselves are faithful.

What then are *we* doing that the great flock of the

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

Good Shepherd may be fed? The *many* are sitting calmly by, to see the *few* at work: to see the faithful and small remnant striving to stem the flowing tide of godlessness. It is so in the *church at large*, and in each *several congregation*. Too many withhold their help from God's work; they are very *ready* to find fault or criticize, but *not ready* to assist. Would the flocks be so small, the sheep so scattered; would the shepherds be so few, so feeble, so faint-hearted; would the church be so weakened by dissensions, and so hindered, as she is, by want of means, if all her members were alive to their *responsibilities*, aware of their *influence*, mindful of their *example*, faithful to their *obligations*, and "*ready*" to give such *help* as they might give? Sweet is the thought of our privileges as the flock of God, but woe to the *careless shepherds*, and woe to the *wayward sheep*, who tread down the pasture and foul the waters that might nourish other famishing souls.

Let thoughts like those suggested by the startling lessons for this day rouse us to *redeem the time*, because the days are evil. Rouse us to better, heartier, more loving and more earnest *work*. Rouse us to faithful and more fervent *prayer*, that we, all being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things our Master would have us do. Amen.

XII

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts vii: 60).

YESTERDAY being Christmas Day, we stood (as it were) by the cradle of the Babe of Bethlehem, and hailed His birth into the world, who came to be the greatest of all martyrs, and more than martyr—the atoning sacrifice for the sins of our fallen race. To-day (*Saint Stephen's day*) we are called to see the holy courage with which a *saint of God* can *suffer and die*. The church ranks, *nearest to Christ*, those who are most *like Him*, who, like Saint Paul, do not count even their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may finish their course with joy (Acts xx: 24). That is why *Saint Stephen's day* comes *next to Christmas* in the Christian calendar, because he was *the first martyr* for the Christian faith. And so *to-day's first lessons* tell us of *the martyr Abel* (Gen. iv: 1-11), and *the martyr Zacharias* (II Chron. xxiv: 15-23), the *first* and the *last* recorded martyrdoms of *the pre-Christian era*.

To the persistent persecutors of God's witnesses in His own day, Christ had said: "*On you shall come the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias*" (Matt. xxiii: 35), and in saying this he showed that the *martyr's blood* was precious in God's sight. The father's sins

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

were to be visited inwrath upon their children's heads, because they filled up the measure of their fathers' sins. *The gospel* for the day (Matt. xxiii: 34-end) speaks of that; and *the epistle* (Acts xii: 55-end) is part of *Saint Stephen's dying speech* in which he sharply reuked the unbelieving Jews for *the slaughter of their Lord's prophets* and for *the betrayal of the Lord Himself*. While he spake, *he was mobbed and stoned*—as *Zacharias* had been stoned before him—and he died, calling upon the Crucified One to receive his spirit, and praying, as Jesus from the cross had prayed, that the sin of his death might not be laid to his murderer's charge.

Oh, hrethren, consider to-day *the holy boldness* of the first martyr for the church and gospel of your Lord! The first to fulfil, or rather to anticipate, the words Saint John wrote afterwards—that as *Christ* laid down His life for us, so should *we* be ready, if need be, “*to lay down our lives for the brethren.*” Saint Stephen had his *natural love of life*, like other men. Naturally, he must have been disposed, like other men, to shrink from the approach of those mysterious pains, the pains of death. Yet did he never, for a moment, seek deliverance for himself. He never quailed, but let them drag him forth beyond the city's gates. He yielded to the cruel villains who thirsted for his blood. With steadfast soul he read his fate in the angry eyes of his relentless foes. Saw them taking up the stones to stone him. Saw the false witnesses suborned to swear away his life, as just such liars had lied away his Lord's before him. Saw them strip off their clothes and fling them down at a young man's feet, who was

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

consenting to his death just then, but who was shortly to become a life-long martyr for His Saviour, too. He saw these bloody preparations for his death, yet never for a moment quailed and, as stone after stone fell on his bleeding limbs, he *kneeled down* to commend his spirit to his Redeemer's grace, and lifting up his gashed and mangled arms to heaven, he cried with his dying breath: "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" *And when he had said this he fell asleep.* So died Saint Stephen. And yet a *single sentence* would have saved him. A few words would have cooled the fury of that rabble, and turned their hatred into smiles. Had he but said: "*Christ I deny: the Galilean peasant whom ye crucified I do disown,*" he might have been released. Had he spoken thus, he might have lived to hoary age. Yet would he then have lived—as coward traitors all deserve to live—despised by all and by himself the most. A conscience-stricken, self-humiliated wretch. But from such ignominy his faithful soul revolted. His *love of Christ* was greater than his *love of life*. And so this brave confessor of the faith *kneeled down*, and, doing his last homage to his Lord and King, "*he fell asleep.*" "*He fell asleep!*" The butchers looked upon their prey, and lo, he had escaped them, having fallen asleep! Covered with blood, he slept; and there was no more harm that they could do him. Broken and bruised, the heroic witness for his Lord had kept the faith and finished his short course, and passed from his persecutors' hands into the rest of paradise, there to await his martyr's crown.

And so Saint Stephen is *an example* to us all, a

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

deacon of the same holy church of which we all are members, he is an example to *deacons, priests* and *bishops*, and to *their people* also, of steadfast loyalty to Christ and His Church. *God's ministers* are, naturally, the *first* to suffer when the persecuting spirit is abroad. It was so in Saint Stephen's day, and during the early history of the holy church, so that all the *first apostles* of our Lord were called to join, if not to die in, *the noble army of the martyrs.*" It was so during the centuries in which the church in England had not only to "*contend for the faith as once delivered to the saints,*" but also to *contend against* the novelties in doctrine imposed upon her by a foreign power. It has been so during the revival of the last fifty years—the *Oxford movement*—when the church has awakened from a long, deep sleep, and has abandoned the fatal and soporific notion that the worship of God consisted of seeing and hearing a preacher, and has become conscious that an *orderly and decorous service, reverently conducted,* is not only the *best and most suitable,* but by far the *most scriptural* way of doing honour to God's presence in our midst. It is so still, and it will, doubtless, be so to the end. The *ministry* must ever *suffer first and worst.* I could tell you of *spies, hired by those who broke the church's laws themselves* to prosecute their ministers for some trivial and often fancied grievance. I could tell you of *bishops reluctantly compelled, by popular outcry or legal threat, to punish men* whom in their hearts they honoured and respected, as hard-working, self-denying, and faithful pastors of their flocks.

I loved the church of England as a boy, perhaps

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

because I knew no other. I came to love her better *as a man* because of my unalterable conviction that she was *God's church*, as well as *England's*. And I have come to reverence her *as deacon and priest*, and have *grown grey* in her delightful service, because I believe all *her doctrines* are indeed *bible-truth*, and because she is *so broad*, *so comprehensive* and *so tolerant in her laws*. It has been the wisdom and the glory of the church of England to be a *tolerant church*. And, brethren, ye who are *its worthy members* will be *tolerant, too*. The hard, narrow, thoughtless criticisms and judgments uttered by those who boast of their protestantism, concerning men and services of which they disapprove, are unworthy of a tolerant church, and partake rather of the intolerant spirit which is characteristic of popery. I emphatically deny the *infallibility* of the *pope of Rome*. And still more emphatically do I deny the *infallibility* of any *private member* of a congregation who sets himself up as the *sensor or arbiter of the church's worship* and says, without the least regard to others' feelings and desires, "*thus, and thus only, must public worship be performed; thus, and thus only, must God's minister behave.*" And, brethren, it is intolerance, bordering on the very spirit of the persecution that stoned this martyr, Stephen, for one who will assume for himself the liberty to *sit at ease through prayer and lounge while praise is being sung*, to deny his brother the free expression of the *fervour of his soul* when acts of thankful reverence are being made to God for all His bounties and His blessings.

Lay not this thing to his charge as though it were

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

a sin. If you must *differ*, act on your own conviction with sincerity, but *act in love*. If the tone of a *brother's* mind be *more devout* than yours, accuse him not, nor judge him, lest yourselves be judged, but tolerate and love him. And if it be *your minister* you are disposed to judge, because you cannot see things as he, with closer study, sees them, *pray for him first* before you cavil at him, *hear what he* has to say before you judge; and you will probably see wisdom and piety in what you had before condemned. *His duty* is to *teach you* in all holy things; but it is *hardly yours* to *instruct him*. And be assured of this—the minister who is most anxious to do all *honour* to the *church's Head*, will generally be equally earnest to do his *duty* to *its members*. And *his duty* consists *not merely* in trying to *please men*, which is a very common and very terrible temptation, but in being ready, if need be, to bear "*dishonour*" as well as "*honour*," and "*evil report*" as well as "*good report*" (II Cor. vi: 8), giving no just offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, "*in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distress, by long suffering, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth.*"

But there is another lesson of Saint Stephen's martyrdom, appropriate to this last Sunday of the year. I mean that *perfect preparation for his last hour of life*, which made his cruel death such a peaceful translation to a better world. Ere he became a *deacon* of the holy church he was a *faithful servant* of his Lord. "*Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,*" his record is. No sudden conversion his, begotten of a

A FAITHFUL MINISTER

little brief excitement, but a steadfast and enduring faith. No getting religion by infection, like a fever, as men take it now-a-days not seldom, and as soon get rid of it. But his Christianity had been *growing, ripening and quietly preparing him for death and judgment and eternity*. So must it be, dear brethren, with you. You cannot, *in a moment*, learn to die. You cannot, in the present, drive off thoughts of death, and at its coming find yourselves prepared to meet it. If you would share the *peaceful resignation* of Saint Stephen's *death*, share first in the *obedience* of that martyr's *life*. Then, when your time shall come, your soul will know no sore amazement at the prospect of your change. He, whom it . . . been your joy to know, and your desire to serve and honour, will be with you to support you when your flesh shall fail. His *rod* will comfort you amid the pains of death; His *staff* sustain you when you can have no help beside it. He, whom St. Stephen saw within the opened heavens, will receive you also at the gates. And in that *blessed hope*, you, like the martyr, we commemorate to-day, may *commend your spirit* to your Lord, and "*fall asleep*," as a child sleeps, trustfully, in his father's arms. Amen.

XIII

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

"O magnify the Lord our God, and worship Him upon His holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy." (Ps. xcix: 9).

"As for me, I will be talking of Thy worship." (Ps. cxlv: 5, Prayer Book).

I CHOSE these verses for the sake of the one word "*worship*," which occurs therein. The psalmist, in very many of his psalms, continually expresses the spirit and the idea of "*worship*"; and the assemblies of God's people, wherever we read of them in the word of God, are gathered together chiefly with *this object* in view. However they expressed it, whether by *sacrifices*, by *oblations*, by *music* and the *voice of melody*, by *prayer*, or by *all these together*, there can be no mistake that the *chief object* of their gathering in God's courts was that they might "*worship*" Him. But in *these* so-called enlightened days of ours, *that idea* is shockingly and dangerously *lost sight of*. Is it not shocking to realize that not one-half, not one-quarter, not one half-quarter, perhaps not even one-tenth of our whole population habitually *assembles* in the courts of the Lord's house at all? An immense majority of our people makes *no confession of Christ* before men; makes *no public profession of the Christian faith*, or of any portion of it; makes no recognition of

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

the fact (even if they know it, or believe it) that "*the Lord is King, and great in Zion, and high above all people.*" The question is often asked, Why are so many *seats* in many churches so often *empty*? Poor *preaching*, poor *ministering*, poor *singing*, poor *playing*, have been assigned as causes, as they may, in part, be. But the chief cause of empty seats in churches, and of the shocking apostasy and infidelity to which I have just referred, is, that Christian people in this age have, to a very dangerous extent, *lost sight* of the meaning and idea of "*worship.*" Of those who do attend church habitually, I fear too many come for such poor and inferior reasons as fail to commend themselves to the many who care not to come. One goes, attracted by the *preacher's* fame, another by the *choir's* excellence. Some go to see, and others to be seen. One goes because it is a *decent custom*, and he will set a *good example*. And many, thank God! great numbers, go because they believe it helps to make them good. They go to *get good*, and they do *get* it, and (by God's grace) *retain* it, and it sanctifies their lives and helps them on their way to heaven. But, oh, how few among them all, how few even of these last, subordinate all other purposes, all lower and self-seeking objects, to the one highest, best, unselfish purpose, of *worshipping* their God, who is their Maker, their Redeemer and their King. How few emulate the spirit of the holy David, and come up to the house of God with the voice of praise and of thanksgiving. How few "*magnify the Lord our God, and worship Him upon His holy hill, because the Lord our God is holy.*" David delighted in God's

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

courts, and, when he was separated from them, longed for them, even as the hunted deer longed for the water-brooks, because of God's covenanted presence there. David called rich and poor to come to the house of God, not merely to hear the *Levites sing*; or to listen to the sweet sounds of the *trumpets, psalteries and harps*; or to hearken to the *elders* as they set forth the *meaning of the law*; but, chiefly, "to ascribe unto the Lord, worship and strength; to give unto the Lord the honour due unto His Name" (Ps. xxix: 2). Oh, brethren, if only professing Christians realized what "worship" is, what a privilege and delight it is, and how justly due it is to Him who redeemed us by His precious blood, there would be neither *vacant seats* nor *standing room* in any church upon God's holy day. If only professing Christians would think less of what they are to *get* by going to church, and think more of what they have *already got* from God their Saviour—their life, with all its blessings, temporal and spiritual—they would surely *emulate* the zeal of the devout Jews of old. They would surely *exceed* the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees; and, instead of making all sorts of *false and wicked excuses* for *staying at home*, they would gladly "*enter into God's gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.*" They would "*be thankful unto Him,*" however poorly the *preacher* might set forth His merits. "*They would speak good of His Name,*" however imperfectly the *choir* might sing their songs of praise.

Let us now consider in outline what *church worship* is, or should be.

The *church* our Lord set up (He tells us) is *His*

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

Kingdom here in earth. The *king* of every kingdom requires the outward, public *homage* of his subjects, to express their loyalty and love. This, offered to "*the King of Kings,*" is *public worship.* It is our public recognition of our "*King*" and "*God.*" The familiar words of the prayer book show this. In the *first chant* we sing: "*O come, let us worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.*" And then, a little further on, we sing: "*We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting, Thine honourable, true and only Son, also the Holy Ghost.*" Thus we confess the *triune God,* and own what each person of the Most Holy Trinity has done, and is doing, for us. This is not private but public "*worship,*" in which, as the words show, every worshipper should join. These words are worshipful, and therefore entirely unselfish. A loyal subject of the Queen goes to court not merely to *get something.* He goes to *manifest his loyalty,* to do his sovereign honour, to show his reverence for her exalted office, or his attachment to her gracious person. *Benefits do follow,* as a matter of course. Sovereigns do frequently reciprocate their subjects' homage by royal favours. And so, in an eminent degree, does He, who is the King of Kings. But *this* is the *result* and not the *motive* of any worthy worship. Yet is it *so certain a result* that an *apostle* has made it his *ground of argument* for perfect *trust in God* for all things *needful.* And as we worship Him for the great gift of His dear Son, we may well sink all cares of earth under those comfortable words: "*He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him*

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also freely give us all things" (Rom. viii: 32).

But are we not to pray for all things needful? And is not prayer for these a part of worship? Certainly, and an important part, since *all true prayer is communion with God*. The pattern prayer that our Lord gave us, *the Lord's prayer*, shows us this. There is just *one* petition, "give us daily our daily bread," and not another word about our *bodies'* needs. *All other parts* are for our *spiritual needs*, or are directly, *worship*. "*Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever.*" Ah! in *that prayer*, and in *the psalms* we have God's ordering of a *fixed form* of prayer to be used constantly in worship. Some of the psalms are *prayers* for personal help and good. By far the greater part are *praises and thanksgivings*, and *ascriptions* of majesty and power, and glory to God. For a *thousand years before Christ came* they formed a large portion of the worship of *the holy temple*. And for well nigh *two thousand years*, the church of Christ has used them in her *liturgies*. The modern plan of *extemporaneous prayer* resulted in a *lowered tone* and *idea of worship*. When we remember the *absurdities* of *prayers political*, and of *prayers polemical*, and the *superabundance* of mere *selfish prayers*—to say nothing of the *vagaries* of religious adventurers who, by noisy parade and irreverent speech, bring divine worship into ridicule—we may be heartily thankful for our *liturgic system*, and rejoice that our church has followed the lines of public worship laid down in the wise king's words: "*Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy*

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth." (Eccl. v: 2).

The *highest* act of worship, and the only one directly ordered by our Lord, by which man is the most blessed and God most honoured, is the *holy communion* of the Saviour's Body and Blood. The deep solemnity of this outwardly shows the inward blessings it conveys. The immense importance of the duty of communion is being more and more widely recognized; the benefits of the Saviour's passion better known. Many, who do not yet receive, are qualifying themselves to do so in reverence and love, by being present at the celebration and joining in its deep devotions. And men are coming gradually to see that the modern and unapostolic custom of *trooping out* of church and hurrying home to dinner *at the solemn moment of the church's holiest ministrations* is dreadfully *dishonouring* to Him whose name they bear, and whose they profess to be. "*They all forsook Him and fled,*" is the most grievous record of the apostles' want of faith. "*Will ye also go away?*" is about the saddest sentence that our Lord ever said to them.

Another act of worship which has been also too long neglected, is being slowly, and against much prejudice, revived. I mean the *offering of our substance to the Lord*, who gives us all. God requires more than the mere worship of *the lips*. God requires more than that which *costs us nothing*. His own words are: "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name. Bring an offering and come into His courts.*" The bible ever makes *the offering* a component portion of God's public worship. The church has ever owned

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

this duty, and therefore directs the reverent *presentation of these offerings* at the same time and together with *the oblations* of the bread and wine, whenever communion takes place. In this we own *God's lordship* over all creation: God's right over *ourselves* and over *all we have*. The poverty of individual churches, and the prevailing sin of *covetousness*, are largely due to the neglect of this great truth, that public worship is not true and complete worship, without the offering of our substance to the Lord. The *bible law* is, that of all that God gives to man, *one-tenth*, at least, is His, and must be returned to Him. Prayers and praises are good, but are incomplete without offerings. How can any Christian expect God's blessing who deliberately does that for which God said to the Jews: "*Ye are cursed with a curse, even this whole nation, because ye have withheld your tithes and offerings, and have robbed your God?*" (Mal. iii: 8-9). Our Saviour put His finger on the putrefying sore which makes the religion of so many Christians vain, and dead in His sight, when he said to the money-loving young man, who claimed to have kept all His laws: "*Sell that thou hast, and give unto the poor, and come and follow Me,*" and by that saying sent him sorrowing away.

And now let me, as I close, say this: God's public worship is man's foremost duty. To the Eternal Triune God—*Maker, Redeemer, Sanctifier—Giver of all spiritual and temporal good*, this general acknowledgment is justly *due*. The *commands enjoining it* literally pervade the bible. The duty arises out of a deep sense of *gratitude*. It is so felt by every well-taught

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

Christian, whose religion "is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter merely, whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii: 29). And it is a notable fact that in the days of the severest *persecutions* of the church, when the assembling for united worship was dangerous to property and life, when men and women assembled for worship at the imminent *risk* of being *burnt* or *butchered* for their loyalty to Jesus Christ, *none of these considerations deterred them* then from offering their homage to God. "*Not death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers of hell were able to separate them from the love of God,*" as they delighted, and were impelled, to show it forth, in the worship of Jesus Christ their Lord. But now a *shower of rain* will do it! A *roughish blast* of heaven's healthful *wind* will do it! The slightest *indisposition* of *body* or *mind*, the merest sham and shadow of a vain excuse, compared to which the purchase of a yoke of oxen or a price of land would be a mountain of impediment, is now enough to separate Christians not only from the love, but from the promised presence in their midst, of Him who for their sakes lived a life of suffering and died a death of shame. Let the church be warned that her *persecutions* are *not done with* yet. Your lives and property may be safe. You may get *orators* and *operatic music* to delight you, and find the service altogether attractive, and see crowded houses; you may get the value of your money and be entertained. There are *no spies*, now, to put you into prison for so coming. No *cruel law* to condemn you to *fight with beasts at Ephesus*, and yet you are beset by *serious danger*. I will tell you *where* this danger lies. The

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

principalities and powers of hell are raging now against the church as ever. Your *bodies* and your *goods* are *safe*. But your holy and ancient *faith* is *not safe*. As it behooves nations now-a-days to stand to arms, so does it behoove the church of God. It is not merely a struggle now between *this or that party* in the church. The issue is not merely between those who *dissent* from us, or those who keep to the old ways and walk therein. Nor are questions at issue between the *church of England* and the *church of Rome* our gravest concern. The *struggle* of our day is between *belief* and *unbelief*. The tendency of public opinion, as seen in our legislative courts and in the public press, is to *secularize* the public institutions and to eliminate the religious spirit. *Scepticism* is ever becoming more aggressive, and the question must be asked and answered, "How shall we meet and conquer it?" I answer, or rather, the whole tenor of bible and prayer book, the voice of holy church, makes answer, *by upholding public worship* as verily and indeed the people's worship, and united recognition of the sovereignty of God. "Let the people praise Thee, O God, yea, let all the people praise Thee." Come, people of this church, more and more often as you realize for what you come! O come and worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord. Pray to Him, too, not self-seeking prayers for money to spend, or good things to enjoy, or fine clothes for parade, but pray for *all estates of men*, that they may have His seven-fold Spirit—the *spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the spirit of His holy fear* And pray that

OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

they may *increase* in spirit more and more until they come unto His everlasting kingdom, where the holy angels forever worship Him, and where ransomed saints cast down their crowns before His throne and say: "*Thou art worthy, O Lord God, to receive glory, and honour, and power*" (Rev. iv: 9-10). Amen.

XIV

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

"A bright cloud overshadowed them." (Matt. xvii: 5).

THE *mysteries* of revelation have been well compared to the *bright cloud* which overshadowed the disciples at the transfiguration of our Blessed Lord. There is *light*, with *shadow*—brightness, but obscurity as well. Some things are clear to us; some are mysterious. "Now," Saint Paul says, "*we know in part; we see through a glass darkly*" (I Cor. xiii: 12). The gospel is indeed "*a light*," but its light is like that of the bright shining *cloud* on the transfiguration mount. The gospel itself states this. We read that God "*hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*" (II Cor. iv: 6). But, we also read of "*the mystery of godliness*" (I Tim. iii: 16), and "*the mystery of Christ*" (Eph. iii: 4). We read of "*the light of the glorious gospel*" (II Cor. iv: 4). But we also read of Christian truths, as "*mysteries of the kingdom*" (Matt. xiii: 11). We read of Christ as "*the True Light* which lighteth every man" (John i: 9). Yet Saint Paul speaks of his own preaching of Christ thus: "*We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery*" (I Cor. ii: 7). Blending texts like these, we learn how aptly *truth divine* may be likened to an *overshadowing bright cloud*.

