

CHARLES KINGSLEY

THE GOSPEL OF THE
PENTATEUCH: A SET OF
PARISH SERMONS

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE GOSPEL OF THE PENTATEUCH TO THE REV. CANON STANLEY

My Dear Stanley,

I dedicate these Sermons to you, not that I may make you responsible for any doctrine or statement contained in them, but as the simplest method of telling you how much they owe to your book on the Jewish Church, and of expressing my deep gratitude to you for publishing that book at such a time as this.

It has given to me (and I doubt not to many other clergymen) a fresh confidence and energy in preaching to my people the Gospel of the Old Testament as the same with that of the New; and without it, many of these Sermons would have been very different from, and I am certain very inferior to, what they are now, by the help of your admirable book.

Brought up, like all Cambridge men of the last generation, upon Paley's *Evidences*, I had accepted as a matter of course, and as the authoritative teaching of my University, Paley's opinions as to the limits of Biblical criticism,¹ quoted at large in Dean Milman's noble preface to his last edition of the *History of the Jews*; and especially that great dictum of his, 'that it is an unwarrantable, as well as unsafe rule to lay down concerning the Jewish history, that which was never laid down concerning any other, that either every particular of it must be true, or the whole false.'

I do not quote the rest of the passage; first, because you, I doubt not, know it as well as I; and next, in order that if any one shall read these lines who has not read Paley's *Evidences*, he may be stirred up to look the passage out for himself, and so become acquainted with a great book and a great mind.

A reverent and rational liberty in criticism (within the limits of orthodoxy) is, I have always supposed, the right of every Cambridge man; and I was therefore the more shocked, for the sake of free thought in my University, at the appearance of a book which claimed and exercised a licence in such questions, which I must (after careful study of it) call anything but rational and reverent. Of the orthodoxy of the book it is not, of course, a private clergyman's place to judge. That book seemed dangerous to the University of Cambridge itself, because it was likely to stir up from without attempts to abridge her ancient liberty of

¹ *Evidences*, Part III. Cap. iii.

thought; but it seemed still more dangerous to the hundreds of thousands without the University, who, being no scholars, must take on trust the historic truth of the Bible.

For I found that book, if not always read, yet still talked and thought of on every side, among persons whom I should have fancied careless of its subject, and even ignorant of its existence, but to whom I was personally bound to give some answer as to the book and its worth. It was making many unsettled and unhappy; it was (even worse) pandering to the cynicism and frivolity of many who were already too cynical and frivolous; and, much as I shrank from descending into the arena of religious controversy, I felt bound to say a few plain words on it, at least to my own parishioners.

But how to do so, without putting into their heads thoughts which need be in no man's head, and perhaps shaking the very faith which I was trying to build up, was difficult to me, and I think would have been impossible to me, but for the opportune appearance of your admirable book.

I could not but see that the book to which I have alluded, like most other modern books on Biblical criticism, was altogether negative; was possessed too often by that fanaticism of disbelief which is just as dangerous as the fanaticism of belief; was picking the body of the Scripture to pieces so earnestly, that it seemed to forget that Scripture had a spirit as well as a body; or, if it confessed that it had a spirit, asserting that spirit to be one utterly different from the spirit which the Scripture asserts that

it possesses.

For the Scripture asserts that those who wrote it were moved by the Spirit of God; that it is a record of God's dealings with men, which certain men were inspired to perceive and to write down: whereas the tendency of modern criticism is, without doubt, to assert that Scripture is inspired by the spirit of man; that it contains the thoughts and discoveries of men concerning God, which they wrote down without the inspiration of God; which difference seems to me (and I hope to others) utterly infinite and incalculable, and to involve the question of the whole character, honour, and glory of God.

There is, without a doubt, something in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, quite different in kind, as well as in degree, from the sacred books of any other people: an unique element, which has had an unique effect upon the human heart, life and civilization. This remains, after all possible deductions for 'ignorance of physical science,' 'errors in numbers and chronology,' 'interpolations' 'mistakes of transcribers' and so forth, whereof we have read of late a great deal too much, and ought to care for them and for their existence, or non-existence, simply nothing at all; because, granting them all—though the greater part of them I do not grant, as far as I can trust my critical faculty—there remains that unique element, beside which all these accidents are but as the spots on the sun compared to the great glory of his life-giving light. The unique element is there; and I cannot but still believe, after much thought, that it

—the powerful and working element, the inspired and Divine element which has converted and still converts millions of souls—is just that which Christendom in all ages has held it to be: the account of certain ‘noble acts’ of God’s, and not of certain noble thoughts of man—in a word, not merely the moral, but the historic element; and that, therefore, the value of the Bible teaching depends on the truth of the Bible story. That is my belief. Any criticism which tries to rob me of that I shall look at fairly, but very severely indeed.

If all that a man wants is a ‘religion,’ he ought to be able to make a very pretty one for himself, and a fresh one as often as he is tired of the old. But the heart and soul of man wants more than that, as it is written, ‘My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God.’ Those whom I have to teach want a living God, who cares for men, works for men, teaches men, punishes men, forgives men, saves men from their sins; and Him I have found in the Bible, and nowhere else, save in the facts of life which the Bible alone interprets.

In the power of man to find out God I will never believe. The ‘religious sentiment,’ or ‘God-consciousness,’ so much talked of now-a-days, seems to me (as I believe it will to all practical common-sense Englishmen), a faculty not to be depended on; as fallible and corrupt as any other part of human nature; apt (to judge from history) to develop itself into ugly forms, not only without a revelation from God, but too often in spite of one—into polytheisms, idolatries, witchcrafts, Buddhist

asceticisms, Phœnician Moloch-sacrifices, Popish inquisitions, American spirit-rappings, and what not. The hearts and minds of the sick, the poor, the sorrowing, the truly human, all demand a living God, who has revealed himself in living acts; a God who has taught mankind by facts, not left them to discover him by theories and sentiments; a Judge, a Father, a Saviour, and an Inspirer; in a word, their hearts and minds demand the historic truth of the Bible—of the Old Testament no less than of the New.

What I needed therefore, for my guidance, was a book which should believe and confess all this, without condemning or ignoring free criticism and its results; which should make use of that criticism not to destroy but to build up; which employed a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament history, the manners of the Jews, the localities of the sacred events, to teach men not what might not be in the Bible, but what was certainly therein; which dealt with the Bible after the only fair and trustful method; that is, to consider it at first according to the theory which it sets forth concerning itself, before trying quite another theory of the commentator's own invention; and which combined with a courageous determination to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, that Christian spirit of trust, reverence and piety, without which all intellectual acuteness is but blindness and folly.

