

Christ we can do nothing—that every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning. It is therefore evident that the doctrines of man's free agency, and God's predestination, are both taught in holy Scripture; and instead of attempting to reconcile them by launching into metaphysical disquisitions, we should receive them in humble faith; and in doing so, we shall be emancipated from those terrible doctrines which rashly consign the far greater portion of our race, without any possibility of escape, to eternal misery. The presumption of judging of God's attributes is, in such speculations, carried to its greatest height, and leads to the most revolting inferences; but of the attributes of God, in their extent and manner of operation, we can know nothing, and it is therefore impious to pronounce upon their limits, or to insinuate any incompatibility between the course of events on earth and the Omnipotence, in which they are all comprehended. "Nothing," says Archbishop Tillotson, "can be admitted to be a revelation from God, which plainly contradicts his essential perfections; and consequently, if any one pretends divine revelation for this doctrine, that God hath from all eternity absolutely decreed the eternal ruin of the greatest part of mankind, without any respect to their sins and demerits, I am as certain that this doctrine cannot be of God, as I am certain that God is good and just; for every man has greater assurance that God is good and just, than he can have of any subtle speculation about predestination and the decrees of God." The Christian Church therefore holds and has ever held the two doctrines of man's free agency and God's predestination:—"She comes to man, enslaved as he is to the outward influences of the natural man, and not only brings before him more facts, more knowledge, new relations, higher promises, more awful threats, and a more powerful body of advisers to counteract them; but the Church gives more, she puts into the heart a new principle, or rather a new being, by imparting to it the Holy Spirit, and uniting it to the body of Christ. It is from the Holy Spirit, and this only, that all the real power and spontaneity of man proceeds; it acts as the individual himself, because it is united to himself. It is given secretly and imperceptibly; so that, in an action he cannot discriminate what comes from heaven and what from himself, except from the consciousness of the fact that he is resisting evil. He does not make this resistance, he suffers pain voluntarily, he feels the whole force of the attraction of evil, and yet remains firm against it, and discovers no power but his own which is thus acting; and yet he knows that it is not his own. 'I can do all things,' saith St. Paul, in the full consciousness of his individual personality, 'and yet,' he says, 'not I, but Christ that is in me.' It is after all, God, and God alone, who works within us to will and to do of his good pleasure." Hence we find that, in the Sacrament of Baptism God imparts the Spirit, that in its working constitutes man's free agency, and yet it is God and God alone that works. And thus is solved, through the Church, the problem,—how to create an agent possessed of the consciousness of individual independence, and yet to reconcile that independence with the absolute universal Sovereignty of the Supreme Creator. "Looking forward, man feels that he is free; looking back, that he has been entirely moulded by the hands of God." Of infinite value, then, are the graces and gifts of baptism; and yet through presumption the Dissenter rejects them, and perils his own salvation. There are several other points of difference between the Church and Dissenters, to which it might be useful to call your attention, but I shall only allude to one or two.

First, it is to be remarked that in their public worship, the Dissenters, as well as the Romanists, depreciate the Holy Scriptures. The latter are afraid lest the people should discover their false doctrines, which would naturally follow the public reading of the word of God, pure and unadulterated, in their daily services. They likewise consider the Scriptures too obscure to be placed in the hands of the people, and by no means necessary, as they believe the Church to be the sole depository and dispenser of the truth, and her explanations of equal authority with Scripture itself. The Dissenters do not withhold the Bible from their people, but it is seldom or ever read to any extent in their public worship; a single

text or passage, upon which their minister finds a long discourse, is all that they commonly hear; and were they not to read the Scriptures at home, they would remain, from the little they learn in their Churches of the sacred record, as ignorant as the heathen.

It were easy to dwell upon the many great evils of such a procedure, but we shall only mention one, to which it naturally gives rise, namely, the preference of the Sermon to the neglect of all the other parts of the public worship of God.—Hence, in the opinion of many Dissenters, prayer, praise, the reading of the Scriptures, and the holy Sacraments, are made to occupy a lower position than preaching, and it is to be feared that a great majority of the Dissenters have no other conception of public worship than that of hearing a sermon, preceded by a tedious extempore prayer. Their leading tenet is, that preaching is the great engine for the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the conversion of the souls of men. Yet, if we refer to the Acts of the Apostles, we find that prayer and the blessed sacraments occupied the position which Dissenters give to preaching. The opinion of our Reformers, in this matter, appears from the fact, that they gave no directions, even on Sundays, for more than one sermon to the same congregation. Their object was to employ, in due proportion, all the means of grace, and to establish a praying, a reading, a sacramental, and a preaching Church. The Dissenters, on the other hand, seem to have little regard for any part of public worship except the sermon; and this they value in proportion to the power employed in the delivery. Eloquence of speech, warmth of manner, are, in their estimation, the chief means of promoting the Gospel, forgetting that Moses was slow of speech, and the rebellious Corinthians considered St. Paul's bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible. They look to the human instrument,—to man, rather than to God. But in thus contending earnestly for the Faith, as it was delivered to the Saints, we must proceed with all possible meekness and love, remembering that the Christian armour contains only one offensive weapon,—the Sword of the Spirit. And we shall best prove ourselves the faithful soldiers of Christ, and the protectors of his flock, by carrying out all the means of grace, in their relative and due proportions, to our respective congregations, so shall they be secure against every assailant. In what these means of grace consist you are all well conversant, and therefore I shall not speak of them on the present occasion at any length.