Look at the doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*, which is

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

uppermost in our minds to-day (*Trinity Sunday*). We assert that there is but *One God*, and yet *Three Persons* in the Godhead; that *every Person* by Himself is *God*, and the whole *three Persons* are co-eternal together and *co-equal*; and yet there is but *One God*. This is abundantly and plainly stated in God's word, and we believe it. We affirm this regularly in *the creeds*, and we glorify the ever-blessed Trinity *at the end of every psalm*, saying "*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.*" And yet, the revelation is a mighty *mystery*. The nature of the Supreme Being is beyond our ken, and we "*cannot by searching find out God; we are not able to find out the Almighty to perfection*" (Job xi: 7). In telling us what *He has done* for us, the bible reveals *God Himself*, and we must thus learn about *Him* from His *works*. At the beginning of the bible, in the story of *creation* (Gen. i and ii: 1-4) the alternate *evening lesson* for to-day), we find the *unity of God*, and the *plurality of Persons*. "*God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen. i: 1)—*this shows us the unity of God*. "*Let us make man in our own image*" (Gen. i: 26)—*this shows us the plurality of persons in the Godhead*. In different places in the bible the *creation* is ascribed to the *different Persons* in the Trinity. "*All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made,*" says Saint John (John i: 3), speaking of *the Son*. "*The Spirit of God hath made me,*" says Job (Job xxxiii: 4). And David says: "*Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created*" (Ps. civ: 30). When Philip says to Jesus: "*Show us the Father?*" He replies: "*He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father*"

(John xiv: 8-9). When our Saviour directed the nations to be baptized "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*" (Matt. xxviii: 20). He made a clear, dogmatic statement of the *Trinity*, and of the *equality* of the *Sacred Three*. And when we read of converts, in obedience to this, being baptized, "*in the Name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts xix: 5), the *unity* of the Godhead seems to be implied. It would be a tedious and a needless task to quote the many passages in which the *Godhead* of each *Person* is asserted, and also the *unity* of *God*. But I may instance two places where the *distinctness* of the *second* and *third Persons* of the *Trinity* is expressly stated, and also *their equality* with *God the Father*. *Divine honours* are ascribed to *God the Son*, when it is ordered that *at His Name all knees should bow*, of things in heaven and in earth, and under the earth (Phil. ii: 10). And the *Godhead* of the *Holy Ghost* is specially asserted in the monition that "*blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven*" (Matt. xii: 31). These passages show the greatest care on their divinely-inspired author's part, lest in believing rightly in *One God*, men should be led wrongly to deny the *equal Godhead* of the *Son*, or of the *Holy Ghost*. Yet, after all, when we endeavour mentally to *realize*, or to *comprehend* the doctrine, are we not lost in strange, mysterious thoughts, are we not "*overshadowed by a bright cloud*"? Well will it be, dear brethren, if, rising from such thoughts, and humbled by our efforts to find out the eternal, incomprehensible God, we, like the disciples after the transfiguration, may lift up our eyes and see before us "*Jesus only*." For the whole revelation of God's love

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

to man may be summed up in that phrase, "*Jesus only.*"

As before stated, it is in His *works* that God has seen fit, chiefly and most graciously, to reveal *Himself* to us. Observe, for example, the stupendous work of our redemption by Christ Jesus. Of *God the Father*, we are told that "He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii: 16). Of *God the Son*, we are told that being "equal with God," He joined our human nature to His divinity, and "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. ii: 7). While of *God the Holy Ghost*, it is said that Christ, "through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix: 14). Thus, in the *incarnation* and *passion* of our Lord, we see the *Three Persons* of the Godhead, *each at work*.

Bright is the cloud that overshadows us, and yet it is a *cloud*. For the more we seek out God in His relation to us men, and specially as engaged in the salvation of His fallen creatures, the more our minds are lost in a maze of *mystery*, the more we are encompassed with the dazzling *cloud*. How can we, for example, ever fully understand "*the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ*"? Yet it is "necessary to everlasting salvation that we should *believe rightly*" this truth (Athanasian creed).

We speak of "*God, manifest in the flesh*" (I Tim. iii: 16), of the *Son of God* being also *Son of Man*, of our Saviour being "*Perfect God*" and, at the same time, absolutely "*Perfect Man*"; of His being in heaven,

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

and everywhere, *as God*, and yet being in Bethlehem and Galilee *as man*! Like the disciples before the transfiguration glory, we are in the presence of *divine mysteries* and listening to the voice of God. Let us reverently accept this *word* of God. The sceptic may say: "I cannot know God, I cannot find out the Almighty, and therefore I will not believe in Him." Lofty and proud intellects, seeking to be wise above what is written, and only reading, very carelessly, what is written, may suggest many a doubt; but humble Christians contemplating the sublime *mysteries of the Kingdom and the King*, and feeling, in their hearts and consciences, that *God is true*, will recollect that even David, prophet of the Almighty though he was, has said: "*Such knowledge, is too wonderful for me*" (Ps. 139: 6). They will fall down and worship God. They will, like the seraphim Isaiah saw, veil their meek faces, crying: "*Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief*" (Mark ix: 24).

Dear brethren, in the face of sacred mysteries, such as this doctrine of the Three in One, let us remember this. If there were *no deep mysteries*, if there were *no hidden things* of God, no room at all for wonder or for doubt, then equally there would be no place for *faith*. Whatever truths and doctrines are *revealed* to us, it is our duty to *accept* and to hold them fast in *faith*. They are a sacred "*charge*," committed to our *trust* (I Tim. vi: 20), although too marvellous for us perfectly to *know*. They are a *cloud*, indeed, but a bright, shining cloud from heaven, which mercifully veils from us *glories* that we could not yet bear to see. "*The truth as it is in Jesus*," demands from

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

all the exercise of *faith*. If all were plain and clear, simple, and easily understood in all its parts, the gospel would make no trial of *patience*, and no demand on our *faith*, and all those passages which exalt faith so highly would then become a waste of words. But *faith* is given to us, and really must be *exercised*. We have *light* enough to guide us along the narrow way, but we have also some *cloud of mystery*, and human reason must submit to God's infallible word.

How can we expect that our *finite minds* will understand the *things of heaven*? How little do we really understand about the *things of earth*! Wonderful are the inventions of this present day and the works of human skill. How wonderfully knowledge has increased, even in the last half-century, let the triumphs of *steam* and *electricity*, and the *innumerable applications of these* to useful purposes declare. In the domain of *nature*, as in the world of *invention*, how soon do we see the bright cloud overshadowing us, Who can comprehend *the wonders of nature* going on around us—the *rising sap*, the *bursting leaves* and *blossoms*, and the *swelling fruit*? Who can define earth's operations as she brings forth the springing "*blade*," the increasing "*ear*," and then at last "*the full corn in the ear*"?

Then, brethren, if in the affairs of *this* world, men *know* so little, yet *believe* so much, were it not folly and a fatal want of faith to insist on demonstration, and to doubt *revelation* in the far more important matters of the *spiritual world*? This much is sure, and it is this day's valuable lesson. However imperfect may be our highest knowledge of God, the more

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

we do His will, the better we shall know His way. The closer we come to Him in His appointed means of grace, the more perfectly we shall know Him whom it is everlasting life to know. God does reveal Himself to earnest souls. Our Saviour told us "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*" (Matt. v: 8). Heaven's light does shine into their hearts who love Him. "*The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*" (Prov. iv: 18). Then walk, my brethren, in the light you have, "*as children of the light.*" It will hardly avail you to believe aright the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, unless you walk so as to obey and serve the Trinity. It will hardly avail you to own that you were made by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Ghost, if, in your life, you honour not those mighty operations of your Triune God. It is useless to sing praises here, to the "*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts,*" if you strive not to win your way into that choir that sings continually the "*holy, holy, holy*" in the courts above. Strive, then, to win your way thither. Yet, as you strive, remember how powerless you are, in your own strength, to strive. And cry, as the church teaches you to cry in her litany, to the Divine Three in One for needful help. Cry out, "*O God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.*" And having no merits of your own to plead, plead those of Christ: "*O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.*" And, as His merits are applied to sinful souls by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, pray on: "*O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding*

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." And, as *salvation* is the undivided work of *all*, pray yet once more: "*O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."* As you pray thus earnestly and humbly, bending in faith before the Triune God, the *cloud* will gradually *lift*, and the brightness and the fellowship of the Sanctifying Spirit will be vouchsafed to you more and more until you come into *His continual presence*, "*Whose face doth shine as the sun, Whose raiment is white as the light."* Amen.

XV

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

"The Kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."
(Matt. xiii: 33).

WHAT is the leaven, and who is the woman, and what are the measures of meal?

We hardly need ask what is the Kingdom of heaven, for our commission, for all these years, has been to preach it; and dull, indeed, must be their ears who do not know it as the Kingdom of which the prophets wrote, which was to endure for ever—the holy and universal church of the Redeemer, into which He "shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth" (Is. xi: 12). It is the church which, though "in tribulation" here, and in the tumult of her war, yet hath union with the general assembly of the blessed in paradise. It is the Kingdom of Christ's grace in this world, and of His glory in the world to come—one Kingdom only, because there is one only King. The Kingdom of grace is, now, the Kingdom of glory in germ; and the Kingdom of glory will be the Kingdom of grace in fruition! Of the earthly portion of His Kingdom our Lord evidently speaks when He likens it to leaven. Of that portion which He Himself set up upon His holy hill of Zion, into which the heathen

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

should be brought for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession. The holy apostles were its earliest ministers, the ambassadors of Christ, the "stewards of His mysteries," as the third advent collect calls them. As these passed away, there was, of course, a regular succession of consecrated men to take their office and to administer the Kingdom's laws. All its laws were written by these first apostles, or by others whom they taught, and these writings formed our New Testament. This Kingdom has its *ordinances*, of *preaching*, *prayer*, and *praise*, and its *sacraments*; its *baptismal rite*, for the enrolment of new subjects of the King, and its *eucharistic feast*, in which the gracious King admits those subjects to communion with Himself. Such is the Kingdom which our Lord came here to found, and organize, for its all important work, and which He was pleased to liken, among many other similes, "to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."

And now, what is the "leaven"? Material, endued with a certain power or spirit, by which it *moves and influences the whole body of the meal*, imparting its own nature to it all. With this thought in our minds we pray Christ in the pre-advent collect: "*Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people.*" At *pentecost* He did "stir up," with the fire of His Holy Spirit, His first apostles, and sent *them* forth to preach salvation to a world of sin. From *them*, the secret, sacred influence spread forth, fermenting, energizing as it spread, till it converted *weak men into heroic martyrs*, *helpless sinners into cour-*

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

ageous, steadfast *saints*, and thousands of *evil livers* into "a *peculiar people zealous of good works*" (Titus ii: 14). As spreads the *leaven's* influence through the *meal*, so spread the *gospel of the Kingdom* through the *lands*; the knowledge of Christ's way upon the earth, His saving health among nations, that had not known His Name.

Observe that *the leaven* was not found within the *meal*, but *put there*. It was deliberately placed there by some outside agency. The "*woman took and hid it*," in the proper quantity of meal. And so *he gospel of the Kingdom* was not found in the world, was not evolved out of men's consciences, but was sent down from heaven. It was the *revelation*, by Jesus Christ, of the unutterable love of God. The woman hid the leaven in the meal, and there it lay concealed. Silent, secret, gradual, but sure and certain, was its operation on the whole—"until the whole was leavened." And silent, secret, gradual, but absolutely sure, was the operation of that unseen Kingdom, of that Kingdom which came "*not with observation*," but yet really came, and elevated, and vivified the souls of men. The *still small voice* of the holy gospel of our Lord spoke to men's *hearts* with trumpet-power divine, and told them that they had, verily, *the Kingdom of their God within them*, and called them to awake out of their sleep, and rise up from the dead, that Christ might give them light. And, brethren, the divine leaven is a hidden power to the world and to the worldly-minded, even yet. It works, but because they do not *see* it working they do not *believe*. As the proud rulers of the world, at Christ's first advent, lived in

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

sublime unconsciousness of the tremendous revolution that had even then begun, ignored Christ and His work, till Christianity had grasped the very sceptre of the Cæsars and assumed their throne, so do worldly philosophers, the rationalists and free-thinkers of our time, ignore and despise what seem, to their lofty intellects, to be the poor, unlikely means which God employs for the regeneration and salvation of men's souls. Saint Paul admitted the feeble beginnings of the church: "*Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (I Cor. i. 26).

"*Like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened!*" But why was it that some *strong man*, or some *powerful cordials*, or *subtle chemicals*, or *wonderful machinery* was not employed to create so wondrous an effect? Mark well that nothing but mere ordinary *woman's work*, and a morsel of fermented dough, was used to stir, and agitate, and stimulate, and change the very being of the whole vast lump. *Who then was the "woman"?* Who, but the feeble *human agencies* employed by God? Who, but the foolish, and weak, and low, whom it has pleased God to choose, to confound the wise, and great, and mighty of this world? (I Cor. i: 27). The woman represents *the church*, in her ministries, and rites and sacraments; the church, in her stewardship of the mysteries of God (see third advent collect). In the Old Testament, as also in the New Testament, the church is called "*woman*," "*virgin*," "*daughter of Zion*," "*bride of Christ*."

A "*woman*," she bears upon her breasts "the

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

word made flesh." A "virgin," she trims the lamp and keeps the light of truth forever burning, so as to prepare the world for the second advent of her Lord. "Daughter of Zion," she is "a tower," to be seen far and near; a "fortress," to defend the faithful (Jer. vi: 27). Oh, that the people would walk about Zion and go round about her, and see *her towers* and mark well *her bulwarks!* (Ps. xlviii: 12-13). As a "bride," she ever thinks of her Heavenly Bridegroom, and desires to be more and more joined to Him in love.

She takes her leaven in her course of duty and hides it in the meal. *The word* goes forth, perhaps in some quiet sermon, which no one seems at the time to heed, but which sinks down into some believing heart, and fills it with "*the blessed hope of everlasting life.*" *Some warning* may be given in all faithful love, which may seem at the time to offend rather than to help, but which turns some disobedient heart unto the wisdom of the just, and unto a life of acceptable service. *Some sacrament* may be administered, and seem to have no visible effect, yet many a troubled soul, sore let and hindered in running the appointed race, may be helped thereby and delivered speedily by the great grace given to it therein. The woman hides the leaven in the meal, yet who does not believe and know that it will work.

In like manner will the Divine leaven work. So let us beware of making light of *the services*, and *sacraments*, and *ministrations* of *the holy church*, or of supposing that they will not have their intended, and absolutely sure, effect. They are, verily, to those who accept them, "*a savour of life unto life,*" but to

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

those who refuse them, "*a savour of death unto death*" (II Cor. ii: 16). The operation of the leaven in the meal is, to the unscientific mind of man, a hidden *mystery*; but being so common and so well known in its effects, men think not of it. So Saint Paul calls the ministrations of the church, "*the mysteries of God*" (I Cor. iv: 1). "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," he says, "even the hidden wisdom," not known, even to "the princes (or great ones) of this world" (I Cor. ii: 7-8). And so men think little of them. Their familiarity with holy ordinances often breeds carelessness, if not indeed contempt. The very fact that *grace is free*, and that the "*wine and milk*," the richest blessings of the gospel, may be purchased "*without money and without price*," makes men of this world careless to obtain them. What! they exclaim, can a *handful of leaven* change the entire substance of a large quantity of meal? Could a *mere trumpet's bray* and a *brief war cry*, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon," without a single blow, scare off an army of God's enemies, numerous as grasshoppers? (Judges vii: 12-21). What! Did little, *shallow Jordan* cure a foul disease, when those grand rivers, Pharpar and Abana, could give no relief? How can such seemingly *slight causes* produce such wonderful effects? So men ever argue from the low standpoint of their natural unbelief. Even of *Christ Himself*, at His first coming, Nathaniel asked, "Can *any good thing* come out of *Nazareth*?" (John i: 46). And of *Saint Paul*, preaching at Athens, learned philosophers cried out, "What will *this babbler* say?" (Acts xvii: 18.)

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

Some would not believe our Lord, because, as they said: "As for this fellow, we *know not* whence He is" (John ix: 29). Others would not believe Him because they thought they *did know* Him. "Is not this *the carpenter*, the Son of Mary. . . . and they were offended at Him" (Mark vi: 3). And of this kingdom, His holy and enduring *church*, which was to permeate and change the world, even as the leaven permeates the meal and makes it good for food, we find this *contemptuous record*, at the end of the first history of the church: "*As concerning this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against*" (Acts xxviii: 22). "*Spoken against*," it was *then*, and is, in *these days*, and *ever* will be. Indeed, it is a mark of the true church to be mistaken, to be doubted, to be "*spoken against*." Did not our Lord say: "*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*" (John xv: 19). And there is the same hatred now as when our Saviour spoke. Witness the disposition to secularize all public institutions that seek public support. Witness the fight there is to keep the bible itself as a text-book for our schools. What, to a worldly philosopher, is the *holy word of God* but a fallible book to be criticized coldly, along with the *words of Confucius*—or calmly compared with the *koran* of impious *Mohammed*. The church declares that *the Holy Ghost* is "*uncreate*," "*incomprehensible*," "*eternal*," and *is God*. But what is the Holy Ghost to a worldly philosopher, but a *mere good influence*, and not perhaps a quite convenient guide in the case of a hard bargain or a

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

horse-trade? No wonder the church is belied and belittled, beleaguered and battled against, when men can be found to attribute increasing culture, knowledge, wisdom, comfort, affluence, to the *natural development of the human mind*, instead of to the *grace of God*, poured down upon His people, through His own divinely appointed channels. As well might the eater of the pure, sweet bread ignore the secret influence of the hidden leaven.

“Like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in *three measures of meal!*” And what are *the measures of meal*, and *why three?* Again and again, in scripture, we come upon this almost mystic number, “*three.*” *Three angels* came to Abraham to promise him that son of his old age, in whom all nations of the world would be blessed—Isaac, the progenitor of Jesus Christ. He *called them “Lord,”* as recognizing in them the *Divine Three in One.* And to feed them, he hastily called Sarah to prepare three measures of fine meal (Gen. xviii: 6). As there were *three measures* to be leavened, so were there *three families of man*, descended from *Shem, Ham, and Japheth*, among whom, sooner or later, the church of the Redeemer was to spread the means of grace. There were the *three great divisions* of the world, known in our Saviour’s time, *Asia, Africa, and Europe*, into which the apostles, or their immediate successors, quickly went with their good tidings of great joy. But it matters not at all to us, if old interpretations such as these should be more fanciful than real. The fact remains that just as the leaven affects and operates upon every particle of meal, so does the Kingdom of our Lord come,

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

with His energizing power, to make "the way of the Redeemer known upon earth, His saving health among *all* nations" (Ps. lxxvii: 2).

Millions of ransomed sinners are alive to-day, who could tell little about *the Caesars* and the great ones of the earth who flourished in the beginning of the Christian era, but who can tell with very thankful hearts *the old, old story* of the *Saviour's* love. They know the touching details of the life of the *Carpenter of Nazareth*, who was, with his own consent, and with many cruel accessories and ingenious degradations, hung between two thieves, in order that by His death, all nations, and languages, and peoples of the world might have eternal life. And who can tell how soon the day may come when the Crucified One may be indeed the *King and Lord over all*, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"? (Is. xi: 9). "*Until the whole was leavened.*" Then when "the whole" shall be "leavened," will the Kingdom of Christ's Glory have come.

But the women who make bread, who put the yeast into the fine flour prepared for its reception, know that there are *conditions* to be observed for its successful working. It must *not* be *too hot*, or it will not work aright. It must *not* be *too cold*, or it will not work at all. And so with the spiritual "leaven" and the spiritual meal. Avoid the undue heat of a *fanatical excitement* which, though it should energize for a little while, the soul will shortly leave it duller than it was by natural reaction. And still more heedfully avoid a *cold indifference*, which can mean only spiritual death. Remember that you have within you,

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

by your baptismal covenant, God's Holy Spirit; you have the *Spirit's sevenfold gifts*—"wisdom and understanding, counsel and ghostly strength, knowledge, true godliness and the fear of God" (see the Confirmation Prayer). These, all, are yours, in measure, as you need them; to be increased within you ever as you use them. If you will not be influenced by these, if the evil spirits of pride and vanity, envy and jealousy, hatred and ill-will—the "old leaven of malice and wickedness"—be allowed to operate upon your hearts and influence your lives, what part or lot can you have in the Israel of your God, or in the Kingdom of His Grace? You may understand all these parables, "may understand all mysteries and all knowledge," but if you have not charity, the greatest of the Christian graces, you are nothing, and nothing can help you (I Cor. xiii: 2). But having *God's love* in your hearts, and your lives *warmed* by the *sevenfold fires* of His Spirit within you, your light will shine forth before men till they glorify God in their lives, and *spread His truth* far and wide.

Men will "*see your good works*," and declare the Lord is with you of a truth. The *way of righteousness* (which is the way of Christ) will be better and better known on earth by reason of your faithful following of Him. *Small* though you may be, *your influence* over others may *not be small*.

May you thus see and know, how "the Kingdom, of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Amen.

XVI

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

"Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv: 19).

WHITSUNDAY is the holy day on which Christians have ever been accustomed to commemorate that wonderful event, the visible *advent of the Holy Spirit* to the church, in the similitude of tongues of fire. But it does far more than simply commemorate the *fact*. Like the other chief festivals of the Christian church it teaches and reminds us of a *doctrine*, too. *Christmas*, for example, not only repeats the story of our Saviour's *birth*, but testifies to the mystic doctrine of the *incarnation*, too—to the importance of the veritable human nature of Him who wrought out the salvation of us men. *Easter* not only records the *fact* and testifies to the miracle of the *resurrection* from the dead, but teaches us how *we*, too, dying unto sin, must positively *rise* unto the *newness of a spiritual life*.

Whitsunday not only speaks to us, throughout its services, of the *fact* of the *coming of the promised Comforter*, to give apostles power and illumination for their appointed work, but it teaches important *doctrines*, too. As we, also, have a work to do, trials and difficulties to overcome, infirmities to struggle with, and sins to fight against and conquer,—so we are

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

promised, and (if we be only faithful) abundantly supplied with the *presence* and *agency* of that *self-same Spirit*, to give us assured success in all these undertakings.

