

CHARLES KINGSLEY

ALL SAINTS' DAY AND
OTHER SERMONS

Charles Kingsley

All Saints' Day and Other Sermons

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All Saints' Day and Other Sermons

*“Inheriting the zeal
And from the sanctity of elder times
Not deviating;—a priest, the like of whom
If multiplied, and in their stations set,
Would o'er the bosom of a joyful land
Spread true religion, and her genuine fruits.”*

The excursion—Book vi.

PREFATORY NOTE ¹

The following Sermons could not be arranged according to any proper sequence. Those, however, which refer to doctrine and the Church Seasons will mostly be found at the beginning of the volume, whilst those which deal with practical subjects are placed at the close.

A few of the Sermons have already appeared in “Good Words;” but by far the greater number were never prepared by their author for the press. They were written out very roughly—sometimes at an hour’s notice, as occasion demanded—and were only intended for delivery from the pulpit.

The original MSS. have been adhered to as closely as possible.

It is thought that many to whom the late Rector of Eversley was dear will welcome the publication of these earnest words, and find them helpful in the Christian life.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

¹ These sermons by the Rev. Charles Kingsley M.A., late rector of Eversley and Canon of Westminster, were edited by the Rev. W. Harrison, M.A., rector of Brington. – DP.

SERMON I. ALL SAINTS' DAY

Westminster Abbey. November 1, 1874.

Revelation vii. 9-12. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

To-day is All Saints' Day. On this day we commemorate—and, as far as our dull minds will let us, contemplate—the saints; the holy ones of God; the pure and the triumphant—be they who they may, or whence they may, or where they may. We are not bidden to define and limit their number.

We are expressly told that they are a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues; and most blessed news that is for all who love God and man. We are not told, again—and I beg you all to mark this well—that this great multitude consists merely of those who, according to the popular notion, have "gone to heaven," as it is called, simply because they have not gone to hell. Not so, not so! The great multitude whom we commemorate on All Saints' Day, are *saints*. They are the holy ones, the heroes and heroines of mankind, the elect, the aristocracy of grace. These are they who have kept themselves unspotted from the world. They are the pure who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, which is the spirit of self-sacrifice. They are those who carry the palm-branch of triumph, who have come out of great tribulation, who have dared, and fought, and suffered for God, and truth, and right. Nay, there are those among them, and many, thank God—weak women, too, among them—who have resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

And who are easy-going folk like you and me, that we should arrogate to ourselves a place in that grand company? Not so! What we should do on All Saints' Day is to place ourselves, with all humility, if but for an hour, where we can look afar off upon our betters, and see what they are like, and what they do.

And what are they like, those blessed beings of whom the text speaks? The Gospel for this day describes them to us; and we may look on that description as complete, for He who gives it is none other than our Lord Himself. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

This is what they are like; and what we, I fear, too many of us, are not like. But in proportion as we grow like them, by the grace of God, just so far shall we enter into the communion of saints, and understand the bliss of that everlasting All Saints' Day which St John saw in heaven.

And what do they do, those blessed beings? Whatever else they do, or do not do, this we are told they do—they worship. They satisfy, it would seem, in perfection, that mysterious instinct of devotion—that inborn craving to look upward and adore, which, let false philosophy say what it will, proves the most benighted idolater to be a man, and not a brute—a spirit, and not a merely natural thing.

They have worshipped, and so are blest. They have hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and now they are filled. They have longed for, toiled for, it may be died for, the true, the beautiful, and the good; and now they can gaze upward at the perfect reality of that which they saw on earth, only as in a glass darkly, dimly, and afar; and can contemplate the utterly free, the utterly beautiful, and the utterly good in the character of God and the face of Jesus Christ. They entered while on earth into the mystery and the glory of self-sacrifice; and now they find their bliss in gazing on the one perfect and eternal sacrifice, and rejoicing in the thought that it is the cause and ground of the whole universe, even the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

I say not that all things are clear to them. How can they be to any finite and created being?

They, and indeed angels and archangels, must walk for ever by faith, and not by sight. But if there be mysteries in the universe still hidden from them, they know who has opened the sealed book of God's secret counsels, even the Lamb who is the Lion, and the Lion who is the Lamb; and therefore, if all things are not clear to them, all things at least are bright, for they can trust that Lamb and His self-sacrifice. In Him, and through Him, light will conquer darkness, justice injustice, truth ignorance, order disorder, love hate, till God be all in all, and pain and sorrow and evil shall have been exterminated out of a world for which Christ stooped to die. Therefore they worship; and the very act of worship—understand it well—is that great reward in heaven which our Lord promised them.

Adoration is their very bliss and life. It must be so. For what keener, what nobler enjoyment for rational and moral beings, than satisfaction with, and admiration of, a Being better than themselves?

Therefore they worship; and their worship finds a natural vent in words most fit though few, but all expressing utter trust and utter satisfaction in the worthiness of God. Therefore they worship; and by worship enter into communion and harmony not only with each other, not only with angels and archangels, but with all the powers of nature, the four beings which are around the throne, and with every creature which is in heaven and in earth, and under the earth, and in the sea. For them, likewise, St John heard saying, "Blessing and glory, and honour, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

And why? I think, with all humility, that the key to all these hymns—whether of angels or of men, or of mere natural things—is the first hymn of all; the hymn which shows that, however grateful to God for what He has done for them those are whom the Lamb has redeemed by His blood to God, out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue; yet, nevertheless, the hymn of hymns is that which speaks not of gratitude, but of absolute moral admiration—the hymn which glorifies God, not for that which He is to man, not for that which He is to the universe, but for that which He is absolutely and in Himself—that which He was before all worlds, and would be still, though the whole universe, all created things, and time, and space, and matter, and every created spirit likewise, should be annihilated for ever. And what is that?

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

Ah! what a Gospel lies within those words! A Gospel? Ay, if you will receive it, the root of all other possible Gospels, and good news for all created beings. What a Gospel! and what an everlasting fount of comfort! Surely of those words it is true, "blessed are they who, going through the vale of misery, find therein a well, and the pools are filled with water." Know you not what I mean? Happier, perhaps, are you—the young at least among you—if you do not know. But some of you must know too well. It is to them I speak. Were you never not merely puzzled—all thinking men are that—but crushed and sickened at moments by the mystery of evil? Sickened by the follies, the failures, the ferocities, the foulnesses of mankind, for ages upon ages past? Sickened by the sins of the unholy many—sickened, alas! by the imperfections even of the holiest few? And have you never cried in your hearts with longing, almost with impatience, Surely, surely, there is an ideal Holy One somewhere, or else how could have arisen in my mind the conception, however faint, of an ideal holiness? But where, oh where? Not in the world around, strewn with unholiness. Not in myself—unholy too, without and within—seeming to myself sometimes the very worst company of all the bad company I

meet, because it is the only bad company from which I cannot escape. Oh, is there a Holy One, whom I may contemplate with utter delight? and if so, where is He? Oh, that I might behold, if but for a moment, His perfect beauty, even though, as in the fable of Semele of old, the lightning of His glance were death. Nay, more, has it not happened to some here—to clergyman, lawyer, physician, perhaps, alas! to some pure-minded, noble-hearted woman—to be brought in contact perforce with that which truly sickens them—with some case of human folly, baseness, foulness—which, however much their soul revolts from it, they must handle, they must toil over many weeks and months, in hope that that which is crooked may be made somewhat straight, till their whole soul was distempered, all but degraded, by the continual sight of sin, till their eyes seemed full of nothing but the dance of death, and their ears of the gibbering of madmen, and their nostrils with the odours of the charnel house, and they longed for one breath of pure air, one gleam of pure light, one strain of pure music, to wash their spirits clean from those foul elements into which their duty had thrust them down perforce?

And then, oh then, has there not come to such an one—I know that it has come—that for which his spirit was athirst, the very breath of pure air, the very gleam of pure light, the very strain of pure music, for it is the very music of the spheres, in those same words, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;” and he has answered, with a flush of keenest joy, Yes.

Whatever else is unholy, there is an Holy One, spotless and undefiled, serene and self-contained.

Whatever else I cannot trust, there is One whom I can trust utterly. Whatever else I am dissatisfied with, there is One whom I can contemplate with utter satisfaction, and bathe my stained soul in that eternal fount of purity. And who is He? Who save the Cause and Maker, and Ruler of all things, past, present, and to come? Ah, Gospel of all gospels, that God Himself, the Almighty God, is the eternal and unchangeable realisation of all that I and all mankind, in our purest and our noblest moments, have ever dreamed concerning the true, the beautiful, and the good. Even though He slay me, the unholy, yet will I trust in Him. For He is Holy, Holy, Holy, and can do nothing to me, or any creature, save what He *ought*. For He has created all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created.

Whosoever has entered, though but for a moment, however faintly, partially, stupidly, into that thought of thoughts, has entered in so far into the communion of the elect; and has had his share in the everlasting All Saints' Day which is in heaven. He has been, though but for a moment, in harmony with the polity of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and with an innumerable company of angels, and the church of the first-born who are written in heaven; and with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with all past, present, and to come, in this and in all other worlds, of whom it is written, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.” Great indeed is their reward, for it is no less than the very beatific vision to contemplate and adore. That supreme moral beauty, of which all earthly beauty, all nature, all art, all poetry, all music, are but phantoms and parables, hints and hopes, dim reflected rays of the clear light of that everlasting day, of which it is written—that “the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

SERMON II. PREPARATION FOR ADVENT

Westminster Abbey. November 15, 1874.

Amos iv. 12. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

We read to-day, for the first lesson, parts of the prophecy of Amos. They are somewhat difficult, here and there, to understand; but nevertheless Amos is perhaps the grandest of the Hebrew prophets, next to Isaiah. Rough and homely as his words are, there is a strength, a majesty, and a terrible earnestness in them, which it is good to listen to; and specially good now that Advent draws near, and we have to think of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and what His coming means.

"Prepare to meet thy God," says Amos in the text. Perhaps he will tell us how to meet our God.

Amos is specially the poor man's prophet, for he was a poor man himself; not a courtier like Isaiah, or a priest like Jeremiah, or a sage like Daniel; but a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit in Tekoa, near Bethlehem, where Amos was born. Yet to this poor man, looking after sheep and cattle on the downs, and pondering on the wrongs and misery around, the word of the Lord came, and he knew that God had spoken to him, and that he must go and speak to men, at the risk of his life, what God had bidden, against all the nations round and their kings, and against the king and nobles and priests of Israel, and the king and nobles and priests of Judah, and tell them that the day of the Lord is at hand, and that they must prepare to meet their God. And he said what he felt he must say with a noble freedom, with a true independence such as the grace of God alone can give. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, who was worshipping (absurd as it may seem to us) God and the golden calf at the same time in King Jeroboam's court, complained loudly, it would seem, of Amos's plain speaking.

How uncourteous to prophesy that Jeroboam should die by the sword, and Israel be carried captive out of their own land! Let him go home into his own land of Judah, and prophesy there; but not prophesy at Bethel, for it was the king's chapel and the king's court. Amos went, I presume, in fear of his life. But he left noble words behind him. "I was no prophet," he said to Amaziah, "nor a prophet's son, but a herdsman, and a gatherer of wild figs. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and said, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." And then he turned on that smooth court-priest Amaziah, and pronounced against him, in the name of the Lord, a curse too terrible to be repeated here.

Now what was the secret of this inspired herdsman's strength? What helped him to face priests, nobles, and kings? What did he believe? What did he preach? He believed and preached the kingdom of God and His righteousness; the simple but infinite difference between right and wrong; and the certain doom of wrong, if wrong was persisted in. He believed in the kingdom of God. He told the kings and the people of all the nations round, that they had committed cruel and outrageous sins, not against the Jews merely, but against each other. In the case of Moab, the culminating crime was an insult to the dead. He had burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime. In the case of Ammon, it was brutal cruelty to captive women; but in the cases of Gaza, of Tyre, and of Edom, it was slave-making and slave-trading invasions of Palestine. "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof."

Yes. Slave-hunting and slave-trading wars—that was and is an iniquity which the just and merciful Ruler of the earth would not, and will not, pardon. And honour to those who, as in Africa of late, put down those foul deeds, wheresoever they are done; who, at the risk of their own lives, dare free the captives from their chains; and who, if interfered with in their pious work, dare execute on armed murderers and manstealers the vengeance of a righteous God. For the Lord God was their King, and their Judge, whether they knew it or not. And for three transgressions of theirs, and for four, the Lord would not turn away their punishment, but would send fire and sword among them, and they should be carried away captive, as they had carried others away. But to go back. Amos

next turns to his own countrymen—to Judah and Israel, who were then two separate nations. For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, the Lord would not turn away their punishment, because they had despised the law of the Lord, and had not walked in His commandments. Therefore He would send a fire on Judah, and it should devour the palaces of Jerusalem. But Amos is most bitter against Israel, against the court of King Jeroboam at Samaria, and against the rich men of Israel, the bulls of Bashan, as he calls them. For three transgressions, and for four, the Lord would not turn away their punishment. And why?