Let us then, my brethren, take up the Book of Common Prayer, and ask our own hearts what it proposes for our guidance and direction, in bringing home the various means of grace to the hearts and understandings of our people. The first thing commanded, is the use of the Morning and Evening Prayer daily throughout the year. Now this implies that our Churches should be open twice every day, and accordingly portions of the Old and New Testament are allotted for each service, so that the most part of the Bible is to be read every year once, the New Testament three times, and the Psalms once every month. We have reason to believe that for some time after the Reformation this order was regularly observed, and in large towns, even within the memory of many still living, some Churches were daily open; and blessed be God, the practice is again gradually reviving.—In this Diocese I hope to see, in a short time, some of our Churches open daily in our rising towns, whenever the number of the Clergy will admit of the regular performance of the duty; and, in country places, it should remind us of our Missionary character, and that we ought to have appointments on week-days with our people, in different parts of our several Missions, as often as our strength will admit. Our Church is a prayerful Church, and not to follow her direction, as far as in us lies, is to rebel against her lawful authority, and rob our people of their just inheritance, for the faithful exercise of daily prayer will doubtless bring down great blessings upon the land. Again, we find a plain order to celebrate Baptism during the service. This is to begin the work of grace at once, for every child has an immortal soul, and will inevitably become as an angel of heaven, or the sinful and wretched companion of evil spirits to all eternity. In baptism the child is made a "member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." And who can tell how soon the seed of vital grace, thus sown, may begin to germinate? Surely the struggles of the Christian child, before he knows that he is struggling for goodness, and gentleness, and obedience, cannot be without grace. He is a member of the

Church, bound up in her spiritual interests; a warrior, enrolled in her armies under the banner of the cross; a partaker in her growth, her benefits, and her prayers. In baptism the child comes into immediate relation with the Apostolic ministry, and through that ministry with the Apostles themselves. He is now one of the flock, whom it is the appointed office of successive pastors to guard and feed. But let it be remembered, that the new birth, or baptismal regeneration, bestowed upon the child in baptism, is far from including spiritual perfection, or any thing decisive, as to the ultimate fate of the baptized. It is a spiritual infancy, with which all the other means of grace are intimately connected. As his faculties expand, and he becomes capable of learning what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he hath made by his sureties, he is brought under the teaching of the Church, through his parents, sponsors, and spiritual pastors. By means of the Catechism he is taught his duty to God and man, and instructed in the great mysteries of the Christian faith. He is made to study and to love God's word, and thus the grace of illumination dawns in his heart. The Church, in her exhortations to parents and sponsors to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, does all she can to habituate the child to pray for grace, the great object of all Christian prayer. Night and morning ought the child to kneel in the presence of its earthly parents before Him who is invisible. As he advances in years, he is permitted to partake in the privilege of domestic worship, and, as the greatest privilege of all, he is taken to the consecrated house of God; and there, amidst holy associations, edifying forms, the memorials of worshippers, once, like himself, "babes in Christ," but now gone to their rest, and surrounded by his spiritual kindred, dead and living, he learns to join in the holy and affecting services which the Church in her Book of Common Prayer provides. And in this manner the spirit of grace and supplication is gradually, by God's aid and blessing, poured into his heart. But the Book of Common Prayer provides still greater privileges for the child of grace. When duly prepared, by catechetical teaching, he is, at the proper age, brought to the Bishop to be confirmed. The vows which were made in his name, he now solemnly, and in the presence of God and of the congregation, takes upon himself. This responsibility, which had hitherto been in proportion to his faculties and his knowledge, is henceforth complete; he is now, for all spiritual purposes, of full age; and the Bishop, after the example of the Apostles, lays his hands upon him, and prays over him, to the intent that God may strengthen him with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in him His manifold gifts of grace. To crown all, the Prayer Book provides a holy office, inviting "such as are religiously and devoutly disposed to the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ;" and there coming in faith and charity, and a thankful remembrance of Christ's death, he and indeed receives His Body and Blood. Furthermore, though the Prayer Book gives no special directions for the preaching of the word, it is the best possible text-book to the Minister to supply subjects for addressing his people.—All the facts and doctrines of Christianity are presented in their regular order throughout the ecclesiastical year, so that the Clergyman who carefully follows the Prayer Book must of necessity preach the Gospel in all its fullness, and he who does not follow this order will be found guilty of not preaching the whole counsel of God. There will, in such a case, be narrow views, bigoted exclusiveness, and part only of the message of the Gospel will be delivered. Thus the Church enters, through her services, as set down in the Book of Common Prayer, into every possible relation of human life, pervading and sanctifying all worldly things,—melting and moulding and transforming earth to heaven,—leading our sinful nature to God in infancy,—training our renewed and better state in childhood,—strengthening our youth,—feeding our manhood by her holy mysteries, and preaching her daily warnings of penitence and faith in the words of Holy Scripture,—comforting our old age,—ministering alike to our joys and sorrows, and at length committing our bodies to the grave, in the hope of a blessed resurrection. Such is a slight summary of the ample provision made by the Church in her Book of Common Prayer, for the various services of the sanctuary, and for the dissemination of the Gospel among our people, and which it is our bounden duty to administer.