Comfortable and strengthening is this doctrine, brethren, and "*Comforter*" was the name by which our Saviour then described *the Holy Ghost*. "*I will give you another Comforter. . . . I will not leave you comfortless*" (John xiv: 16-18). And when we stand up, week after week, and say in *the apostles' creed*, "*I believe in the Holy Ghost*," or when in the communion service we recite *the Nicene creed*, and say of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity: "*I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life*," we publicly acknowledge *our need*, and we claim *the promise*, of this precious gift. "*I believe in the Holy Ghost*" does not mean, merely, "*I believe that such a Person once visibly descended*," but, "*I believe that He is still among us; that He still works and dwells in all who have become Christians, and that His residence in our bodies, as His temples, is indispensable to us as Christians.*"

We believe that the *pledge* of this indwelling presence was given to us in our *baptism*, that this divine gift was *certified* anew and increased to us at our *confirmation*, and continually *renewed and strengthened* in us at every faithful *sacramental communion* that we make. We believe that the spiritual presence is a veritable, comfortable, guiding, protecting, and most blessed *influence* in our lives, unless we wilfully and persistently exclude and "*quench*" His operations. In this sense we believe in the Holy Ghost, "*the Lord*

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

and Giver of Life," and it is of this "life," this spiritual life, that our Saviour seems to be speaking in our text: "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*"

Evidently it could not be the mere *bodily life* He spoke of, for He did not come down to this earth to give us that. He did not come down to *save us* from that which is the fruit and witness of our fallen nature, the *death of the body*. That is, indeed, ultimately, to be conquered, but it is "*the last enemy that shall be destroyed*" (I Cor. xv: 26), and the time for its destruction is not yet. Moreover, the "life" of which the text speaks, does not seem to be directly the *eternal life*, or the *living everlastingly* with Him in Heaven, for His *conversation* related rather to the Spirit's help and guidance for their *work on earth*, and the "life" of which the text speaks is, in its *primary* meaning, something here, *in this world*.

"*At that day,*" He says (alluding to the *day of pentecost*, when He would send the Spirit), "*ye shall know*"—or shall be convinced—"that I am in my Father and ye in Me, and I in you" (John xiv: 20). Strange and mysterious as are those words of Christ, they show distinctly that He is *not* speaking, *primarily*, of *everlasting life* above, but of the spiritual life in His disciples' souls *on earth*. In many other places He speaks in the same manner of the same all-important spiritual "life." He does so when He says: "*I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly*" (John x: 10). He does so, when He pleads so sorrowfully, so affectionately, with His unthankful people: "*Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life*" (John v: 40). Evidently in both

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

those cases He means *primarily, spiritual life here, and then, eternal life hereafter.*

And so of this spiritual life which must be lived here, in this world of trial and probation, we can say we believe the Holy Ghost is its *Lord and Giver*. We believe not only in *God the Father*, who *made us*; and in *God the Son*, who, at the precious price of all His sufferings, *redeemed us*; but also in *God the Holy Ghost*, who *sanctifies us, now in this present life, and causes and enables us to grow in grace*. Apart from this doctrine, and without this work of the life-giving Spirit, the scheme of our redemption would be manifestly incomplete; for, not having the capacity to do right, there could hardly be responsibility for doing wrong. And as it is the especial office of the Holy Ghost to "*guide us unto all truth,*" it was evidently expedient for us that when the Saviour's sacrificial work was done, He should "*go away,*" in order that the dispensation of the holy and life-giving Spirit might begin.

It is sometimes charged that the *worship of the church of England is lifeless and unspiritual*: and because such an opinion is entertained in some places respecting our teaching, I now lay emphasis on the fact that *Whitsunday is set apart for the regular contemplation, in every year, of the office and work of the Holy Spirit, and in several of the church's prayers, like the collect for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, she prays definitely for the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Saviour has taught her to do.*

The church distinctly teaches that the *sacrament of baptism, in which our church-life begins, is the means and pledge of grace given, and she preserves the*

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

apostolic rite of confirmation to certify to her faithful children the *presence and blessing* of God's Holy Spirit, and she continues to administer the *sacrament of the body and blood of Christ*, which is the *pledge of the true believers' abiding fellowship* with his God. It is true that the *extraordinary gifts of the Spirit* were confined to the *first ages of the gospel*; that the *gift of tongues*, and *power of working miracles*, were continued only so long as they were needed to confirm "the truth." But it is also true that the Holy Ghost is "*the Lord and Giver of life*," and *every step* in our *spiritual*, as in our *natural* life, depends upon the *grace of God*. In Whitsunday's gospel we thankfully record the gracious promise of our Lord, that "the Comforter" was *sent then* to abide within His church "*for ever*" (John xiv: 16). "*For ever*"—not during the *apostles' life-time* only, but during *all future ages* of the church's existence would the Holy Spirit be its all-sufficient source of light and life until the coming of the Lord in glory.

And now, brethren, remember that the lesson to be gathered out of all this doctrine is—that if no gift of God can with impunity be carelessly neglected; then, least of all, can that great gift, that *highest of all gifts, the life divine* within us through the Holy Spirit. "*The manifestation of the Spirit*," says Saint Paul, "*is given to every man, to profit withal*" (I Cor. xii: 7). If we would see *what* the gift is, *what power* it gives, and *what duties* it imposes, we must recollect its ordinary effect upon those who, at the first, received it. Remember, *for example*, Saint Peter's *self-dependence* and most lamentable fall, without its guid-

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

ance. He vowed that though all men should forsake the Lord yet would not he; and then, almost immediately, denied, in angry language, that he even knew the man. Then think of the same apostle's *holy boldness* when, shortly after, "*being filled with the Holy Ghost,*" he proclaimed, at the imminent risk of his life, the almighty power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. There you see a man *yielding himself* to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and employing profitably His sacred gifts. Or, for a *warning*, look at the first king of Israel, *Saul of Kish*. When Samuel chose him, "*the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he was turned into another man*" (I Sam. x: 6). Yet, after awhile, he *refused the Spirit's guidance*, and resisted Him, offering an unlawful sacrifice. Then, in page after page, we read of the king *falling into further error*, going on from sin to sin, instead of from "*strength to strength,*" until at last he sank into *hopeless despair*.

So must it be, dear brethren, with any among you who, having received the gift, wilfully refuse to profit by its power, and are in no way different from what you would have been without it; who, having received the "*five talents*" (Matt. xxv: 15), or the "*ten pounds*" (Luke xix: 13), yet remain *unprofitable servants, dishonorable stewards* of God's bounties.

Will you resemble *Peter the Apostle*, to whom the Holy Ghost was truly "*the Lord and Giver of life*"; or will you, while professing with your lips that you believe Him to be this, yet resist His heavenly influence and choose spiritual death, like *Saul the king*? That is the great question which meets us on this, the Holy Spirit's feast day. On this day the ascended and

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

glorified Redeemer poured down upon His infant church an abundant flood of light and life divine. On *this day* He bestowed upon that little flock such thrilling, energizing *power* as sent them forth into the world willing and resolute *to do, to suffer, or to die.*

Upon this holy birthday of the Christian church let us then ask ourselves honestly, as in the sight of God, such questions as these: "*Have I this spiritual life within my soul, and am I cultivating it, employing it, and endeavouring to increase it, as did the Apostle Peter? Or am I, in spite of my knowledge, and professed belief, resisting its influence, and by carelessness quenching its ardour, like unholy Saul the king?*"

And, brethren, let me advise you not to shirk these questions, unpleasant though they may sometimes be. Better to admit that we do *not* feel this spiritual life within our souls, if such be the unhappy case, than try to banish the subject out of our minds. Better to realize at once the evil, than to try to forget that it is, indeed, an evil. A wise *physician* will require to *know disease*, that he may hopefully attempt *its cure*. And unless you feel the spiritual *want* within you, you will be hardly likely to endeavour to *supply* it. Then meet these questions manfully, set them before your conscience honestly, and be not put off with an evasive answer. Again, let me put these questions: "*Have we, or have we not, the evidence of this spiritual life within our souls?*" Without it, we cannot hope for life eternal, for both *revelation* and *common sense* alike declare that *life eternal* depends upon a *previous spiritual career*. The Holy Spirit is willing to "*guide us into all truth.*" Am I, then, for

HOW THE KINGDOM SPREADS

my part, willing to be *guided* by it? Am I, in daily life and common action, *following* its holy lead? The question becomes very simple stated thus. *Living bodies* move and act obedient to the laws that give them life. And so must *living souls*. They must hate sin, resist temptation, love God and good, and long for holiness, for these are the fruits of the Holy Spirit's influence, and these are signs of life.

Doing these things a little, you may have a *little* spiritual life. But *don't stop* there. For the object of your continuance in this world is, that you may go on "*from strength to strength.*" "I am come," said the Redeemer, "*that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" And again He said: "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*"

Follow then, in the days to come, the Spirit's guidance reverently and faithfully, and be sure that God will increase His Holy Spirit in you more and more, and, by reason of His life within you *here*, you shall be admitted for the life with Him *hereafter*, and come in His own good time unto His everlasting Kingdom. Amen.

XVII

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (II Tim. ii: 3).

SPENDING our days in comfort and sleeping in security during the long, cold springtime of this year of grace (1885), we have been daily reading, by our snug firesides, about *our noble volunteer defenders in the North-West*, who are "*enduring hardness as good soldiers*" of their Queen and country. It has been no *playing* at soldiering with *them*. It has been no mere parade, or military display. Their general, who is an old campaigner, testifies to *that*, and speaks of enduring hardships on the march that have exceeded even all *his* previous experience. Our brave citizen-soldiers have endured real and continuous "*hardness*" with a manly cheerfulness that has done them infinite credit. They have faced danger and death with a courage that has been truly glorious, and oh, what a living sermon they have preached, what a magnificent example they have set, to the *other great army of volunteers*, who are called by the significant name in the text, "*soldiers of Jesus Christ!*"

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "Therefore"—but wherefore? Why? Why hardship? Why not ease? Why fighting? Why not peace? Why discipline and drill? Why not self-

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

pleasing always? Would a soldier of the Queen ask questions such as these? Nay, for he knows that foes may arise at any time and rebellious spirits turn against their lawful sovereign. And Queen and country, and loved ones, have such strong claims upon his love that for their sakes he gladly trains, and hardens, and prepares himself to fight, or even die. And "Thou, therefore," says the apostle to his volunteer recruit, young Timothy, and to us all. And the "wherefore" is, because *our King*, Christ Jesus, hath abolished death and brought immortality to light; and "hath saved us and called us with a holy calling" (II Tim. 1: 9), to fight in His army, and under His banner, against sin, the world and the devil; that so our land, and houses, and dear ones, may be kept safe, and holy, and happy, in spite of the repeated attacks and rebellions of deadly enemies.

In this *North-West rebellion* that is raging now, we have noticed this characteristic of some of the Indian bands—that they desire to ally themselves with the stronger, or victorious, side. If *Riel* should get the better of the Queen's forces, they would cast in their lot with him. If *General Middleton* should put down the rebel leader, they would submit to the Queen's government. Are the children of light always as wise in their generation as those dusky and heathen children of this world? If so, they would surely be *good and true soldiers* of that *Strongest One*, that Leader who has proved Himself the Conqueror of the powers of hell and death, against whom the prince of this world arrayed his battalions and fought in vain. *This* is a thought, at all times profitable, but very *appropriate*,

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

now, when the recurrence of a *confirmation* must remind all of their *vows* to *serve* and *fight*. Did you ever hear this beautiful *legend of Saint Christopher*? A heathen youth, of gigantic size and strength, wanted to find the strongest warrior on earth that he might serve under his standard. So he engaged himself to a *great Christian prince*, famous for his success in arms. Serving him for some time with much satisfaction and success, he noticed that his leader used frequently to sign himself with the *sign of the cross*, and he asked him what he did that for. And the prince told him he did it to *keep off the devil*; that *the devil* was very strong, well armed, famous in strategy and *more powerful than any man*, and that he was very much afraid of him. "Then," said the young heathen, "I will serve you no longer, for I want to serve the strongest master I can find; and I will *find the devil* and serve him." It does not take anyone very long to find the devil, for the devil is always going about seeking for whomsoever he can find to serve him. Soon he met the devil, who said to him: "I am the strong, powerful and popular leader you are looking for; come along with me, and you shall have the riches of this world and all its glories, if you will always follow me." But as they were going on towards a great city, at a place where two roads met, there was a *cross set up*: and immediately *the devil turned into a by-path*, and was going a long way round to avoid it, and so reach the city. But the young warrior asked him *why* he left the highway. "Because of *that cross*," said the devil. "It's the sign and mark of *my greatest enemy*, of one who is *stronger*

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

than I, who conquered me, and took away my crown." "Then I shall follow you no further," said the youth, "if you are afraid of Him, whose emblem is that cross. I shall go after Him, and enter into His service, because He is stronger than you." And so the young man began to look anxiously for *Jesus Christ, the Crucified*, and soon he found Him and was baptized into His Holy Name. The sign of the cross was marked on his forehead in token that he should be Christ's faithful soldier and servant to his life's end. And the name they gave him was *Christopher*, or Christ-bearer. So much for the story of one of the earlier volunteers of the Christian army. And what does this story mean to you? Why, *you*, too, are *Christophers*; you, too, are Christ-bearers. You are signed with His sign. You bear in your body *His mark*; you, who are *confirmed*, are *volunteer soldiers* of Christ. You, all, have taken on you, the grave responsibilities of joining His banner, to be His forever. His always in the weary, anxious *watch*. His, on the long, forced *march* against the treacherously hidden foe. His, in the terrible *day of battle*. It is no light thing, this soldiering and volunteering. The noble little army of the North-West will tell you this. They know something about fighting against an unseen foe, and perilous ambushades. And so will every tried soldier and servant of Jesus Christ tell you that *Christian warfare is no light matter*. Yet you do well to volunteer, and take the sacred oath of your enlistment. And my object now is to show—(1) *Why you do well to take this oath*, and (2) *What does it require you to do?* And (1st), *why do you take the oath of*

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

allegiance to Jesus Christ? (a) *You are His by divine right.* In His divine nature, He is your Creator and Sovereign Lord; while, in His human nature, He is the first begotten Son of God, and first and best of all the human race. (b) *You are His by purchase.* By Adam's sin, mankind all fell from the free state of sons of God into the servile state of slaves of sin. Christ, by a gracious covenant with God the Father, and by pledging His life for us and shedding His blood, "bought" us, to be His for ever. Bought us from exile and slavery, and gave us back our freedom as God's sons and our inheritance of eternal life. (c) *You are His, by conquest.* When the whole world was subject to the rebellion of the devil, Christ came, not with His hosts and armies then, but by Himself; "with His own right hand, and with His holy arm," He won the victory, and wrested our souls from the dominion of the devil; and, therefore, we are no more subjects of the devil, but of his divine Conqueror, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though his claims on us are so strong, He appeals to us to become His by our own *choice*. We all have *free-will*. And he desires us to exercise our free-will in *choosing* whom we will serve. He desires us to *volunteer* to fight under His banner. The claim was admitted, for most of us, when we were too young to choose, and we were made His at our *holy baptism*, just as we were made subjects of our Queen by our *natural birth* into her kingdom. But whenever we become old enough to take up arms, then we must choose our service, must decide under whose banner we desire to fight. I have shown you *three reasons*

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

why you should take the oath to fight under Christ's banner, and yet there is *one more*. That is the *reason of Saint Christopher*, that he would *fight under the strongest captain*, or the reason of the North-West Indian, for choosing between the rebel Riel and Middleton. This reason constrains us to enlist under Jesus, who is certain to obtain the victory, quite sure to triumph gloriously over all His foes, whether they be open and declared opponents, or rebels in His ranks. (2) *What does your oath of enlistment require you to do?* Our North-West troubles remind us of the value of *loyalty*, and *discipline*, and *endurance*. Our feelings of indignation are hot now against *rebellion*. "*From all sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion, Good Lord deliver us,*" is a prayer that we can heartily enter into just now.

Our feelings of admiration are strong now for those "good soldiers" who are "*enduring hardness,*" and are ready to lay down their lives for Queen and country. "*Defend Thy servants, in all assaults of their enemies* (second morning collect)—is a prayer oft repeated and very appropriate for a time of trouble like this. May there be a deepened spiritual meaning and intensity in the prayer that shall be offered up for the recruits who offer themselves at the coming confirmation. "*Defend, O Lord, this, Thy servant, with Thy Heavenly grace, that He may continue Thine for ever.*" Christ's for ever. That surely implies the *endurance*, *loyalty*, *courage*, and *firmness*, that we admire so justly in our gallant forces. Quite *common* qualities these are, thank God, amongst the soldiers of the Queen. But are they *so general* among the

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

soldiers of the King of Kings? Are there no miserable rebels wearing His livery and signed with His mark, marching perhaps in his ranks, yet receiving rewards from His foe? The money, for example, that is unfairly gained by *fraud*, by *gambling*, by *false dealing*, or the shadow of a *lie* is the *devil's bounty* money. What are you doing *with it*, soldier, in the army of the Lord? The Lord will tolerate no *robbers* in His camp. If there be one here tempted to sell his *voice*, his *word*, his *honour*, his *vote*, his *conscience*, or his *faith*, for money, I tell that soldier, it is the *devil's bounty*, and if he draw not back at once, he will become the *devil's servant*, and a traitor to his flag. And what shall we say of *midnight revelry and dissipation*; of those *pleasures* that deal out *misery, despair, and death* to wretched husbands and fathers, and their still more wretched wives and children; of those *sinful excitements* that carry their subjects on a rushing tide of passion down to ruin and remorse? They are the foaming pledges of friendship with the devil, and with his followers; they are the *lusts* which you renounced when you enlisted and became Christ's soldiers; they are those wicked *vanities* which prove you *deserters* from the ranks of Christ.

And then there is the *training*, and the *drill* and *discipline*, the *necessary preparation and parade*. You cannot keep the pledge of your enlistment, if you neglect your *drill*. Where were you, then, *last Sunday*? Where are you so often on your King's *parade days*, the *church's Sunday* and *holy days*, when His soldiers should muster and present themselves in review before Him? Absent! Absent without leave! Absent with-

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

out excuse! Or, do you fancy you can do your drilling in your own tent, *alone*? Is there no *shoulder-to-shoulder work* needful in training, as in the actual fight? Is the *communion of saints* an obsolete "article of war," or of the faith of Christian soldiers? And what of the closest and holiest communion of all, *the memorial service*, which celebrates your Leader's glorious victory? Are you so brave that you want nothing to stir up and to keep up your courage in the fearful fray? Are you so strong that you can do without *rations* to sustain your strength? I'll tell you to whom professing Christians may be likened, who *neglect the holy ordinances* of the Lord their God. To *malingering soldiers*, who feign sickness, to avoid the march; to *stragglers*, for ever falling out and getting behind their column; to *sentries*, who keep a *careless watch*, or slumber at their post. Are any of the "*Queen's Own*" thus guilty? Then what about "*Christ's own*," the soldiers that the Lord has called to be His army? If you will neglect your Leader's *order book*, the bible, its general orders, standing orders, marching orders, and fighting orders, how can you hope to succeed? I appeal to you all as soldiers. Consider carefully *the despatches from the field of war*, and let the "hardness" that our "good soldiers" in the North-West have cheerfully endured, put your sham soldiership to shame.

Oh, brethren, you who are unfaithful followers of your Lord, I call upon you to renounce your treasonable trucklings with His enemy. I pray you to rally around *the standard* of your soul's salvation, and never to desert it more. If Jesus be indeed your *King*, if

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

you desire ever to share in the rewards and glories of His victory, then rally around His standard. Stirring, timely words, are those we often sing: "*Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war.*" The war is raging all around you now in which you must take part—on God's side, or the devil's. The banners are flying, the bugles are calling, the trumpets are sounding. Advance! True soldiers of Christ are pressing on to battle, are winning eternal renown. The Lord, the King, heads His hosts, and leads them on! Victory sits already on His helm, or waves her wings over the unconquerable standard of the cross of Jesus. The shouts of conquest can be heard already. The church re-echoes them every year on the great festival of her Lord's ascension: "*Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in*" (Ps. xxiv: 7). He fights not for Himself alone, He is "*the Lord of Hosts*" (Ps. xxiv: 10). The army of Christ must face the foe and press ever on. And will any of you fall out, like laggards, or shun the fray, like cowards?

Far be the thought from Christian soldiers' breasts. The Leader calls you—"Forward, Onward!" Press onward towards the mark for the rich prize of your eternal calling, and as you share the conflict you shall share the triumph and enter with your Leader into His glorious rest. Amen.

XVIII

'THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph. vi: 10-11).

WE say "*strong in the Lord,*" because we have but little strength, apart from Him. We say, "*and in the power of His might,*" because, as the collect for the *seventh Sunday after Trinity* asserts, He is "*Lord of all power and might.*" The same collect also calls Him "*the Author and Giver of all good things.*" And when we remember what a continual struggle, even to our life's end, we must carry on against "the devil's wiles," we may be very sure that there is nothing better among all the "*good things*" of which He is the Giver, nothing more absolutely needful for our final victory than this great gift of God's "*armour.*" It may be, some of you have visited an *armoury* of this world's weapons, have looked with awe and wonder upon the infinite variety of the instruments of war. There is a grey and grim old fortress on the Thames, that we all have seen, or heard about, known as *the Tower of London*. A fortress famous for its historic memories, and for its vast collection of the *armour* of the days gone by. To look on those war-worn and rusted relics of the past is to recall to mind whole pages of historic lore. There hangs a suit of

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

mail that *Norman William* wore. Here, the cross-hilted sword and cross-emblazoned harness that *Richard of the Lion Heart* bore forth against the legions of Mohammed. There, the dark iron suit that gave his surname to the *Black Prince*. On this side there are battered helmets, on that side there are blunted swords, and on all sides are "bruised arms, hung up for monuments." They all remind us of the battles and the noble deeds by which our mother country won her greatness. But not of arms like *these*, does the text speak, because "*the weapons of our Christian warfare are not carnal,*" but "*mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds*" (II Cor. x: 4). In the armoury of the Lord, the armour and the weapons tell of yet fiercer fights than that of Bosworth field, of far more brilliant victories than the field of Waterloo, or Trafalgar Bay. In the armoury of God, you shall not only see the arms of warriors and heroes who were "more than conquerors" in the days long past, but from its stores you must select the armour, "the whole armour," that is best fitted for you to wear. *This* armoury, too (like the old Tower I spoke of), recalls *past history*, and reminds us of the fierce *engagements* and brilliant *triumphs* of the whole church militant here in earth, the battles and the victories by which the militant church on earth becomes the church triumphant in the heavens.

Would you see swords and staves and bucklers that will stir your pulses, and remind you of brave days of old? There is "*the sword of the Lord and of Gideon*" (Judges vii: 20), which struck such terror into the heart of the fierce Midianites. There is the

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

"*staff of Jacob*" (Gen. xxxii: 10), with which he "crossed over Jordan," even his sure trust in God, by which he speedily "became two bands." Here are the "*shields of faith*," the shield which guarded *Noah* from gibes and jests of an unbelieving world, what time the ark was building, and the shield which enabled *Abraham* to offer up his only son and typify the world's redemption, and the shield which enabled *Samson* to bear away the gates of Gaza, and to tear down the two pillars of the false god Dagon's temple, even as Christ Himself prevailed against the gates of hell, and tore down the two main pillars of Satan's temple—sin and death. But who shall enumerate the triumphs of the shields of faith? "The time would fail me to tell of them" (Heb. xi: 32), the *shields*, and *swords*, and *staves* in countless numbers. And there are *breastplates*, too, and *helmets* in the armoury of God! There is "*the breastplate of righteousness*," which guarded *Joseph* in his hour of trial. And there, the one that *Daniel* wore when he stepped into the den of lions. For "*helmets*," they had the hope of Christ's salvation, which they knew only in a mystic promise. This hope sustained the dying *Stephen*, as he sank down under a murderous hail of stones, and enabled him to pray with his dying breath—"Lord, lay not this to their charge."