All this, and more, I found in your book, enforced with a genius which needs no poor praise of mine; and I hailed its appearance at such a crisis as a happy Providence, certain that

it would be, what I now know by experience it has been, a balm to many a wounded spirit, and a check to many a wandering intellect, inclined, in the rashness of youth, to throw away the truth it already had, for the sake of theories which it hoped that it might possibly verify hereafter.

With your book in my hand, I have tried to write a few plain Sermons, telling plain people what they will find in the Pentateuch, in spite of all present doubts, as their fathers found it before them, and as (I trust) their children will find it after them, when all this present whirlwind of controversy has past,

‘As dust that lightly rises up,
And is lightly laid again.’

I have told them that they will find in the Bible, and in no other ancient book, that living working God, whom their reason and conscience demand; and that they will find that he is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. I have not apologised for or explained away the so-called ‘Anthropomorphism’ of the Old Testament. On the contrary, I have frankly accepted it, and even gloried in it as an integral, and I believe invaluable element of Scripture. I have deliberately ignored many questions of great interest and difficulty, because I had no satisfactory solution of them to offer; but I have said at the same time that those questions were altogether unimportant, compared with those salient and fundamental points of the Bible history on which I

was preaching. And therefore I have dared to bid my people relinquish Biblical criticism to those who have time for it; and to say of it with me, as Abraham of the planets, ‘O my people, I am clear of all these things! I turn myself to him who made heaven and earth.’

I do not wish, believe me, to make you responsible for any statement or opinion of mine. I am painfully conscious, on reviewing for the Press Sermons which would never have been published save by special request, how imperfect, poor, and weak they seem to me—how much worse, then, they will appear to other people; how much more may be said which I have not the wit to say! But the Bible can take care of itself, I presume, without my help. All I can do is, to speak what I think, as far as I see my way; to record the obligation toward you under which I, with thousands more, now lie; and to express my hope that we shall be always found together fellow-workers in the cause of Truth, and that to you and in you may be fulfilled those noble and tender words, in which you have spoken of Samuel, and of those who work in Samuel’s spirit:

‘In later times, even in our own, many names spring to our recollection of those who have trodden or (in different degrees, some known, and some unknown) are treading the same thankless path in the Church of Germany, in the Church of France, in the Church of Russia, in the Church of England.

Wherever they are, and whosoever they may be, and howsoever they may be neglected or assailed, or despised, they, like their

great prototype and likeness in the Jewish Church, are the silent healers who bind up the wounds of their age in spite of itself; they are the good physicians who bind together the dislocated bones of a disjointed time; they are the reconcilers who turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, or of the fathers to the children. They have but little praise and reward from the partisans who are loud in indiscriminate censure and applause.

But, like Samuel, they have a far higher reward, in the Davids who are silently strengthened and nurtured by them in Naioth of Ramah—in the glories of a new age which shall be ushered in peacefully and happily after they have been laid in the grave.²

That such, my dear Stanley, may be your work and your destiny, is the earnest hope of

Yours affectionately,

C. KINGSLEY.

EVERSLEY RECTORY,

July 1, 1863.

² *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, Lect. xviii. p. 401.

SERMON I. GOD IN CHRIST

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS i. I. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

We have begun this Sunday to read the book of Genesis. I trust that you will listen to it as you ought—with peculiar respect and awe, as the oldest part of the Bible, and therefore the oldest of all known works—the earliest human thought which has been handed down to us.

And what is the first written thought which has been handed down to us by the Providence of Almighty God?

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’

How many other things, how many hundred other things, men might have thought fit to write down for those who should come after; and say—This is the first knowledge which a man should have; this is the root of all wisdom, all power, all wealth.

But God inspired Moses and the Prophets to write as they have written. They were not to tell men that the first thing to be learnt was how to be rich; nor how to be strong; nor even how to be happy; but that the first thing to be learnt was that God created the heaven and the earth.

And why first?

Because the first question which man asks—the question which shows he is a man and not a brute—always has been, and

always will be—Where am I? How did I get into this world; and how did this world get here likewise? And if man takes up with a wrong answer to that question, then the man himself is certain to go wrong in all manner of ways. For a lie can never do anything but harm, or breed anything but harm; and lies do breed, as fast as the blight on the trees, or the smut on the corn: only being not according to nature, or the laws of God, they do not breed as natural things do, after their kind: but, belonging to chaos, the kingdom of disorder and misrule, they breed fresh lies unlike themselves, of all strange and unexpected shapes; so that when a man takes up with one lie, there is no saying what other lie he may not take up with beside.

Wherefore the first thing man has to learn is truth concerning the first human question, Where am I? How did I come here; and how did this world come here? To which the Bible answers in its first line—

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’

How God created, the Bible does not tell us. Whether he created (as doubtless he could have done if he chose) this world suddenly out of nothing, full grown and complete; or whether he created it (as he creates you and me, and all living and growing things now) out of things which had been before it—that the Bible does not tell us.

Perhaps if it had told us, it would have drawn away our minds

to think of natural things, and what we now call science, instead of keeping our minds fixed, as it now does, on spiritual things, and above all on the Spirit of all spirits; Him of whom it is written, 'God is a Spirit'

For the Bible is simply the revelation, or unveiling of God. It is not a book of natural science. It is not merely a book of holy and virtuous precepts. It is not merely a book wherein we may find a scheme of salvation for our souls. It is the book of the revelation, or unveiling of the Lord God, Jesus Christ; what he was, what he is, and what he will be for ever.

Of Jesus Christ? How is he revealed in the text, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth?'

Thus:—If you look at the first chapter of Genesis and the beginning of the second, you will see that God is called therein by a different name from what he is called afterwards. He is called God, Elohim, The High or Mighty One or Ones. After that he is called the Lord God, Jehovah Elohim, which means properly, The High or Mighty I Am, or Jehovah, a word which I will explain to you afterwards. That word is generally translated in our Bible, as it was in the Greek, 'The Lord;' because the later Jews had such a deep reverence for the name Jehovah, that they did not like to write it or speak it: but called God simply Adonai, the Lord.

So that we have three names for God in the Old Testament.

First El, or Elohim, the Mighty One: by which, so Moses says, God was known to the Jews before his time, and which sets forth

God's power and majesty—the first thing of which men would think in thinking of God.

Next Jehovah. The I Am, the Eternal, and Self-existent Being, by which name God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush—a deeper and wider name than the former.

And lastly, Adonai, the Lord, the living Ruler and Master of the world and men, by which he revealed himself to the later Jews, and at last to all mankind in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I need not to trouble your mind or my own with arguments as to how these three different names got into the Bible.