Now see what I meant when I said that Amos believed not only in the kingdom of God, but in the righteousness of God. It was not merely that they were worshipping idols—golden calves at Dan, and Bethel, and Samaria, at the same time that they worshipped the true God. That was bad, but there was more behind. These men were bad, proud, luxurious, cruel; they were selling their countrymen for slaves—selling, he says so twice, as if it was some notorious and special case, an honest man for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They were lying down on clothes taken on pledge by every altar. They were breaking the seventh commandment in an abominable way. They were falsifying weights and measures, and selling the refuse of the wheat. They stored up the fruits of violence and robbery in their palaces. They hated him who rebuked them, and abhorred him that spoke uprightly. They trod upon the poor and crushed the needy, and then said to their stewards, “Bring wine, and let us drink.” Therefore though they had built houses of hewn stone, they should not live in them. They had planted pleasant vineyards, but should not drink of them. And all the while these superstitious and wicked rich men were talking of the day of the Lord, and hoping that the day of the Lord would appear.

You, if you have read your Bibles carefully and reverently, must surely be aware that the day of the Lord, either in the Old Testament or in the New, does not mean merely the final day of judgment, but any striking event, any great crisis in the world’s history, which throws a divine light upon that history, and shows to men—at least to those who have eyes wherewith to see—that verily there is a God who judges the earth in righteousness, and ministers true judgment among the people;—a God whom men, and all their institutions, should always be prepared to meet, lest coming suddenly, He find them sleeping. If you are not aware of this, the real meaning of a day of the Lord, a day of the Son of Man, let me entreat you to go and search the Scriptures for yourselves; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of the Lord, of that Eternal Son of whom the second Psalm speaks, in words which mobs and tyrants, the atheist and the superstitious, are alike willing to forget.

In the time of Amos, the rich tyrants of Israel seem to have meant by the day of the Lord some vague hope that, in those dark and threatening times, God would interfere to save them, if they were attacked by foreign armies. But woe to you that desire the day of the Lord, says Amos the herdsman.

What do you want with it? You will find it very different from what you expect. There is a day of the Lord coming, he says, therefore prepare to meet your God. But you are unprepared, and you will find the day of the Lord very different from what you expect. It will be a day in which you will learn the righteousness of God. Because He is righteous He will not suffer your unrighteousness.

Because He is good, He will not permit you to be bad. The day of the Lord to you will be darkness and not light, not as you dream deliverance from the invaders, but ruin by the invaders, from which will be no escape. “As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.” There will be no escape for those wicked men.

Though they dug into hell, God’s hand would take them; though they climbed up into heaven, God would fetch them down; though they hid in the bottom of the sea, God would command the serpent, and it should bite them. He would sift the house of Israel among all nations like corn in a sieve, and not a grain should fall to the earth. And all the sinners among God’s people should die by the sword, who say, “The evil shall not overtake us.”

This was Amos's notion of the kingdom of God and His righteousness. These Israelites would not obey the laws of God's kingdom, and be righteous and good. But Amos told them, they could not get rid of God's kingdom. The Lord was King, in spite of them, and they would find it out to their sorrow. If they would not seek His kingdom and His government, His government would seek them and find them, and find their evil-doings out. If they would not seek God's righteousness, His righteousness would seek them, and execute righteous judgment on them. No wonder that the Israelites thought Amos a most troublesome and insolent person. No wonder that the smooth priest Amaziah begged him to begone and talk in that way somewhere else. He saw plainly enough that either Amos must leave Samaria, or he must leave it. The two could no more work together than fire and water. Amos wanted to make men repent of their sins, while Amaziah wanted only to make them easy in their minds; and no man can do both at once.

So it was then, my friends, and so it will be till the end of this wicked world. The way to please men, and be popular, always was, and always will be, Amaziah's way; to tell men that they may worship God and the golden calf at the same time, that they may worship God and money, worship God and follow the ways of this wicked world which suit their fancy and their interest; to tell them the kingdom of God is not over you now, Christ is not ruling the world now; that the kingdom of God will only come, when Christ comes at the last day, and meanwhile, if people will only believe what they are told, and live tolerably respectable lives, they may behave in all things else as if there was no God, and no judgments of God. Seeking the righteousness of God, say these preachers of Amaziah's school, only means, that if Christ's righteousness is imputed to you need not be righteous yourselves, but will go to heaven without having been good men here on earth. That is the comfortable message which the world delights to hear, and for which the world will pay a high price to its flatterers.

But if any man dares to tell his fellow-men what Amos told them, and say, The kingdom of God is among you, and within you, and over you, whether you like or not, and you are in it; the Lord is King, be the people never so unquiet; and all power is given to Him in heaven and earth already; and at the last great day, when He comes in glory, He will show that He has been governing the world and the inhabitants thereof all along, whether they cared to obey Him or not:—if he tell men, that the righteousness of God means this—to pray for the Spirit of God and of Christ, that they may be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, and holy as Christ is holy, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord: if he tell men, that the wrath of God was revealed from heaven at the fall of man, and has been revealed continuously ever since, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish will fall upon every soul of man that doeth evil; and glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good:—when a man dares to preach that, he is no more likely to be popular with the wicked world (for it is a wicked world) than Amos was popular, or St Paul was popular, or our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave both to Amos and to St Paul their messages, was popular. False preachers will dislike that man, because he wishes to make sinners uneasy, while they wish to make them easy. Philosophers, falsely so-called, will dislike that man, because he talks of the kingdom of God, the providence of God, and they are busy—at least, just now—in telling men that there is no providence and no God—at least, no living God. The covetous and worldly will dislike that man, for they believe that the world is governed, not by God, but by money. Politicians will dislike that man, because they think that not God, but they, govern the world, by those very politics and knavish tricks, which we pray God to confound, whenever we sing “God save the Queen.” And the common people—the masses—who ought to hear such a man gladly, for his words are to them, if they would understand them, a gospel, and good news of divine hope and deliverance from sin and ignorance, oppression and misery—the masses, I say, will dislike that man, because he tells them that God's will is law, and must be obeyed at all risks: and the poor fools have got into their heads just now that not God's will, but the will of the people, is law, and that not the eternal likeness of God, but whatever they happen to decide by the majority of the moment, is right.

And so such a preacher will not be popular with the many. They will dismiss him, at best, as they might a public singer or lecturer, with compliments and thanks, and so excuse themselves from doing what he tells them. And he must look for his sincere hearers in the hearts of those—and there are such, I verily believe, in this congregation—who have a true love and a true fear of Christ, their incarnate God—who believe, indeed, that Christ is their King, and the King of all the earth; who think that to please Him is the most blessed, as well as the most profitable, thing which man can do; to displease Him the most horrible, as well as the most dangerous, thing which man can do; and who, therefore, try to please Him by becoming like Him, by really renouncing the world and all its mean and false and selfish ways, and putting on His new pattern of man, which is created after God's likeness in righteousness and true holiness. Blessed are they, for of them it is written, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Even Christ Himself shall fill them. Blessed are they, and all that they take in hand, for of them it is written, “Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, and walk in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands.”

“The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, yea, all such as call upon Him faithfully. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him. He also will hear their cry”—ay, “and will help them.”

Happy, ay, blest will such souls be, let the day of the Lord appear when it will, or how it will.

It may appear—the day of the Lord, as it has appeared again and again in history—in the thunder of some mighty war. It may appear after some irresistible, though often silent revolution, whether religious or intellectual, social or political. It will appear at last, as that great day of days, which will conclude, so we believe, the drama of human history, and all men shall give account for their own works. But, however and whenever it shall appear, they at least will watch its dawning, neither with the selfish assurance of modern Pharisaism, nor with the abject terror of mediæval superstition; but with that manful faith with which he who sang the 98th Psalm saw the day of the Lord dawn once in the far east, more than two thousand years ago, and cried with solemn joy, in the glorious words which you have just heard sung—words which the Church of England has embodied in her daily evening service, in order, I presume, to show her true children how they ought to look at days of judgment; and so prepare to meet their God:—

“Show yourselves joyful unto the Lord, all ye lands: sing, rejoice, and give thanks.

“Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is: the round world, and they that dwell therein.

“Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord: for He cometh to judge the earth.

“With righteousness shall He judge the world: and the people with equity.

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

“As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

SERMON III. THE PURIFYING HOPE

Eversley, 1869. Windsor Castle, 1869.

1 John iii. 2. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Let us consider this noble text, and see something, at least, of what it has to tell us. It is, like all God’s messages, all God’s laws, ay, like God’s world in which we live and breathe, at once beautiful and awful; full of life-giving hope; but full, too, of chastening fear. Hope for the glorious future which it opens to poor human beings like us; fear, lest so great a promise being left us, we should fall short of it by our own fault. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God.

There is the root and beginning of all Christianity,—of all true religion. We are the sons of God, and the infinite, absolute, eternal Being who made this world, and all worlds, is our Father. We are the children of God. It is not for us to say who are not God’s children. That is God’s concern, not ours. All that we have to do with, is the awful and blessed fact that we are. We were baptised into God’s kingdom, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Let us believe the Gospel and good news which baptism brings us, and say each of us;—Not for our own goodness and deserving; not for our own faith or assurance; not for anything which we have thought, felt, or done, but simply out of the free grace and love of God, seeking out us unconscious infants, we are children of God. “Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” It doth not yet appear what the next life will be like, or what we shall be like in it. That there will be a next life,—that death does not end all for us, the New Testament tells us. Yea, our own hearts and reasons tell us. That sentiment of immortality, that instinct that the death of our body will not, cannot destroy our souls, or ourselves—all men have had that, except a few; and it is a question whether they had it not once, and have only lost it by giving way to their brute animal nature. But be that as it may, it concerns us, I think, very little. For we at least believe that we shall live again.

That we shall live again in some state or other, is as certain to our minds as it was to the minds of our forefathers, even while they were heathens; as certain to us as it is that we are alive now. But in that future state, what we shall be like, we know not. St. John says that he did not know; and we certainly have no more means of knowing than St. John.

Therefore let us not feed our fancies with pictures of what the next world will be like,—pictures, I say, which are but waking dreams of men, intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds—that is in their animal and mortal brain. Let us be content with what St. John tells us, which is a matter not for our brains, but for our hearts; not for our imaginations, but for our conscience, which is indeed our highest reason. Whatever we do not know about the next world, this, he says, we do know,—that when God in Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him. Like God. No more: No: but no less. To be like God, it appears, is the very end and aim of our being. That we might be like God, God our Father sent us forth from His eternal bosom, which is the ground of all life, in heaven and in earth. That we might be like God, He clothed us in mortal flesh, and sent us into this world of sense. That we might be like God, He called us, from our infancy, into His Church. That we might be like God, He gave us the divine sense of right and wrong; and more, by the inspiration of His holy spirit, that inward witness, that Light of God, which lightens every man that cometh into the world, He taught us to love the right and hate the wrong.

That we might be like God, God is educating us from our cradle to our grave, by every event, even the smallest, which happens to us. That we might be like God, it is in God that we live, and move, and have our being; that as the raindrop which falls from heaven, rises again surely, soon or late, to heaven again; so each soul of man, coming forth from God at first, should return again to God, as

many of them as have eternal life, having become like to God from whom it came at first. And how shall we become like God? or rather like Christ who is both God and man? To become like God the Father,—that is impossible for finite and created beings as we are. But to become somewhat, at least, like God the Son, like Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, that is not impossible. For He has revealed Himself as a man, in the soul and body of a man, that our sinful souls might be made like His pure soul; our sinful bodies like His glorious body; and that so He might be the first born among many brethren. And how? “We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

For we shall see Him as He is. Herein is a great mystery, and one which I do not pretend to fathom. Only this I can try to do—to shew how it may seem possible and reasonable, from what is called analogy, that is by judging of an unknown thing from a known thing, which is, at least, something like it. Now do we not all know how apt we are to become like those whom we see, with whom we spend our hours—and, above all, like those whom we admire and honour? For good and for evil, alas! For evil—for those who associate with evil or frivolous persons are too apt to catch not only their low tone, but their very manner, their very expression of face, speaking, and thinking, and acting. Not only do they become scornful, if they live with scorners; false, if they live with liars; mean, if they live with covetous men; but they will actually catch the very look of their faces. The companions of affected, frivolous people, men or women, grow to look affected frivolous. Indulging in the same passions, they mould their own countenances and their very walk, also the very tones of their voice, as well as their dress, into the likeness of those with whom they associate, nay, of those whose fashions (as they are called) they know merely by books and pictures. But thank God, who has put into the hearts of Christian people the tendency towards God—just in the same way does good company tend to make men good; high-minded company to make them high-minded; kindly company to make them kindly; modest company to make them modest; honourable company to make them honourable; and pure company to make them pure. If the young man or woman live with such, look up to such as their ideal, that is, the pattern which they ought to emulate—then, as a fact, the Spirit of God working in them does mould them into something of the likeness of those whom they admire and love. I have lived long enough to see more than one man of real genius stamp his own character, thought, even his very manner of speaking, for good or for evil, on a whole school or party of his disciples. It has been said, and truly, I believe, that children cannot be brought up among beautiful pictures,—I believe, even among any beautiful sights and sounds,—without the very expression of their faces becoming more beautiful, purer, gentler, nobler; so that in them are fulfilled the words of the great and holy Poet concerning the maiden brought up according to God, and the laws of God—

“And she shall bend her ear
In many a secret place,
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty, born of murmuring sound,
Shall pass into her face.”