Here hangs the armour of many a hard-fought field and many a well-won victory. And now our eye rests on a whole suit, battered and blood-stained, and earth-soiled in many a desperate encounter. Surely this is *the panoply of some veteran warrior*. Ay, here are the bruises of the stones at *Lystra*, and

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

here are the teeth-marks of the "*beasts at Ephesus*," stripes from the Jews, and salt stains from the seas, the memorials of many a peril—the perils and trials that marked every stage of *Saint Paul's* Christian march. A spiritual *veteran*, he had thoroughly tested the panoply of God before he recommended it to others in the text. This grand old soldier, whose glory was the cross, whose strength was his humility, and whose delight when he put off his armour was that he had fought out the good fight, and kept the citadel of the Christian faith, and that, "thenceforth there was laid up for him the crown of righteousness." "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" (Acts ix: 6) he had asked, at the beginning of his Christian course. "*I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake*" (Acts ix: 16), the Lord had said of him. From that hour he was ready to do, and suffer, and die for the Name of the Lord Jesus (Acts xxi: 13).

And, brethren, believe me when we pray in the collect referred to: "*Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same,*" we are praying for grace to fight the same good fight in which Saint Paul so valorously engaged, and to keep the same *steadfast faith* to the same glorious end.

"*Increase in us true religion,*" is only another way of saying: "keep us, in these dangerous days, more and more steadfast in the faith." "*Nourish us with all goodness,*" is only another way of saying: "put on us all Thy armour." The danger is, that we may forget that "*true religion*" is the *fighting of a good fight*

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

against a very wily foe. We are all willing to be Christians in name, but far too many of us shrink from the *responsibilities* of our Christian profession. We are all willing to be called Christ's soldiers, but none too willing for His active service. And yet it is for *active service*, and no other, that we enlisted. We are always drawn up either to watch, or fight, against a tireless foe. For *this*, we must not only *put on*, but *keep on*, God's "*whole armour*." Your bishop told you that, in very earnest words, on your confirmation day. Put off no portion of the armour. Make no truce. Sign no conditions of even a moment's peace on account of the "wiles of the devil."

Admiral Seymour agreed to a short truce the other day (1882) with the wily Arabi Bey. And Arabi used it to massacre the fellow-Christians of his honourable and Christian adversary. And *that* is exactly how *the devil* treats his victims. Under a flag of truce, he will possess your staunchest stronghold, if he can, and kill its guard. Remember then, that though the battle may be less fierce at some times than at others, it must be always *war*. Our baptismal vow, renewed at confirmation, was to continue Christ's faithful soldiers, *fighting* under His banner, not slothfully *resting*, nor heedlessly *sleeping*, but *manfully fighting*, under His banner, against sin, the world and the devil, unto our life's end.

This was the sacramental oath of allegiance to our great Commander, to the "Lord of all power and might," in whose great strength we surely shall prevail, and shall be "more than conquerors," if we continue steadfast. Oh, brethren, beware of those who tell you

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

that you may lay down your arms, for that the battle has been won for you already. Beware of those who, with proud self-satisfaction, will tell you that they are "converted" and "saved," but who fail to show the sure first-fruit of true conversion, namely, Christian humility. Remember those words of the king of Israel to the king of Syria: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off" (I Kings xx: 11). The people who say "now I am converted," and "now I am safe," must be surely forgetting that wise adage of the king of Israel, and must be surely forgetting to "fight" against sin.

"Put on the whole armour of God." Trust to no shams. There is a miserable paper-and-tinsel breast-plate that comes cheaper and feels easier than the true metal one. It is the breast-plate of *self-righteousness*, the false and flattering Pharisaic frame of mind that thanks God that it is not as other men are, but a little better, and knows not that it is "*wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" (Rev. iii: 17). The boastful Pharisee knows not the weak place in his harness, as the devil knows it, which, though it shine like steel, is only paper, and through which the devil flings his "fiery darts."

Trust to no false assurance. It was the wisest among men who wrote: "*Happy is the man that feareth alway*" (Prov. xxviii: 14). It was *Saint Paul*, the valiant soldier of the cross, who said: "*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (I Cor. x: 12).

Let me offer a word of advice to all, and especially to you, my younger friends, who have in *confirmation*

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

renewed your baptismal promise to be Christ's faithful and true soldiers. Cast away useless defences, and all the sham armour of self-confidence and self-satisfaction. Come helpless and defenceless into the armoury of *Christ's church militant*, and "*put on the whole armour of God.*" Remember the force and meaning of the words you often sing:

I

*"Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armour on,
Strong, in the strength which God supplies
Through His Eternal Son.*

II

*Strong, in the Lord of hosts
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror."*

Defend your heart with the *breastplate of Christ's righteousness*, that holiness, which consists in following Him, and which the Holy Ghost will give you and "increase" in you "more and more," through prayer and the efficacious sacrament of your communion with Him. Uplift the impenetrable *shield of faith*. Have ever at your hand the "*sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God." And on your head "the *helmet of salvation.*" "Let righteousness be the *girdle of your loins*, and faithfulness the girdle of your reins" (Is. xi: 5), and may your "*feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*" (Eph. vi: 15). Thus shall your hearts, *young men*, be armed against all evil thoughts; your heads, *young maidens*, against all vain desires. And thus shall you be "abie," all of

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

you, "to stand" in the rough places of the world—the rugged paths of doubt and unbelief, and sin, or in the world's pleasant, but alluring, ways, the broad and flowery ways, that are so full of pitfalls for the unprepared. Thus shall you be able to "*withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand.*" Thus, having "done all" in the power of the "Lord of all power and might," will you be able "to stand" before Him at the *great day of His appearing*, when He shall recompense you all, "according as your works shall be."

So armed and so prepared you shall be strong and of a good courage, and able to "*endure hardness* as good soldiers of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. ii: 3). For there is hardness to be endured, and you will need *all* your courage. Beware of sham courage as well as sham armour. One thinks it brave to dare to *sin*, or brave to *speak bad words*, or brave to *laugh at holiness*, or brave to *break laws, human and divine*. But this is sham bravery and coward's courage, for the coward will always take the easy and popular course. But are you brave enough, and strong enough, to *endure the cross* and to *despise the shame* of being Christ's true soldiers? Are you brave enough to take Christ's side when it is *unpopular*? Can you resist an invitation to *desecrate God's day*? Can you stand against temptation to be *absent from His house*? Are you brave enough to set a *good example amongst wicked people*, and to *cut bad company* as soon as you discover it is bad? Are you brave enough to *disregard ridicule* for doing right? Ridicule is one of Satan's keenest shafts, and if you are brave enough to stand against

THE SOLDIER'S ARMOUR

that, if you can always stand up for a Crucified Christ against a sneering world, then, I say, you are giving very noble evidence that you can "endure hardness," and that you are true soldiers and servants of your Lord.

Let me, add this closing word of advice: You must *never turn back*. You have enlisted and taken the oath, and the foe is *before you* to be fought. If you resist him, he will flee before you. But if you flee from him, then he will surely pierce you, and will wound you sorely, for among all "the whole armour of God" there is *nothing for the back*. I said you would need all your courage, for Christ's soldiers never ask and never give any truce, and never sound a retreat. Be strong, then, *in the Lord*, and *in the power of His might*. And as you gird yourself with God's strength, and wear His armour, and remain steadfast in His ranks, it shall be yours one day to say (with the old warrior, whose battered arms we saw): "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a *crown of righteousness*" (II Tim. iv: 8). Amen.

XIX

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

"Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." (I Cor. xi: 28).

AS what I wish to say is rather an *instruction* than a *sermon*, I begin with a few words of preface. Before a *confirmation* it is desirable that intending candidates should thoroughly understand and appreciate *their privileges* as full members of Christ's body, the church, and as *guests*, continually invited to that *feast*, wherein Christ gives Himself to be the spiritual food for souls. Of *that feast* it is written that if a man faithfully eat, he *hath life eternal* within him; while, "*except he so eat, he hath no life,*" is declared in just as plain words. But inasmuch as many who have been confirmed evidently do not appreciate their privileges, a faithful pastor, as each confirmation recurs, will consider the reasons for this neglect. I believe one chief reason is want of instruction about the meaning, or rationale, of *the communion service*. What I am about to say, then, shall be said for *all*, confirmed and unconfirmed. And may God grant that I say nothing contrary to His holy word. Besides a knowledge of *the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments*, the church requires of those who come to be confirmed, that they be *further instructed* in the *church catechism* set forth for that

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

purpose. And there is no more important question in all that catechism than *the last*; because, the answer to the last *sums up the whole*, and is a brief, comprehensive and scriptural compendium of a Christian's life and duty.

The final question is, "*What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?*" And the answer is, "*To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and be in charity with all men.*" Now, that is the whole of our Christian life and duty, and it is necessary to the end of life. These are the heads of a most thorough and searching *self-examination*, for that answer is founded, as every word of the *catechism* and every word of the *prayer book* is founded, upon the clear teaching of *the bible*. And now we come to the text, "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*" (I Cor. xi: 28). Let me first point out what that text does *not* say, but what I am afraid only too many fancy it says. It does *not* say, "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him decide whether he shall eat of that bread and drink of that cup, or refuse them.*" It does *not* say, "*Let a man examine himself, and so find out whether he is worthy or unworthy, fit or unfit, to eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*" But it says in the plainest of words, "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*" Saint Paul knew what the result of the self-examination would most surely be. He knew

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

that the *Corinthian Christians* would be convinced thereby of their *entire unworthiness*, and so would be compelled to place their sole dependence on the merits of *Christ's precious blood*. To you, who are full members of Christ's church, according to His holy ordinance, I would say: if you examine yourselves, ever so slightly, you will not presume to come to His table, trusting at all to *your own* righteousness, but in *His* manifold mercies alone. And, as you examine more closely, you will certainly say from your hearts: "*I am not worthy to gather up the crumbs under Thy table.*"

To produce that state of mind, our Lord's apostle wrote the text before us. And if I knew of one here present, or one whom I had ever instructed, in preparation for confirmation and communion, who *could* venture to approach the holy table with *any* trust in his own worthiness or fitness, to him I would say: "Don't come, my dear, mistaken friend, don't come till you have read all our Lord's words to pharisees and to self-righteous persons, and in their light examined yourself closely, in a humble, prayerful spirit." Let a man examine himself, and so, with the result of that examination in his mind and heart, let him "eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Remember this is the *only* place in the bible where *preparation* for the holy communion is directly spoken of. And *self-examination* is the *one thing* that the apostle speaks of, because it necessarily includes all preparation needful. It includes, of course, as the last answer in the catechism plainly shows, the three essential and comprehensive graces of the Christian life, *repentance,*

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

faith, and love. And now let me show you how our *communion service* is meant to help us in *this* important matter. *First of all*, the *Lord's prayer* is offered here with a special object. In all other places by all present, but here by the officiating minister alone, for himself first, and then for all the people, that he may duly administer in the most sacred rite, and that in it the holy Name may be hallowed, Christ's kingdom advanced, and the divine will done on earth, even as the memorial is continually offered by Christ at the right hand of God. By every petition of this wonderful prayer, "let a man examine himself."

Next comes the *collect* for the *raising of our hearts* by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. And if we can indeed ask this, if we can indeed desire perfectly to love God and worthily to magnify His Holy Name, then we may be very sure that such a good desire, so put into our hearts by His most Holy Spirit, must be His invitation to us all to come to Him, in the sure way of His appointment, by pleading His precious blood. "Let a man examine himself," then, *by this collect*, too, so that it may be indeed a prayer, and not mere lip-service, not the taking of God's name in vain. And *next* we come to *the law*, as set forth in the *ten commandments*. And here we are met by one of the cries of the day: "What, have you not got *beyond* the ten commandments yet? What have *Christians* approaching the Lord's table to do with the ten commandments? Had you not better examine yourselves as to your *trust in Christ*? Or your *justification by faith* in Him? Or your *assurance of acceptance* with Him? Our answer is: "No, we

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

have not got beyond the ten commandments yet. We think it wiser to observe the *order of God's Holy Word*; and it is only too evident that there are many who profess all the *trust*, and all the *faith*, and any amount of the *assurance* about their own salvation, but whose *lives* are a *continual offence* against the spirit of the ten commandments." We have not got beyond the ten commandments, because we need them to bring us to Christ. The Church believes, with her early apostle, Saint Paul, that "*the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.*" I read, and you hear, the ten commandments in the holy communion service, *not* that you may say, with the rich young fool in the gospel, "I have kept all this; this is my title to the table of the Lord and to the Lord Himself," but that you may examine yourselves as to your *numberless transgressions* of the spirit of those laws; and in the spirit, and with the understanding of them which your Lord has given you in His sermon on the mount, that you may earnestly *pray* concerning each one, "*Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*" The chief reason why they are continually read before people who know them all by rote, is that they may continually pray that they may come to know them also by heart. That's why the people are directed to continue kneeling during this recital. I need hardly say to any intelligent churchman, that by these commandments we understand not merely *literal extracts* from the twentieth chapter of Exodus, but the same *as expounded by our Divine Lord* in the sermon on the mount. Of this, no churchman, no child even of the church, can be

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

in ignorance who remembers those two simple forms which we are all taught in infancy—our “*duty towards God,*” and our “*duty towards our neighbour,*” which the catechism draws from *these ten commandments*. He who, mindful of the gospel spirit of the *sixth* commandment, for example, “*will hurt nobody by word or deed, will bear no malice nor hatred in his heart,*” will better show his *trust* in Christ, and the presence of a really justifying *faith* in Him, than the man who, prating ever so glibly of these doctrines, forgets their *exercise*, and, by indulging in hatred and malice, incurs the awful condemnation: “*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*” “Let a man examine himself” thus, *by the exceeding broad commandments* of his God, and being conscious of manifold transgressions of their spirit, let him look to his Lord alone for pardon for the past, and saving help to serve Him more truly in the future, and “so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup” which commemorate the purchase of the pardon, and are the pledge and promise of the help.

But does the church, by honouring God’s law, set at nought His gospel? Or ignore that truly evangelic scheme which bids us place our dependence for salvation all on Christ? No, for the *next unvarying portion* of the service is the *confession of our faith*, as set forth in the *Nicene creed*. Of that confession, *Jesus Christ is the centre*. The *Epistle* and *Gospel* precede this, indeed, but these are *varying portions* of the service. This is the *ancient method of reading holy scripture* in the Christian church, as the communion service is, of course, the oldest, the one divine, and therefore, most important service of the church.

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

It would be manifestly incomplete without the reading of the scriptures, and therefore they are rehearsed in the beautiful and affecting order of the Christian year. In the *Epistles* we have all the essential *doctrines*, and in the *Gospels* all the *acts and words* of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And inasmuch as all church doctrine is bible truth, and founded directly on the gospel of our Blessed Lord, the official reading of the gospel has ever been treated with especial reverence, *the people standing*, and singing, before it, "Glory be to Thee, O Lord," and after it, their "Thanks." Upon the gospel is founded the confession of our faith, *the creed*. This follows in *unvarying order*, and will assist us greatly in our needful self-examination.

So highly does the church hold the necessity of a true—that is, a scriptural, and not merely sentimental—faith in Christ, that she provides for the *recital of the creed at every administration* of the holy feast. It gives a summary and perfect outline of all the great *facts and circumstances* of fallen man's redemption. These *facts* reveal God's mercy to us, through Christ, in which we are to "have a lively faith." If our faith be "lively" or living, we will thoroughly believe and hold the mystery of Christ's holy *incarnation*, a doctrine that has been frequently assailed, but which the church emphatically asserts. She avers that *the man Christ Jesus is very God*, of, or proceeding from, the Father, and was conceived by the Holy Ghost.

This *fundamental doctrine*, on which the value of the sacrifice of Christ Himself depends, was set forth by more than *three hundred bishops*, at the great Council of Nicæa, so long ago as A.D. 325, and, being the

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

most authoritative confession of the faith, it is placed in our most solemn and important service. The modern custom of scoffing at *the creeds* of the church is often found coupled with erroneous views concerning the *personality* of our *Divine Lord*, whilst the custom of saying the creeds *regularly* preserves and propagates the faith once delivered to the saints. We believe that Jesus Christ, being equal with God, became man, that as a man He might make a perfect expiation for man's sin, and by His death He might pay all its penalty, and by His rising again He might raise us also to a new and higher life, and by His ascension and all prevailing intercession, He might raise and restore our human nature to heaven and to the right hand of God. All this depends upon the *Godhead* or *Divinity* of Christ, for no mere man could redeem his brother's soul.

Therefore all this, the church continually sets before her members in the creed; while in the varying round of the selected *gospels* she gives them the manifold *details* of His love; how He called sinners to Him and helped them, healed them, and relieved their wants; how, dying by sinner's hands, to save all sinners, He prayed for their forgiveness; and how, rising again and going back to heaven with His work accomplished, He made us to follow Him, and in a holy service and feast of His own ordering, He pledged us the grace of His Holy Spirit, to strengthen us and to teach us the mysteries of redeeming love.

"Let a man examine himself" by these pure and ancient *standards* of Christian *faith* and *bedience*, with humble and contrite heart, and so, "let him eat

THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

of that bread and drink of that cup," in remembrance of Christ and His wonderful love. And the next thing in order is *the sermon*. "*Then shall follow the sermon or one of the homilies set forth by due authority.*" Of the sermon, I will merely say now, that if it be of any good at all, it must surely furnish some food for this all-important duty of self-examination. The *position* given for the sermon in *the prayer book*, shows us it is *one of many means* which the church provides for the great work of *self-examination*. Those who take part in our familiar service, up to this point, and do not use the sermon as a help to self-examination, have little appreciation of its value.

Habitually to *depart* after the sermon, without partaking of that life-giving feast, for which the self-examination is commanded by Saint Paul, shows deliberate *disregard* for the inspired words of *the text*, and for the *gracious invitation of the Saviour*. Saint Paul did not say: "*Let a man examine himself, and if he find himself a sinner let him stay away.*" The Christian's duty is set forth in the *comfortable words* of the communion service. *Christ Jesus* came into the world to save sinners and to *invite*, even the chief of them, to *come to Him*, and not to put off coming, but to come *now*, in the *accepted time*, and in the *appointed way*. Amen.

XX

A HARD BATTLE

"Love ye your enemies." (Luke vi: 35).

THE experience of life teaches us that it is so common to *ignore the duty of loving one's enemies*, and so common to indulge the opposite inclination to *hate* and even to *avenge one's self* upon one's enemy, that I feel bound not only to insist upon it as a duty laid upon you by our Lord that you should "love your enemies," but to remind you, from our gracious Lord's own words, that your salvation is *impossible* unless you do.

First, then, we take the unmistakably plain words, as our Lord spake them in His sermon, "Love ye your enemies." By an enemy we understand one whom, for some cause or other, fancied or real, grievous or trivial, greater or less, you think of with aversion and speak of with dislike, and against whom, perhaps, you will even publicly manifest ill-will. There are *degrees* of love, all of them genuine in their measure, and it may be, by reason of great provocation, *impossible* that you should love the hostile person *as* you would love *dear relatives* and *chosen friends*. But, what the spirit of our Lord's sermon certainly requires is *such* a degree of *kindly feeling* as shall make you willing to *forget* his faults, to *forgive* the wrongs he may have done you, to *forego* all angry and revengeful

A HARD BATTLE

feelings, and even, if circumstances require it, to show him active kindness, or give him needful help. You certainly are *not* bound to love *the evil* in your enemy, or at all to subject yourself to *any evil influence* from him. Only to be quite sure that for your part you render him no evil, and would, if need be, render help instead.

There is a disposition in our fallen nature to hate rather than to love an enemy, and yet the *gospel* asserts, what *experience* corroborates, that persistence in such hatred is wrong. The angry feeling at the heart drives out sweet peace, whereas the very *effort* to cast out hatred and forego revenge soothes mind and conscience, renders the enemy less hateful, and prepares the way for reconciliation. "*It hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, love your enemies*" (Matt. v: 43). That old law of *hating enemies*, to which our Lord referred, was merely the *judicial law* of hostility to those who were *God's enemies*, as well as the enemies of the Jews—as the *Canaanites* of Joshua's, or the *Amalekites* of Samuel's day—who, for their grievous sins, were condemned to punishment at the Jews' hands, as instruments of God's selection. No *personal* revenge or hate was, even *then*, permitted. On the contrary, it was written: "*Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian because thou wast a stranger in his land*" (Deut. xxiii: 7). And again: "*Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth*" (Prov. xxiv: 17). And the righteous *Job* says the same thing in even stronger words (Job xxxi: 28, 30).

But we are *Christians*, living *under law to Christ*,

A HARD BATTLE

bound by the perfect principles of His enduring gospel. And *He* says: "*Love ye your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.*" In the words following the text our Lord gives a strong *reason* for this command, and a powerful *encouragement* to act on it: "Your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest, for, *He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil*" (Luke vi: 35). Oh, brethren, what an argument that is! So *kind* He is, as to have given up His glory, and to have become poor, and to have died for us, we being yet His enemies. Hard matter, do we call it? Indeed, I know it to be hard, and all who have ever had enemies must know it to be very hard. But is that any reason to a Christian for ignoring Christ's law? We must not expect the way of Christ to be an *easy* way. The way of the *cross* is *His way* and the *only way* to heaven. Heaven will be won, not by playing at soldiering, or pretending to be an army, and calling each other by sham military names, but by hard, constant, real *fighting* against the world, the flesh, and the devil; by pain of mind, by wounds of heart, by the agony of the soul over its manifold temptations, and by the *hardships* of a very real (albeit, spiritual) camp. The pomp of a *parade* ground is a very *pretty* thing. But *glory* is won only by the stern *conflict* of the battlefield. "*Hard, stern conflict,*" says one—why, it's too much to expect of *human nature* that I should love the man who has belied me, and said such wicked, false, and injurious things against me. Exactly, but are you only to "love your enemies" when they do

A HARD BATTLE

not belie you, and speak evil of you, and traduce your character? Why, that is precisely one of the cases that our Lord provides for in His directory to Christians. "*Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.*" And, besides; although such self-denying love as that is quite too much to expect of mere *unassisted human nature*, it is not at all too much to expect from the *grace of Jesus Christ*. And it is by trust alone in the help and efficacy of His grace, that we can hope to treat our enemies aright.