That is a matter of criticism, of scholarship, with which you have nothing to do: and you may thank God that you have not, in such days as these. Your business is, not how the names got there, which is a matter of criticism, but why they have been left there by the providence of God, which is a matter of simple religion; and you may thank God, I say again, that it is so. For scholarship is Martha's part, which must be done, and yet which cumbers a man with much serving: but simple heart religion is the better part which Mary chose; and of which the Lord has said, that it shall not be taken from her, nor from those who, like her, sit humbly at the feet of the Lord, and hear his voice, without troubling their souls with questions of words, and endless genealogies, which eat out the hearts of men.

Therefore all I shall say about the matter is that the first

chapter of Genesis, and the first three verses of the second, may be the writing of a prophet older than Moses, because they call God Elohim, which was his name before Moses' time; and that Moses may have used them, and worked them into a book of Genesis; while he, in the part which he wrote himself, called God at first by the name Jehovah Elohim, The Lord God, in order to show that Jehovah and El were the same God, and not two different ones; and after he had made the Jews understand that, went on to call God simply Jehovah, and to use the two names, as they are used through the rest of the Old Testament, interchangeably: as we say sometimes God, sometimes the Lord, sometimes the Deity, and so forth; meaning of course always the same Being.

That, I think, is the probable and simple account which tallies most exactly with the Bible.

As for the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, having been written by Moses, or at least by far the greater part of them, I cannot see the least reason to doubt it.

The Bible itself does not say so; and therefore it is not a matter of faith, and men may have their own opinions on the matter, without sin or false doctrine. But that Moses wrote part at least of them, our Lord and his Apostles say expressly. The tradition of the Jews (who really ought to know best) has always been that Moses wrote either the whole or the greater part. Moses is by far the most likely man to have written them, of all of whom we read in Scripture. We have not the least proof, and, what

is more, never shall or can have, that he did not write them. And therefore, I advise you to believe, as I do, that the universal tradition of both Jews and Christians is right, when it calls these books, the books of Moses.³

But now no more of these matters: we will think of a matter quite infinitely more important, and that is, *Who* is this God whom the Bible reveals to us, from the very first verse of Genesis?

At least, he is one and the same Being. Whether he be called El, Jehovah, or Adonai, he is the same Lord.

It is the Lord who makes the heaven and the earth, the Lord who puts man in a Paradise, lays on him a commandment, and appears to him in visible shape.

It is the Lord who speaks to Abraham: though Abraham knew him only as El-Shaddai, the Almighty God. It is the Lord who brings the Israelites out of Egypt, who gives them the law on Sinai. It is the Lord who speaks to Samuel, to David, to all the Prophets, and appears to Isaiah, while his glory fills the Temple.

In whatever ‘divers manners’ and ‘many portions,’ as St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he speaks to them, he is the same Being.

³ I must say that all attempts to put a later date on these books seems to me to fail simply from want of evidence. I must say, also, that all attempts to distinguish between ‘Jehovistic’ and ‘Elohistic’ documents (with the exception, perhaps, of the first chapter of Genesis) seem to me to fail likewise; and that the theory of an Elohistic and a Jehovistic sect has received its *reductionem ad absurdum* in a certain recent criticism of the Psalms.

And Psalmists and Prophets are most careful to tell us that he is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles; of all mankind—as indeed, he must be, being Jehovah, the I Am, the one Self-existent and Eternal Being; that from his throne he is watching and judging all the nations upon earth, fashioning the hearts of all, appointing them their bounds, and the times of their habitation, if haply they may seek after him and find him, though he be not far from any one of them; for in him they live and move and have their being.

This is the message of Moses, of the Psalmists and the Prophets, just as much as of St. Paul on Mars' Hill at Athens.

So begins and so ends the Old Testament, revealing throughout The Lord.

And how does the New Testament begin?

By telling us that a Babe was born at Bethlehem, and called Jesus, the Saviour.

But who is this blessed Babe? He, too, is The Lord.

‘A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ And from thence, through the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, the Revelation of St. John, he is the Lord. There is no manner of doubt of it. The Apostles and Evangelists take no trouble to prove it. They take it for granted. They call Jesus Christ by the name by which the Jews had for hundreds of years called the El of Abraham, the Jehovah of Moses. The Babe who is born at Bethlehem, who grows up as other human beings grow, into the man Christ Jesus, is none other than the Lord God who created the universe, who

made a covenant with Abraham, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, who inspired the Prophets, who has been from the beginning governing all the earth.

It is very awful. But you must believe that, or put your Bibles away as a dream—New Testament and Old alike. Not to believe that fully and utterly, is not to believe the Bible at all. For that is what the Bible says, and has been sent into the world to say. It is, from beginning to end, the book of the revelation, or unveiling of Jesus Christ, very God of very God.

But some may say, ‘Why tell us that? Of course we believe it. We should not be Christians if we did not.’

Be it so. I hope it is so. But I think that it is not so easy to believe it as we fancy.

We believe it, I think, more firmly than our forefathers did five hundred years ago, on some points; and therefore we have got rid of many dark and blasphemous superstitions about witches and devils, about the evil of the earth and of our own bodies, of marriage, and of the common duties and bonds of humanity, which tormented them, because they could not believe fully that Jesus Christ had created, and still ruled the world and all therein.

But we are all too apt still to think of Jesus Christ merely as some one who can save our souls when we die, and to forget that he is the Lord, who is and has been always ruling the world and all mankind.

And from this come two bad consequences. People are apt to speak of the Lord Jesus—or at least to admire preachers

who speak of him—as if he belonged to them, and not they to him; and, therefore, to speak of him with an irreverence and a familiarity which they dared not use, if they really believed that this same Jesus, whose name they take in vain, is none other than the Living God himself, their Creator, by whom every blade of grass grows beneath their feet, every planet and star rolls above their heads.

And next—they fancy that the Old Testament speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ only in a few mysterious prophecies—some of which there is reason to suspect they quite misinterpret. They are slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures have spoken of him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write, not in a few scattered texts, but in every line of the Old Testament, from the first of Genesis to the last of Malachi.

And therefore they believe less and less, that Jesus Christ is still the Lord in any real practical sense—not merely the Lord of a few elect or saints, but the Lord of man and of the earth, and of the whole universe. They think of him as a Lord who will come again to judgment—which is true, and awfully true, in the very deepest sense: but they do not think of him—in spite of what he himself and his apostles declared of him—as The Living, Working Lord, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, and not merely over the souls of a few regenerate; as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, of whom St. Paul says, ‘that the mystery of Christ has been hid from the beginning of the world in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.’ * * *

‘That, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth.’ They fill their minds with fancies about the book of Revelation, most of which, there is reason to fear, are little else but fancies: while they overlook what that book really does say, and what is the best news that the world ever heard, that he is the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Therefore they have fears for Christ’s Bible, fears for Christ’s Church, fears for the fate of the world, which they could not have if they would recollect who Christ is, and believe that he is able to take care of his own kingdom and power and glory, better than man can take care of it for him. Surely, surely, faith in the living Lord who rules the world in righteousness is fast dying out among us; and many who call themselves Christians seem to know less of Christ, and of the work which he is carrying on in the world, than did the old Psalmist, who said of him, ‘The Lord shall endure for ever; he hath also prepared his seat for judgment.