But if mere human beings can have this “personal influence,” as it is called, over each others' characters, if even inanimate things, if they be beautiful, can have it—what must be the personal influence of our Lord Jesus Christ? Of Him, who is the Man of all men, the Son of Man, the perfect and ideal Man—and more, who is very God of very God; the Author of all life, power, wisdom, genius, in every human being, whether they use to good, or abuse to ill, His divine gifts; the Author, too, of all natural beauty, from the sun over our heads to the flower beneath our feet? Think of that steadily, accurately, rationally. Think of who Christ is, and what Christ is—and then think what His personal influence must be—quite infinite, boundless, miraculous. So that the very blessedness of heaven will not be merely the sight of our Lord; it will be the being made holy, and kept holy, by that

sight. If only we be fit for it. For let us ask ourselves the question,—If St John's words come true of us, if we should see Him as He is, would the sight of His all-glorious countenance warm us into such life, love, longing for virtue and usefulness, as we never felt before? Or would it crush us into the very earth with utter shame and humiliation, full and awful knowledge of how weak and foolish, sinful and unworthy we were?—as it does to Gerontius in the poem, when he dreams that, after death, he demanded, rashly and ambitiously, to see our Lord, and had his wish.

That is the question which every one must try to answer for himself in fear and trembling, for, he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. The common sense of men—which is often their conscience and highest reason—has taught them this, more or less clearly, in all countries and all ages. There are very few religions which have not made purifying of some kind a part of their duty. The very savage, when he enters (as he fancies) the presence of his god, will wash and adorn himself that he may be fit, poor creature, for meeting the paltry god which he has invented out of his own brain; and he is right as far as he goes. The Englishman, when he dresses himself in his best to go to church, obeys the same reasonable instinct. And, indeed, is not holy baptism a sign that this instinct is a true one?—that if God be pure, he who enters the presence of God must purify himself, even as God is pure? Else why, when each person, whether infant or adult, is received into Christ's Church, is washing with water, whether by sprinkling, as now, or, as of old, by immersion, the very sign and sacrament of his being received into God's kingdom? The instinct, I say, is reasonable, and has its root in the very heart of man. Whatsoever we respect and admire we shall also try to copy, if it be only for a time. If we are going into the presence of a wiser man than ourselves, we shall surely recollect and summon up what little wisdom or knowledge we may have; if into the presence of a holier person, we shall try to call up in ourselves those better and more serious thoughts which we so often forget, that we may be, even for a few minutes, fit for that good company.

And if we go into the presence of a purer person than ourselves, we shall surely (unless we be base and brutal) call up our purest and noblest thoughts, and try to purify ourselves, even as they are pure.

It is true what poets have said again and again, that there are women whose mere presence, whose mere look, drives all bad thoughts away—women before whom men dare no more speak, or act, nay, even think, basely, than they would dare before the angels of God.

But if it be so—and so it is—what must we be, to be fit to appear before Him who is Purity itself?—before that spotless Christ in whom is no sin and who knows what is in man; who is quick and piercing as a two-edged sword, even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, so that all things are naked and open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do? What purity can we bring into His presence which will not seem impure to Him? What wisdom which will not seem folly? What humility which will not seem self-conceit? What justice which will not seem unjust?

What love which will not seem hardness of heart, in the sight of Him who charges His angels with folly, and the very heavens are not clean in His sight? Who loved Him better, and whom did He love better, than St John? Yet, what befel St John when, in the spirit, he saw Him even somewhat as He is?—“And I fell at His feet as dead.” If St John himself was struck down with awe, what shall we feel, even the best and purest among us? All we can do is to cast ourselves, now and for ever, in life, in death, and in the day of judgment, on His boundless mercy and love—who stooped from heaven to die for us and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Therefore, I have many fears for some who are ready enough to talk of their fulness of hope and their assurance of salvation, and to join in hymns which express weariness of this life and longings for the joys of heaven, and prayers that they may depart and be with Christ. If they are not in earnest in such words they mock God; but if they are in earnest, some of them, I fear much, tempt God.

What if He took them at their word? What if He gave them their wish? What if they departed and entered the presence of Christ, only to meet with a worse fate than that of Gerontius? Only to be overwhelmed with shame and terror, because, though they have been talking of being with Christ, they have not been trying to be like Christ; because they have not sought after holiness, without which

no man shall see the Lord; because they have not tried to purify themselves, even as He is pure; and have, poor, heedless souls, gone out of the world, with all their sins upon their head, to enter a place for which they will find themselves utterly unfit, because it is a place into which nothing can enter which defileth, or committeth abomination, or maketh a lie, and from which the covetous are specially excluded; and in which will be fulfilled the parable of the man who came to the feast, not having on a wedding garment,—Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Assurance, my friends, may be reasonable enough when it is founded on repentance and hatred of evil, and love and practice of what is good. But, again, assurance may be as unreasonable as it is offensive. We blame a man who has too much assurance about earthly things. Let us beware that we have not too much assurance about heavenly things. For our assurance will surely be too great, unreasonable, built upon the sand, if it be built on mere self-conceit of our own orthodoxy, and our own privileges, or our own special connection with God.

Meanwhile it has been my comfort to meet with some—would God they were more numerous—who, instead of talking of their assurance of salvation, lived in a state of noble self-discontent and holy humility; who could see nothing but their own faults and failings; who, though they were holier than others, considered themselves as unholy; though they were doing more good than others, thought themselves useless; whose standard of duty was so lofty, that they could think of nothing, but how far they had failed in reaching it; who measured themselves, not by other men, but by Christ Himself; and, doing that, had nought to say, save, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” And for such people I have had full assurance, just because they had no assurance themselves. And I have said in my heart, These are worthy, just because they think themselves unworthy. These are fit to appear in the presence of God, just because they believe themselves unfit. These are they who will cry at the day of judgment, in wondering humility,—Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or in prison, and visited Thee? And will receive for answer,—“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

To which end may God of His mercy bring us, and all we love. Amen.

SERMON IV. THE LORD COMING TO HIS TEMPLE

Westminster Abbey. November, 1874.

Malachi iii. 1, 2. “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple. . . . But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s sope.”

We believe that this prophecy was fulfilled at the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that it will be fulfilled again, in that great day when He shall judge the quick and the dead.

But it is of neither of these events I wish to speak to you just now. I wish to speak of an event which has not (as far as we know) happened; which will probably never happen; but which is still perfectly possible; and one, too, which it is good for us to face now and then, and ask ourselves, If this thing came to pass, what should I think, and what should I do?

I shall touch the question with all reverence and caution. I shall try to tread lightly, as one who is indeed on hallowed ground. For the question which I have dared to ask you and myself is none other than this—If the Lord suddenly came to this temple, or any other in this land; if He appeared among us, as He did in Judea eighteen hundred years ago, what should we think of Him? Should we recognise, or should we reject, our Saviour and our Lord? It is an awful thought, the more we look at it. But for that very reason it may be the more fit to be asked, once and for all.

Now, to put this question safely and honestly, we must keep within those words which I just said—as He appeared in Judea eighteen hundred years ago. We must limit our fancy to the historic Christ, to the sayings, doings, character which are handed down to us in the four Gospels; and ask ourselves nothing but—What should I think if such a personage were to meet me now? To imagine Him—as has been too often done—as doing deeds, speaking words, and even worse, entertaining motives, which are not written in the four Gospels, is as unfair morally, as it is illogical critically. It creates a phantom, a fictitious character, and calls that Christ. It makes each writer, each thinker—or rather dreamer—however shallow his heart and stupid his brain—and all our hearts are but too shallow, and all our brains too stupid—the measure of a personage so vast and so unique, that all Christendom for eighteen hundred years has seen in Him, and we of course hold seen truly, the Incarnate God. No; we must think of nothing save what is set down in Holy Writ.

And yet, alas! we cannot use in our days, that which eighteen hundred years ago was the most simple and obvious test of our Lord’s truthfulness, namely His miraculous powers. The folly and sin of man have robbed us of what is, as it were, one of the natural rights of reasoning, man. Lying prodigies and juggleries, forged and pretended miracles, even—oh, shame!—imitations of His most sacred wounds, have, up to our own time, made all rational men more and more afraid of aught which seems to savour of the miraculous; till most of us, I think, would have to ask forgiveness—as I myself should have to ask,—if, tantalized and insulted again and again by counterfeit miracles, we failed to recognise real miracles, and Him who performed them. Therefore, for good or evil, we should be driven back upon that test alone, which, after all, perhaps, is the most sure as well as the most convincing—the moral test—the test of character. What manner of personage would He be did He condescend to appear among us? Of that, thank God, the Gospels ought to leave us in no doubt.

What acts He might condescend to perform, what words He might condescend to speak, it is not for such beings as we to guess. But how He would demean Himself we know; for Holy Writ has told us how He demeaned Himself in Judea eighteen hundred years ago; and He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and can be only like Himself. But should we know Him merely by His bearing and character? Should we see in Him an utterly ideal personage—The Son of Man, and therefore, ere we lost sight of Him once more, the Son of God? Let us think. First, therefore, we must believe that—as in Judea of old—Christ would meet men with all consideration and courtesy. He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He would not strive, nor cry, nor let His voice

be heard in the streets. He would not cause any of God's little ones to offend, to stumble. In plain words, He would not shock and repel them by any conduct of His. Therefore, as in Judea of old, He would be careful of, even indulgent to, the usages of society, as long as they were innocent. He would never outrage the code of manners, however imperfect, however conventional, which this or any other civilised nation may have agreed on, to express and keep up respect, self-restraint, delicacy, of man toward man, of man toward woman, of the young ward the old, of the living toward the dead. No.

As I said just now, He would never cause, by any act or word of His, one of God's little ones to stumble and fall away.

I used just now that word *manners*. Let me beg your very serious attention to it. I use it, remember, in its true, its ancient—that is, in its moral and spiritual sense. I use it as the old Greeks, the old Romans, used their corresponding words; as our wise forefathers used it, when they said well, that “Manners maketh man;” that manners are at once the efficient cause of a man's success, and the proof of his deserving to succeed: the outward and visible sign of whatsoever inward and spiritual grace, or disgrace, there may be in him. I mean by the word what our Lord meant when He reproved the pushing and vulgar arrogance of the Scribes and Pharisees, and laid down the golden rule of all good manners, “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”

Next, I beg you to remember that all, or almost all, good manners which we have among us—courtesies, refinements, self-restraint, and mutual respect—all which raises us, socially and morally, above our forefathers of fifteen hundred years ago—deep-hearted men, valiant and noble, but coarse, and arrogant, and quarrelsome—all that, or almost all, we owe to Christ, to the influence of His example, and to that Bible which testifies of Him. Yes, the Bible has been for Christendom, in the cottage as much as in the palace, the school of manners; and the saying that he who becomes a true Christian becomes a true gentleman, is no rhetorical boast, but a solid historic fact.

Now imagine Christ to reappear on earth, with that perfect outward beauty of character—with what Greeks and Romans, and our own ancestors, would have called those perfect manners—which, if we are to believe the Gospels, He shewed in Judea of old, which won then so many hearts, especially of the common people, sounder judges often of true nobility than many who fancy themselves their betters. Conceive—but which of us can conceive?—His perfect tenderness, patience, sympathy, graciousness, and grace, combined with perfect strength, stateliness, even awfulness, when awe was needed. Remember that, if, again, the Gospels are to be believed. He alone, of all personages of whom history tells us, solved in His own words and deeds the most difficult paradox of human character—to be at once utterly conscious, and yet utterly unconscious, of self; to combine with perfect self-sacrifice a perfect self-assertion. Whether or not His being able to do that proved Him to have been that which He was, the Son of God, it proves Him at least to have been the Son of Man—the unique and unapproachable ideal of humanity, utterly inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

But again: He condescended, in His teaching of old, to the level of Jewish, knowledge at that time. We may, therefore, believe that He would condescend to the level of our modern knowledge; and what would that involve? It would leave Him, however less than Himself, at least master of all that the human race has thought or discovered in the last eighteen hundred years. Think of that. And think again, that if He condescended, as in Judea of old, to employ that knowledge in teaching men—He who knew what was in man, and needed not that any should bear witness to Him of man—He would manifest a knowledge of human nature to which that of a Shakspeare would be purblind and dull; a knowledge of which the Scripture nobly says that “The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;” so that all “things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” And consider that, in the light of that knowledge, He might adapt himself as perfectly to us of this great city, as He did to the villagers of Galilee, or to the townsmen of Jerusalem.

Consider, again, that He who spoke as never man yet spake in Jerusalem, might speak as man never yet spoke on English soil; that He who was listened to gladly once, because He spake with authority, and not as the scribes, at second hand, and by rule and precedent, might be listened to gladly here once more. For He might speak here, not as we poor scribes can speak at best, but with an authority, originality, earnestness, as well as an eloquence, which might exercise a fascination, which would be, to all with whom He came in contact, what Malachi calls it, “a refiner’s fire”—most purifying, though often most painful to the very best; a fascination which might be to every one who came under its spell a veritable Judgment and Day of the Lord, shewing each man with fearful clearness to which side he really inclined at heart in the struggle between truth and falsehood, good and evil; a fascination, therefore, equally attractive to those who wished to do right, and intolerable to those who wished to do wrong.

Consider that last thought. And consider, too, that those to whom the fascination of such a personage might be so intolerable, that it might turn to utter hate, would probably be those whose moral sense was so perverted, that they thought they were doing right when they were doing wrong, and speaking truth when they were telling lies. It is an awful thought. But we know that there were such men, and too many, among the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem. And human nature is the same in every age. Be that as it may—however retired His life, He could not long be hid. He would shortly exercise, almost without attempting it, an enormous public influence.