A young man once asked his pastor whether he would approve of his taking some lessons in the art of *self-defense*. "*Certainly,*" said the minister. "I studied it assiduously when I was young myself." "Did you?" said the young man. "*Whose system? Sullivan's or Gully's?*" "Neither—I practised Solomon's." "Solomon's?" "Yes—one of his first rules is, that '*a soft answer turneth away wrath,*' and I have found it a good rule for self-defense all through my life." And it *is*, brethren, surely. And when that snare of the devil, *pride*, besets you (as it does dangerously beset us all), and tempts you to think it manly to give back sneer for sneer, threatening for reviling, and perhaps blow for blow, because such is *man's* way, and of such ways *the world* approves; bethink you whence pride comes, and how, by reason of it, the devil was cast out of heaven. Bethink you *whose* approval you have need to value—God's or man's, Christ's or Belial's? Bethink you how King Solomon's best guard and parry—a *soft answer*—turneth wrath away. Follow the magnanimous example of Jesus,

A HARD BATTLE

"*who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*" (I Pet. ii: 23). And, believe me, brethren, that as *true soldiers* of Christ, you shall have gained a victory that the Wellingtons and the Wolseleys of the world might envy, for by God's grace you shall have ruled your own spirit, which is a nobler achievement before Him than the taking of a city. Brethren, it is an *easy thing to love those who love you*, and to be on good terms with those who have never been unkind to you, but, "*what thank have you,*" your Lord asks, for *this?* (Luke vi: 32). *Sinners* living in sin do *this*. They do good, hoping to receive more good in return. They lend, to receive back their own *with increase*. But there is no praise with God for this mere selfish and self-seeking goodness. *But, love ye your enemies*, do good to the man, or to the woman, who has done you an evil turn, and your reward shall be great and enduring for ever.

"*Revenge is sweet,*" is an adage often heard. And, to the *carnal* mind, a lust, so purely of the flesh as vengeance, may very well be sweet. But *sweeter far* to the Christian must be the only vengeance that the loving heart of Christ, or of any true follower of Christ, could feel—the sweet revenge of *returning good for evil*. This sweet revenge found utterance from the cross in the dying accents of the *Crucified Saviour*: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" This highest form of revenge was also found in *Saint Paul's life*, and recommended in his *writings*: "*If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink; for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of*

A HARD BATTLE

fire on his head" (Rom. xii: 20-21). He found these words in *the Book of Proverbs* (Prov. xxv: 21-22), and they made a deep impression on his heart. Such is the only vengeance that a *Christian* can take. Thus he mortifies—not the man, but—the malice of his heart within him. Kindness disarms his anger, and the love and softness of a gentle answer turn away his wrath for ever. Oh! if there be one *angry or revengeful heart* here now, let me say—remembering my own heart that has been often tempest-tossed with angry passions, hardly and painfully subdued—*"Unhappy heart, that harborest ill-will, thou, too, art tossed like little boat on stormy Galilean sea. Rouse the meek spirit of your Lord, that you have in you, even as the apostles called upon our Lord Himself. Cry, as they cried, 'Lord, save or we perish,' and it shall be with you, as it was instantly with them: His peace and a holy calm shall come over your soul.*

"Lord, save; or we perish." Ay, and those words remind me that I have not only to show you that you should "love your enemies," but also, from our Lord's own words, that you must PERISH, that your *salvation*, under His gospel, is *impossible* unless you do. Hear your Lord's solemn warning about it: "*So, likewise, shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*" Full of grace and goodness, as the holy gospel is, it would be folly to forget its reasonable and just *severity*. After our Lord had said: "*Love ye your enemies.*" He said: "*With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again.*" And He,

A HARD BATTLE

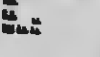
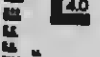
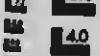
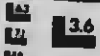
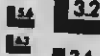
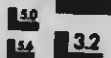
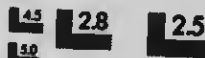
who said it, is to be your Judge, and He will *measure* out the pains or pleasures of your eternal life. So, there, you have the matter left to your own deliberate decision. *Thus* you can *know* the chances of your own salvation. No use to think you are "converted," or to say, "I'm saved," so long as you *bear malice* in your heart against a single enemy. God promises to deal with you precisely as you treat your foe. Hate him, and God will withhold His love from you. Curse him, and God will not hless you. *Avenge yourself* upon your enemy, and God will *avenge Himself*, and all His long-suffering love, which you have set at naught, upon your vengeful, unforgiving soul. If ye forgive, your Father forgives you. "*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.*" Words cannot be plainer than those words of our Blessed Lord.

The gates of heaven are harred and holted against you, *so long as* you cherish hatred in your heart. The bolts are not iron, nor the hars of brass. But *you* have forged them for yourselves by your own *malice and ill-will*; and nothing hut the flame of love can soften or undo them. Oh, think, my unforgiving hrother, if there be one such here to-day! Will you, by your own act, deliberately destroy your hope of heaven? Will you persist in making it impossible for even the love of Christ to save you? Oh, hut you say, you will *pray God* to pardon you; prayer is an all-availing thing. Well, pray then. Try the effect of even your Lord's own prayer—"Our Father which *art in heaven*"—the ahode of love. "*Hallowed be Thy Name,*" which is also love, "*Thy Kingdom*



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A HARD BATTLE

come," though I am hindering its coming. "Thy will be done," though I am determined not to do it in this matter. "Give us this day our daily bread," though I would give no crust to him I hate. "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." "As we forgive"—my God, I will not pardon this mine enemy; therefore do *not* Thou pardon me: I will *not* answer though he speak to me; therefore, do *not* Thou answer this my prayer to Thee: I will *not* help him, though he should need my help; therefore, in my sore need, withhold Thy saving help from me, O God. Is it not awful? And yet *all this* is comprehended in our Lord's own prayer, offered by one *who will not pardon*, who will not even *try* to love his enemy. *Alms* are no better, for though they, being dutifully offered, do indeed come up as a memorial before God, and are acceptable with prayers, yet you are told distinctly that though you should give *all your goods* to feed the poor, and have not charity, or *love*, it profiteth you nothing. *Communions* will never help you either, for their very condition is that you should first go and be *reconciled* to your brother, and *then* come and offer your gift, your sacrifice of thanksgiving for the Atonement of His Beloved Son. Only do *that*, and all will be well. Seek out your enemy. If there is anyone in the world you hate, hate him no longer. Seek him out quickly and sue for reconciliation. Do him a good turn, ask him to your house, if opportunity occur. "*Feed him*," the bible says. Treat him well in any way you can. Break down the unkind spirit in him, and in your own heart, too. Thus "*thou shalt heap coals of fire upon*

A HARD BATTLE

his head, and the Lord shall reward thee" (Prov. xxv: 22). Then will your *prayers* and *alms* and *communions* all avail, both for your pardon here, and for your eternal life hereafter. "*If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*" Love one another, and the love of God shall be perfected in you (I John iv: 12), and yours shall be the inconceivably good things prepared for those who love Him. But no one truly loves God who does not love his brother also (I John iv: 21). Amen.

XXI

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii: 20).

IT will help us to enter into the spirit of our text if I read first two other verses taken from the *sixty-first psalm*, beautiful words, full of comfort for struggling souls, which throw a strong light on the text, by declaring almost the same thing in totally different words. "*O, set me up upon the rock that is higher than I: for Thou hast been my hope and a strong tower for me against the enemy. I will dwell in Thy tabernacle for ever, and my trust shall be under the covering of Thy wings*" (Ps. lxi: 3-4—prayer book version). My brethren, *David's* expression, "*the Rock that is higher than I,*" points to the same person as *Saint Paul's* words, "*the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.*" And when *Saint Paul* says: "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in Me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*"—he is stating the same theological doctrine that *David* had set forth in song, when he said; "*I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of Thy wings*" (Ps. lxi: 4).

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

"*The Rock that is higher than I,*" sang the psalmist of old. "*Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,*" wrote the apostle of this latter dispensation. Both men, you see, are *putting off* themselves, and such poor rags as their own natural righteousness might be, and *putting on* the purer, lovelier garment of a *righteousness* which cometh *from above*.

And now let us look at *the text*, by the light of *the whole Epistle to the Galatian church*, and by the light of *all the gospel of our Lord*. No less a light can be sufficient to secure us against some common errors. The epistle is written to admonish certain converts of Galatia who, being baptized into the faith of Jesus Christ, were disposed by evil influences and Judaizing teachers, to revert to the rites and customs of the Jewish law. The *Jewish rites* were ordered to *pre-figure Christ*; as was *its law* to lead men—(as a *school-master* leads children)—to a *knowledge of Christ*, and His redeeming work, and its necessity. *Christ having come*, in person, and performed the work of all mankind's redemption, the preceding *figures* became *needless*. And, indeed, positively wrong and harmful, as implying that the Redeemer had not yet come, and that the redemption was yet future; and, in effect, denying Christ. Against this danger wrote Saint Paul, and used many strong words about the uselessness of the "*works of the law,*" meaning the *ceremonial law of Moses*—which some, in our day, misunderstand to mean the good works of the holy and enduring law of God, and so come to fancy that even these are not of obligation, now. From such false doctrine, Good Lord, deliver us.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Strong words, too, the apostle uses about "*faith*," as when in the text he says: "I live by *the faith* of the Son of God." Many would make that mean no more than *belief* in the *Son of God*; and believing in the *word of God* because it is His word. Whereas Saint Paul means infinitely more than this; means nothing less than the *whole life of Christ*, as lived by Christ. He means, in fact, the gospel, and in very many places in his various epistles, when he uses the word "*faith*," in a specially practical way, the word "*gospel*" would bear the same sense, and would illustrate and emphasize his meaning. That it may please Thee, to bring into the way of truth, all such as have erred in this important matter of the faith, we beseech Thee to hear us, Good Lord.

And with this light upon them let us look into the words before us and see what instruction they afford for this lenten season. "*I am crucified with Christ.*" "*Crucified!*" Soon the *lenten days* will lead us on to the *one dark, holy day* of all the year, when, in the church throughout the world, there will be the recapitulation of the old story of *the cross*: when the agony, the cross, the passion, and the precious death of Jesus will be the burden of her services—services that must touch the hearts of those who, in any true sense, can be called the faithful. Many will make it a *day of pleasure*, and enjoy themselves, and pay no heed to Him who "loved them and gave Himself for them." A few will gather around the cross to *ponder the precious death*. But who, even of these, shall say, "*I am crucified with Christ*"? Well, brethren, you all may, if you will. You all know how, in all his letters,

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Saint Paul says that we have in us, as it were, *two selves*. Two men, in fact: the one, which he calls the "*old man*," or the old Adam, which is our old and sinful nature; and the other, which he calls the "*new man*," new-born in holy baptism by the Spirit of our Lord (Eph. iv: 22-24). The first, "*the old man*," is prone to *sin*, apt to be proud, vain-glorious, envious, malicious, and leads you to say within your hearts: "I hate my foe, and I will have revenge," or, "I delight in that besetting sin, and I will not debar myself from its indulgence." The better self, the "*new man*," born of the Spirit, strives after *better things*; longs, however feebly, for the increase of God's grace; receives His word with some poor love, if not yet pure affection; and endeavours to bring forth the *fruits of the Spirit*, "*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*" (Gal. v: 22, 23). As this better self conquers the worse within you, so you are crucified with Christ. As you forgive the foe who hates you, as you forbear the sharp answer to the angry word, as you forego the sinful pleasure which tempts you—"you are crucified with Christ." Or, as Saint Paul puts it elsewhere, you "*crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts*" (Gal. v: 24). But it will not be easily nor quickly done. The *crucifixion* was a *lingering, slow, painful, although certain death*. And though the "*old man*," in faithful followers of the Lord, be indeed stricken to his death, he will die hard. Your flesh, being a part of yourself, you will feel all the pain. And though you will feel it less and less as you grow older in your Lord, yet you will feel it till you die. "*He that is dead is freed*

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

from sin" (Rom. vi: 7), Saint Paul says; but no one is quite free from it, or from its trials and temptations, so long as he is here in this world. The *crucifixion* must go on till *death*. The evil nature will struggle to the last, and will assert itself. Have you ever seen a picture of a beautiful old sculpture of the crucifixion, in which *the hardened thief* is represented as struggling to tear his limbs away from the fastenings that bind him so securely to the cross, while *the penitent and pardoned malefactor* is gazing upon the Saviour with such a peaceful face, gladly enduring the cross that is bearing him to paradise with his Lord? That is what Saint Paul means when he says, "I" (the sinful "I" within me) "am crucified with Christ."

"Nevertheless I live," are the next words; and there he is speaking of his *better self*, the new man within him, born of God's spirit, by His baptismal grace. *This* did indeed "live" in Saint Paul, and *daily increased* in him more and more, as he crucified, or mortified, the old and sinful nature.

And then the apostle seems to contradict himself again: "Yet not I." "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and *He* has of a truth become to me the *All in All*. See the wonderful agreement that I spoke of between the psalmist and the great apostle. David, hiding amid the rugged caverns of Engedi, chased by King Saul, crying to God for help: "O, set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I: for Thou hast been my hope and a strong tower for me against the enemy. . . . and my trust shall be under the covering of Thy wings" (Ps. lxi: 3-4—prayer book). And Chris-

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

tianized *Saint Paul*, crying in the agony of his strife with sin; "*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" "*I live,*" in the exercise of grace, and keep the faith, and fight the fight, and do the works of grace, and yet *that grace is not of me, hut from my Saviour, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Surely this beautiful connection between the poetry of David and the experience of Saint Paul must have been very clearly in the mind of Toplady when he wrote the lovely hymn:

*"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."*

Ah, *rough* were the rocks and caves of Engedi where David sought shelter from Saul; and yet were they *magnificent* within, and *glorious* with the glory of *His presence*, who was David's "*hiding place.*" So faithful Christians now, as they read their bibles, see in the *stable* of little Bethlehem, the imperial *palace* of the world; and in the *manger*, where the infant Jesus lay, the royal *throne* of the Almighty King of Kings; and in the *cross* (which so many are ashamed of even yet), a *thing of beauty and a joy for ever*, gleaming with all the brightness of the Redeemer's "*many crowns.*" "*God forbid that I should glory,*" said Saint Paul, in the letter now before us, "*save in the cross*

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Behold Him, brethren, in these lenten days, "*in the form of a servant,*" for you; with the sentence of a criminal written above Him, for your sakes; dying, as malefactors die, the death of bitter shame, although being "the Son of God" and "eternal life" to all His followers. Only as you are His followers, and will *crucify yourselves* (i.e., the devil that is in you) with Him, will *He live* in you; and, hiding yourselves in him, you shall be safer than ever David was in the rugged fastness of the Judæan wilderness. From your "Rock" you shall look calmly down upon the powerless rage of all your spiritual foes, and you shall defy the evil that the crafty devil or bad men work against you. Only be sure of this, that you are *indeed* followers of Christ—that "*the life you now live in the flesh, you live* (like Saint Paul) *by the faith of your Saviour.*" And never forget that the "*faith*" of your Saviour comprises *this whole blessed gospel,* and *all* He has taught you *to know* and *to do* for His sake. Thousands there are, who are willing and glad to believe that Jesus was crucified for them, who do not at all believe in being crucified, or in crucifying themselves *with Him,* or in denying themselves, in any least particular, for Him. Do they live by "*the faith*" of their Lord, do you think? Thousands enjoy the glowing language of *Isaiah,* telling of One who was "*wounded for their transgressions, and was bruised for their iniquities,*" who do not at all "*repent*" of these "*transgressions,*" or "*turn away from*" their confessed "*iniquities.*" Do they live by "*the faith*"

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

of their Lord, do you think? "The faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them."

And tens of thousands see, and even feel, the beauty and the glory of the Saviour's sacrifice, who yet will give *nothing* that they will *miss*, and much less give *themselves*, in any sense at all, for Christ. Withering and well-deserved was that sharp sarcasm (ascribed to Spurgeon) describing rich men singing lustily, and with all their vocal energy, the truly gospel words:

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."*

And then, rummaging among the *shillings* and *half-crowns* to find a *four-penny bit* to put into the plate, for the spread of that glorious gospel of love. Well, brethren, I am afraid there are people like that in other congregations besides Mr. Spurgeon's.

Let me ask, are you really *crucified with Christ*? Do you really *live* by the *faith* of your Lord? Or is the faith by which you live a "*dead faith*," fruitless of good works or self-sacrifice? Instead of hiding yourselves within the Rock of Ages, are you exalting yourselves in shaky houses built on sifting sand, of which the fall will be as terrible as it is sure? "*Christ and Him Crucified*," is a glorious doctrine, for the *follower* of Christ; but *nothing at all, no use, and no comfort* at all, for the man who *will not even try* to *crucify* and *kill* the *sin* within him.

Survey, indeed, the wondrous cross. Boast of it, glory in it, like Saint Paul! It is the holy instrument on which your Saviour died—which gleams above and

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

shines within so many of the temples of the Lord—formed in the dew baptismal upon faithful brows, the graceful finial of the crowns of Christian Kings.

It is the blazing beauty of the invincible standard of our Christian fatherland. Sole hope of man, and single ground of dying sinner's trust. Sign of the life of Christ, the only way to heaven. The perpetual reminder to you, of how the sinful world is to be crucified to you, and you unto the world.

So glory in it, brethren, as the instrument of your crucifixion *with your Lord*.

So give up your sins, *for His sake*, hard though it be, as He gave up His life, in cruel agonies, for you. And, "*as you walk according to this rule, peace shall be on you, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God*" (Gal. vi: 16).

Saint Paul's *parting advice* to the Galatian church was, to "*walk according to this rule*" (Gal. vi: 16), his own rule of continual struggle against the sin within him, and his *parting promise* is "*peace and mercy*" (Gal. vi: 16) to the *true followers* of Christ, the *true Israel* of God. Amen.

XXII

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." (Exod. xii: 14).

THESSE were God's words to Moses, when He was about to work that wonderful *deliverance* of His people, Israel, from *Egyptian bondage*, by which He prefigured the still *more wonderful deliverance* which we are to celebrate to-day (Easter day), the deliverance of all the world, from the *bondage of death and hell*, by the death and resurrection of His Son, Christ Jesus. Down into the depths of the insatiate *sea* went Moses and all his hosts, and very soon he led them all forth, safely, by the power of God, into a land of liberty. And down into the depths of the insatiate *grave* went Jesus Christ, in common with all the hosts of the whole human race, and, after a "little while," He came forth victorious and free, "*having obtained eternal redemption*" (Heb. ix: 12) for all His true followers, from the slavery of *sin* and of its fatal consequence, *eternal death*. Not merely to remind all Israel of the first deliverance at the Red Sea, but mainly to commemorate among all believers the second and greater deliverance at Calvary, God said: "*Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.*"

And there is no feast like it. None like *the passover*

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

was ever held in Israel. And none can compare with *Easter* in the Christian church. We joy, indeed, at Christmas in the Redeemer's birth, and for the glad tidings He brought to the world. But if we rejoice with the soldier when he *girds on* his armour, we rejoice still more with him when he *puts it off* in order to assume the laurel crown of victory. "*This is the day which the Lord hath made,*" says David in one of the *Easter psalms* (Ps. cxviii: 24): "*Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*" Well may we adorn God's altars with the *fresh flowers* of spring, the emblems and lovely harbingers of resurrection glories. Well may we sing *Easter anthems* and praise God with our brightest and most joyous *music*. For, surely, the alleluias which "*the holy church throughout all the world*" raises to God to-day must kindle her loyal children's hearts, and fill them with the joyful recollection of the triumph and the glory of her Lord.

"*Jesus Christ is risen to-day, Alleluia,
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia.*"

A *triumphant day* for us all, because on this day He conquered *hell's dominion* by His death, and *death itself* by His resurrection from the dead, and the redemption is an accomplished fact; therefore the church sings her alleluias to-day. This is the one thought with which I would fain fill your hearts to-day. Very different is the *triumph of Easter* from that of *Palm Sunday*. The short-lived honours of Palm Sunday were soon blemished by the base rebellion of the people, and blotted out by the tragedy of Good Friday. The *hosannas* of Palm Sunday that meant so *little*, are exchanged to-day for *alleluias* which for so many mean so *much*. On

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

Palm Sunday fickle admirers were crying "hail" to one whom they *expected* to deliver them. But ever since the first Easter day, the hosts of the redeemed can cry "Alleluia—praise the Lord," for He *has* wrought out and won salvation. *Alleluia*, for "*with His own right hand, and with His holy arm, He hath gotten for Himself (and for us all) the victory* (Ps. xcvi: 2).

Sad was the church's song on Palm Sunday:

*"Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp, ride on, to die."*

But *glad and glorious* is her refrain to-day:

*"The strife is o'er; the battle done;
Now is the Victor's triumph won.
O let the song of praise be sung, Alleluia."*

Not long ago we were reading in our papers how all England was stirred up to give an enthusiastic welcome to a favourite warrior who was returning home after a short, but sharp and very arduous, campaign in Egypt. We read of the dense crowds that waited for hours along the line of march, and how the windows in the streets were filled with happy and expectant faces. Our gracious Queen, with noble retinue, came to join her loyal subjects in doing honour to the returning conqueror. Then the cry was raised, "*He comes!*" and every eye was turned down the long, living avenue formed by the assembled hosts. And the waving of flags was seen, and thousands of sabres flashed, gleamed, and glittered in the sun. And there was the braying of the bands, the spirit-stirring strains of triumphant martial music, and the quick rolling of the

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

drums, and the booming and roaring of the saluting guns. And on came the proud battalions, the very pick of England's army and navy, in long unbroken line. As they approach the Queen they play "*See the conquering hero comes,*" and the general rides by, and salutes his sovereign, and the Queen graciously salutes Sir Garnet (*from thenceforth Lord*) Wolseley—the victor and the hero of the hour. And banners wave and cheers upon cheers arise and are wafted on the wind for miles.

With pomp and circumstance like *that*, with enthusiastic greetings and triumphant joy, the nations of *the world* are wont to hail and welcome those valiant soldiers who fight their battles, and win their dear-bought victories. Such is, or ought to be, the very spirit of the Easter triumph of the *holy church*, as, all over the world to-day, she hails the *Captain of her salvation*—Him *who is worthy to receive all honour; Him "who was slain, and has redeemed us by His blood, to God, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue"* (Rev. v: 9). What crowds those were in *London* streets who hailed Sir Garnet Wolseley, and what a brave sound of martial music there was *there!* But it was as *nothing* to the *alleluias* which rise from the church on earth to the Risen Saviour of the world *on Easter day*—*nothing* at all to the *sound* of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of voices *heard by Saint John*, when every creature which is *in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea*, swell the *great chorus*, to the once-slain (but risen) Lamb of God—of "*blessing and honour and glory and power*" (Rev. v: 13).

But what a change is all such praise and glory from

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

the humiliation of *Good Friday*, or from what we meet with on *Palm Sunday*. The popularity which was bestowed on Christ that day was shortlived and was soon replaced by degradation, denunciation, and death. But what a glorious change is wrought on *Easter day*; when the denial and desertion of His little band of friends give place to the worship and glorification of the whole family of the redeemed.

Let us see how it all happened, that so, (God helping us) we may have a better understanding of the true spirit and the joys of Easter.