For he shall judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment among the people.’ He fashioneth ‘the hearts of all of them, and understandeth all their works.’

Who can say that he believes that, who holds that this world is the devil’s world, and that sinful man and evil spirits are having it all their own way till the day of judgment?

Who can say that he believes that, who falls into pitiable terror at every new discovery of science or of scholarship, for fear it should destroy the Bible and the Christian faith, instead of

believing that all which makes manifest is light, and that all light comes from the Father of lights, by the providence of Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son, who is the light of men, and the inspiration of his Spirit, who leadeth into all truth?

And how, lastly, can those say that they believe that, who will lie, and slander, and have recourse to base intrigues, in order to defend that truth, and that Church, of which the Lord himself has said that he has founded it upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?

But if you believe indeed the message of the Bible, that Jesus Christ is the Lord who made heaven and earth, then it shall be said of you, as it was of St. Peter, ‘Blessed art thou: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.’

Yes. Blessed indeed is he who believes that; who believes that the same person who was born in a stable, had not where to lay his head, went about healing the sick and binding up the broken heart, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven—ascended thither that he might fill all things; and is none other than the Lord of the earth and of men, the Creator, the Teacher, the Saviour, the Guide, the King, the Judge, of all the world, and of all worlds past, present, and to come.

For to him who thus believes shall be fulfilled the promise of his Lord, ‘Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’

He will find rest unto his soul. Rest from that first and last question, of which I said that all men, down to the lowest savage, ask it, simply because they are men, and not beasts. Where am I? How came I here? How came this world here likewise? For he can answer—

‘I am in the kingdom of the Babe of Bethlehem. He put me here. And he put this world here likewise: and that is enough for me. He created all I see or can see—I care little how, provided that HE created it; for then I am sure that it must be very good.

He redeemed me and all mankind, when we were lost, at the price of his most precious blood. He the Lord is King, therefore will I not be moved, though the earth be shaken, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Yea, though the sun were turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, and the stars fell from heaven, and all power and order, all belief and custom of mankind, were turned upside down, yet there would still be One above who rules the world in righteousness, whose eye is on them that fear him and put their trust in his mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to feed them in the time of dearth. Darkness may cover the land for awhile, and gross darkness the people.

But while I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be my light, till the day when he shall say once more, “Let there be light,” and light shall be.’

Yes. To the man who is a good man and true; who has any hearty Christian feeling for his fellow-men, and is not merely a selfish superstitious person, caring for nothing but what he calls

the safety of his own soul; to the man, I say, who has anything of the loving spirit of Christ in him, what question can be more important than this, Is the world well made or ill? Is it well governed or ill? Is it on the whole going right or going wrong?

And what can be more comforting to such a man, than the answer which the Bible gives him at the outset?—

This world is well made, in love and care; for Christ the Lord made it, and behold it was very good.

This world is going right and not wrong, in spite of all appearances to the contrary; for Christ the Lord is King. He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet. He is too strong and too loving to let the world go any way but the right. Parts of it will often go wrong here, and go wrong there.

The sin and ignorance of men will disturb his order, and rebel against his laws; and strange and mad things, terrible and pitiable things will happen, as they have happened ever since the day when the first man disobeyed the commandment of the Lord.

But man cannot conquer the Lord; the Lord will conquer man.

He will teach men by their neighbours' sins. He will teach them by their own sins. He will chastise them by sore judgments. He will make fearful examples of wilful and conceited sinners; and those who seem to escape him in this life, shall not escape him in the life to come. But he is trying for ever every man's work by fire; and against that fire no lie will stand. He will burn up the stubble and chaff, and leave only the pure wheat for the use of future generations. His purpose will stand. His word will never

return to him void, but will prosper always where he sends it. He has made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved either by man or by worse than man. His everlasting laws will take effect in spite of all opposition, and bring the world and man along the path, and to the end, which he purposed for them in the day when God made the heavens and the earth, and in that even greater day, when he said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,' and man arose upright, and knew that he was not as the beasts, and asked who he was, and where? feeling with the hardly opened eyes of his spirit after that Lord from whom he came, and to whom he shall return, as many as have eternal life, in the day when Christ the Lord of life shall have destroyed death, and put all enemies under his feet, and given up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

SERMON II. THE LIKENESS OF GOD

(Trinity Sunday.)

GENESIS i. 26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

This is a hard saying. It is difficult at times to believe it to be true.

If one looks not at what God has made man, but at what man has made himself, one will never believe it to be true.

When one looks at what man has made himself; at the back streets of some of our great cities; at the thousands of poor Germans and Irish across the ocean bribed to kill and to be killed, they know not why; at the abominable wrongs and cruelties going on in Poland at this moment—the cry whereof is going up to the ears of the God of Hosts, and surely not in vain; when one thinks of all the cries which have gone up in all ages from the victims of man's greed, lust, cruelty, tyranny, and shrillest of all from the tortured victims of his superstition and fanaticism, it is difficult to answer the sneer, 'Believe, if you can, that this foolish, unjust, cruel being called man, is made in the likeness of God. Man was never made in the image of God at all. He is only a cunninger sort of animal, for better for worse—and for worse as often as for better.'

Another says, not quite that. Man was in the likeness of God once, but he lost that by Adam's fall, and now is only an animal with an immortal soul in him, to be lost or saved.

There is more truth in that latter notion than in the former: but if it be quite right; if we did lose the likeness of God at Adam's fall, how comes the Bible never to say so? How comes the Bible never to say one word on what must have been the most important thing which ever happened to mankind before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

And how comes it also that the New Testament says distinctly that man is still made in the likeness of God? For St. Paul speaks of man as 'the likeness and glory of God.' And St. James says of the tongue, 'Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith' (to our shame) 'curse we men, which are made in the likeness of God.'

But the great proof that man is made in the image and likeness of God is the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; for if human nature had been, as some think, something utterly brutish and devilish, and utterly unlike God, how could God have become man without ceasing to be God? Christ was man of the substance of his mother. That substance had the same human nature as we have. Then if that human nature be evil, what follows?

Something which I shall not utter, for it is blasphemy. Christ has taken the manhood into God. Then if manhood be evil, what follows again? Something more which I shall not utter, for it is blasphemy.

But man is made in the image of God; and therefore God, in whose image he is made, could take on himself his own image and likeness, and become perfect man, without ceasing to be perfect God.