But yet, as in Judea of old, would He not be only too successful? Would He not be at once too liberal for some, and too exacting for others? Would He not, as in Judea of old, encounter not merely the active envy of the vain and the ambitious, which would follow one who spoke as never man spoke; not merely the active malignity of those who wish their fellow-creatures to be bad and not good; not merely the bigotry of every sect and party; but that mere restless love of new excitements, and that dull fear and suspicion of new truths, and even of old truths in new words, which beset the uneducated of every rank and class, and in no age more than in our own? And therefore I must ask, in sober sadness, how long would His influence last? It lasted, we know, in Judea of old, for some three years. And then—. But I am not going to say that any such tragedy is possible now. It would be an insult to Him; an insult to the gracious influences of His Spirit, the gracious teaching of His Church, to say that of our generation, however unworthy we may be of our high calling in Christ.

And yet, if He had appeared in any country of Christendom only four hundred years ago, might He not have endured an even more dreadful death than that of the cross?

But doubtless, no personal harm would happen to Him here. Only there might come a day, in which, as in Judea of old, “after He had said these things, many were offended, and walked no more with Him:” when his hearers and admirers would grow fewer and more few, some through bigotry, some through envy, some through fickleness, some through cowardice, till He was left alone with a little knot of earnest disciples; who might diminish, alas, but too rapidly, when they found at He, as in Judea of old, did not intend to become the head of a new sect, and to gratify their ambition and vanity by making them His delegates. And so the world, the religious world as well as the rest, might let Him go His way, and vanish from the eyes and minds of men, leaving behind little more than a regret that one so gifted and so fascinating should have proved—I hardly like to say the words, and yet they must be said—so unsafe and so unsound a teacher.

I shall not give now the reasons which have led me, and not in haste, to this melancholy conclusion. I shall only say that I have come to it, with pain, and shame, and fear. With shame and fear. For when I ask you the solemn question, Would you know Christ if He came among you? do I not ask myself a question which I dare not answer? How can I tell whether I should recognise, after all, my Saviour and my Lord? How do I know that if He said (as He but too certainly might), something which clashed seriously with my preconceived notions of what He ought to say, I should not be offended, and walk no more with Him? How do I know that if He said, as in Judea of old, “Will ye too go away?” I should answer with St Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the

words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?”

I dare not ask that question of myself. How then dare I ask it of you? I know not. I can only say, “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.” I know not. But this I know—that in this or any other world, if you or I did recognise Him, it would be with utter shame and terror, unless we had studied and had striven to copy either Himself, or whatsoever seems to us most like Him. Yes; to study the good, the beautiful, and the true in Him, and wheresoever else we find it—for all that is good, beautiful, and true throughout the universe are nought but rays from Him, the central sun—to obey St. Paul of old, and “whatsoever things are true, venerable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report—if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, to think on these things,”—on these scattered fragmentary sacraments of Him whose number is not two, nor seven, “but seventy-times seven;” that is the way—I think, the only way—to be ready to recognise our Saviour, and to prepare to meet our God; that He may be to us, too, as a refiner’s fire, and refine us—our thoughts, our deeds, our characters throughout.

And I think, too, that this is the way, perhaps the only way, to rid ourselves of the fancy that we can be accounted righteous before God for any works or deservings of our own. Those in whom that fancy lingers must have but a paltry standard of what righteousness is, a mean conception of moral—that is, spiritual—perfection. But those who look not inwards, but upwards; not at themselves, but at Christ and all spiritual perfection—they become more and more painfully aware of their own imperfections. The beauty of Christ’s character shows them the ugliness of their own. His purity shows them their own foulness. His love their own hardness. His wisdom their own folly. His strength their own weakness. The higher their standard rises, the lower falls their estimate of themselves; till, in utter humiliation and self-distrust, they seek comfort ere alone it can be found—in *faith*—in utter faith and trust in that very moral perfection of Christ which shames and dazzles them, and yet is their only hope. To trust in Him for themselves and all they love. To trust that, just because Christ is so magnificent, He will pity, and not despise, our meanness. Just because He is so pure, and righteous, and true, and lovely, He will appreciate, and not abhor, our struggles after purity, righteousness, truth, love, however imperfect, however soiled with failure—and with worse. Just because He is so unlike us, He will smile graciously upon our feeblest attempts to be like Him. Just because He has borne the sins and carried the sorrows of mankind, therefore those who come to Him He will in no wise cast out. Amen.

SERMON V. ADVENT LESSONS

Westminster Abbey, First Sunday in Advent, 1873.

Romans vii. 22-25. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This is the first Sunday in Advent. To-day we have prayed that God would give us grace to put away the works of darkness, and put on us the armour of light. Next Sunday we shall pray that, by true understanding of the Scriptures, we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. The Sunday after that the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries may prepare His way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—the next, that His grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us from the sins which hinder us in running the race set before us.

But I do not think that we shall understand those collects, or indeed the meaning of Advent itself, or the reason why we keep the season of Advent year by year, unless we first understand the prayer which we offered up last Sunday, "Stir up, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people,"—and we shall understand that prayer just in proportion as we have in us the Spirit of God, or the spirit of the world, which is the spirit of unbelief.

Worldly people say—and say openly, just now—that this prayer is all a dream. They say God will not stir up men's wills to do good any more than to do harm. He leaves men to themselves to get through life as they can. This Heavenly Father of whom you speak will not give His holy spirit to those who ask Him. He does not, as one of your Collects says, put into men's minds good desires—they come to a man entirely from outside a man, from his early teaching, his youthful impressions, as they are called now-a-days. He does not either give men grace and power to put these desires into practice. That depends entirely on the natural strength of a man's character; and that, again, depends principally on the state of his brain. So, says the world, if you wish your own character to improve, you must improve it yourself, for God will not improve it for you. But, after all, why should you try to improve? why not be content to be just what you are? you did not make yourself, and you are not responsible for being merely what God has chosen to make you.

This is what worldly men say, or at least what they believe and act on; and this is the reason why there is so little improvement in the world, because men do not ask God to improve their hearts and stir up their wills. I say, very little improvement. Men talk loudly of the enlightenment of the age, and the progress of the species, and the spread of civilisation, and so forth: but when I read old books, and compare old times with these, I confess I do not see so much of it as all this hopeful talk would lead me to expect. Men in general have grown more prudent, more cunning, from long experience. They have found out that certain sins do not pay—that is, they interfere with people's comfort and their power of making money, and therefore they prudently avoid them themselves, and put them down by law in other men's cases. Men have certainly grown more good-natured, in some countries, in that they dislike more than their ancestors did, to inflict bodily torture on human beings; but they are just as ready, or even more ready, to inflict on those whom they dislike that moral and mental torture which to noble souls is worse than any bodily pain. As for any real improvement in human nature—where is it? There is just as much falsehood, cheating, and covetousness, I believe, in the world as ever there was; just as much cant and hypocrisy, and perhaps more; just as much envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness. Is not the condition of the masses in many great cities as degraded and as sad as ever was that of the serfs in the middle ages? Do not the poor still die by tens of thousands of fevers, choleras, and other diseases, which we know perfectly how to prevent, and yet have not the will to prevent? Is not the adulteration of food just now as scandalous as it is unchecked?

The sins and follies of human nature have been repressed in one direction only to break out another.

And as for open and coarse sin, people complain even now, and I fear with justice, that there is more drunkenness in England at this moment than there ever was. So much for our boasted improvement.

Look again at the wars of the world. Five-and-twenty years ago, one used to be told that the human race was grown too wise to go to war any more, and that we were to have an advent of universal peace and plenty, and since then we have seen some seven great wars, the last the most terrible of all,—and ever since, all the nations of Europe have been watching each other in distrust and dread, increasing their armaments, working often night and day at forging improved engines of destruction, wherewith to kill their fellow-men. Not that I blame that. It is necessary. Yes! but the hideous thing is, that it should be necessary. Does that state of things look much like progress of the human race?

Can we say that mankind is much improved, either in wisdom or in love, while all the nations of Europe are spending millions merely to be ready to fight they know not whom, they know not why?

No, my good friends, obey the wise man, and clear your minds of cant—man's pretensions, man's boastfulness, man's power of blinding his own eyes to plain facts—above all, to the plain fact that he does not succeed, even in this world of which he fancies himself the master, because he lives without God in the world. All this saddens, I had almost said, sickens, a thoughtful man, till he turns away from this noisy sham improvement of mankind—the wages of sin, which are death, to St John's account of the true improvement of mankind, the true progress of the species,—the gift of God which is eternal life. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I saw the Holy City—New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Does that sound much like a general increase of armaments? or like bills for the prevention of pestilence, or of drunkenness,—which, even if they pass, will both probably fail to do the good which they propose? No. And if this wicked world is to be mended, then God must stir up the wills of His faithful people, and we must pray without ceasing for ourselves, and for all for whom we are bound to pray, that He would stir them up. For what we want is not knowledge; we have enough of that, and too much. Too much; for knowing so much and doing so little, what an account will be required of us at the last day!

No. It is the will which we want, in a hundred cases. Take that of pestilential dwelling-houses in our great towns. Every one knows that they ought to be made healthy; every one knows that they can be made healthy. But the will to make them healthy is not here, and they are left to breed disease and death. And so, as in a hundred instances, shallow philosophers are proved, by facts, to be mistaken, when they tell us that man will act up to the best of his knowledge without God's help. For that is exactly what man does not. What is wrong with the world in general, is wrong likewise more or less with you and me, and with all human beings; for after all, the world is made up of human beings; and the sin of the world is nothing save the sins of each and all human beings put together; and the world will be renewed and come right again, just as far and no farther, as each human being is renewed and comes right. The only sure method, therefore, of setting the world right, is to begin by setting our own little part of the world right—in a word, setting ourselves right.

But if we begin to try, that, we find, is just what we cannot do. When a man begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and, discontented with himself, attempts to improve himself, he soon begins to find a painful truth in many a word of the Bible and the Prayer Book to which he gave little heed, as long as he was contented with himself, and with doing just what pleased him, right or wrong.

He soon finds out that he has no power of himself to help himself, that he is tied and bound with the burden of his sins, and that he cannot, by reason of his frailty, stand upright—that he actually is sore let and hindered by his own sins, from running the race set before him, and doing his duty where God

has put him. All these sayings come home to him as actual facts, most painful facts, but facts which he cannot deny. He soon finds out the meaning and the truth of that terrible struggle between the good in him and the evil in him, of which St Paul speaks so bitterly in the text. How, when he tries to do good, evil is present with him. How he delights in the law of God with his inward mind, and yet finds another law in his body, warring against the law of God, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. How he is crippled by old bad habits, weakened by cowardice, by laziness, by vanity, by general inability of will, till he is ready,—disgusted at himself and his own weakness,—to cry, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Let him but utter that cry honestly. Let him once find out that he wants something outside himself to help him, to deliver him, to strengthen him, to stir up his weak will, to give him grace and power to do what he knows instead of merely admiring it, and leaving it undone. Let a man only find out that. Let him see that he needs a helper, a deliverer, a strengthener—in one word, a Saviour—and he will find one. I verily believe that, sooner or later, the Lord Jesus Christ will reveal to that man what He revealed to St Paul; that He Himself will deliver him; and that, like St Paul, after crying “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” he will be able to answer himself, I thank God—God will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ will deliver me from the bonds of my sins, Christ will stir up this weak will of mine, Christ will give me strength and power, faithfully to fulfil all my good desires, because He Himself has put them into my heart not to mock me, not to disappoint me—not to make me wretched with the sight of noble graces and virtues to which I cannot attain, but to fulfil His work in me. What He has begun in me He will carry on in me. He has sown the seed in me, and He will make it bear fruit, if only I pray to Him, day by day, for strength to do what I know I ought to do, and cry morning and night to Him, the fount of life, Stir up my will, O Lord, that I may bring forth the fruit of good works, for then by Thee I shall be plentifully rewarded.

So the man gains hope and heart for himself, and so, if he will but think rationally and humbly, he may gain hope and heart for this poor sinful world. For what has come true for him may come true for any man. Who is he that God should care more for him than for others? Who is he that God should help him when he prays, more than He will help His whole church if it will but pray? He says to himself, all this knowledge of what is right; all these good desires, all these longings after a juster, purer, nobler, happier state of things; there they are up and down the world already, though, alas! they have borne little enough fruit as yet. Be it so. But God put them into my heart. And who save God has put them into the world's heart? It was God who sowed the seed in me; surely it is God who has sowed it in other men? And if God has made it bear even the poorest fruit in me, why should He not make it bear fruit in other men and in all the world? All they need is that God should stir up their wills, that they may do the good they know, and attain the blessedness after which they long.

And then, if the man have a truly human, truly reasonable heart in him—he feels that he can pray for others as well as for himself. He feels that he must pray for them, and cry,—Thou alone canst make men strong to do the right thing, and Thou wilt make them. Stir up their wills, O Lord!