In the *second Easter morning lesson*, our Lord says: "*I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore; Amen, and have the keys of hades and of death.*" (Rev. i: 18). These keys were wrested from him who had the power of them for a little season, *i.e.*, the devil. And in the *second Easter evening lesson* we are told that those "*under the earth*" and "*in the sea*" join with the hosts *in heaven and earth*, in the ascription of glory to the risen Christ, (Rev. v: 11-14). These *two lessons* constrain our attention to the awful mystery of the *intermediate state*. And if we turn to the *epistle for Easter-even*, the solemn Jewish Sabbath which our Lord passed "*under the earth*"—*in hades*—we are graciously permitted to learn just how His disembodied Spirit was employed, whilst *there*. "*He went and preached unto the spirits in prison*" (I Peter iii: 19). A mysterious declaration which has given rise to much dispute. Some of the wisest and most learned fathers (taking, I must think, the most simple, literal reading of the words) believe that the "*spirits in prison*" were the souls of the just—"sometimes disobedient," indeed,

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

but repentant and saved by long suffering, divine—and waiting in hope, and patience, for the coming Redeemer. The term "*spirits in prison*" literally means, *souls in safe-keeping*, and Saint John tells us that he heard them crying, "*Lord, how long?*" On the first Easter eve the Crucified Himself came to *preach* (or to proclaim) to these waiting souls *His finished work*.

Let us think (with all due fear and reverence), of *this holy hades*, this place of the departed spirits of the saints, as it was *during our Lord's earthly life*. Soon after our Lord was *born*, we heard *the aged Simeon singing*: "*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,*" and then he *sinks to rest*. And as *his soul enters hades* the spirits gather round him for the *news of earth*, and he tells them how *his eyes have seen the Lord's salvation*, for which *they have waited long*—"the light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel" (Luke ii: 32). He tells them *the good tidings of great joy that the holy angels brought to earth on Christmas day*.

Years fly by—or moments, for it is all one with God—and amongst many others, comes into hades *another noted saint, Saint John* ("the baptist," as he was called on earth), and he tells them how *he had publicly proclaimed the Lamb of God who had come to take away the curse of sin; how he had gone before Him to prepare His way by preaching the saving doctrine of repentance; and how at last he had been beheaded by the tyrant king*. And *then*, a little later, comes an awful hush, *the silence at the crucifixion*; and then, the heavens grow dark, and earth and hades are convulsed and rent. A loud voice penetrates the depths crying "*It is finished!*"

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

The earthly temple's veil is rent in twain. The *gates of paradise*, the *hades of the saints*, are opened wide to admit the Blessed Spirit of the world's Redeemer; and, to the ransomed spirits in that happy place of safety, He preaches, He proclaims that He has overcome the sharpness of His sacrificial death, and "*opened the Kingdom of heaven unto all believers.*" And the spirit of the *pardoned thief* is there, Christ's fellow-sufferer on the cross, with his Lord that day in paradise. The goodly fellowship of the *prophets*, and the noble army of the earlier *martyrs*, "from Abel down to Zacharias"—all are there—all there, to "*praise Him*" for His glorious news, and to *begin* the glad new song, the chorus of unending *alleluias* "unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

And as the day after the crucifixion vanishes and the third day begins its course, these mystic words of old find their fulfilment: "*Thou wilt not leave My soul in hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.* (Ps. xvi: 10). And back to this earth comes the Saviour's *soul*, and reanimates the *body* that does not see corruption, and it rises at once, before angelic witnesses, purged of all mortality, and beautified, and glorified. Then was brought to pass (for the *first time*) the saying that is written: "*Death is swallowed up in victory; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* No victory, no more dominion, belongs to the *grave* or *death*, only a despoiled and empty tomb; only some grave clothes laid apart; and two attendant angels watching and waiting to tell His dear ones that their Lord is risen!

*"The strife is o'er; the battle done;
Now is the Victor's triumph won.
O let the song of praise be sung, Alleluia."*

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

Then, that it may be sung—spread far and wide the tidings. And, foremost herald of the resurrection, there comes the Magdalene. Poor, pardoned *Mary* came early to the tomb and seeing, as she thought, a stranger, asked for the body of her Lord, "*Mary*"—He said to her. And then who can describe her joy as she flew forth to say to the others, "*I have seen the Lord*"? The *other women* also met Him; to them He also says, "all hail," and they too, spread the news that "*He is risen*." And on a village path He joins *two sad ones*, who had trusted in the Man called Jesus of Nazareth, but whose weak faith and hope had been overthrown by the Master's death. And out of their own familiar, but uncomprehended scriptures, He soon shows them that *the Messiah ought to suffer* just as *Jesus* had done, and so to "*enter into His glory*" (Luke xxiv: 26). And their hearts burn within them at His convincing words, and they soon *recognize Him*, and hurry back joyfully, over the way they had so sadly come. *They find the eleven* and say to them: "*The Lord is risen, indeed*." And, as they talk it over, within closed doors, there suddenly *appears their Lord*, in their very midst, blessing them just as of old and saying: "*Peace be unto you*." And, in His uplifted hands, they see the cruel wounds that the nailing to the cross had made. And now their wonder and their joy know no bounds. What their joy was we may suppose, but we can never fully know, until we go where they are and hear from themselves their story, and join in their alleluias in that better land.

Nearly nineteen long centuries of grace have gone, since that first Easter day. And the church has kept

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

it "a feast unto the Lord, through all her generations, until now; and she will keep it, loyally, "a feast, by the ordinance of her God, for ever." Heathens may rage and unbelievers scoff. But, from increasing millions, in all quarters of the world—on sea, on land, in crowded cathedrals and little rural churches—the anthem will swell, and gather—the rolling, glorious chorus of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of voices will rise up (at Easter) to the throne of God: "*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us—therefore let us keep the feast.*" (I Cor. v: 7-8). "Therefore"—that is, because *the sacrifice is perfected by the resurrection* of Christ from the dead. As surely "as in Adam" (in the mortality of Adam) "all must die," "even so in Christ, by virtue of this Easter fact, shall all be made alive." Is there not reason enough for all our Easter joy? No preacher can tell you, and no believer can know, all the reasons of this joy. "*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.*" (I Cor. ii: 9). But what we do know should give us *boundless confidence* in love of which we have so graciously been told so much. The tremendous victory that we commemorate to-day is our Lord's *pledge* to us that *we*, too,—if only we will continue to be His faithful soldiers, fighting under His hanner alway—shall be *victorious*—indeed, shall be even *more than conquerors*—over the enemies of our salvation. *Earth's hattalions* are sometimes called *invincible*. The only *true* "invincihles" are the soldiers of Christ—the hattalions of the glorious Conqueror, whom, with our alleluias, we have hailed and magnified to-day.

THE PLEDGE OF VICTORY

Do you desire to be *invincible*? Then, *be steadfast*. Stand well to your arms. Keep the pledge of the cross that was once signed upon your infant brows. Remember whose soldiers you are, and *then*, I tell you, on the authority of the word of God, that "*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom. viii: 38-39). Amen.

XXIII

ABIDE WITH ME

"Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." (Luke xxiv: 29).

THERE are some beautiful and affecting incidents connected with the resurrection of our blessed Lord, from which we may well endeavour to derive instruction in this *Easter season*, while yet the joyous tidings linger on the ear that "Christ is risen from the dead." Towards the evening of that most glorious and ever-memorable day, on which the holy angels visited this earth to announce Christ's victory over death and hell, *two of our Lord's disciples* were on their way to *Emmaus*, some eight miles distant from the holy city. And as they journeyed home from the passover they naturally talked of what had recently occurred. Naturally, *their Master's death* was foremost in their thoughts, and made them very sad. It seemed the blighting of their cherished hopes. They had anticipated such great things from Him: "*They trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel*" from its thralldom to Imperial Rome (Luke xxiv: 21). And then, like morning mists before the rising sun, their hopes had vanished, and He, from whom they looked for so much, was *crucified and buried*. They had *heard* something about the "*vision of angels*," and the *rumour* that He was yet

ABIDE WITH ME

alive, but they were "*slow of heart to believe*" that this could be. Their faith was weak, and so they sorrowfully walked and talked of Him whom they had *loved and lost*. And He was close at hand to comfort them, although they knew it not. *Any of you* who have been visited with trials, or *separated from those whom you have dearly loved*, and, through the weakness of your faith, have been unable to derive all the comfort which Christ's religion can give, will understand their feelings. You can imagine how they would have *talked, and loved to talk*, of Him who had just been *buried* in the rock-hewn tomb. Little knew they, as they communed together, that His Kingdom was a *spiritual Kingdom*, of which there should be *no end* for ever; and that He would indeed redeem the true Israel from its thralldom to the powers of evil. Strange, then, to them would be the memory of those words of His: "*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me*" (John xii: 32). Up to that time, *the cross* had been the mark of *shame and lowest degradation* but *henceforth* it would be the Christian's greatest *glory*. They looked, no doubt, as other Jews looked, for their Lord's *earthly sovereignty*, and for the emancipation and earthly glory of His people, Israel, but they had seen Him die a *felon's death*, and all their hopes seemed dashed to the ground. They walked and talked of Him they loved and lost, and *as they talked*, He whom they talked about appeared. "*Jesus Himself drew near*," and though He had cast off, for ever, the *weakness* of His earthly life, yet He *sympathized with theirs*. Gently He enquired the subject of their conversation and the cause of their

ABIDE WITH ME

grief. And they, not recognizing Him, told Him, as they would tell a stranger, their troubles and their disappointed hopes. And then He reproved them for their *want of faith*; and, "*beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself*" (Luke xxiv: 27). And their hearts burned within them, and they longed to hear more and more, of such words of wonder. He spake; and when they reached the village they constrained Him to remain and pass the night with them, saying—"Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent."

This is the narrative, connected with this memorable conversation, and what a lovely and comfortable lesson we may learn from its concluding words; even the lesson of *the abiding presence among us of our Lord and God*. Dear brethren, is not our faith, however real and earnest, yet imperfect? Have we not felt, sometimes, as those two *disappointed* travellers felt? Has not our Lord seemed, sometimes, to have withdrawn His presence? We have become sad, or doubtful, and discouraged. We thought we should have had *this*, or *that*; or that He would have been *something different*, to us, from what He has been. And when our hopes have ended, or our prayers have been answered in some way different from what we expected, has not our *faith* in Him *wavered* and *grown cold*? Have not our prayers become less fervent, our religious exercises more lukewarm? I speak not of *the causes* of this disappointment. Perhaps we have *mistaken excited feelings for the love of Christ*. Or perhaps we have *forgotten to say*—"Thy will be done." But I speak rather of

ABIDE WITH ME

the cure. I speak more anxiously of how we are to act in difficulties which, I suppose, *all* Christians sometimes feel. What can we do but ponder deeply *all the gracious promises concerning Christ*, written by Moses and in *all the scriptures*, and then entreat Him ever to *abide with us*? Be the *cause* of our disappointment what it may, its *effect* is sure. We, like the two sorrowful disciples, are being *tried and tested*. Our *faith* is being *shaken*,—ay, shaken perhaps to its very deepest roots—but only that it may be more firmly fixed, more thoroughly and deeply grounded. Not knowing, certainly, who He was, these men, whose hearts burned at His convincing, comfortable words—*that Christ ought certainly to have suffered all the things He had and so to enter into His glory*—these men constrained him to *abide with them*, although He made as though He would have gone on further.

And so, in our hour of darkness and weak faith, must we. We should not wish to escape tribulation, for, "*tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope* (Rom. v: 3), even a hope that cannot be extinguished by any disappointment, however severe. We must let *patience* have her perfect work if we would be "*perfect and entire in Christ*" (Jas. i: 4). Then to all, who are walking the way of the cross, I would say this: Whenever your trial comes, fervently *call upon your Saviour*, who is not far from you; fervently "*constrain*" Him to *abide with you*. They *knew not* whom they were inviting; and you, though you *do know* your risen and redeeming Lord, yet *know Him only "in part,"* for *His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out* (Rom. xi:

ABIDE WITH ME

35). But your hearts may well burn within you by reason of all the wonders of His love for you, which you do know, and if you earnestly ask Him to abide with you, He will *come in and tarry* with you and you shall *realize His presence*—strengthening you *in all time of your tribulation*;—guarding and guiding you, *in all time of your wealth*; comforting and supporting you, *in your hour of death*; accepting and rewarding you, *in the day of your judgment*. Only there must be the fervour of the invitation, that we read of in the text. “They constrained Him, saying unto Him: “*Abide with us.*” As Solomon sings, in the song of songs: “*I will seek Him whom my soul loveth,*” and then immediately: “*I found Him whom my soul loveth, I held Him and would not let Him go*” (Cant. iii: 2, 4). These words describe the church’s love for her Redeemer; and just so pure, ardent, constant, and faithful, should be the love in every true Christian’s heart, for Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification; “*by whose stripes we are healed.*” Here then *within God’s house*, let every loving and obedient soul *begin to seek its Lord*. In the appointed *means of grace*; and specially in His own service—the *Lord’s Supper*—the one service of Divine appointment—commemorating this one, full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for all our sins. To those gathered together in *His house* in His name a special blessing has been promised. “*I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.*” Yes, “*glad*”—because it is His sure “*abiding place,*”—“*the place where His honour dwelleth,*”—the place wherein *He waits to be gracious*. In meek *confession of past sins*; in gracious *absolution*; in joyous *chant*

ABIDE WITH ME

and glad *thanksgiving psalm*; in *holy scripture*; in *penitential litany* and *frequent intercession*, the devout soul seeks, and finds, its well-beloved Lord. Every petition, every earnest appeal to the throne of grace is filled with this one thought—*Creator, Saviour, Sanctifier, oh, abide with us!*

But chiefly is this the case in His own *memorial feast* to which He invites—to which, rather, as a King, He bids us all. No theme is this for miserable, vain *disputes* and useless *reasonings*, but for the purest *thankfulness*. Far from every devout communicant who approaches the table of the Lord, be all such strifes, and doubts, questionings and faithless fears. For one thing only will the truly humble, loving heart ever yearn, even for *Jesus Christ Himself*. One thing, alone, it cares to know, that there His presence is, who gives His people heavenly bread to eat, who gave Himself to be the *bread of life*. Oh, blessed thought, if a man eat that bread in faith, he hath *eternal life* and Christ will raise him at the last great day. “*Abide in me and I in you,*” He said. We, one with Him, as He is one with us. In every *holy eucharist* and in every other solemn *act of worship*, let worshippers implore *their Saviour’s presence*. “*Abide with us*”—“*Abide with us,*” “*True vine*” and fountain of our spiritual life; “*Leave us not, neither forsake us, O God of our salvation.*”

And as you think of these affecting memorials of your Saviour’s sufferings, look for *His presence* in your own *sorrows* and *reverses* and amidst all the *miseries* of this sinful world. In all your sorrows He walks with you, as with those two upon the road to Emmaus, and it shall often be that *your sad heart* shall, indeed, “*burn*” within

ABIDE WITH ME

you, as you receive the whispers of His gracious consolation. Himself *a man of sorrows*, from His lowly birth, until, upon the cross, He cried aloud that His great sacrifice was "finished"—He *knows*, as none but He can know, how best to give sweet *sympathy and succour* to all who pass through the furnace of affliction. Therefore fear nothing in the time of trial, but earnestly pray Him to "*abide with you*." And then though He may, sometimes, as if to prove your faith, make it *appear* that He would *go on further*, He will *come into you* and *tarry* with you, whether in joy or sorrow, whether in life or death. And, your eyes being no longer holden, you shall increasingly know Him whom truly to know is everlasting life.

"Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and *the day is far spent*." When *life's evening* shall have really come, and when the aching head, the feeble limb, the failing eye, shall tell you that you have reached the threshold of the unseen world, and that you will very soon have done with all of earth, what then shall cheer you in *your dying hour*? What then shall comfort you but the known, felt, and *abiding presence* of your dear Redeemer, and the assurance of His inestimable love, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, and now pleads, at the Father's throne, in behalf of all His people? When it is towards evening with us, and our day of grace has been far spent, when other helpers fail and comforts flee, may we realize that Christ, who has been with us all our lives, surely abideth with us for ever. Yes, brethren, believe me, that for those who steadfastly endeavour to *abide in Christ* while here, and live the life that is in Him, *seeking His presence* ever to abide

ABIDE WITH ME

with them, the *sharpness of death* has been overcome already, and its sting removed. For this let all praise be given to God, "*who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" And therefore, ere the Eastertide has passed, let us pray more and more earnestly, what the travellers to Emmaus prayed, that He will "*abide with us,*" "*abide with us for ever.*" "Abide with us," in the *market*, on the *farm*, out in the *busy world*, in the *privacy of the closet*, and in the *public services* of the church.

"Abide with us" to be our hope, our joy, our trust and guiding light, so that amidst all changes and all trials we may be delivered from evil and kept by the power of God. Thus realizing the comfort and the glory of Christ's Presence, every true believer can then sing:

*"I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is Death's sting, where, Grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me."*

Amen.

XXIV

A DEAD SOLDIER

"Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him." (Jer. xxii: 10).

IN the *place* of the dead, in the *temple* where your *dead pastor* stood so often, and whence he proclaimed for so long the unsearchable riches of Christ, and so faithfully, ably, and well, set forth the gospel of *life*. I rise up this evening to bid you "*weep not for the dead.*" I found the words in our *evening lesson* for this Sunday (17th Sunday after Trinity). *Jeremiah*, preaching the gospel of *repentance*, threatening God's *judgments* against rebellious people, declaring things which a faithful prophet of God's truth may not omit—namely, the *woes* of them who should forsake the covenant of the Lord their God, and worship other Gods and serve them (Jer. xxii: 9)—then makes allusion to the *death* of the *good king Josiah*. He remembered Josiah's zeal for God's church, and the good that it wrought, and the respite it gained for the cities condemned to destruction. He remembered the favour with which God regarded the faithful king, and he cried, with the *voice of a seer*, who saw, even then, the *good tidings of Christ's revelation*—who knew, even then, how precious with God was the death of His saints, how "*blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*" (Rev. xiv: 13), and he cried to the people, "*Weep ye not for the dead.*" Well!

A DEAD SOLDIER

because of their *death* we may weep, and indeed must weep, while yet we weep not *for them*. The words, as I read them, say nothing whatever to contravene or to condemn our *natural* affections. How could they, when in one of the most lovely pictures of the holy gospel (John xi) we see the *sacredness* and the *divine poetry* of *grief*? Two sisters of Bethany *grieved* for a brother dearly loved. We read of *Mary* falling at the Saviour's feet and *weeping*, and "the *Jews also weeping* which came with her," and the *Lord Himself*, in His sweet sympathy with mortal woe, *groaning in spirit* and *being troubled* (John xi: 33). The next record is, that "*Jesus wept.*"

Sorrow is a most sure softener of our stubborn hearts, and well and wisely is it fitted to mature and elevate the Christian character. I think that is a pious and good prayer, the emanation of a purified and chastened heart, which says—

*"Holy Jesu, grant us tears,
Fill us with heart-searching fears."*

If only we remember that our tears are for *our own loss*, that "no chastening *for the present* seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (Heb. xii: 11); if only we search within our hearts for that true *faith* in our heavenly Father's love and that holy *resignation* to His will, which shall enable us verily to *thank God* whenever it may please Him to deliver any of our dear ones out of the miseries of this sinful world—*then* shall the tears our Saviour grants us, by the lone graveside, or by the vacant chair, or in the deserted, desolated chamber of the broken home, be *purifying, sanctifying* tears indeed:

A DEAD SOLDIER

tears which He will lovingly put into His bottle, and which are written in His book.

"*The dead!*" What a phrase this is! What a world of sorrow it contains! What a picture of agony of heart, and desolate bereavement it suggests! And yet, *here*, from the *older scriptures*, and from the ages long before our Saviour came to bring to light true life and immortality, comes down to us the voice of inspiration, "*Weep ye not for the dead.*" For many months, we, who, though living at a distance, have yet known something of the physical state of our departed friend, have waited in much anxiety—have waited in the suspense between much fear and a little changeful hope—have watched for the message which passed with electric speed throughout *this deanery of West Simcoe*, ten days since, and gave us a veritable shock, when we learned that *our rural dean was dead*. What could we do but weep? We had, indeed, expected, but we did *not realize*, our loss. If I had been told *then* that I would come and preach to *you*, his own flock, his nearest and his dearest, and from such words as the text, "*Weep ye not for the dead nor bemoan him,*" I would have surely said, "*I could not do it.*" I know how coldly fall the words of comfort—of even sacred *scriptural* consolation—upon fond hearts in the first moments of a bitter grief. I know that though God does indeed say to His ministers: "*Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people*" (Is. xl: 1), and bid them comfortably speak of *warfare accomplished*, and *iniquity pardoned*, through the merits of Christ's precious blood, yet the poor, burdened, broken heart will groan and chafe and struggle under the mighty hand of God. The heart, that thoroughly

A DEAD SOLDIER

believes, cannot at first quite *feel* the love that lurks behind the heavy blow. It is hardly able, for a little while, "to kiss the rod that with a stroke removes the eyes' desire" (Ezek. xxiv: 16), and can hardly "bear the rod and who appointed it" (Micah vi: 9), nor the *divine* voice saying "forbear to cry and make no mourning for the dead" (Ezek. xxiv: 17), nor yet the *counsel* of the text, "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him."

I know how easy it is to *preach* of patience, and how hard it is to *practise* it; and I would willingly forbear to preach, and have recourse to *prayer*.

O God, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

I would fain lift up to the God of grace *our litany of love*—"that it may please Him to succour, help and comfort all that are in danger, necessity and tribulation"—all who are troubled now, and indeed *their number is not small*. Not from *one* home alone comes there the cry, "help Lord"; for the home of him whose loss we mourn to-night was in the hearts of many people. Not from *this town* of Collingwood alone, but from the *scattered missions* throughout all *West Simcoe*, and from the *clergy* of those missions *chiefly*, rises a wail of sorrow for the irreparable loss of one who was a *friend* and *guide* and *counsellor*—a genial, affectionate and trusty *friend*; a wise, experienced and gifted *guide* and teacher; a *counsellor* of ripe judgment, who was ever ready to give advice or aid according to the spirit of the holy gospel, and the order and doctrines of the church of which he was, in truth, an able minister.