Therefore, my friends, it is a comfortable and wholesome doctrine, that man is made in the image of God, and one for which we must thank the Bible. For it is the Bible which has revealed that truth to us, in its very beginning and outset, that we might have, from the first, clear and sound notions concerning man and God. The Bible, I say; for the sacred books of the heathen say, most of them, nothing thereof.

Man has, in all ages, been tempted, when he looks at his own wickedness and folly, not only to despise himself—which he has good reason enough to do—but to despise his own human nature, and to cry to God, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’ He has cursed his own human nature. He has said, ‘Surely man is most miserable of all the beasts of the field.’ He has said, ‘I must get rid of my human nature—I must give up wife, family, human life of all kinds, I must go into the deserts and the forests, and there try to forget that I am a man, and become a mere spirit or angel.’

So said the Buddhists of Asia, the deepest thinkers concerning man and God of all the heathens, and so have many said since their time. But so does the Bible not say. It starts by telling us that man is made in God’s likeness, and that therefore his human nature is originally and in itself not a bad, but a perfectly good thing. All that has to be done to it is to be cured of its diseases;

and the Bible declares that it can be cured. Howsoever man may have fallen, he may rise. Howsoever the likeness may be blotted and corrupted, it can be cleansed and renewed. Howsoever it may be perverted and turned right round and away from God and goodness to selfishness and evil, it can be converted, and turned back again to God. Howsoever utterly far gone man may be from original righteousness, still to original righteousness he can return, by the grace of baptism and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. And what in us is the likeness of God? That is a deep question.

Only one answer will I make to it to-day. Whatever in us is, or is not, the likeness of God, at least the sense of right and wrong is; to know right and wrong. So says the Bible itself: 'Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' Not that he got the likeness of God by his fall—of course not; but that he became aware of his likeness, and that in a very painful and common way—by sinning against it; as St. Paul says in one of his deepest utterances, 'By sin is the knowledge of the law.'

And you may see for yourselves how human nature can have God's likeness in that respect, and yet be utterly fallen and corrupt.

For a man may—and indeed every man does—know good and yet be unable to do it, and know evil, and yet be a slave to it, tied and bound with the chains of his sins till the grace of God release him from them.

To know good and evil, right and wrong—to have a

conscience, a moral sense—that is the likeness of God of which I wish to preach to-day. Because it is through *that* knowledge of good and evil, and through it alone, that we can know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. It is through our moral sense that God speaks to us; through our sense of right and wrong; through that I say, God speaks to us, whether in reproof or encouragement, in wrath or in love; to teach us what he is like, and to teach us what he is not like.

To know God. That is the side on which we must look at this text on Trinity Sunday. If man be made in the image of God, then we may be able to know something at least of God, and of the character of God. If we have the copy, we can guess at least at what the original is like.

From the character, therefore, of every good man, we may guess at something of the character of God. But from the character of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the very brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, we may see perfectly—at least perfectly enough for all our needs in this life, and in the life to come—what is the character of God, who made heaven and earth.

I beseech you to remember this—I beseech you to believe this, with your whole hearts, and minds, and souls, and especially just now.

For there are many abroad now who will tell you, man can know nothing of God.

Answer them: 'If your God be a God of whom I can know

nothing, then he is not my God, the God of the Bible. For he is the God who has said of old, "They shall not teach each man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least unto the greatest." He is the God, who, through Jesus Christ our Lord, accused and blamed the Jews because they did *not* know him, which if they *could not* know him would have been no fault of theirs. Of doctrines, and notions, and systems, it is written, and most truly, "I know in part, and I prophesy in part," and again, "If a man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." But of God it is written, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

But they will say, man is finite and limited, God is infinite and absolute, and how can the finite comprehend the infinite?

Answer: "Those are fine words: I do not understand them; and I do not care to understand them; I do not deny that God is infinite and absolute, though what that means I do not know.

But I find nothing about his being infinite and absolute in the Bible. I find there that he is righteous, just, loving, merciful, and forgiving; and that he is angry too, and that his wrath is a consuming fire, and I know well enough what those words mean, though I do not know what infinite and absolute mean. So that is what I have to think of, for my own sake and the sake of all mankind.'

But, they will say, you must not take these words to the letter; man is so unlike God, and God so unlike man, that God's

attributes must be quite different from man's. When you read of God's love, justice, anger, and so forth, you must not think that they are anything like man's love, man's justice, man's anger; but something quite different, not only in degree, but in kind: so that what might be unjust and cruel in man, would not be so in God.

My dear friends, beware of that doctrine; for out of it have sprung half the fanaticism and superstition which has disgraced and tormented the earth. Beware of ever thinking that a wrong thing would be right if God did it, and not you. And mind, that is flatly contrary to the letter of the Bible. In that grand text where Abraham pleads with God, what does he say? Not, 'Of course if Thou choosest to do it, it must be right,' but 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do RIGHT?' Abraham actually refers the Almighty God to his own law; and asserts an eternal rule of right and wrong common to man and to God, which God will surely never break.

Answer: 'If that doctrine be true, which I will never believe, then the Bible mocks and deceives poor miserable sinful man, instead of teaching him. If God's love does not mean real actual love,—God's anger, actual anger,—God's forgiveness, real forgiveness,—God's justice, real justice,—God's truth, real truth,—God's faithfulness, real faithfulness, what do they mean?

Nothing which I can understand, nothing which I can trust in. How can I trust in a God whom I cannot understand or know? How can I trust in a love or a justice which is not what *I* call love or justice, or anything like them?

‘The saints of old said, *I know* in whom I have believed. And how can I believe in him, if there is nothing in him which I can know; nothing which is like man—nothing, to speak plainly, like Christ, who was perfect man as well as perfect God? If that be so, if man can know nothing really of God, he is indeed most miserable of all the beasts of the field, for I will warrant that he can know nothing really of anything else. And what is left for him, but to remain for this life, and the life to come, in the outer darkness of ignorance and confusion, misrule and misery, wherein is most literally—as one may see in the history of every heathen nation upon earth—wailing and gnashing of teeth.

‘If God’s goodness be not like man’s goodness, there is no rule of morality left, no eternal standard of right and wrong. How can I tell what I ought to do; or what God expects of me; or when I am right and when I am wrong, if you take from me the good, plain, old Bible rule, that man *can* be, and *must* be, like God? The Bible rule is, that everything good in man must be exactly like something good in God, because it is inspired into him by the Spirit of God himself. Our Lord Jesus, who spoke, not to philosophers or Scribes and Pharisees, but to plain human beings, weeping and sorrowing, suffering and sinning, like us,—told them to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect, by being good to the unthankful and the evil. And if man is to be perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect, then his Father in heaven is perfect as man ought to be perfect. He told us to be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful. Then our Father in

heaven is merciful with the same sort of mercy as we ought to show. We are bidden to forgive others, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us: then if our forgiveness is to be like God's, God's forgiveness is like ours. We are to be true, because God is true: just, because God is just. How can we be that, if God's truth is not like what men call truth, God's justice not like what men call justice?

