

CHARLES KINGSLEY

SERMONS FOR
THE TIMES

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Sermons for the Times

SERMON I. 'FATHERS AND CHILDREN'

Malachi iv. 5, 6. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

These words are especially solemn words. They stand in an especially solemn and important part of the Bible. They are the last words of the Old Testament. I cannot but think that it was God's will that they should stand where they are, and nowhere else. Malachi, the prophet who wrote them, did not know perhaps that he was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He did not know that no prophet would arise among the Jews for 400 years, till the time when John the Baptist came preaching repentance. But God knew. And by God's ordinance these words stand at the end of the Old Testament, to make us understand the beginning of the New Testament. For the Old Testament ends by saying that God would send to the Jews Elijah

the prophet. And the New Testament begins by telling us of John the Baptist's coming as a prophet, in the spirit and power of Elias; and how the Lord Jesus himself declared plainly that John the Baptist was Elijah who was to come; that is, the Elijah of whom Malachi prophesies in my text.

Therefore, we may be certain that this text tells us what John the Baptist's work was; that John the Baptist came to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers; lest the Lord should come and smite the land with a curse.

Some may be ready to answer to this, 'Of course John the Baptist came to warn parents of behaving wrongly to their children, if they were careless or cruel; and children to their parents, if they were disobedient or ungrateful. Of course he would tell bad parents and children to repent, just as he came to tell all other kinds of sinners to repent. But that was only a part of John the Baptist's work. He came to be the forerunner of the Messiah, the Saviour, the Redeemer.'

Be it so, my friends. I only hope that you really do believe that John the Baptist did come to proclaim that a Saviour was born into the world—provided only that you remember all the while who that Saviour was. John the Baptist tells you who He was.

If you will only remember that, and get the thought of it into your hearts, you will not be inclined to put any words of your own in place of the prophet Malachi's, or to fancy that you can describe better than Malachi what John the Baptist's work was

to be; and that turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, was only a small part of John the Baptist's work, instead of being, as Malachi says it was, his principal work, his very work, the work which must be done, lest the Lord, instead of saving the land, should come and smite it with a curse.

Yes—you must remember who it was that John the Baptist came to bear record of, and to manifest or show to the Jews. The Angels on the first Christmas Eve told us—they said it was *The Lord*, 'Unto you,' they said, 'is born a Saviour, who is Christ, *The Lord*.'

John the Baptist told you and all mankind who it was—that it was The Lord. 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of *the Lord*!'

The Lord. What Lord—Which Lord? John the Baptist knew. Simeon, Anna, Nathaniel, all righteous and faithful hearts who waited for the salvation of the Lord, knew. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not know. The men who wrote our Creeds, our Prayer Book, our Church Catechism, knew. The Pharisees and the Sadducees in our day, who fancy themselves wiser than the Creeds, and the Prayer Book, and the Church Catechism, do not know. May God grant that we may all know, not only with our lips, but with our hearts, our faith, our love, our lives, who The Lord is.

Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, is The Lord. But who is He? The Bible tells us; when we have heard what the Bible

tells us we shall be able better to understand the text. The Lord is He of whom it is written, 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' And who is God's image and God's likeness? The New Testament tells us—Jesus Christ. In Him man was made. He is the Son of Man, who is in heaven—the true perfect pattern of man: but He is also the image and likeness of God, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He is The Lord. He is the Lord who instituted marriage, and said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help-meet for him.' He is the Lord who said to man, 'Be fruitful and multiply: fill the earth and subdue it.' He is the Lord who said to the first murderer, 'Thy brother's blood crieth against thee from the ground.' He is the Lord who talked with Abraham face to face as a man talks with his friend; who blest him by giving him a son in his old age, that he might be the father of many nations. He is the Lord who, on Mount Sinai, gave those Ten Commandments, the foundation of all law and right order between man and God, between man and man:—'Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness in courts of law or elsewhere. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's property.'

This is The Lord. Not a God far away from men; who does not feel for them, nor feel with them; not a God who despises men, or has an ill-will to men, and must be won over to change his mind, and have mercy on them, by many supplications and tears,

and fear and trembling, and superstitious ceremonies. But this is The Lord, this is the babe of Bethlehem, this is He whose way John the Baptist came to prepare—even He of whom it is written, that He possessed wisdom, the simple, practical human wisdom, useful for this everyday earthly life of ours, which Solomon sets forth in his Proverbs, in the beginning before His works of old; and that when He appointed the foundations of the earth, that Wisdom was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and she was daily His delight; rejoicing alway before Him; rejoicing in the *habitable* parts of the earth; and her delights were *with the sons of men*.