What a loss the cause of *missions* has sustained in losing such a zealous champion! He spared himself no pains, even when his health was evidently failing; and

A DEAD SOLDIER

he feared no hardship in going up and down and through his deanery to advocate that cause which has the propagation of Christ's gospel for its single aim. I well remember *the last time* he came to speak in the interests of missions *in my parish*. It was a very stormy time and he was far from well. He was to go next into a distant portion of West Mulmur. The morning after our meetings was a bitterly cold and wild one. The Mulmur meeting would almost surely be a failure in such weather. I strongly advised him to go home for the rest I saw he so much needed, and, indeed, he seemed inclined to go. But while we discussed the matter, a little boy drove up in a rough farm sleigh to take him to West Mulmur. *Never a moment's hesitation then*. Never a thought of all the comforts of his pleasant home. The *willing spirit* triumphed over the *weaker flesh*, and while he shook his fist in playful anger at the boy for coming, he jumped into the sleigh, turned a deaf ear to my urgent remonstrances, and shouting his farewell, drove off into the stormy wind and snow for two days' more hard work. Such was the spirit in which this good servant went about his Master's business. So lightly did he think of enduring literal *hardship* as a *good soldier* of Christ Jesus. Perhaps he knew his *usefulness*, his *influence* for good on these occasions; perhaps (although I am sure he did not think more highly than he ought to think about himself), perhaps he knew that he was gifted with the rare power of *persuading* others to their duty. This, by the abounding grace of God, may well have encouraged and sustained his zeal. He had a pleasant way of talking of unpleasant duties, and I have heard him speak from his

A DEAD SOLDIER

heart straight to the hearts of those before him, and persuade them, successfully, to give, for Christ's cause, a little more than their common miserable doles. Meanwhile they seemed only to be aware that they had been listening to some very pleasant stories, told in a very genial way. But not in the *missions* of his deanery, nor in *his own parish*, nor in his *home* alone, does the cry of grief, or the sound of weeping, for his loss resound. It is echoed throughout all the diocese, where he was widely known and just as widely loved. Its echoes extend indeed to *many a distant station* of the church in *Canada*. And in her councils, the *smaller meetings* for the church's temporal welfare; or the *larger meetings*—synods, diocesan and provincial—held to advance her higher, holier interests, there will be an *empty chair* which it will be hard indeed to fill, with the *ability* and *zeal* for the church's good and *watchfulness* against impending harm, which belonged to our dear departed friend. Not mine alone is this testimony to the usefulness of the life now ended. It is the public verdict. When I was lately in Toronto, the centre of our diocese, persons, whom I scarcely knew, came to ask me the anxious question, "*What news of Dr. Lett?*" When I made answer that I feared he was dying—there came repeatedly the same reply—"Ah, well, he will be sadly missed!"

It needs not, I am sure, that I attempt, at this time and in this holy place, to act as his biographer. Indeed, the *newspapers* have told us how well and widely known were his earlier labours; and how successful were his constant efforts for the spiritual and temporal welfare of *the poor, the orphan, the afflicted*, in the first very

A DEAD SOLDIER

important field of his ministerial work in Canada. Nearly *thirty-nine years* have passed since he was first ordained; *thirty* of these have been devoted to the service of the church *in Canada*, and, with but little interruption, to this diocese of Toronto; and few indeed have been the movements for the increase of the church's usefulness and influence, the welfare of her ministry, and the good, present and eternal, of her members at large, in which he has not taken an active, zealous, able, leading part. Well may the people say—"he will be *sadly missed.*"

He will be sadly missed. Missed *throughout the church*, which he so truly loved, which he believed in and revered as the Redeemer's spouse. Missed, in her *councils*. Missed, in her *mission fields*. Missed, in the *parish* he had so striven to build up, and prosper. And, oh! how sadly, sorely missed, in the *home*, of which he was the kindly, affectionate, and beloved head. I have spoken a little, in his praise to-night because I think his praise must be in all the churches, and I should have done great violence to my own feelings of respect and love, and failed (I think) in duty and respect to you, his friends, had I allowed this solemn occasion to pass by without offering at least this little tribute to his memory—to the memory of your loving pastor, whose mortal body was, on *Sunday last*, "*committed to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Burial Service). Ah! Those last words—"through our Lord Jesus Christ"—remind me of some last words of his to me, when we had offered together some of the prayers appointed for the *visitation*

A DEAD SOLDIER

of the sick, at the last time I ever saw him. I had been reading that lovely, comfortable verse—"though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii: 4). He told me then how that thought was his comfort, how absolutely he *leaned* on his good Shepherd's staff for his support; how utterly he trusted to that "rod," which was his Redeemer's cross, for his admission into the church triumphant. While he had time, he had striven to "do good to all, and specially to those who were of that household of the faith," the church, but there was never a thought about his doings now.

Imperfect, tempted, failing, weak, he knew himself to be; and humbly owned himself an unprofitable servant.

"Through our Lord Jesus Christ," were the sweet words that seemed to hang upon his lips. In his Saviour's boundless love was his sole trust, and in Christ's gracious intercession was his well-founded hope. I could not close without assuring you of *this*. It is such an essential lesson for us all. Work as you will, dear friends, work as you *must*, if you would manifest your faith in, and your love for, your Redeemer; when you have done all, then must you know and own yourselves "unprofitable servants." Christ's finished work is that alone which profiteth us all; and in your days of health, and strength, and work, and in your hour of death, you must plead *that*, and nothing else but *that*.

Had our dear friend known that I should speak of him to you as I have just been speaking, I think he would have warned me to be very heedful of my words. I think he would have said: "*Preach the Redeemer's*"

A DEAD SOLDIER

gospel, glorify the Lord; if there be aught in all my life and labours in His service, that can show forth the power of His gospel or the riches of His grace, then speak of that and of that only; so speak of me that I may be, in death, as I have tried to be in life, a humble instrument for the edification, or upbuilding, of His church, and for the salvation of souls." And so have I spoken of him, I humbly trust. So to speak of *him* that I might encourage *others*, to follow the example of his zeal for the church and love for the church's Lord, so that, *with him, they* may be partakers of Christ's heavenly kingdom—for *this purpose* I accepted the invitation to come here to-night. What shall I add? Bear with me a moment longer while I say once more to all of you, even to those who mourn his loss with deepest, and most sacred grief, "*Weep ye not for the dead.*" Your grievous loss, is his incalculable gain. He is *freed from sin*. And what a cause of thankfulness is that. His warfare is accomplished, his iniquity is pardoned. Bless and praise God for that. He has entered into *rest*. He is resting from his labours for Christ and for His church. And his works do follow him. Bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever for those gracious words: "*Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them*" (Rev. xiv: 13). Our works, you see, which have nothing whatever to do with our *redemption*, the full and precious price of which was paid long since on Calvary, have a great deal to do with our *reward*. Behold," saith the Redeemer, "*My reward is with Me to give to every man according as his work shall be*" (Rev. xxii: 12).

"Weep ye not for the dead." Bear in your loving

A DEAD SOLDIER

memory the dead. Remember him, chiefly, in his *teaching*. He was the ambassador for Christ to you, and steward of His sacred mysteries. He maintained, as the church ever maintains, *apostolic order* and *evangelical truth*. Hold such instruction fast; let it not go. Let His death give new power and force to words he can no longer utter in your ears. Fondly and carefully treasure up his *counsels*, since you will *hear* him no more. His warnings, entreaties, persuasive and loving appeals, if you carelessly heard them, recall them and be guided by them now. Every sacred truth he taught you; every several article of the one faith in which he grounded you; every "*joint*," and "*band*" of the "*one body*," by which he strove to "*knit*" you to Christ and to one another is as a *talent* lent you, and for which you must be responsible for the increase, to Him who is the head of the body. But again, remember him, too, in prayerful remembrance for his desolated and sorely afflicted *family*. Pray, to the throne of grace, for the help and strength of the Holy Spirit of our God, the Comforter, for the dear *partner of his life and labours*, his earnest and untiring fellow-labourer, in the highest and eternal interests of you all, and of your children. Pray God to be *her* help in trouble now when the help of man is vain. So honour and revere his memory, in this most worthy way, in the way he would himself have wished you to remember him; but weep not *for him*. "*Weep ye not for the dead*," because even now he ranks among the truly living, along those who, though dead, yet live—live where there is no more death—live in the immediate presence of Him who is "*the resurrection and the life*."

A DEAD SOLDIER

"Thy brother shall rise again," were the Saviour's comforting, assuring words. *"Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him,"* but rather apply to your dear departed pastor, to our beloved, faithful friend who has gone on before us, good Bishop Heber's words:

*"Thou art gone to the grave but we will not deplore thee,
Whose God was thy ransom, thy guardian and guide;
He gave thee, He took thee, and He will restore thee,
And death has no sting. for the Saviour has died."*

Amen.

XXV

DEATH

{ "We bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told."
(Psalm xc: 9).

YES; one after another, we bring them to a very speedy end; and to-day, for the 14th time (1883) since I have been among you here, we bring another of the *church's years* to its admonitory close; and the old, old *tale* that affects us all so closely, has been told again, with all its doctrines and reproofs, corrections and instructions in the ways of God. The tale is over, and the book is shut; but only to be reopened and begun again next Sunday, with the advent preface of hosannas to the coming King, and the advent admonition that now is our salvation nearer than when we looked upon the pages last. Very appropriate is the figure of the speedily told "*tale*" to remind us of the *shortness* of that life which is our portion here. Numbers of figures of the same truth are shown us, equally appropriate, and as startling in their reiteration of the same memorable truth—the *fading flower*, the *withering grass*, the *dream*, the *smoke*, the *vapour*, the *passing shadow*, and the *thing of naught*. All these we read of, and there are many more. But of "*the tale that is told*," we are reminded over and over again in some of the *saddest moments* of our lives—when, with the company of *mourners*, we worship, for

DEATH

the last time, around the dear *remains of some one* we have *loved and lost*, and the sternest face is softened, the fountains of the hardest heart are broken up, and tears are streaming down to earth, and sighs are rising up to heaven, as "out of the deep" we call upon our God and utter forth into His ears "the voice of our complaint." "*Our years, to an end as a tale that is told!*"—If ever such words go to our hearts at all, it must be, surely, when we read them in the solemn *burial psalm*. And if ever we "*number our days*" so as to *incline* our hearts (if not to *apply* them) to the truest wisdom, it is, surely, when the "*days*" of some dear one are *numbered* and done, and we commit the beloved body to the ground, "*earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.*" And then the solemn words are ended with the most *solemn prayer*, that we, too, may rest, one day, in Jesus, and at the last be found acceptable in His pure sight. And then, *scatters the crowd*. Back to the busy world—its toils, its pleasures, or its sins—each takes his way. And O, how many utterly and immediately forget what manner of poor, short-lived men we are! This time, a little *child*; last time, a stalwart *youth*; next time, perhaps, a *grey-haired, worn-out man*. Who knows who next amongst us all, dear friends? Who next? No matter *who*, or of *what age*, the figure equally applies. "*Our years, as a tale that is told.*" The *brief, bright sketch*, for the *little one*, that gladdens for a while our life, then, fades out of our sight. The *story that fills a book*, for the life that reaches *man's estate*, and grows no older. The *three-volume story* for *childhood, manhood, age*; and then "*the end!*" When I began reading "*Les Miserables.*"

DEATH

by *Victor Hugo*, I thought it would last me a long time; it was one of the longest stories I had ever read, and consisted of five copious books, and yet, after what seemed a very little while, I reached the end. *Five parts: (1) childhood, (2) youth, (3) manhood, (4) sturdy age, (5) senility.* Count how we will, five ages; or, as Shakespeare counts man's *seven ages: (1) the infant, (2) school boy, (3) lover, (4) soldier, (5) justice of the peace, (6) lean slippered pantaloan, and (7) second childhood*—still, exit the player from life's little stage, the curtain falls, the lights are out, *the tale is told, and so (the psalmist says) our years are ended.*

"*A tale that is told!*" See the mere novel-reader, the silly fool who literally feeds his mind on fiction; who weakly allows himself to be a *slave* to a pleasure meant only to *rest and recreate* his mind. The tale *absorbs him*; he *lives* in the fictitious lives he reads of; forgets the flying time; forgets the work he has had given him *to do*; forgets to apply his heart to wisdom's search, and minutes eat up the hours, and the wasted hours consume the working day and, as the tale at last is ended, the misspent day ends, too; and the dark night has come when it is too late to work. So, *time*, with its quick step, with its unresting flight, steals from us hours and days. Ay, brethren, and if we "*number*" not "*our days*," steals from us *weeks, months, years*, until it robs us of our *life* itself. And, before we know it, *realize* it, or are in any way at all *prepared* for it, it leaves us standing at the very entrance of eternity, and an eternity of *night* for those whose lives were nothing but a wasted day.

"*Our years to an end, as a tale that is told.*" And

DEATH

very *different sorts* of tales are told. (1) *Light, trifling stories*, meant merely to raise a laugh and while away time fairly devoted to the mind's and body's rest. And there are *lives* no better than *such tales*; whose *only object* is the search for *pleasure*. People of buoyant spirits and light hearts who shun, not care and sorrow only, but the claims of duty—and who, so long as they have *present happiness* and glitter in life's sunshine, will *never make provision* for the *evil days*—when they shall surely say, "*I have no pleasure in them*" (Eccl. xii: 1). (2) And there are *graver, deeper tales* of human labours, trials, triumphs, sorrows and successes. But *labours done*, and *triumphs won*, without any *motive* higher or more enduring than *this world's* wealth, or fitful, changeful fame. Lives, like those tales, may leave their mark upon the world, and even leave it there for good. Useful and valuable they may, indeed, have been. But they have been bounded by the interests of *this world* alone, and the wise man's record of them is the one word, "*Vanity.*" *Bees*, we may call *them*; and the *others, butterflies*. Useful, the one; beautiful alone, the other; but both contented with, and living on the flowers of earth. (3) But there are *tales of facts*, or *tales founded on noble truths*, which have an infinitely higher, holier object in the telling. *Tales*, such as the *world* knows well, and makes *immortal*; and tales such as the *church* delights to illustrate her doctrines with—throughout the Christian year—of men who lived and suffered *in* the world, indeed, and *for it*, though they were *never of it*. Shrewd business men, perhaps, "*not slothful in business,*" but eager, active, energetic—"fervent in

DEATH

spirit," in every useful, hopeful undertaking—"serving the Lord," in serving holily and well, *His world*, the world for which He died. Beautiful in their lives, and busy; yet, *not* like the *bees* and *butterflies*, gathering their treasures for *this world's* use alone, but "*laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life.*"

Well, brethren, like *which* of those *three sorts of tales* are you bringing *your years* towards their end? Look back and examine the past, and number the days that are flown, that your hearts may be wiser and better in the future that God may yet give you. Has your *past year* of grace been frittered uselessly away in pleasures and amusements? Or has it been actively engaged in schemes and labours that have had no object higher than the things of *earth*? Or, have you *hallowed worldly work* with *holy aims*, and hours of ease and recreation with the remembrance that even in these things you may set forth God's glory and God's peace, and make yourselves more and more meet for the Kingdom towards which you are going?

Again, some tales end happily, you know, and some end sadly. And we are dissatisfied with *these*, and would like to have them altered, somehow, so that everything should come out right at last. And in this also they are like our lives. When they are ended it is *too late to change them*. "*In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*" The life must be judged according "*as its works have been—not as they might have been.*" Thus is every tale judged at the bar of public opinion on its merits *as written*. We can not enjoy to have a story

DEATH

end in gloom, and though we write no condemnation on the impenitent sinner's tomb, it is no less sure that his end is bitter and enduring woe. We prefer the tale wherein the clouds clear off, and happy changes brighten the closing page. And so, knowing how "*dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,*" shall we not offer, for ourselves, the well-known prayer of Balaam, for a happy ending to our days on earth— "*let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his*"? Let closing years remind you, then, my brother, of the close of life, and as the tale progresses, apply your hearts to wisdom, study out the plot, and heedfully prepare (as page after page is filled, and turned into the irremediable past) to bring about a bright, a happy, and a blessed ending. *Blessed* (as the Spirit says) are the *righteous dead*, for they "*rest from their labours and their works do follow them.*"

"*Our years to an end, as a tale that is told.*" And there are more *little* tales than *long* ones told. (1) Mind that, *my little friends*. It is but a short time since I read our text in the burial service over a *little* body that had only seen four summers. And statistics show that about *one-quarter* of all lives are ended before the *seventh year*. Then must you *children*, as well as *older people*, endeavour to be always "*ready.*" Anxious to *do God's pleasure* here, should he prolong your days. "*Ready*" to *go* to Him who came down here to you and died to save you, and then went back to heaven to prepare happy places for all the thousands of little children whom He should call early to Himself, out of the miseries of this sinful world and away from

DEATH

the evil to come. (2) And to you, *young men and maidens*, let me say that though "*the days of our age are threescore years and ten,*" few reach that period and the *average* duration of man's life is but a little *over thirty years*. Think how many of your young acquaintances—prime, hopeful young lads and beautiful girls—have been laid in the dust since I first came among you. Over how many I myself have read the solemn warning of the "*tale*" that is so shortly told, and so soon ended. What says the *last Sunday* of the *church's year* to you, but, "*be ye also ready*"? What is her *special prayer*, but that the Lord would "*stir up*" and stimulate *His people's wills* to better, heartier service in the year to come? All the long, lovely *story of His love* has been told through once more. What for, if not to make you better know, and better love, *your King*—to draw your hearts more under His righteous sway—to make you more and more fruitful in good works? What for, if not to remind you how much you have been receiving daily from His love, and how far too little fruit you have been bearing to His glory, as the swift years fly by, bearing you nearer and nearer to His judgment seat? "*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth*" (is the wise man's message to your souls to-day)—"*Rejoice and let thy heart cheer thee in thy youthful days, but know,*" and remember how quickly they pass, "as a tale that is told," and that, for every one of them, you must *account* to God (Eccl. xi: 9). (3) And to you, brethren, who have come to *middle life*, manhood's maturity, well through the second volume of life's story, what shall I say to you, that I have not said already? I cannot promise you

DEATH

that you shall come to the third volume of the tale—nor even to another *chapter*; and you, also, must be *ready* to turn down the page and leave it, if you are called away. But if you *should* be permitted to pursue the story *further*, read it more carefully, mark more thoughtfully and digest *its lessons*, for they are full of beauties. *Beautiful opportunities! Beautiful possibilities*, for those who will read it and heed it in the *light* thrown on its harder passages by our Lord's *sermon on the mount*, and by the sweet, illustrative *stories* that He loved to tell. "*Life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal,*" and though, on the last page, be written "*finis,*" or the end, the heedful reader knows that it is no "end" for *him*, and that *its lessons* are enduring treasures to be laid up safely and to go on increasing in his heart for ever.

"*Our years to an end, as a tale that is told!*" And there is no tale told but leaves its *fruit* either for good, or evil. Either *good fruit* of high and elevating thought and noble deed; or the *vile fruit* of enervating, vapid, sentimental trash, in useless, aimless (if not absolutely evil) lives.

"*We bring* them to an end," the psalmist says. I purposely left out those words "*we bring*" in my reiteration of the text, that I might emphasize them all the more in closing. "*We bring,*" reminds us, clearly, of our own *free-will*. The *writer* of a tale decides how *he* will have it end. *He brings it to its end*. He holds the threads, the various complications, in his busy brain, and works out the happy, or the unhappy, consummation as he sees most fit. So it is with our lives exactly. And to what end, then,

DEATH

brethren, will you bring your years? To "*an end*" you must bring them; but to *what end* it is for you to say. I have read tales (many of them true tales, I fear) of the *rogue's end*, the *idler's end*, the *drunkard's end*, the *gambler's end*, the *hypocrite's end*, and the end of many who were wilful rebels *against God*, and *miserable endings* were they all. And I do trust that none to whom it is my privilege to preach will ever allow themselves in sins whose fruit is only evil in the present time, and forever disastrous, "*for the end of those things is death*" (Rom. vi: 21). "As a tale" your lives shall end. May the story of *your lives* end like the tale that *we end to-day*—the *church's story of redeeming love*. Bring *all your years* to the test of that immortal story. Let the message of the *incarnation, solemn fasting and temptation, bitter cross and passion, and glorious resurrection and ascension*, decide the aims and consecrate the service of *each passing year*. Let all the graces of redeeming love be with you all and ever increase within you more and more. Bring *every year* to its swift end in *that sublime similitude*, and each year will find you being made freer than you were from sin: becoming more truly servants unto God: having "*your fruit unto holiness here, and the end everlasting life*" (Rom. vi: 22). The brief life *here* ending, for you in the bright life *there*, that shall know *no end* for ever. Amen.

XXVI

REWARD

"My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. xxii: 12).

I WAS once taken to task, in the early days of my ministry, by a profligate old man who, now and then, had intervals of religious fervour, and who was quite satisfied that he would be saved in the great day of account, because (as he said) he *believed in Jesus Christ*. He took me to task for preaching what he thought was not gospel at all; or what, at any rate, was quite new to him. I had referred to the different measures of "*reward*" laid up for the different degrees of *service* rendered by God's saints on earth. He objected to this, because he thought that there were just *two places*, and that if only we were saved from *hell*, and admitted into *heaven*, we should surely be all equal there.

I have referred to this old parishioner and his low views of heaven and of God's justice—for *two reasons*: (1) Because I fear that *the notion is not at all uncommon*; and (2), because it is *so low*, and *so unworthy*. What could be more debasing to the mind, and to the life, than to suppose that all that was needed was to avoid mortal and unpardonable sin, to believe in another's merits; and so, just barely, to win admission inside heaven's gates?

REWARD

All equal there? No, brethren, no more than we are all equal *here*. The inequalities of heaven will be very real, although quite different from those of earth. *Here*, one is rich, another poor. One is learned, and another ignorant. One has hereditary greatness, power, position. Another, only such greatness as he may himself achieve. *There*, all will be accorded just that station which they shall have for themselves achieved. No class lines *there*, indeed, of rich and poor; of (so-called) noble and plebeian; and yet, a most true aristocracy will form the great King's court—the “*living creatures*” and “*the elders*,” the noblest *mortys*, the most faithful servants of their Lord, those who have loved Him best. Ay, brethren, “*best*,” that is what the word “*aristos*” means; and that is why I speak about *the aristocracy* of heaven. The best, on earth, is often poor indeed. But there, Christ, the great King, will arrange the *order* of His court. He will say who shall sit upon His right hand or His left, whose places shall be nearest to His throne. And, those He deems *the best* will indeed be the best. For “*He will reward every man according as His works shall be*,” and various *merits* shall have various *rewards*, even as the various stars above us have various altitudes and various degrees of brightness. Saint Paul declares: “*There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory*,” and adds, “*So also is the resurrection of the dead*.”

Let us beware how we think or speak of *merit*. Not by *our own merits* do we gain *admission* into heaven at all. No works of ours can win an entrance

REWARD

within the gates celestial. I carefully disclaim such thoughts of human merit. Forbid it, God, that I should rob Thee of Thine honour. Forbid it, "*honourable, true and only Son,*" that I should ever fail to teach and preach that "*Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man,*" that "*Thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb,*" and when "*Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, didst open the Kingdom of Heaven unto all believers.*" But I am not speaking now about the opening of the Kingdom; that was Christ's glorious work, indeed; that was the King's royal *bounty*, and *free favour* for us all. But I am speaking of *our own part* in the matter; our own efforts to do all honour to His bounty, by trying to deserve it better, and by winning for ourselves such places in the opened Kingdom as He has condescended to "*prepare*" for those who love and serve Him well.

And fear not that *this doctrine* of winning rewards in heaven, should cherish in us thoughts of *self-dependence* or of *self-sufficiency*. We know that all, even our least, efforts spring from God, and come first from the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. The traveller, fallen among thieves, lying prostrate in the roadside-ditch, would not feel very self-dependent. And, as one after another passed him by, he would feel his *helplessness*. And when the *good Samaritan*, at last, came where he was, and poured the cleansing wine and healing oil into his wounds, he would *value this help* all the more, when he remembered how faint and *helpless* he had been. And that was exactly *our condition* before God, who "so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

REWARD

lieth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That was exactly our condition when the *true Good Samaritan*, of His rich bounty, poured into our many wounds the *oil and wine* of His healing, sanctifying grace. Those are His *gifts*. Moreover, He *gives us strength to use, and perseverance to go on using*, to the end, the sanctifying grace. And, then, He *gives us His rewards* according to our faithful *use* thereof; or, as He says, "*according to our work.*" That is why he spake the *parables of the talents and the pounds*; and thereby taught us the lesson of *stewardship*. Not that we might depend upon Him less, but more; and seek to *use His gifts* aright.