'If I give up that rule of right and wrong, I give up all rules of right and wrong whatsoever.'

No, my friends; if we will seek for God where he may be found, then we shall know God, whom truly to know is everlasting life. But we must not seek for him where he is not, in long words and notions of philosophy spun out of men's brains, and set up as if they were real things, when words and notions they are, and words and notions they will remain. We must look for God where he is to be found, in the character of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who alone has revealed and unveiled God's character, because he is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person.

What Christ's character was we can find in the Holy Gospels; and we can find it too, scattered and in parts, in all the good, the holy, the noble, who have aught of Christ's spirit and likeness in them.

Whatsoever is good and beautiful in any human soul, that is the likeness of Christ. Whatsoever thoughts, words, or deeds are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report;

whatsoever is true virtue, whatsoever is truly worthy of praise, that is the likeness of Christ; the likeness of him who was full of all purity, all tenderness, all mercy, all self-sacrifice, all benevolence, all helpfulness; full of all just and noble indignation also against oppressors and hypocrites who bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, but touched them not themselves with one of their fingers; who kept the key of knowledge, and neither entered in themselves, or let those who were trying enter in either.

The likeness of an all-noble, all-just, all-gracious, all-wise, all-good human being; that is the likeness of Christ, and that, therefore, is the likeness of God who made heaven and earth.

All-good; utterly and perfectly good, in every kind of goodness which we have ever seen, or can ever imagine—that, thank God, is the likeness and character of Almighty God, in whom we live and move, and have our being. To know that he is that—all-good, is to know his character as far as sinful and sorrowful man need know; and is not that to know enough?

The mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity, as set forth so admirably in the Athanasian Creed, is a mystery; and it we cannot *know*—we can only believe it, and take it on trust: but the *character* of the ever-blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—we can know: while by keeping the words of the Athanasian Creed carefully in mind, we may be kept from many grievous and hurtful mistakes which will hinder our knowing it.

We can know that they are all good, for such as the Father is such

is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. That goodness is their one and eternal substance, and majesty, and glory, which we must not divide by fancying with some, that the Father is good in one way and the Son in another. That their goodness is eternal and unchangeable; for they themselves are eternal, and have neither parts nor passions. That their goodness is incomprehensible, that is, cannot be bounded or limited by time or space, or by any notions or doctrines of ours, for they themselves are incomprehensible, and able to do abundantly more than we can ask or think.

This is our God, the God of the Bible, the God of the Church, the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And him we can believe utterly, for we know that he is faithful and true; and we know what *that* means, if there is any truth or faithfulness in us. We know that he is just and righteous; and we know what *that* means, if there is any justice and uprightness in ourselves. Him we can trust utterly; to him we can take all our cares, all our sorrows, all our doubts, all our sins, and pour them out to him, because he is condescending; and we know what *that* means, if there be any condescension and real high-mindedness in ourselves. We can be certain too that he will hear us, just because he is so great, so majestic, so glorious; because his greatness, and majesty, and glory is a moral and spiritual greatness, which shows itself by stooping to the meanest, by listening to the most foolish, helping the weakest, pitying the worst, even while it is bound to punish. Him we can trust, I say,

because him we can know, and can say of him, Let the Infinite and the Absolute mean what they may, I know in whom I have believed—God the Good. Whatever else I cannot understand, I can at least ‘understand the lovingkindness of the Lord;’ however high his dwelling may be, I know that he humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven and earth, to take the simple out of the dust, and the poor out of the mire. Whatever else God may or may not be, I know that gracious is the Lord, and righteous, yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple, for *I* was in misery, and he helped *me*. Whatsoever fine theories or new discoveries I cannot trust, I can trust him, for with him is mercy, and with the Lord is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem his people from all their sins. However dark and ignorant I may be, I can go to him for teaching, and say, Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God; let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.

The land of righteousness. The one true heavenly land, wherein God the righteous dwelleth from eternity to eternity, righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and therefore adorable in all his ways, and glorious in all his works, with a glory even greater than the glory of his Almighty power. On that glory of his goodness we can gaze, though afar off in degree, yet near in kind, while the glory of his wisdom and power is far, far beyond my understanding. Of the intellect of God we can know nothing; but we can know what is better, the heart of God. For *that* glory of goodness we can understand, and *know*, and sympathize with

in our heart of hearts, and say, If *this* be the likeness of God, he is indeed worthy to be worshipped, and had in honour. Praise the Lord, O my soul, for the Lord is *good*. Kings and all people, princes and all judges of the world, young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord, for his name only is excellent, because his name is *good*. Lift up your eyes, and look upon the face of Christ the God-man, crucified for you; and behold therein the truth of all truths, the doctrine of all doctrines, the gospel of all gospels, that the 'Unknown,' and 'Infinite,' and 'Absolute' God, who made the universe, bids you know him, and know this of him, that he is *good*, and that his express image and likeness is—Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord.

SERMON III. THE VOICE OF THE LORD GOD

(Preached also at the Chapel Royal, St. James, Sexagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS iii. 8. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

These words would startle us, if we heard them for the first time. I do not know but that they may startle us now, often as we have heard them, if we think seriously over them. That God should appear to mortal man, and speak with mortal man. It is most wonderful. It is utterly unlike anything that we have ever seen, or that any person on earth has seen, for many hundred years. It is a miracle, in every sense of the word.

When one compares man as he was then, weak and ignorant, and yet seemingly so favoured by God, so near to God, with man as he is now, strong and cunning, spreading over the earth and replenishing it; subduing it with railroads and steamships, with agriculture and science, and all strange and crafty inventions, and all the while never visited by any Divine or heavenly appearance, but seemingly left utterly to himself by God, to go his own way and do his own will upon the earth, one asks with wonder, Can we be Adam's children? Can the God who appeared to Adam, be our God likewise, or has God's plan and rule for teaching man

changed utterly?

No. He is one God; the same God yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His will and purpose, his care and rule over man, have not changed.

That is a matter of faith. Of the faith which the holy Church commands us to have. But it need not be a blind or unreasonable faith. That our God is the God of Adam; that the same Lord God who taught him teaches us likewise, need not be a mere matter of faith: it may be a matter of reason likewise; a thing which seems reasonable to us, and recommends itself to our mind and conscience as true.