In one word, He is the Lord, in whose likeness man is made.

Man's justice is a pattern of His; man's love is a pattern of His; man's industry a pattern of His; man's Sabbath-rest, in some unspeakable and eternal way, a pattern of His. Man's family ties are patterns of His. God the Father is He, said St. Paul, from whom every fathership in heaven and earth is named, that we may be such fathers to our children as God is to us. God The Son is He who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and to declare to us the glorious news, that in Him we, too, are the sons of God, that we may be such sons to our heavenly Father—ay, and to our earthly fathers also, as the Lord Jesus was to His Father.

Yes—and even more wonderful still, and more blessed still, the Lord is not ashamed to call himself a husband. Our human wedlock and married love is a pattern of some divine mystery. 'Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and

gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' Blessed words, which we cannot pretend to explain or understand, but can only believe and adore, and find, as we shall find, in proportion as we are loving and faithful in wedlock, that God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that they are reasonable, blessed, true; true for ever.

This, then, was the Lord who was coming to judge these Jews; not merely a god, but *The* God. The Lord, in whose likeness man was made; who had appointed men to be fathers, sons, husbands, citizens of a nation, owners of property, subject to laws, and yet *makers* of laws; because all these things, in some wonderful way, are parts of His likeness. He was coming to this nation of the Jews first, and then to all the nations of the earth, to judge them, Malachi said, with a great and terrible day. To lay the axe to the root of the tree; to cut down from the very root the evil principles which were working in society. His fan was in His hand; and He would thoroughly purge His floor; and gather His wheat into the garner, for the use of future generations: but the chaff, all that was empty, light, and useless, He would burn up and destroy utterly out of the way, with unquenchable fire. He would inquire of every man, How have you kept my image; my likeness, in which I made you? What sort of husbands, fathers, sons, neighbours, subjects, and governors, have you been? And above all, Malachi says, the root question of all would be, what sort of fathers have you been to your children? What sort of

children to your fathers? Does that seem to you a small question, my friends? Would you have rather expected to hear John the Baptist ask, what sort of saints they had been? What sort of doctrines they were professing?

A small question? Look at these two little words, Father and Son. Father and Son! Are they not the most deep and awful, as well as the most blessed and hopeful words on earth? Do they not tell us the very mystery of God's being? Are they not the very name of God, God The Father and God The Son, knit together by one Holy Spirit of Love to each other and to all, who proceeds alike from The Father and from The Son? And then, will you think it a light matter to ask fallen creatures made in the likeness of that perfect Father and that perfect Son, what sort of fathers and sons they have been? God help us all, and give us grace to ask ourselves that question morning and night, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come, lest He come and smite this land with a curse.

I have been led to think deeply and to speak openly upon this solemn matter, my friends, by seeing, as who can help seeing, the great division and estrangement between the old and the young which is growing up in our days. I do not, alas! I cannot, deny the complaints which old people commonly make. Old people complain that young people are grown too independent, disobedient, saucy, and what not. It is too true, frightfully, miserably true, that there is not the same reverence for parents as there was a generation back;—that the children break loose

from their parents, spend their parents' money, choose their own road in life, their own politics, their own religion, alas! too often, for themselves;—that young people now presume to do and say a hundred things which they would not have dreamed in old times.

And they are ready enough to cry out that all this is a sign of the last days, of which, they say, St. Paul speaks in 2 Tim. iii. 4—when men 'shall be disobedient to parents, unthankful, boasters, heady, high-minded, despisers of those who are good, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' My friends, my friends, it is far better for us who have children, instead of prying into the times and seasons which God has kept in His own hand, to read our Bibles faithfully, and when we quote a text, quote the whole of it, and not just those bits of it which help us to throw blame on other people. What St. Paul really says, is that 'in the last days evil times will come;' just as they had come, he shows, when he wrote; and what he means I will try and show you presently.