It is *not* the man who is *using* God's gifts of grace, and expecting to gather to himself a good *reward* in the great coming "day of his necessity," that will be self-righteous or self-dependent, but rather the man who thinks he *cannot fall from grace*, and that it is *unconditionally* his; and so forgets to *work* for his reward; forgets the evil that is all round him, and is *permitted*, on purpose that he may *overcome* it. Not fall from grace! Why, brethren, but for your watchful dependence on the *daily gifts* of God's grace, you would fall from it *every day*. That is why *our Lord* taught even *His own chosen band*, who enjoyed His grace so richly, that whenever *they* prayed, they must not omit to say, "*Give us, this day, our daily bread.*" That is why you likewise teach *your little children* from their *childhood* to say, *daily*, to their Father in heaven, "*Give us, this day, our daily bread.*" As well might we expect the little fledglings in their nests to live without the frequent visits of the parent bird, as

REWARD

that the Christian *life* can be sustained without the *daily gifts* of grace from God.

But the Holy Scriptures make a distinction between God's *gifts* and His *rewards*. God gives us faith. He gives us His Spirit of wisdom, of righteousness, of love, and according to the *use* we make of these His bounties, He *rewards* us, more or less richly, in the great day of account. Saint Paul marks this distinction clearly in a well-known verse (Rom. vi: 23): "*The wages of sin is death*"—the *reward*, the recompense of sin is death—but "*the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" *That* we could never *merit*, never *win*. God freely *gives* us *that*—won for us by the merits of our Lord. But, as we live that life that is in Him, according to the manner of our life, so will be our several *rewards*. Our Lord's own words make this plain. We are reviled, perhaps, and evil is spoken against us, falsely, for Christ's sake, and yet we bear it patiently. What says our Lord of *that*? "*Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven*" (Matt. v: 12). We do some little deed of charity, some trifling act of love, a cup of water to some little one and given with a loving heart—what says our Lord of *that*? "*Verily I say unto you, you shall in no wise lose your reward*" (Matt. x: 42). And then there is that harder task than any—the *love of enemies*, the doing good to them, and hoping for nothing in return, enduring hatred and reproach, and having your very name held to be evil, for Christ's sake—what says our Lord of *that*? "*Rejoice and leap for joy, for your reward is great in heaven*" (Luke vi: 23). And, as to the *measure* ... the *reward*,

REWARD

He has distinctly said: "*With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*" (Matt. vii: 2). Saint Paul, who writes so strongly and so much about the *gifts* and the *free grace* of God, also speaks plainly of His *rewards*. He says indeed that neither is he that planteth, nor he that watereth, *anything, apart from God*, who gives the increase—but he also says the *planting* and the *watering* shall be rewarded, "*every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*" (I Cor. iii: 8). Thus are we taught that, in the life to come, there will be *rewards* for works of piety done here: and, also, that these rewards will *differ* from each other as much as the *several lights* of heaven, *sun, moon, and stars*; or as much as the *various lives*, and *various merits* of the saints of God on earth.

This *doctrine of rewards*, is *elevating* doctrine; which will surely elevate your *lives*. You are not put here to be content with being "*just saved*" from the destruction which your sins deserve. You are *put here* by God the Father who made you; *gathered* at your baptism into the *Kingdom of God* the Son, who redeemed you; and *endowed* with *gifts of grace* by God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies you, and edifies you, day by day, in order that you may so *exercise* that holiness each day, as in the end to win its great and manifold rewards. To the drunkards, thieves, blasphemers; to the ignorant, careless, or wilful sinners, we must cry out the advent warning of Saint John the Baptist, and tell them to "*flee from the wrath to come.*" But surely to *thoughtful* Christians and worshippers of the Most High God, to *devout* Church-goers, to those who *delight* to hear the

REWARD

gospel of their Lord, we may speak better words than those: we may repeat their Lord's own words, referring to God's commandments: "*Whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven*" (Matt. v: 19).

"*Great in the Kingdom of Heaven!*" Then there are to be *great* people there. There is, then, to be an *aristocracy* in heaven, as I said at first; some "*sealed in their foreheads,*" as, in a special sense, "*the servants of the Lord.*" But *who* are these aristocrats to be? "*High and low, rich and poor, one with another,*" the blue-blooded *nobleman* of earth who travelled in his gilded chariot, and the poor old *cripple* who hobbled in the dust; the *student*, versed in all the lore of libraries, and the *labourer* who has toiled through a long life of ignorance—all will appear on the same level before the Judge's throne. Then the secrets of all hearts will be laid open, the advantages and disadvantages of each one will be considered, and the all-righteous Judge will "*give to every man according as his work shall be.*" Mark the words—"according as his work shall be." Some *rich man* may have given abundant *alms*, which cost him little self-denial; and some *poor woman* may have given *an hour*, out of her busy *day*, to nurse a suffering child, or *hours* out of her needful rest at *night* to watch by a dying bed: and *she* shall be *preferred* before the *other*. And *this penitent* shall profess with *his lips*, that he is "a miserable sinner"; and *that one* shall "*bring forth fruits meet for repentance*" (Matt. iii: 8), and the *last* shall be *preferred* before the *first*. And here a *woman* shall give a *too grudging pardon* to the *slight unkindness* of a *friend*; and *there*, another

REWARD

shall *forgive*, freely, some *gross and irremediable wrong* done by an *enemy*: and *this last* shall be a *brighter "star"* in heaven than *the first*. And here, a man of *many talents*, and abundant blessings, shall have *done* God's will, with little hindrance; and *there*, one shall have *borne God's will*, with patient *resignation*, through a life of suffering, privation, and grievous tribulation—the robes of *this last one* shall be *brighter and more glorious* than the *other's*. And here, a famous *captain* shall stand for his reward, good, brave, a patriot, a hero, and the *conqueror of cities*; and there, a *quiet unknown personage*, whose only merit was that he had *ruled his spirit*, kept down his passions, and subdued his temper, after a holy *example* that he had kept steadfastly before him, and *this man* shall be esteemed better than *the mighty one* beside him. And so, my brethren, shall the aristocracy of heaven be formed. "*One star shall differ from another star in glory.*" And I have shewn you what shall meet with most approval in the great day of reward—not the *blue blood*, but the *pure, honest heart*—not the *big balance* at the *banker's*, but the *treasure* stored in *heaven*. These are the things by which the Judge will measure your rewards. The work of *judgment* is *going on* even *now*. Now, day by day, you all are being proved. "*Now, in the time of this your mortal life,*" you are *winning* for yourselves the places you are to *enjoy for ever*. Do you aspire to no honourable place, no high position in the Kingdom of your Lord? Are you not stirred with any high ambition for your future life? We hear plenty about *earthly* place, just now. At every street corner, it is the absorbing theme.

REWARD

Who is to be *warden of the county*? Who is to be *reeve* or *deputy-reeve* of the town? Or whom shall we raise up to such a lofty pinnacle of glory that he may write *M.P.* or *M.P.P.* after his name? For a *year*, my brethren, or for a *few years*, this transient glory will last. And how men *study* and *strive*, and *look*, and *long*, and *labour* for *rewards* like these! But do you think, my brethren, what honour it would be to see *the Judge*, the Great Examiner of merits, take up His pen and write the title "*saint*" beside your name? *Saint John*, because of all his love. *Saint Peter*, for his fervent zeal. *Saint Matthew*, because he was so ready to give up a good position in the customs to follow Jesus Christ. We talk about *glory*. But think what glory it would be to find yourselves all "numbered with *God's saints* in *glory everlasting*." Amen.

XXVII

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle." (Ps. xxiv: 7, 8).

HAVE we not all remarked how generally it was not given us fully to understand God's dealings with us, till time had passed and we could *look back* at them and see how they had wrought us good, could see how many things that seemed *against* us had been really *for* us? It was so even with *the Holy Apostles* when our Lord was with them. Our Lord said *to them*: "*A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me,*" and "*because I go to the Father.*" They could not understand His words, and enquired among themselves as to His meaning. He said the words *before* he suffered, "*a little while.*" It passed. He left them then, and they saw him not. And then another "*little while,*" and the broken bonds of death yielded Him up, and the conquered grave restored the "*strong and mighty,*" whom it could not hold, and the disciples who had so loved Him, and had so sorrowed for His absence, *saw* Him again. And then perhaps they thought *His lately-spoken words* were *plain* and that they understood them now. If so, it only proves how *darkly*, as through a clouded

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

glass, man sees while here the mysterious ways of God. As they had *failed to understand His former words about His sufferings and death, "how it behoved Christ to suffer,"* so did they *little know how soon—* after what a little while—*it behoved Him also to enter into His glory.* Yet when He had spoken of the little while, He had said also, "*because I go to the Father.*" He had spoken of His return to heaven, whence He declared that He had come. When *Mary* would have embraced Him after His resurrection, He had said to her: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren and say unto them, *I ascend* unto my Father and your Father, unto My God and your God." And yet for forty days He had tarried among them, and talked with them, appearing and disappearing in a wondrous way, speaking to them of the things concerning His holy church, that Kingdom of God which He had set up so lately on the earth, and which was to endure as long as the world endureth.

And then, as it were suddenly, the time was come. This other "*little while*" was past. The whole of His work on earth was finished. "*By many infallible proofs*" He had established the great fact which was to establish all other facts concerning Him—the fact of *His resurrection* from the dead. And now the glorious *resurrection* is followed by the wonderful *ascension*. The Lord and the Eleven tread the *path* they have so often *trod before* to Bethany. Out by the eastern gateway from the holy city, as we may trace it on the map. Down the steep pathway from the city walls, over the brook Cedron, and past the

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

garden where the agony was borne, and the bloody sweat-drops had witnessed to the awful, but *final*, struggle with the powers of hell. And as they thus walked with their beloved Lord, little supposing it was for the last time on earth, "*He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up to heaven.*"

Blessing, He left them, and awestruck they gazed up to Heaven after Him. "*He maketh the clouds His chariot, He walketh upon the wings of the wind*" (Ps. civ: 3). The ministering *angels* are around Him, and in His honour made the triumphant claim which we find in the *twenty-fourth psalm*—that the everlasting gates and doors, barred up (since Adam's fall) against the human race, should be thrown open now. "*Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.*" But *who*—this seems the care of watchful janitors therein—who makes this *bold demand*? Who, coming from the ruined world, the abode of misery and sin? What *man* ventures to ask admission into this holy place? *Who is the King of Glory* that you speak of? And then, there comes the answer from the attendant angels—joyful, triumphant, bold, and all-sufficient—"*It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle.*" The Lord "*strong*" to endure and suffer, "*mighty*" to save. Even the Lord Jesus Christ "*mighty in battle*" against sin, and death, and hell. "*Mighty*" to beat down Satan, and to abolish death and to loosen the chains of hell. He is the King of Glory.

So much for the *historical fact* which the church

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

records to-day (*ascension day*). It was the *crowning act* of the marvellous *human life* that had been lived out here by Almighty God the Son. He was received into the *glory* that He had with Almighty God the Father before the worlds were made.

The clouds receive Him out of our sight, and we cannot follow Him *now*, but, blessed be His holy name for the assurance, we shall *follow him hereafter*. In like manner as the Eleven saw Him go into the heavens we, *all of us*, shall see Him come again to lead the hosts of His redeemed up with Him through the everlasting gates. For He is gone, He says, to *prepare a place for us* in the mansions of His Father's house, and He will come again to receive us to Himself, that *where He is*, even there also may His *servants* be. We only read about *our Lord's* ascension now. But then the cloud shall receive *us* even as it received *Him*. "We shall be caught up *in the clouds* to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. iv: 17). This is the *doctrine* of ascension day which specially *concerns* us. But whom may we venture to include in that word "*we*"? The *question* asked is answered in the Psalm from which our text is taken. "*Who,*" says the psalmist, "*shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rise up in His holy place?*" And he answers, "*Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.*" That answer shows how wisely and well the church has done in connecting *that psalm* with the worship of *ascension day*, for *that* can only refer directly to *our Lord Himself*, none but the *Holy One of God* hath the "*clean hands*" and the "*pure heart*" that could deserve and win admission into the holy place. But, for all that,

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

I venture to say "*we*"—venture to tell you that *for us* the gates of heaven shall lift up their heads, and the everlasting doors shall be lift up—because *not* for the Lord, only *as the King of Glory*, was the call made to open wide or to lift up the gates, but for Him *as the Lord of hosts*. "*The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.*" And *who* are the *hosts* if not *the hosts of the redeemed*? I venture to say "*we*," when speaking of the great triumphant and jubilant ascension yet to come, because *not for Himself* did our Redeemer ever leave His throne on high, but *for us all*. Why did He come down here to live and labour, to suffer and to die, but that He had taken upon Him *to deliver man and open the kingdom of heaven unto all believers*? Why but that, *in Him*, all who *believe* should be held *clean and pure*? And that through Him they should be even counted worthy of admission into His holy place? "*All who believe in Him,*" "*the blessed company of all faithful people*"—and that means all who, being very *members* incorporate in the mystical body of Christ's Son, *continue*, by His grace, in that holy fellowship, endeavouring humbly to do all such good works as He hath prepared for them to walk in. To all such, see how the scripture speaks in words of holy cheer about our Lord's return to make His second and *great* ascension with all the *hosts* of which *He is the Lord*—"This same *Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as ye have seen Him go.*" And thenceforth the *Apostles* write to the church about it in words like these. *Saint Paul* bids the faithful "look for the blessed *hope* and the glorious *appearing* of the great God and our Saviour *Jesus Christ*" (Titus

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

ii: 13), and he prays God to "direct their hearts unto the *patient waiting for Christ*" (II Thess. iii: 5). *Saint James* exhorts them to be patient, as the *husbandman* waiting for the *fruits of earth*, for the *coming of the Lord* draweth nigh (Jas. v: 7-8). *Saint John* puts the hope before them in another way, and says: "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is* (I John iii: 2).

Thus are we taught that we may indeed look forward with great *joy and hope*, not only to the rest and peace of *paradise*, the happy intermediate state of the blessed who die in the Lord, but to a better and *more triumphant time*—to a *great day* when we shall be raised with our bodies in our Redeemer's likeness to see Him as He is. To see Him as He shall be with all His hosts around Him—to meet Him in the air—to ascend with Him to His throne of glory, and to fulfil the very words of another *ascension psalm* (Ps. xlvii). "*God has gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trump. O sing praises, sing praises unto our God. O sing praises, sing praises unto our King.*"

Yes, brethren, we are taught on this day of the ascension of our blessed Lord, to look forward to that *glorious day* when once again the *heavenly doors* and *everlasting gates* will be *lift up* for the King of Glory to come in. And the gates will be thrown wide open then, for there will be a *mighty train* to enter. These gates shall not be *shut* at all (Rev. xxi: 24-26), for the *nations of them which are saved*, the glory and honour

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

of the nations, the whole blessed company of the redeemed, all who have kept the faith, the generation of them that have sought the Saviour, even of them which have sought His face, shall now *enter with Him* into His courts of glory, shall now *rise up with Him* in His holy place.

*We know not, ah, we know not,
What joys await us there;
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.*

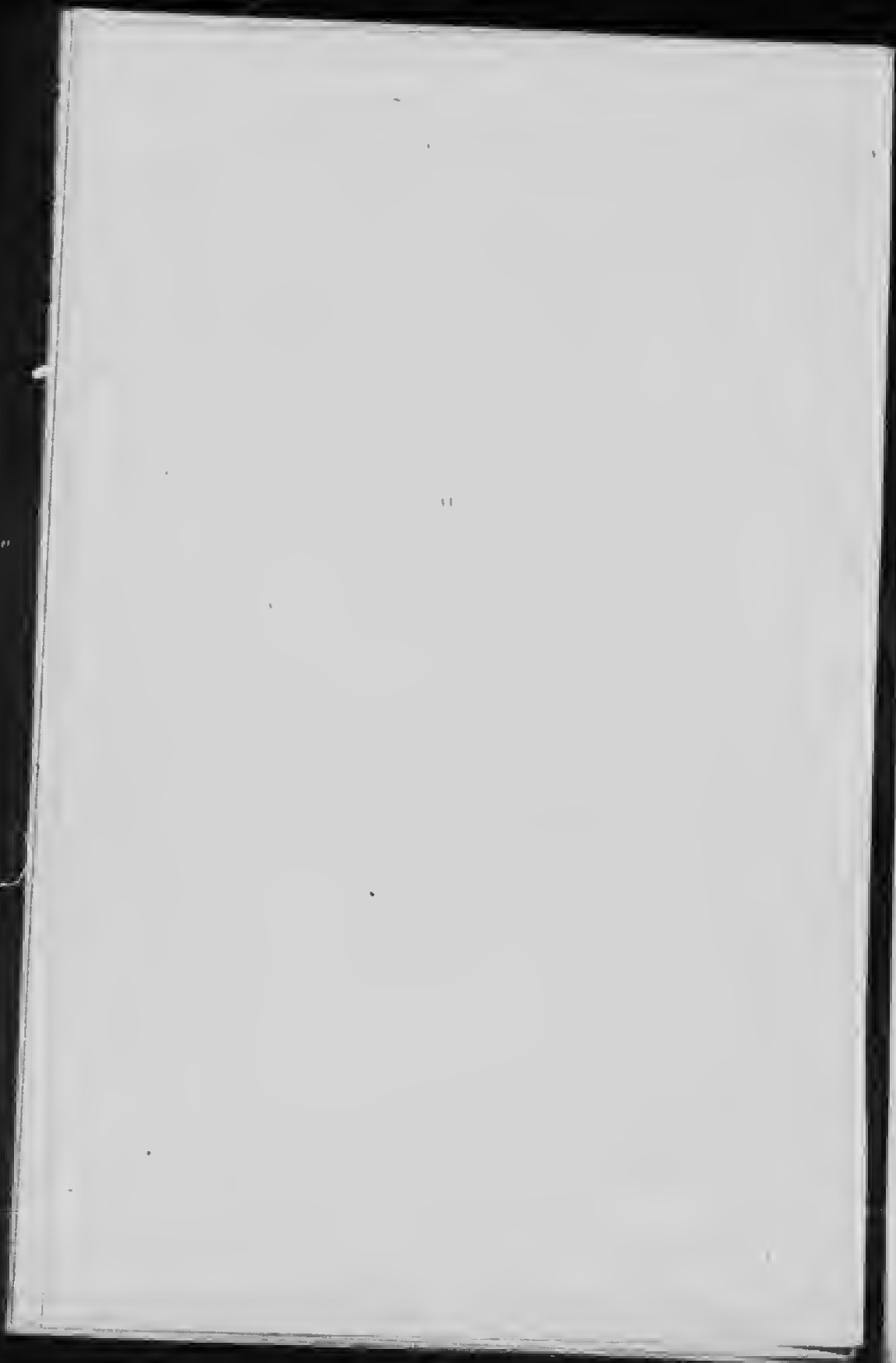
We only know that the *joy* and the *glory* are something far *higher* and far *better* than the *highest and best conceptions* of our minds. Heavenly magnificence can be only dimly pictured to us in poor human language. The "*everlasting gates*"—"each several gate *one pearl*"; the *street* that we shall tread "*pure gold, and as it were transparent glass.*" We cannot know its glories, cannot understand it *now*, because earth's language is inadequate to the revelation or description of the things of heaven. We can only know—and *this* is all that we need care to know just now—that *through those gates of pearl and along that golden street, and up to the throne of God shall pass the triumphant King of Glory, who is the Lord of Hosts.* And that His *hosts* shall be all those of *every land and every age, and every tongue* who shall have lived and died in Him. And that they shall be like Him then, risen with Him indeed, with bodies new and glorified like His, fit tenements for purified and ransomed souls, and that there shall be the singing of that new song then in which all voices shall be raised:

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

*The song of them that triumph,
The shout of them that feast.*

*And they who with their leader
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clothed in robes of white.*

Let us then see to it that we do keep "*with our Leader,*" the Strong and Mighty One, the Lord mighty in battle, that in His strength and under His command we may most surely "*conquer in the fight,*" and take our *places* in the *mighty host* which will follow Him *through the everlasting gates.* Amen.



APPENDIX

NOTE ON JOHN III: 5

SOME Christians shrink from applying John iii: 5 to Christian baptism. But the church plainly does apply it to baptism, by selecting *this chapter* as the *gospel* for the *baptism of adults*. We should note carefully that the *original words* in St. John's gospel are "*born of water and spirit,*" not "*born of water and of the spirit.*" The *Cambridge Greek Testament* (Rev. A. Plummer's note, p. 102) says of this phrase:—"The outward sign and inward grace of *Christian baptism* are here clearly given, and an unbiassed mind can scarcely avoid seeing this plain fact. . . . Note that *ΕΚ* (the preposition "of") is *not repeated* before *Πνευματος* (spirit), so that the *two factors* are *treated as inseparable*." Much of the teaching of the present day on the "*new birth*" ignores this *inseparable connection* between the *water* and the *spirit*, and either *separates* them or *explains away* the word "*water*." *Bishop Westcott*, in his commentary on St. John's gospel, insists on this *inseparable connection*, and also points out that *water* means *water*. "*All interpretations,*" he says, "*which treat the term 'water' as simply figurative and descriptive of the cleansing power of the Spirit, are essentially defective, as they are also opposed to all ancient tradition.*" It was in support of this explanation of John iii: 5, that *Hooker* delivered his *well-known rule of expositi-*

APPENDIX

tion: "I hold it for a most infallible rule, in exposition of sacred scripture, that where a literal construction will stand the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst." (Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V, chap. lix, par. 2). Many who admit the soundness of Hooker's rule, forget that he wrote it to support the church's teaching of baptism.

[NOTE ON TITUS III: 5

The common mistake of confounding "regeneration" and "conversion" would never happen if only preachers and teachers would reflect that the *new birth*, like the *natural birth*, (simply because it is a *birth*) must be an *unconscious* experience. *Conversion* is *never* an *unconscious* experience, but a *deliberate* turning from a life of sin to a life of grace. The phrase "*washing of regeneration*" is interpreted as applying to baptism by Luther, Calvin, Beza, Jewel, Hooker, Bishop Hall, Barrow, Jeremy Taylor, Beveridge, Mede, John Wesley, Alford, and an army of able expositors. "By water then as a means, the water of baptism we are regenerated and born again," says John Wesley, "whence it is also called the washing of regeneration." The word "regeneration," as Dean Vaughan remarks in his "*Revision of the Liturgy*," is only found twice in the *New Testament*. In Titus iii: 5, it relates to *baptism*, and in the other instance to the *future life*. As Titus iii: 5 relates to this *present* life, the church has always used the word "regeneration" in the sense *there found* and applied it to *baptism*.