Consider, my friends, a babe when it comes into the world. The first thing of which it is aware is its mother's bosom. The first thing which it does, as its eyes and ears are gradually opened to this world, is to cling to its parents. It holds fast by their hand, it will not leave their side. It is afraid to sleep alone, to go alone. To them it looks up for food and help. Of them it asks questions, and tries to learn from them, to copy them, to do what it sees them doing, even in play; and the parents in return lavish care and tenderness on it, and will not let it out of their sight. But after a while, as the child grows, the parents will not let it be so perpetually with them. It must go to school. It must see its parents only very seldom, perhaps it must be away from them weeks or months. And why? Not that the parents love it less: but that it must learn to take care of itself, to act for itself, to think for itself, or it will never grow up to be a rational human being.

And the parting of the child from the parents does not break the bond of love between them. It learns to love them even better. Neither does it break the bond of obedience. The child is away from its parents' eye. But it learns to obey them behind their back; to do their will of its own will; to ask itself, What would my parents wish me to do, were they here? and so learns, if it will think of it, a more true, deep, honourable and spiritual obedience, than it ever would if its parents were perpetually standing over it, saying, Do this, and do that.

In after life, that child may settle far away from his father's home. He may go up into the temptations and bustle of some great city. He may cross to far lands beyond the sea. But need he love his parents less? need the bond between them be broken, though he may never set eyes on them again? God forbid. He may be settled far away, with children, business, interests of his own; and yet he may be doing all the while his father's will. The lessons of God which he learnt at his mother's knee may be still a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. Amid all the bustle and labour of business, his father's face may still be before his eyes, his father's voice still sound in his ears, bidding him be a worthy son to him still; bidding him not to leave that way wherein he should go, in which his parents trained him long, long since. He may feel that his parents are near him in the spirit, though absent in the flesh. Yes, though they may have passed altogether out of this world, they may be to him present and near at hand; and he may be kept from doing many a wrong thing and encouraged to

do many a right one, by the ennobling thought, My father would have had it so, my mother would have had it so, had they been here on earth. And though in this world he may never see them again, he may look forward steadily and longingly to the day when, this life's battle over, he shall meet again in heaven those who gave him life on earth.

My friends, if this be the education which is natural and necessary from our earthly parents, made in God's image, appointed by God's eternal laws for each of us, why should it not be the education which God himself has appointed for mankind?

All which is truly human (not sinful or fallen) is an image and pattern of something Divine. May not therefore the training which we find, by the very facts of nature, fit and necessary for our children, be the same as God's training, by which he fashioneth the hearts of the children of men? Therefore we can believe the Bible when it tells us that so it is. That God began the education of man by appearing to him directly, keeping him, as it were, close to his hand, and teaching him by direct and open revelation. That as time went on, God left men more and more to themselves outwardly: but only that he might raise their minds to higher notions of religion—that he might make them live by faith, and not merely by sight; and obey him of their own hearty free will, and not merely from fear or wonder. And therefore, in these days, when miraculous appearances have, as far as we know, entirely ceased, yet God is not changed. He is still as near as ever to men; still caring for them, still teaching them; and his

very stopping of all miracles, so far from being a sign of God's anger or neglect, is a part of his gracious plan for the training of his Church.

For consider—Man was first put upon this earth, with all things round him new and strange to him; seeing himself weak and unarmed before the wild beasts of the forest, not even sheltered from the cold, as they are; and yet feeling in himself a power of mind, a cunning, a courage, which made him the lord of all the beasts by virtue of his *mind*, though they were stronger than he in body. All that we read of Adam and Eve in the Bible is, as we should expect, the history of *children*—children in mind, even when they were full-grown in stature. Innocent as children, but, like children, greedy, fanciful, ready to disobey at the first temptation, for the very silliest of reasons; and disobeying accordingly. Such creatures—with such wonderful powers lying hid in them, such a glorious future before them; and yet so weak, so wilful, so ignorant, so unable to take care of themselves, liable to be destroyed off the face of the earth by their own folly, or even by the wild beasts around—surely they needed some special and tender care from God to keep them from perishing at the very outset, till they had learned somewhat how to take care of themselves, what their business and duty were upon this earth. They needed it before they fell; they needed it still more, and their children likewise, after they fell: and if they needed it, we may trust God that he afforded it to them.

But again. Whence came this strange notion, which man alone

has of all the living things which we see, of *Religion*? What put into the mind of man that strange imagination of beings greater than himself, whom he could not always see, but who might appear to him? What put into his mind the strange imagination that these unseen beings were more or less his masters? That they had made laws for him which he must obey? That he must honour and worship them, and do them service, in order that they might be favourable to him, and help, and bless, and teach him?

All nations except a very few savages (and we do not know but that their forefathers had it like the rest of mankind) have had some such notion as this; some idea of religion, and of a moral law of right and wrong.

Where did they get it?

Where, I ask again, did they get it?

My friends, after much thought I answer, there is no explanation of that question so simple, so rational, so probable, as the one which the text gives.

“And they heard the voice of the Lord God.”

Some, I know, say that man thought out for himself, in his own reason, the notion of God; that he by searching found out God.

But surely that is contrary to all experience. Our experience is, that men left to themselves forget God; lose more and more all thought of God, and the unseen world; believe more and more in nothing but what they can see and taste and handle, and become as the beasts that perish. How then did man, who now is continually forgetting God, contrive to remember God

for himself at first? How, unless God himself showed himself to man? I know some will say, that mankind invented for themselves false gods at first, and afterwards cleared and purified their own notions, till they discovered the true God. My friends, there is a homely old proverb which will well apply here. If there had been no gold guineas, there would be no brass ones. If men had not first had a notion of a true God, and then gradually lost it, they would not have invented false gods to supply his place.

And whence did they get, I ask again, the notion of gods at all?

The simplest answer is in the Bible: God taught them. I can find no better. I do not believe a better will ever be found.

And why not?

Why not? I ask. To say that God cannot appear to men is simply silly; for it is limiting God's Almighty power. He that made man and all heaven and earth, cannot he show himself to man, if he shall so please? To say that God will not appear to man because man is so insignificant, and this earth such a paltry little speck in the heavens, is to limit God's goodness; nay, it is to show that a man knows not what goodness means. What grace, what virtue is there higher than condescension? Then if God be, as he is, perfectly good, must he not be perfectly condescending—ready and willing to stoop to man, and all the more ready and the more willing, the more weak, ignorant, and sinful this man is? In fact, the greater need man has of God, the more certain is it that God will help him in that need.

Yes, my friends, the Bible is the revelation of a God who

condescends to men, and therefore descends to men. And the more a man's reason is spiritually enlightened to know the meaning of goodness and holiness and justice and love, the more simple, reasonable, and credible will it seem to him that God at first taught men in the days of their early ignorance, by the only method by which (as far as we can conceive) he could have taught them about himself; namely, by appearing in visible shape, or speaking with audible voice; and just as reasonable and credible, awful and unfathomable mystery though it is, will be the greater news, that that same Lord at last so condescended to man that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; and rose the third day, and ascended into heaven. Credible and reasonable, not indeed to the natural man who looks only at nature, which he can see and hear and handle; but credible and reasonable enough to the spiritual man, whose mind has been enlightened by the Spirit of God, to see that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal; even justice and love, mercy and condescension, the divine order, and the kingdom of the Living God.