Thou canst not mean that all the good seed which is sown about the world should die and wither, and bring no fruit to perfection. Surely Thy word will not return to Thee void, but be like the rain which comes down from heaven, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Oh, strengthen such as stand, and comfort and help the weak-hearted, and raise up them that fall, and, finally, beat down Satan and all the powers of evil under our feet, and pour out thy spirit on all flesh, that so their Father's name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And so will come the one and only true progress of the human race—which is, that all men should become faithful and obedient citizens of the holy city, the kingdom of God, which is the Church of Christ.

To which may God in His mercy bring us all, and our children after us. Amen.

This, then, is the lesson why we are met together this Advent day. We are met to pray that God would so help us by His grace and mercy that we may bring forth the fruit of good works, and that

when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come in His glorious majesty to judge the quick and the dead, we, and our descendants after us, may be found an acceptable people in His sight.

We are met to pray, in a National Church, for the whole nation of England, that all orders and degrees therein may, each in his place and station, help forward the hallowing of God's name, the coming of His kingdom, the doing of His will on earth. We are met to pray for the Queen and all that are in authority, that these Advent collects may be fulfilled in them, and by them, for the good of the whole people; for the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries, that the same collects may be fulfilled by them and in them, till they turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; for the Commons of this nation, that each man may be delivered, by God's grace and mercy, from the special sin which besets him in this faithless and worldly generation and hinders him from running the race of duty which is set before him, and get strength from God so to live that in that dread day he may meet his Judge and King, not in tenor and in shame, but in loyalty and in humble hope.

But more—we are here to worship God in Christ, both God and man. To confess that without Him we can do nothing, that unless He enlighten our understandings we are dark, unless He stir up our wills we are powerless for good. To confess that though we have forgotten Him, yet He has not forgotten us. That He is the same gracious and generous Giver and Saviour. That though we deny Him He cannot deny Himself. That He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever as when He came to visit this earth in great humility. That the Lord is King, though the earth be moved. He sitteth upon His throne, be the nations never so unquiet. We are here to declare to ourselves and all men, and the whole universe, that we at least believe that the heavens and earth are full of His glory. We are here to declare that, whether or not the kings of the earth are wise enough, or the judges of it learned enough, to acknowledge Christ for their king, we at least will worship the Son lest He be angry, and so we perish from the right way; for if His wrath be kindled, yea but a little, then blessed are they, and they only, who put their trust in Him. We are here to join our songs with angels round the throne, and with those pure and mighty beings who, in some central sanctuary of the universe, cry for ever, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

We do so in ancient words, ancient music, ancient ceremonies, for a token that Christ's rule and glory is an ancient rule and an eternal glory; that it is no new discovery of our own, and depends not on our own passing notions and feelings about it, but is like Christ, the same now as in the days of our forefathers, the same as it was fifteen hundred years ago, the same as it has been since the day that He stooped to be born of the Virgin Mary, the same that it will be till He shall come in His glory to judge the quick and the dead. Therefore we delight in the ancient ceremonial, as like as we can make it, to that of the earlier and purer ages of the Church, when Christianity was still, as it were, fresh from the hand of its Creator, ere yet it had been debased and defiled by the idolatrous innovations of the Church of Rome. For so we confess ourselves bound by links of gratitude to the Apostles, and the successors of the Apostles, and to all which has been best, purest, and truest in the ages since. So we confess that we worship the same God-man of whom Apostles preached, of whom fathers philosophised, and for whom martyrs died. That we believe, like them, that He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords; that there is no progress, civilization, or salvation in this life or the life to come, but through His undeserved mercy and His strengthening grace; that He has reigned from the creation of the world, reigns now, and will reign unto that last dread day, when He shall have put all enemies under His feet, and delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. Unto which day may He in His mercy bring us all through faith and good works: Amen.

SERMON VI. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Eversley. Quinquagesima Sunday, 1872.

Genesis ix. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6. “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. . . . Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you . . .

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

This is God’s blessing on mankind. This is our charter from God, who made and rules this earth. This is the end and duty of our mortal life:—to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it. But is that all? Is there no hint in this blessing of God of something more than our mortal life—something beyond our mortal life? Surely there is. Those words—“in the image of God made He man,” must mean, if they mean anything, that man can, if he will but be a true man, share the eternal life of God. But I will not speak of that to-day, but rather of a question about his mortal life in this world, which is this:—What is the reason why man has a right over the lives of animals? why he may use them for his food? and at the same time, what is the reason why he has not the same right over the lives of his fellow-men? why he may not use them for food?

It is this—that “in the image of God made He man.” Man is made in the image and likeness of God, therefore he is a sacred creature; a creature, not merely an animal, and the highest of all animals, only cunninger than all animals, more highly organised, more delicately formed than all animals; but something beyond an animal. He is in the likeness of God, therefore he is consecrated to God. He is the one creature on earth whom God, so far as we know, is trying to make like Himself. Therefore, whosoever kills a man, sins not only against that man, nor against society: he sins against God. And God will require that man’s blood at the hand of him who slays him. But how? At the hand of every beast will He require it, and at the hand of every man.

What that first part of the law means I cannot tell. How God will require from the lion, or the crocodile, or the shark, who eats a human being, the blood of their victims, is more than I can say.

But this I can say—that the feeling, not only of horror and pity, but of real rage and indignation, with which men see (what God grant you never may see) a wild beast kill a man, is a witness in man’s conscience that the text is true somehow, though how we know not. I received a letter a few weeks since from an officer, a very remarkable person, in which he described his horror and indignation at seeing a friend of his struck down and eaten by a tiger, and how, when next day he stood over what had been but the day before a human being, he looked up to heaven, and kept repeating the words of the text, “in the image of God made He man,” in rage and shame, and almost accusing God for allowing His image to be eaten by a brute beast. It shook, for the moment, his faith in God’s justice and goodness. That man was young then, and has grown calmer and wiser now, and has regained a deeper and sounder faith in God. But the shock, he said, was dreadful to him. He felt that the matter was not merely painful and pitiable, but that it was a wrong and a crime; and on the faith of this very text, a wrong and a crime I believe it to be, and one which God knows how to avenge and to correct when man cannot. Somehow—for He has ways of which we poor mortals do not dream—at the hand of every beast will He require the blood of man.

But more; at the hand of every man will He require it. And how? The text tells us, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.” Now, I do not doubt but that the all-seeing God, looking back on what had most probably happened on this earth already, and looking forward to what would happen, and happens, alas! too often now, meant to warn men against the awful crime of cannibalism, of eating their fellow-men as they would eat an animal. By so doing, they not only treated their fellow-men as beasts, but they behaved like beasts

themselves. They denied that their victim was made in the likeness of God; they denied that they were made in the likeness of God; they willingly and deliberately put on the likeness of beasts, and as beasts they were to perish. Now, this is certain, that savages who eat men—and alas! there are thousands even now who do so—usually know in their hearts that they are doing wrong. As soon as their consciences are the least awakened, they are ashamed of their cannibalism; they lie about it, try to conceal it; and as soon as God's grace begins to work on them, it is the very first sin that they give up. And next, this is certain, that there is a curse upon it. No cannibal people, so far as I can find, have ever risen or prospered in the world; and the cannibal peoples now-a-days, and for the last three hundred years, have been dying out. By their own vices, diseases, and wars, they perish off the face of the earth, in the midst of comfort and plenty; and, in spite of all the efforts of missionaries, even their children and grand-children, after giving up the horrid crime, and becoming Christians, seem to have no power of living and increasing, but dwindle away, and perish off the earth. Yes, God's laws work in strange and subtle ways; so darkly, so slowly, that the ungodly and sinners often believe that there are no laws of God, and say—"Tush, how should God perceive it? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" But the laws work, nevertheless, whether men are aware of them or not. "The mills of God grind slowly," but sooner or later they grind the sinner to powder.

And now I will leave this hateful subject and go on to another, on which I am moved to speak once and for all, because it is much in men's minds just now—I mean what is vulgarly called "capital punishment," the punishing of murder by death. Now the text, which is the ancient covenant of God with man, speaks very clearly on this point. "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Man is made in the likeness of God. That is the ground of our law about murder, as it is the ground of all just and merciful law; that gives man his right to slay the murderer; that makes it his duty to slay the murderer. He has to be jealous of God's likeness, and to slay, in the name of God, the man who, by murder, outrages the likeness of God in himself and in his victim.

You all know that there is now-a-days a strong feeling among some persons about capital punishment; that there are those who will move heaven and earth to interfere with the course of justice, and beg off the worst of murderers, on any grounds, however unreasonable, fanciful, even unfair; simply because they have a dislike to human beings being hanged. I believe, from long consideration, that these persons' strange dislike proceeds from their not believing sufficiently that man is made in the image of God. And, alas! it proceeds, I fear, in some of them, from not believing in a God at all—believing, perhaps, in some mere maker of the world, but not in the living God which Scripture sets forth. For how else can they say, as I have known some say, that capital punishment is wrong, because "we have no right to usher a man into the presence of his Maker."

Into the presence of his Maker! Why, where else is every man, you and I, heathen and Christian, bad and good, save in the presence of his Maker already? Do we not live and move and have our being in God? Whither can we go from His spirit, or whither can we flee from His presence? If we ascend into heaven, He is there. If we go down to hell He is there also. And if the law puts a man to death, it does not usher him into the presence of his Maker, for he is there already. It simply says to him, "God has judged you on earth, not we. God will judge you in the next world, not we. All we know is, that you are not fit to live in this world. All our duty is to send you out of it. Where you will go in the other world is God's matter, not ours, and the Lord have mercy on your soul."

And this want of faith in a living God lies at the bottom of another objection. We are to keep murderers alive in order to convert and instruct and amend them. The answer is, We shall be most happy to amend anybody of any fault, however great: but the experience of ages is that murderers are past mending; that the fact of a man's murdering another is a plain proof that he has no moral sense, and has become simply a brute animal. Our duty is to punish not to amend, and to say to the murderer, "If you can be amended; God will amend you, and so have mercy on your soul. God must amend you, if you are to be amended. If God cannot amend you, we cannot. If God will not amend you, certainly we cannot force Him to do so, if we kept you alive for a thousand years." That would

seem reasonable, as well as reverent and faithful to God. But men now-a-days fancy that they love their fellow creatures far better than God loves them, and can deal far more wisely and lovingly with them than God is willing to deal. Of these objections I take little heed. I look on them as merely loose cant, which does not quite understand the meaning of its own words, and I trust to sound, hard, English common sense to put them aside.

But there is another objection to capital punishment, which we must deal with much more respectfully and tenderly; for it is made by certain good people, people whom we must honour, though we differ from them, for no set of people have done more (according to their numbers) for education, for active charity, and for benevolence, and for peace and good will among the nations of the earth.

And they say, you must not take the life of a murderer, just because he is made in God's image.

Well, I should have thought that God Himself was the best judge of that. That, if God truly said that man was made in His image, and said, moreover, as it were at the same moment, that, therefore, whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed—our duty was to trust God, to obey God, and to do our duty against the murderer, however painful to our feelings it might be. But I believe these good people make their mistake from forgetting this; that if the murderer be made in God's image and likeness, so is the man whom he murders; and so also is the jury who convict him, the judge who condemns him, and the nation (the society of men) for whom they act.

And this, my dear friends, brings us to the very root of the meaning of law. Man has sense to make laws (which animals cannot do), just because he is made in the likeness of God, and has the sense of right and wrong. Man has the right to enforce laws, to see right done and wrong punished, just because he is made in the likeness of God. The laws of a country, as far as they are just and righteous, are the copy of what the men of that country have found out about right and wrong, and about how much right they can get done, and how much wrong punished. So, just as the men of a country are (in spite of all their sins) made in the likeness of God, so the laws of a country (in spite of all their defects) are a copy of God's will, as to what men should or should not do. And that, and no other, is the true reason why the judge or magistrate has authority over either property, liberty, or life. He is God's servant, the servant of Christ, who is King of this land and of all lands, and of all governments, and all kings and rulers of the earth. He sits there in God's name, to see God's will done, as far as poor fallible human beings can get it done. And, because he is, not merely as a man, but, by his special authority, in the likeness of God, who has power over life and death, therefore he also, as far as his authority goes, has power over life and death. That is my opinion, and that was the opinion of St. Paul. For what does he say—and say not (remember always) of Christian magistrates in a Christian country, but actually of heathen Roman magistrates? “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Thus spoke out the tenderest-hearted, most Christ-like human being, perhaps, who ever trod this earth, who, in his intense longing to save sinners, endured a life of misery and danger, and finished it by martyrdom. But there was no sentimentality, no soft indulgence in him. He knew right from wrong; common sense from cant; duty from public opinion; and divine charity from the mere cowardly dislike of witnessing pain, not so much because it pains the person punished, as because it pains the spectator. He knew that Christ was King of kings, and what Christ's kingdom was like. He had discovered the divine and wonderful order of men and angels. He saw that one part of that order was—“the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

But some say that capital punishment is inconsistent with the mild religion of Christ—the religion of mercy and love. “The mild religion of Christ!” Do these men know of Whom they talk?

Do they know that, if the Bible be true, the God who said, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,” is the very same Being, the very same God, who was born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate—the very same Christ who took little children up in His arms and blessed them, the very same Word of God, too, of whom it is written, that out of His mouth goeth

a two-edged sword, that He may smite the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God? These are awful words, but, my dear friends, I can only ask you if you think them too awful to be true? Do you believe the Christian religion? Do you believe the Creeds? Do you believe the Bible? For if you do, then you believe that the Lord Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, is the Maker, the Master, the Ruler of this world, and of all worlds. By what laws He rules other worlds we know not, save that they are, because they must be—just and merciful laws. But of the laws by which He rules this world we do know, by experience, that His laws are of most terrible and unbending severity, as I have warned you again and again, and shall warn you, as long as there is a liar or an idler, a drunkard or an adulteress in this parish.