But we must draw to a close.

And now, my Reverend brethren, after presiding over this extensive Diocese for nearly eight years, I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere regret if I have treated any of you unkindly or with seeming neglect, and also for any instances in which I may have, in any respect, failed in my duty towards you. If I have not consulted, as I should have done, your judgments and feelings in any particular, or have done less justice to the motives of those of whose conduct I have had occasion, in any respect, to disapprove, I desire to acknowledge my error, and to ask your forgiveness, and your prayers, to enable me, in future, more watchfully to discharge the duties of that station to which, in the course of Divine Providence, I have been called. Grant me also your favourable construction of my labours, and your honest confidence, as I freely give mine to you. Without such mutual confidence and charity, the Bishop and his Clergy cannot work together to the glory of God or the edification of his people. In regard to certain diversities of opinion within the Church, so far as they concern the celebration of Divine service, I have already spoken; and with respect to any others of a graver character, I deem it a happy thing for this Diocese that we are entirely free. Some shades of variety in opinion there may and must be in different minds; but, blessed be God, they have never sunk with us into any thing like the bitterness of party-spirit. Let us, my Reverend brethren, preserve this holy pre-eminence. While at peace among ourselves, and sincerely devoted to the Church, we possess a bond of union that will make us invincible in our spiritual warfare with our enemies, whether from without or from within. Holding this bond, we shall proceed in harmony and love as brethren, with the same mind and singleness of heart. It will lead us to the conscientious discharge of our duty to God and his Church, by rightly dividing the word to our people, in obedience to her pure and authorised teaching; and in doing this with one heart and one soul, we shall feel no sympathy with Romanism on the one hand, which suffocates the truth under a mass of falsehood and corruption, or with Dissent on the other, which not only takes from the truth, but which, in active bitterness against us, we have ever found the more implacable enemy of the two.

Standing in the middle between them, we ought neither to be grieved nor surprised at their calumnies and revilings, or that they should, in their extreme ignorance, attribute to us unsound opinions in theology, which all of us abhor; of such accusations your consciences will acquit you, and I know them to be untrue. On me they fall lightly, for my opinions were settled long before the movements which have been for some years disturbing the Church had any existence. They have ever been in accordance with the formularies of the Church, and have become so much part of myself, that I should now find it impossible to speak or even to think differently from what she teaches. But dismissing these miserable elements of earth, let us look to ourselves, and remember that we have a great and important work before us,—the evangelizing of this vast country. Let us not then fall out by the way. We have already too many enemies and opposers to admit of division in our own household. Enemies numerous and powerful, and whom we can only expect to combat with success, by using the weapons furnished by the Church in the true spirit of unity and concord. We are all servants of the same Master; let us stand together in faithfulness of purpose and in steadiness of action. Have we not to contend with infidelity and worldliness on the one hand, and all the Protean forms of Dissent on the other? Is it not, then, our duty to rise above difficulties, and exert ourselves to the utmost in promoting the advancement of the Church of God in this Diocese; that Church which is not human in her constitution, but heavenly, and neither takes her rise from earthly powers, nor depends upon them for her continuance. Empires and kingdoms fall; the earth itself shall pass away; but the Church of the Living God shall continue for ever. Her name—her offices—her services—her laws—her powers—her spiritual endowments—are for eternity. How awful the responsibility which attaches to us, her Ministers! The worship we offer is the commencement of the worship of eternity, and our ministrations the beginning of services which are to continue for evermore.

And now unto God's gracious mercy and protection I commit you all, both Ministers and people. May the Lord bless you, and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you, and give you peace, both now and evermore. Amen.

* Christian Morals, by Rev. W. Sewell, M. A. 1841. An excellent book. Page 279 & 280, &c.