And now one word on a matter which is tormenting the minds of many just now. It is often said that all that I have been saying is contrary to science. That this science and understanding of the world around us, which has improved so marvellously in our days, proves that the apparitions and miracles spoken of in the Bible cannot be true; that God, or the angels of God, can never

have walked with man in visible shape.

Now, my friends, I do not believe this. I believe the very contrary. I entreat you to set your minds at rest on this point; and to believe (what is certainly true) there is nothing in this new science to contradict the good old creed, that the Lord God of old appeared to his human children. It would take too much time, of course, to give you my reasons for saying this: and I must therefore ask you to take on trust from me when I tell you solemnly and earnestly that there is nothing in modern science which can, if rightly understood, contradict the glorious words of St. Paul, that God at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers by the prophets, and hath at last spoken unto us by a Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things: by whom also he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholdeth all things by the word of his power: even Jesus Christ, God blessed for ever. Amen.

What then shall we think of these things? Shall we say, 'How much better off were our forefathers than we! Ah, that we were not left to ourselves! Ah, that we lived in the good old times when God and his angels walked with men!'

My friends, what says Solomon the Wise?—'Inquire not why the former times were better than these, for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.'

It is very natural for us to think that we could become more easily good men, more certain of going to heaven, if we saw divine apparitions and heard divine voices. A very natural

thought. But natural things are not always the best or wisest things. Spiritual things are surely higher and deeper than natural things. It is natural to wish to see Christ, or some heavenly being, with our natural eyes and senses. But it is spiritual and therefore better for our souls, to be content to see him by faith, with the spiritual eyes of our heart and mind, to love him with all our heart and mind and soul, to worship him, to put our whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of our life.

Natural, indeed, to wish that we were back again in the old times. But we must recollect that these old times were not good times, but bad times, and for that very reason the Lord took pity on them. That they were times of darkness, and therefore it was that the people who sat in great darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death, were allowed to see a great light. And that after that, the fulness of time, the very time which the Lord chose that he might be incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and came down upon this earth in human form, was not a good time. On the contrary, the fulness of time, 1863 years ago, was the very wickedest, most faithless, most unjust time that the world had ever seen—a time of which St. Paul said that there were none who did good, no, not one; that adders' poison was under all lips, and all feet swift to shed blood, and that the way of peace none had known.

Better, far better, to live in times like these, in which there is (among Christian nations at least) no great darkness, even though there be no great light; times in which the knowledge of the true

God and his Son Jesus Christ is spreading, slowly but surely, over all the earth; and with it, the fruit of the knowledge of the Lord, justice, mercy, charity, fellow-feeling, and a desire to teach and improve all mankind, such as the world never saw before. These are the fruits of the Scriptures of the Lord, and the Sacraments of the Lord, and of the Holy Spirit of the Lord; and if that Holy Spirit be in our hearts, and we yield our hearts to his gracious motions and obey them, then we are really nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ than if we saw him, as Adam did, with our bodily eyes, and yet rebelled against him, as Adam did, in our hearts, and disobeyed him in our actions. Of old the Lord treated men as babes, and showed himself to their bodily eyes, that so they might learn that he was, and that he was near them. But us he treats as grown men, who know that he is, and that he is with us to the end of the world. And if he treats us as men, my friends, let us behave ourselves like men, and not like silly children, who cannot be trusted by themselves for a moment lest they do wrong or come to harm. Let us obey God, not with eye-service, just as long as we fancy that his eye is on us, but with the deeper, more spiritual, more honourable obedience of faith. Let us obey him for obedience' sake, and honour him for very honour's sake, as the young emigrant in foreign lands obeys and honours the parents whom he will never see again on earth; and let us look forward, like him, to the day when him whom we cannot see on earth we may, perhaps, be permitted to see in heaven, as the reward—and for what higher reward can man wish?—of faith

and obedience.

SERMON IV. NOAH'S FLOOD

(Quinquagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS ix. 13. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

We all know the history of Noah's flood. What have we learnt from that history? What were we intended to learn from it? What thoughts should we have about it?

There are many thoughts which we may have. We may think how the flood came to pass; what means God used to make it rain forty days; what is meant by breaking up the fountains of the great deep. We may calculate how large the ark was; and whether the Bible really means that it held all kinds of living things in the world, or only those of Noah's own country, or the animals which had been tamed and made useful to man. We may read long arguments as to whether the flood spread over the whole world, or only over the country where Noah and the rest of the sons of Adam then lived. We may puzzle ourselves concerning the rainbow of which the text speaks. How it was to be a sign of a covenant from God. Whether man had ever seen a rainbow before. Whether there had ever been rain before in Noah's country; or whether he did not live in that land of which the second chapter of Genesis says that the Lord had not caused it to rain upon the earth, but there went up a mist from the earth and watered the face of the ground, as it does still in that high

land in the centre of Asia, in which old traditions put the garden of Eden, and from which, as far as we yet know, mankind came at the beginning.

We may puzzle our minds with these and a hundred more curious questions, as learned men have done in all ages. But—shall we become really the wiser by so doing? More learned we may become. But being learned and being wise are two different things. True wisdom is that which makes a man a better man.

And will such puzzling questions and calculations as these, settle them how we may, make us *better* men? Will they make us more honest and just, more generous and loving, more able to keep our tempers and control our appetites? I cannot see that. Will it make us better men merely to know that there was once a flood of waters on the earth? I cannot see that. If we look at the hills of sand and gravel round us, a little common sense will show us that there have been many floods of waters on the earth, long, long before the one of which the Bible speaks: but shall we be better men for knowing that either? I cannot see why we should.

Now the Bible was sent to make us better men. How then will the history of the flood do that?

Easily enough, my friends, if we will listen to the Bible, and thinking less about the flood itself, think more about him who, so the Bible tells us, sent the flood.

The Bible, I have told you, is the revelation of the living Lord God, even Jesus Christ; who, in his turn, reveals to us the Father.

And what we have to think of is, how does this story of the

flood reveal, unveil to us the living Lord of the world, and his living government thereof? Let us look at the matter in that way, instead of puzzling ourselves with questions of words and endless genealogies which minister strife. Let us look at the matter in that way, instead of (like too many men now, and too many men in all ages) being so busy in picking to pieces the shell of the Bible, that we forget that the Bible has any kernel, and so let it slip through our hands. Let us look at the matter in that way, as a revelation of the living God, and then we shall find the history of the flood full of godly doctrine, and profitable for these times, and for all times whatsoever.

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