And if this be so—if Christ be a God of severity as well as a God of love, a God who punishes sinners as well as a God who forgives penitents—what then? We are, He tells us, made in His likeness.

Then, according to His likeness we must behave. We must copy His love, by helping the poor and afflicted, the weak and the oppressed. But we must copy His severity, by punishing whenever we have the power, without cowardice or indulgence, all wilful offenders; and, above all, the man who destroys God's image in himself, by murdering and destroying the mortal life of a man made in the image of God. And more; if we be made in the likeness of God and of Christ, we must remember, morning and night, and all day long, that most awful and most blessed fact. We must say to ourselves, again and again, "I am not a mere animal, and like a mere animal I must not behave; I dare not behave like a mere animal, for I was made in the likeness of God; and when I was baptised the Spirit of God took possession of me to restore me to God's likeness, and to call out and perfect God's likeness in me all my life long. Therefore, I am no mere animal; and never was intended to be. I am the temple of God; my body and soul belong to God, and not to my own fancies and passions and lusts, and whosoever defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy."

Therefore, this is our duty, this is our only hope or safety—to do our best to keep alive and strong the likeness of God in ourselves; to try to grow, not more and more mean, and brutal, and carnal, but more and more noble, and human, and spiritual; to crush down our base passions, our selfish inclinations, by the help of the Spirit of God, and to think of and to pray for, whatsoever is like Christ and like God; to pray for a noble love of what is good and noble, for a noble hate of what is bad; and whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report to think of these things. And to pray, too, for forgiveness from Christ, and for the sake of Christ, whenever we have yielded to our low passions, and defiled the likeness of God in us, and grieved His Spirit, lest at the last day it be said to us, if not in words yet in acts, which there will be no mistaking, no escaping,—“I made thee in My likeness in the beginning of the creation, I redeemed thee into My likeness on the cross, I baptised thee into My likeness by my Holy Spirit; and what hast thou done with My likeness?

Thou hast cast it away, thou hast let it die out in thee, thou hast lived after the flesh and not after the spirit, and hast put on the likeness of the carnal man, the likeness of the brute. Thou hast copied the vanity of the peacock, the silliness of the ape, the cunning of the fox, the rapacity of the tiger, the sensuality of the swine; but thou hast not copied God, thy God, who died that thou mightest live, and be a man. Then, thou hast destroyed God's likeness, for thou hast destroyed it in thyself. Thou hast slain a man, for thou hast slain thy own manhood, and art thine own murderer, and thine own blood shall be required at thy hand. That which thou hast done to God's likeness in thee, shall be done to that which remains of thee in a second death.”

And from that may Christ in His mercy deliver us all. Amen.

SERMON VII. TEMPTATION

Eversley, 1872. Chester Cathedral, 1872.

St Matt. iv. 3. “And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

Let me say a few words to-day about a solemn subject, namely, Temptation. I do not mean the temptations of the flesh—the temptations which all men have to yield to the low animal nature in them, and behave like brutes. I mean those deeper and more terrible temptations, which our Lord conquered in that great struggle with evil which is commonly called His temptation in the wilderness.

These were temptations of an evil spirit—the temptations which entice some men, at least, to behave like devils.

Now these temptations specially beset religious men—men who are, or fancy themselves, superior to their fellow-men, more favoured by God, and with nobler powers, and grander work to do, than the common average of mankind. But specially, I say, they beset those who are, or fancy themselves, the children of God. And, therefore, I humbly suppose our Lord had to endure and to conquer these very temptations because He was not merely a child of God, but the Son of God—the perfect Man, made in the perfect likeness of His Father. He had to endure these temptations, and to conquer them, that He might be able to succour us when we are tempted, seeing that He was tempted in like manner as we are, yet without sin.

Now it has been said, and, I think, well said, that what proves our Lord's three temptations to have been very subtle and dangerous and terrible, is this—that we cannot see at first sight that they were temptations at all. The first two do not look to us to be wrong. If our Lord could make stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, why should He not do so? If He could prove to the Jews that He was the Son of God, their divine King and Saviour, by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and being miraculously supported in the air by angels—if He could do that, why should He not do it? And lastly, the third temptation looks at first sight so preposterous that it seems silly of the evil spirit to have hinted at it. To ask any man of piety, much less the Son of God Himself, to fall down and worship the devil, seems perfectly absurd—a request not to be listened to for a moment, but put aside with contempt.

Well, my friends, and the very danger of these spiritual temptations is—that they do not look like temptations. They do not look ugly, absurd, wrong, they look pleasant, reasonable, right.

The devil, says the apostle, transforms himself at times into an angel of light. If so, then he is certainly far more dangerous than if he came as an angel of darkness and horror. If you met some venomous snake, with loathsome spots upon his scales, his eyes full of rage and cunning, his head raised to strike at you, hissing and showing his fangs, there would be no temptation to have to do with him. You would know that you had to deal with an evil beast, and must either kill him or escape from him at once. But if, again, you met, as you may meet in the tropics, a lovely little coral snake, braided with red and white, its mouth so small that it seems impossible that it can bite, and so gentle that children may take it up and play with it, then you might be tempted, as many a poor child has been ere now, to admire it, fondle it, wreath it round the neck for a necklace, or round the arm for a bracelet, till the play goes one step too far, the snake loses its temper, gives one tiny scratch upon the lip or finger, and that scratch is certain death. That would be a temptation indeed; one all the more dangerous because there is, I am told, another sort of coral snake perfectly harmless, which is so exactly like the deadly one, that no child, and few grown people, can know them apart.

Even so it is with our worst temptations. They look sometimes so exactly like what is good and noble and useful and religious, that we mistake the evil for the good, and play with it till it stings us, and we find out too late that the wages of sin are death. Thus religious people, just because they are religious, are apt to be specially tempted to mistake evil for good, to do something specially wrong,

when they think they are doing something specially right, and so give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; till, as a hard and experienced man of the world once said: “Whenever I hear a man talking of his conscience, I know that he is going to do something particularly foolish; whenever I hear of a man talking of his duty, I know that he is going to do something particularly cruel.”

Do I say this to frighten you away from being religious? God forbid. Better to be religious and to fear and love God, though you were tempted by all the devils out of the pit, than to be irreligious and a mere animal, and be tempted only by your own carnal nature, as the animals are. Better to be tempted, like the hermits of old, and even to fall and rise again, singing, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise;” than to live the life of the flesh, “like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains.” It is the price a man must pay for hungering and thirsting after righteousness, for longing to be a child of God in spirit and in truth. “The devil,” says a wise man of old, “does not tempt bad men, because he has got them already; he tempts good men, because he has *not* got them, and wants to get them.”

But how shall we know these temptations? God knows, my friends, better than I; and I trust that He will teach you to know, according to what each of you needs to know. But as far as my small experience goes, the root of them all is pride and self-conceit. Whatsoever thoughts or feelings tempt us to pride and self-conceit are of the devil, not of God. The devil is specially the spirit of pride; and, therefore, whatever tempts you to fancy yourself something different from your fellow-men, superior to your fellow men, safer than them, more favoured by God than them, that is a temptation of the spirit of pride. Whatever tempts you to think that you can do without God’s help and God’s providence; whatever tempts you to do anything extraordinary, and show yourself off, that you may make a figure in the world; and above all, whatever tempts you to antinomianism, that is, to fancy that God will overlook sins in you which He will not overlook in other men—all these are temptations from the spirit of pride. They are temptations like our Lord’s temptations. These temptations came on our Lord more terribly than they ever can on you and me, just because He was the Son of Man, the perfect Man, and, therefore, had more real reason for being proud (if such a thing could be) than any man, or than all men put together. But He conquered the temptations because He was perfect Man, led by the Spirit of God; and, therefore, He knew that the only way to be a perfect man was not to be proud, however powerful, wise, and glorious He might be; but to submit Himself humbly and utterly, as every man should do, to the will of His Father in Heaven, from whom alone His greatness came.

Now the spirit of pride cannot understand the beauty of humility, and the spirit of self-will cannot understand the beauty of obedience; and, therefore, it is reasonable to suppose the devil could not understand our Lord. If He be the Son of God, so might Satan argue, He has all the more reason to be proud; and, therefore, it is all the more easy to tempt Him into shewing His pride, into proving Himself a conceited, self-willed, rebellious being—in one word, an evil spirit.

And therefore (as you will see at first sight) the first two temptations were clearly meant to tempt our Lord to pride; for would they not tempt you and me to pride? If we could feed ourselves by making bread of stones, would not that make us proud enough? So proud, I fear, that we should soon fancy that we could do without God and His providence, and were masters of nature and all her secrets. If you and I could make the whole city worship and obey us, by casting ourselves off this cathedral unhurt, would not that make us proud enough? So proud, I fear, that we should end in committing some great folly, or great crime in our conceit and vainglory.

Now, whether our Lord could or could not have done these wonderful deeds, one thing is plain—that He would not do them; and, therefore, we may presume that He ought not to have done them.

It seems as if He did not wish to be a wonderful man: but only a perfectly good man, and He would do nothing to help Himself but what any other man could do. He answered the evil spirit simply out of Scripture, as any other pious man might have done. When He was bidden to make the stones into bread, He answers not as the Eternal Son of God, but simply as a man. “It is written:”—it is the belief of Moses and the old prophets of my people that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every

word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God:—as much as to say, If I am to be delivered out of this need, God will deliver me by some means or other, just as He delivers other men out of their needs.

When He was bidden cast Himself from the temple, and so save Himself, probably from sorrow, poverty, persecution, and the death on the cross, He answers out of Scripture as any other Jew would have done. “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” He says nothing—this is most important—of His being the eternal Son of God. He keeps that in the background. There the fact was; but He veiled the glory of His godhead, that He might assert the rights of His manhood, and shew that mere man, by the help of the Spirit of God, could obey God, and keep His commandments.

I say these last words with all diffidence and humility, and trusting that the Lord will pardon any mistake which I may make about His Divine Words. I only say them because wiser men than I have often taken the same view already. Of course there is more, far more, in this wonderful saying than we can understand, or ever will understand. But this I think is plain—that our Lord determined to behave as any and every other man ought to have done in His place; in order to shew all God’s children the example of perfect humility and perfect obedience to God.

But again, the devil asked our Lord to fall down and worship him. Now how could that be a temptation to pride? Surely that was asking our Lord to do anything but a proud action, rather the most humiliating and most base of all actions. My friends, it seems to me that if our Lord had fallen down and worshipped the evil spirit, He would have given way to the spirit of pride utterly and boundlessly; and I will tell you why.

The devil wanted our Lord to do evil that good might come. It would have been a blessing, that all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of man should be our Lord’s,—the very blessing for this poor earth which He came to buy, and which He bought with His own precious blood. And here the devil offered Him the very prize for which He came down on earth, without struggle or difficulty, if He would but do, for one moment, one wrong thing. What temptation that would be to our Lord as God, I dare not say. But that to our Lord as Man, it must have been the most terrible of all temptations, I can well believe: because history shews us, and, alas! our own experience in modern times shews us, persons yielding to that temptation perpetually; pious people, benevolent people, people who long to spread the Bible, to convert sinners, to found charities, to amend laws, to set the world right in some way or other, and who fancy that therefore, in carrying out their fine projects, they have a right to do evil that good may come.

This is a very painful subject; all the more painful just now, because I sometimes think it is the special sin of this country and this generation, and that God will bring on us some heavy punishment for it. But all who know the world in its various phases, and especially what are called the religious world, and the philanthropic world, and the political world, know too well that men, not otherwise bad men, will do things and say things, to carry out some favourite project or movement, or to support some party, religious or other, which they would (I hope) be ashamed to say and do for their own private gain. Now what is this, but worshipping the evil spirit, in order to get power over this world, that they may (as they fancy) amend it? And what is this but self-conceit—ruinous, I had almost said, blasphemous? These people think themselves so certainly in the right, and their plans so absolutely necessary to the good of the world, that God has given them a special licence to do what they like in carrying them out; that He will excuse in them falsehoods and meannesses, even tyranny and violences which He will excuse in no one else.

Now, is not this self-conceit? What would you think of a servant who disobeyed you, cheated you, and yet said to himself—No matter, my master dare not turn me off: I am so useful that he cannot do without me. Even so in all ages, and now as much as, or more than ever, have men said, We are so necessary to God and God’s cause, that He cannot do without us; and therefore though He hates sin in everyone else, He will excuse sin in us, as long as we are about His business.

Therefore, my dear friends, whenever we are tempted to do or say anything rash, or vain, or mean, because we are the children of God; whenever we are inclined to be puffed up with spiritual

pride, and to fancy that we may take liberties which other men must not take, because we are the children of God; let us remember the words of the text, and answer the tempter, when he says, If thou be the Son of God, do this and that, as our Lord answered him—“If I be the Child of God, what then? This—that I must behave as if God were my Father. I must trust my God utterly, and I must obey Him utterly. I must do no rash or vain thing to tempt God, even though it looks as if I should have a great success, and do much good thereby. I must do no mean or base thing, nor give way for a moment to the wicked ways of this wicked world, even though again it looks as if I should have a great success, and do much good thereby. In one word, I must worship my Father in heaven, and Him only must I serve. If He wants me, He will use me. If He does not want me, He will use some one else. Who am I, that God cannot govern the world without my help? My business is to refrain my soul, and keep it low, even as a weaned child, and not to meddle with matters too high for me.

My business is to do the little, simple, everyday duties which lie nearest me, and be faithful in a few things; and then, if Christ will, He may make me some day ruler over many things, and I shall enter into the joy of my Lord, which is the joy of doing good to my fellow men. But I shall never enter into that by thrusting myself into Christ's way, with grand schemes and hasty projects, as if I knew better than He how to make His kingdom come. If I do, my pride will have a fall. Because I would not be faithful over a few things, I shall be tempted to be unfaithful over many things; and instead of entering into the joy of my Lord, I shall be in danger of the awful judgment pronounced on those who do evil that good may come, who shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will He protest unto them—I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Oh, my friends, in all your projects for good, as in all other matters which come before you in your mortal life, keep innocence and take heed to the thing that is right. For that, and that alone, shall bring a man peace at the last.

To which, may God in His mercy bring us all. Amen.

SERMON VIII. MOTHER'S LOVE

Eversley, Second Sunday in Lent, 1872.

St Matthew xv. 22-28. “And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

If you want a proof from Scripture that there are two sides to our blessed Lord's character—that He is a Judge and an Avenger as well as a Saviour and a Pardoner—that He is infinitely severe as well as infinitely merciful—that, while we may come boldly to His throne of grace to find help and mercy in time of need, we must, at the same time, tremble before His throne of justice—if you want a proof of all this, I say, then look at the Epistle and the Gospel for this day. Put them side by side, and compare them, and you will see how perfectly they shew, one after the other, the two sides.

The Epistle for the day tells men and women that they must lead moral, pure, and modest lives.

It does not advise them to do so. It does not say, It will be better to do so, more proper and conducive to the good of society, more likely to bring you to heaven at last. It says, You must, for it is the commandment of the Lord Jesus, and the will of God. Let no man encroach on or defraud his brother in the matter, says St Paul; by which he means, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife. And why? “Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.”

My friends, people talk loosely of the Thunder of Sinai and the rigour of Moses' law, and set them against what they call the gentle voice of the Gospel, and the mild religion of Christ. Why, here are the Thunders of Sinai uttered as loud as ever, from the very foot of the Cross of Christ; and the terrible, “Thou shalt not,” of Moses' law, with the curse of God for a penalty on the sinner, uttered by the Apostle of Faith, and Freedom, in the name of Christ and of God. St Paul is not afraid to call Christ an Avenger. How could he be? He believed that it was Christ who spoke to Moses on Sinai—the very same Christ who prayed for His murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And he knew that Christ was the eternal Son of God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that He had not changed since Moses' time, and could never change; that what He forbade in Moses' time, hated in Moses' time, and avenged in Moses' time, He would forbid, and hate, and avenge for ever. And that, therefore, he who despises the warnings of the Law despises not man merely, but God, who has also given to us His Holy Spirit to know what is unchangeable, the everlastingly right, from what is everlastingly wrong. So much for that side of our Lord's character; so much for sinners who, after their hardness and impenitent hearts, treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to St Paul's Gospel.

But, when we turn to the Gospel for the day, we see the other side of our Lord's character, boundless condescension and boundless charity. We see Him there still a Judge, as He always is and always will be, judging the secrets of a poor woman's heart, and that woman a heathen. He judges her openly, in public, before His disciples. But He is a Judge who judges righteous judgment, and not according to appearances; who is no respecter of persons; who is perfectly fair, even though the woman be a heathen: and, instead of condemning her and driving her away, He acquits her, He grants her prayer, He heals her daughter, even though that daughter was also a heathen, and one who knew Him not. I say our Lord judged the woman after He had tried her, as gold is tried in the fire. Why

He did so, we cannot tell. Perhaps He wanted, by the trial, to make her a better woman, to bring out something noble which lay in her heart unknown to her, though not to Him who knew what was in man. Perhaps He wished to shew his disciples, who looked down on her as a heathen dog, that a heathen, too, could have faith, humility, nobleness, and grace of heart. Be that as it may, when the poor woman came crying to Him, He answered her not a word. His disciples besought Him to send her away—and I am inclined to think that they wished Him to grant her what she asked, simply to be rid of her. “Send her away,” they said, “for she crieth after us.” Our Lord, we learn from St Mark, did not wish to be known in that place just then. The poor woman, with her crying, was drawing attention to them, and, perhaps, gathering a crowd. Somewhat noisy and troublesome, perhaps she was, in her motherly eagerness. But our Lord was still seemingly stern. He would not listen, it seemed, to His disciples any more than to the heathen woman. “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” So our Lord said, and (what is worth remembering) if He said so, what He said was true.

He was the King of the people of Israel, the Royal Prince of David’s line; and, as a man, His duty was only to His own people. And this woman was a Greek, a Syro-phenician by nation—of a mixed race of people, notoriously low and profligate, and old enemies of the Jews.

Then, it seems, He went into a house, and would have no man know it. But, says St Mark, “He could not be hid.” The mother’s wit found our Lord out, and the mother’s heart urged her on, and, in spite of all His rebuffs, she seems to have got into the house and worshipped Him. She “fell at His feet,” says St Mark—doubtless bowing her forehead to the ground, in the fashion of those lands—an honour which was paid, I believe, only to persons who were royal or divine. So she confessed that He was a king—perhaps a God come down on earth—and again she cried to Him. “Lord, help me.” And what was our Lord’s answer—seemingly more stern than ever? “Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it unto the dogs.” Hard words. Yes: but all depends on how they were spoken. All depends on our Lord’s look as He spoke them, and, even more, on the tone of His voice. We all know that two men may use the very same words to us;—and the one shall speak sneeringly, brutally, and raise in us indignation or despair; another shall use the same words, but solemnly, tenderly, and raise in us confidence and hope. And so it may have been—so, I fancy, it must have been—with the tone of our Lord’s voice, with the expression of His face.

Did He speak with a frown, or with something like a smile? There must have been some tenderness, meaningfulness, pity in His voice which the quick woman’s wit caught instantly, and the quick mother’s heart interpreted as a sign of hope.

Let Him call her a dog if He would. What matter to a mother to be called a dog, if she could thereby save her child from a devil? Perhaps she was little better than a dog. They were a bad people these Syrians, quick-witted, highly civilised, but vicious, and teaching vice to other nations, till some of the wisest Romans cursed the day when the Syrians first spread into Rome, and debauched the sturdy Romans with their new-fangled, foreign sins. They were a bad people, and, perhaps, she had been as bad as the rest. But if she were a dog, at least she felt that the dog had found its Master, and must fawn on Him, if it were but for the hope of getting something from Him.

And so, in the poor heathen mother’s heart, there rose up a whole heaven of perfect humility, faith, adoration. If she were base and mean, yet our Lord was great, and wise, and good; and that was all the more reason why He should be magnanimous, generous, condescending, like a true King, to the basest and meanest of His subjects. She asked not for money, or honour, or this world’s fine things: but simply for her child’s health, her child’s deliverance from some mysterious and degrading illness. Surely there was no harm in asking for that. It was simply a mother’s prayer, a simply human prayer, which our Lord must grant, if He were indeed a man of woman born, if He had a mother, and could feel for a mother, if He had human tenderness, human pity in Him. And so, with her quick Syrian wit, she answers our Lord with those wonderful words—perhaps the most pathetic words in the whole Bible—so full of humility, of reverence, and yet with a certain archness, almost playfulness, in

them, as it were, turning our Lord's words against Him; and, by that very thing, shewing how utterly she trusted Him,—“Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”

Those were the beautiful words—more beautiful to me than whole volumes of poetry—which our Lord had as it were crushed out of the woman's heart. Doubtless, He knew all the while that they were in her heart, though not as yet shaped into words. Doubtless, He was trying her, to shew His disciples—and all Christians who should ever read the Bible—what was in her heart, what she was capable of saying when it came to the point. So He tried her, and judged her, and acquitted her. Out of the abundance of her heart her mouth had spoken. By her words she was justified. By those few words she proved her utter faith in our Lord's power and goodness—perhaps her faith in His godhead.

By those words she proved the gentleness and humility, the graciousness and gracefulness of her own character. By those words she proved, too,—and oh, you that are mothers, is that nothing?—the perfect disinterestedness of her mother's love. And so she conquered—as the blessed Lord loves to be conquered—as all noble souls who are like their blessed Lord, love to be conquered—by the prayer of faith, of humility, of confidence, of earnestness, and she had her reward. “O woman,” said He, the Maker of all heaven and earth, “great is thy faith. For this saying go thy way. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. The devil is gone out of thy daughter.” She went, full of faith; and when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

One word more, and I have done. I do not think that any one who really took in the full meaning of this beautiful story, would ever care to pray to Saints, or to the Blessed Virgin, for help; fancying that they, and specially the Blessed Virgin, being a woman, are more humane than our Lord, and can feel more quickly, if not more keenly, for poor creatures in distress. We are not here to judge these people, or any people. To their own master they stand or fall. But for the honour of our Lord, we may say, Does not this story shew that the Lord is humane enough, tender enough, to satisfy all mankind?

Does not this story shew that even if He seem silent at first, and does not grant our prayers, yet still He may be keeping us waiting, as He kept this heathen woman, only that He may be gracious to us at last? Does not this story shew us especially that our Lord can feel for mothers and with mothers; that He actually allowed Himself to be won over—if I may use such a word in all reverence—by the wit and grace of a mother pleading for her child? Was it not so? “O woman, great is thy faith.

For this saying go thy way. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” Ah! are not those gracious words a comfort to every mother, bidding her, in the Lord's own name, to come boldly where mothers—of all human beings—have oftenest need to come, to the throne of Christ's grace, to find mercy, and grace to help in time of need?

Yes, my friends, such is our Lord, and such is our God. Infinite in severity to the scornful, the proud, the disobedient: infinite in tenderness to the earnest, the humble, the obedient. Let us come to Him, earnest, humble, obedient, and we shall find Him, indeed, a refuge of the soul and body in spirit and in truth.

Thou, O Lord, art all I want.
All and more in thee I find. Amen.

SERMON IX. GOOD FRIDAY

Eversley, 1856.

St. Luke xxiv. 5, 6. “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”

This is a very solemn day; for on this day the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. The question for us is, how ought we to keep it? that is, what sort of thoughts ought to be in our minds upon this day?

Now, many most excellent and pious persons, and most pious books, seem to think that we ought to-day to think as much as possible of the sufferings of our Blessed Lord; and because we cannot, of course, understand or imagine the sufferings of His Spirit, to think of what we can, that is, His bodily sufferings. They, therefore, seem to wish to fill our minds with the most painful pictures of agony, and shame, and death, and sorrow; and not only with our Lord's sorrows, but with those of His Blessed Mother, and of the disciples, and the holy women who stood by His cross; they wish to stir us up to pity and horror, and to bring before us the saddest parts of Holy Scripture, such as the Lamentations of Jeremiah; as well as dwell at great length upon very painful details, which may be all quite true, but of which Scripture says nothing; as so to make this day a day of darkness, and sorrow, and horror, just such as it would have been to us if we had stood by Christ's cross, like these holy women, without expecting Him to rise again, and believing that all was over—that all hope of Israel's being redeemed was gone, and that the wicked Jews had really conquered that perfectly good, and admirable Saviour, and put Him out of the world for ever.

Now, I judge no man; to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, and he shall stand, for God is able to make him stand. But it does seem to me that these good people are seeking the living among the dead, and forgetting that Christ is neither on the cross nor in the tomb, but that He is risen; and it seems to me better to bid you follow to-day the Bible and the Church Service, and to think of what they tell you to think of.

Now the Bible, it is most remarkable, never enlarges anywhere upon even the bodily sufferings of our dear and blessed Lord. The evangelists keep a silence on that point which is most lofty, dignified, and delicate. What sad and dreadful things might not St. John, the beloved apostle as he was, have said, if he had chosen, about what he saw and what he felt, as he stood by that cross on Calvary—words which would have stirred to pity the most cruel, and drawn tears from a heart of stone? And yet all he says is, “They crucified Him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” He passes it over, as it were, as a thing which he ought not to dwell on; and why should we put words into St. John's mouth which he did not think fit to put into his own? He wrote by the Spirit of God; and therefore he knew best what to say, and what not to say. Why should we try and say anything more for him? Scripture is perfect. Let us be content with it. The apostles, too, in their Epistles, never dwell on Christ's sufferings. I entreat you to remark this. They never mention His death except in words of cheerfulness and triumph. They seem so full of the glorious fruits of His death, that they have, as it were, no time to speak of the death itself. “Who, for the joy which was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” That is the apostles' key-note. For God's sake let it be ours too, unless we fancy that we can improve on Scripture, or that we can feel more for our Lord than St. Paul did.

In the Lessons, the Psalms, the Epistle, and Gospel for this day, you find just the same spirit. All except one Psalm are songs of hope, joy, deliverance, triumph. The Collects for this day, which are particularly remarkable, being three in number, and evidently meant to teach us the key-note of Good Friday, make no mention of our Lord's sufferings, save to say that He was *contented*, “contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross,” but are full of prayers that the glorious fruits of His death may be fulfilled, not only in us and all Christians, but in the very heathen who have not known Him; drawing us away, as it were, from looking too

closely upon the cross itself, lest we should forget what the cross meant, what the cross conquered, what the cross gained, for us and mankind.

Surely, this was not done without a reason. And I cannot but think the reason was to keep us from seeking the living among the dead; to keep us from knowing Christ any longer after the flesh, and spending tears and emotions over His bodily sufferings; to keep us from thinking and sorrowing too much over the dead Christ, lest we should forget, as some do, that He is alive for evermore; and while they weep over the dead Christ or the crucifix, go to the blessed Virgin and the saints to do for them all that the living Christ is longing to do for them, if they would but go straight to Him to whom all power is given in heaven and earth; whom St John saw, no longer hanging on the accursed tree, but with His hair as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire, and His voice like the sound of many waters, and His countenance as the sun when he shineth in his strength, saying unto him, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." This is what Christ is now. In this shape He is looking at us now. In this shape He is hearing me speak. In this shape He is watching every feeling of your hearts, discerning your most secret intents, seeing through and through the thoughts which you would confess to no human being, hardly even to yourselves. This is He, a living Christ, an almighty Christ, an all-seeing Christ, and yet a most patient and loving Christ. He needs not our pity; but our gratitude, our obedience, our worship. Why seek Him among the dead? He is not there, He is risen! He is not there, He is here!

Bow yourselves before Him now; for He is in the midst of you; and those eyes of His, more piercing than the mid-day sunbeams, are upon you, and your hearts, and your thoughts, and upon mine also.

God have mercy upon me a sinner.

Yes, my friends, why seek the living among the dead? He is not there, but here. We may try to put ourselves in the place of the disciples and the Virgin Mary, as they stood by Jesus' cross; but we cannot do it, for they saw Him on the cross, and thought that He was lost to them for ever; they saw Him die, and gave up all hope of His rising again. And we know that Christ is not lost to us for ever. We know Christ is not on the cross, but at the right hand of God in bliss and glory unspeakable.

We may be told to watch with the three Maries at the tomb of Christ: but we cannot do as they did, for they thought that all was over, and brought sweet spices to embalm His body, which they thought was in the tomb; and we know that all was not over, that His body is not in the tomb, that the grave could not hold Him, that His body is ascended into heaven; that instead of His body needing spices to embalm it, it is His body which embalms all heaven and earth, and is the very life of the world, and food which preserves our souls and bodies to everlasting life. We are not in the place of those blessed women; God has not put us in their place, and we cannot put ourselves into their place; and if we could and did, by any imaginations of our own, we should only tell ourselves a lie. Good Friday was to them indeed a day of darkness, horror, disappointment, all but despair; because Easter Day had not yet come, and Christ had not yet risen. But Good Friday cannot be a day of darkness to us, because Christ has risen, and we know it, and cannot forget it; we cannot forget that Easter dawn, when the Sun of Righteousness arose, never to set again. Has not the light of that Resurrection morning filled with glory the cross and the grave, yea the very agony in the Garden, and hell itself, which Christ harrowed for us? Has it not risen a light to lighten the Gentiles, a joy to angels and archangels, and saints, and all the elect of God; ay, to the whole universe of God, so that the very stars in their courses, the trees as they bud each spring, yea, the very birds upon the bough, are singing for ever, in the ears of those who have ears to hear, "Christ is risen?" And shall we, under pretence of honouring Christ and of bestowing on Him a pity which He needs least of all, try to spend Good Friday and Passion Week in forgetting Easter Day; try to think of Christ's death as we should if He had not risen, and try to make out ourselves and the world infinitely worse off than we really know that we are? Christ has died, but He has risen again; and we must not think of one without the other.

Heavenly things are too important, too true, too real—Christ is too near us, and too loving to us, too earnest about our salvation, for us to spend our thoughts on any such attempts (however reverently

meant) at imaginative play-acting in our own minds about His hanging on His cross, while we know that He is not on His cross; and about watching by His tomb, when we know that He is not in His tomb. Let us thank Him, bless Him, serve Him, die for Him, if need be, in return for all He endured for us: but let us keep our sorrow and our pity, and our tears, for our own daily sins—we have enough of them to employ all our sorrow, and more;—and not in voluntary humility and will-worship, against which St Paul warns us, lose sight of our real Christ, of Him who was dead and is alive for evermore, and dwells in us by faith; now and for ever, amen; and hath the keys of death and hell, and has opened them for us, and for our fathers before us, and for our children after us, and for nations yet unborn.

True, this is a solemn day, for on it the Son of God fought such a fight, that He could only win it at the price of His own life's blood; and a humiliating day, for our sins helped to nail Him on the cross—and therefore a day of humiliation and of humility. Proud, self-willed thoughts are surely out of place to-day (and what day are they in place?) On this day God agonised for man: but it is a day of triumph and deliverance; and we must go home as men who have stood by and seen a fearful fight—a fight which makes the blood of him who watches it run cold; but we have seen, too, a glorious victory—such a victory as never was won on earth before or since; and we therefore must think cheerfully of the battle, for the sake of the victory that was won; and remember that on this day death was indeed swallowed up in victory—because death was the victory itself.

The question on which the fate of the whole world depended was, whether Christ dare die; and He dared die. Whether Christ would endure to the end; and He did endure. Whether He would utterly drink the cup which His Father had given Him; and He drank it to the dregs; and so by His very agony He showed Himself noble, beautiful, glorious, adorable, beyond all that words can express.

And so the cross was His throne of glory; the prints of the nails in His hands and feet were the very tokens of His triumph; His very sorrows were His bliss; and those last words, “It is finished,” were no cry of despair, but a trumpet-call of triumph, which rang from the highest heaven to the lowest hell, proclaiming to all created things, that the very fountain of life, by dying, had conquered death, that good had conquered evil, love had conquered selfishness, God had conquered man, and all the enemies of man; and that He who died was the first begotten from the dead, and the King of all the princes of the earth, who was going to fulfil, more and more, as the years and the ages rolled on, the glorious prayer which we have prayed this day, graciously to behold that family for whom He had been contented to die; and wisely and orderly to call each man to a vocation and a ministry, in which he might duly serve God and be a blessing to all around him, by the inspiration of Christ's Holy Spirit; and to have mercy, in His own good time, upon all Jews, Turks, heathens, and infidels, and bring them home to His flock, that they may be saved, and made one fold under one Shepherd—Him who was dead and is alive for evermore.

Therefore, my dear friends, if we wish to keep Good Friday in spirit and in truth, we cannot do so better than by trying to carry out the very end for which Christ died on this day; and doing our part, small though it be, toward bringing those poor heathens home into Christ's fold, and teaching them the gospel and good news that for them, too, Christ died, and over them, too, Christ reigns alive for evermore; and bringing them home into His flock, that they, too, may find a place in His great family, and have their calling and ministry appointed to them among the nations of those who are saved and walk in the light of God and of the Lamb.

I have refrained till now from speaking to you much about missionaries, and the duty which lies on us all of helping missions. It seemed to me that I must first teach you to understand these first and second collects before I went on. to the third; that I must first teach you that you belonged to Christ's family, and that He had called each of you, and appointed each of you to some order and degree in His Holy Church. But now, if indeed you have learnt that—if my preaching here for fourteen years has had any effect to teach you who and what you are, and what your duty is, let me entreat you to go on, and take the lesson of that third collect, and think of those poor Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, who still—many a million of them—sit, or rather wander, and fall, and lie, miserably

wallowing in darkness and the shadow of death, and think whether you cannot do something toward helping them. What you can do, and how it is to be done, I will tell you hereafter; and, by God's grace, I hope to see men of God in this pulpit, who having been missionaries themselves, can tell you better than I, what remains to be done, and how you can help to do it. But take home this one thought with you, this Good Friday,—Christ, who liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore, if He be indeed precious to you, if you indeed feel for His sufferings, if you indeed believe that what He bought by those sufferings was a right to all the souls on earth, then do what you can toward repaying Him for His sufferings, by seeing of the travail of His soul, and being satisfied. All the reward He asks, or ever asked, is the hearts of sinners, that He may convert them; the souls of sinners, that He may save them; and they belong to Him already, for He bought them this day with His own most precious blood. Do something, then, toward helping Christ to His own.

SERMON X. THE IMAGE OF THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY

Eversley, Easter Day, 1871.

1 Cor. xv. 49. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

This season of Easter is the most joyful of all the year. It is the most comfortable time, in the true old sense of that word; for it is the season which ought to comfort us most—that is, it gives us strength; strength to live like men, and strength to die like men, when our time comes. Strength to live like men. Strength to fight against the temptation which Solomon felt when he said: “I have seen all the works which are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. For what has a man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he has laboured under the sun?

For all his days are sorrow, and his travail grief. Yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This also is vanity. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: as the one dieth, so dieth the other: yea, they have all one breath: so that a man has no pre-eminence over a beast; for all is vanity.

All go to one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that it goeth downward to the earth?” So thought Solomon in his temptation, and made up his mind that there was nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour.

So thought Solomon, in spite of all his wisdom, because he had not heard the good news of Easter day. And so think many now, who are called wise men and philosophers; because they, alas! for them, will not believe the good news of Easter day.

But what says Easter day? Easter day says, Man has pre-eminence over a beast. The man is redeemed from the death of the beasts by Christ, who rose on Easter day. Easter day says, Wherever the spirit of the beast goes, wherever the spirit of the brutal and the wicked man goes, the spirit of the true Christian goes upward, to Christ, who bought it with His precious blood. Easter day says, The body may turn to the dust from which it was taken, but the spirit lives for ever before God, who shall give it another body, as it shall please Him, as He gives to every seed its own body. And, therefore, Easter day says, There is something better for a man than to eat and drink and enjoy himself, for tomorrow he may die, and all be over; and that something is, to labour not merely for the meat which perishes with the perishing body, but to labour after the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These the life of the body does not give us; and these the death of the body not take away from us; for they are spiritual and heavenly, eternal and divine; and he who has them cannot die for ever. And therefore, we may comfort ourselves in all our labour, if only we labour at the one useful work on earth, to be good, and to do good, and to make others good likewise.

True it is, as St. Paul says, that if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable. For we do not care to be of the earth, earthy: we long to be of the heaven, heavenly.

We do not care to spend our time in eating and drinking, mean covetousness, ambition, and the base pleasures of the flesh: we long after high and noble things, which we cannot get on earth, or at best only in fragments, and at rare moments; after the holiness and the blessedness of ourselves and our fellow-creatures. But we have hope in Christ for the next life as well as for this. Hope that in the next life He will give us power to succeed, where we failed here; that He will enable us to be good and to do good, and, if not to make others good (for there, we trust, all will be good together), to enjoy the fulness of that pleasure for which we have been longing on earth—the pleasure of seeing others good, as Christ is good and perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect.

To be good ourselves, and to live for ever in good company—ah my friends, that is true bliss.

If we cannot reach that after death, it were better for us that death should make an end of us, and that when our body decays in the grave we should be annihilated, and become nothing for ever.

But Easter day says to us, If you labour to create good company in this life, by trying to make other people round you good, you shall enjoy for ever in the next world the good company which you have helped to make. If you labour to make yourself good in this life, you shall enjoy the fruit of your labour in the next life by being good, and, therefore, blessed for ever. Easter day says, Your labour is not vanity and vexation of spirit. It is solid work, which shall receive solid pay from God hereafter. Easter day is a pledge—I may say a sacrament—from God to us, that He will righteously reward all righteous work; and that, therefore, it is worth any man's while to labour, to suffer, if need be even to die, in trying to be good, noble, useful, self-sacrificing, as Christ toiled and suffered and died and sacrificed Himself to do good. For then he will share Christ's reward, as he has shared Christ's labour, and be rewarded, as Christ was, by resurrection to eternal life.

And so Easter day should give us strength to live like men—the only truly manly, truly human life; the life of being good and doing good.

And strength to die. Men are afraid of dying, principally, I believe, because they fear the unknown. It is not that they are afraid of the pain of dying. It is not that they are afraid of going to hell; for in all my experience, at least, I have met with but one person who thought that he was going to hell. Neither is it that they are afraid of not going to heaven. Their expectation almost always is, that they are going thither. But they do not care much to go to heaven. They are willing enough to go there, because they know that they must go somewhere. But their notions of what heaven will be like are by no means clear. They have sung rapturous hymns in church or chapel about the heavenly Jerusalem, and passing Jordan safe to Canaan's shore, with no very clear notion of what the words meant—and small blame to them.

But when they think of actually dying, they feel as if to go into the next world was to be turned out into the dark night, into an unknown land, away from house and home, and all they have known, and all they have loved; and they are ready to say with the good old heathen emperor, when he lay a-dying—

“Little soul of mine, wandering, kindly,
Companion and guest of my body;
Into what place art thou now departing,
Shivering, naked, and pale?”

And so they shrink from death. They must shrink from death, unless they will believe with their whole hearts the good news of Easter day. The more thoughtful and clever they are, the more they will shrink from death, and dread the thought of losing their bodies. They have always had bodies here on earth. They only know themselves as souls embodied, living in bodies; and they cannot think of themselves in the next world with any comfort, if they may not think of themselves as having bodies.

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