And, moreover, remember that Malachi says, that the hearts of the parents in Judea needed turning to their children, as well as the hearts of the children to their parents. Take care lest it be not so in England now. Remember that St. Paul, in that same solemn passage, gives other marks of 'last days,' which have to do with parents as well as with children, and some which can only have to do with parents—for they are the sins of grown-up and elderly people, and not of young ones. He says, that in those days men shall also be 'covetous, proud, without natural affection, breakers of their word, blasphemers; having a form of

godliness, but denying the power thereof.' Will none of these hard words hit some grown people in our day? Will not they fill some of us with dread, lest the parents now-a-days should be as much in fault as the children of whom they complain; lest the parents' sins should be but too often the cause of the children's sins? Read through St. Paul's sad list of sins, and see how every young man's sin in it has some old man's sin corresponding to it. St. Paul does not part his list, and I dare not, and cannot.

St. Paul mixes the parents' and the children's sins together in his words, and I fear that we do the same in our actions.

Oh! beware, beware, you who complain of the behaviour of children now-a-days, lest your children have as much cause to complain of you. Are your children selfish, lovers of themselves?—See that you have not set them the example by your own covetousness or laziness. Are they boastful?—See that your pride has not taught them. Incontinent and profligate?—See that your own fierceness has not taught them. If they see you unable to master your own temper, they will not care to try to master their appetites. Are they disobedient and unthankful?—See, well, then that your want of natural affection to them, your neglect, and harshness, and want of feeling and tenderness, has not made the balance of unkindness fearfully even between you.

Are your children disobedient to you?—See that you have not taught them to be so, by breaking your word to them, by letting them see you deceitful to others, till they have lost all trust in you, all reverence for you. Above all, are your children lovers

of pleasure more than lovers of God?—Oh! beware, beware, lest you have made them so,—lest you have been blasphemers against God, even when you have been fancying that you talked religion. Beware lest you have been teaching them dark, cruel, superstitious thoughts about God,—making them look up to Him not as their heavenly Father, but as a stern taskmaster whom they must obey, not from gratitude, but from fear of hell, and so have made God look so unlovely in their eyes that ‘there is no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.’ Can you wonder at their loving pleasure rather than loving God, when you show them nothing in God’s character to love, but everything to dread and shrink from? And last of all, are your children despisers of those who are good, inclined to laugh at religion, to suspect and sneer at pious people, and call them hypocrites? Oh! beware, beware, lest your lip-religion, your dead faith, your inconsistent practice, has not been the cause of it. If you, as St. Paul says, have a form of godliness, and yet in your life and actions deny the power of it, by living without God in the world, and following the lowest maxims of the world in everything but what you call the salvation of your souls, what wonder if your children grow up despisers of those who are good? If they see you preaching one thing, and practising another, they will learn to fancy that all godly people do the same. If they see your religion a sham, they will learn to fancy all religion false also. Oh! woe, woe, most terrible, to those who thus harden their own children’s hearts, and destroy in them, as too many do, all faith in God and man, all hope, all

charity! Woe to them! for the Lord Himself, who came to lay the axe to the root of the tree, said of such, ‘If any man cause one of these little ones to offend, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.’

So it is too often now-a-days, and so it will be, until people condescend to learn over again that simple old Church Catechism which they were taught when they were little, and to teach it to their children, not only with their lips but in their lives.

‘The Church Catechism!’ some here will say to themselves with a smile, ‘that is but a paltry medicine for so great a disease—a pitiful ending, forsooth, to such a severe sermon as this, to recommend just the Church Catechism!’ Let those laugh who will, my friends. If you think you can bring up your children to be blessings to you,—if you think you can live so as to be blessings to your children, without the Church Catechism, you can but try.

I think that you will fail. More and more, year by year, I find that those who try do fail. More and more, year by year, I find that even religious people’s education of their children fails, and that pious men’s sons now-a-days are becoming more and more apt to be scandals to their parents and to religion. If any choose to say that the reason is, that the pious men’s sons were not of the number of the elect, though their fathers were, I can only answer, that God is no respecter of persons, and that they say that He is; that God is not the author of the evil, and that they say that He is.

If a child of mine turns out ill, I am bound to lay the fault first

on myself, and certainly never on God,—and so is every man, unless the inspired Scripture is wrong where it says, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’ And the fault *is* in ourselves. Very few people really teach their children now-a-days the Church Catechism; very few really believe the Church Catechism; very few really believe that God is such an one as the Church Catechism declares to us; very few believe in the Lord, in whose image and likeness man is made, whose way John the Baptist prepared by turning the hearts of the fathers to the children. They put, perhaps, religious books into their children’s hands, and talk to them a great deal about their souls: but they do not tell their children what the Church Catechism tells them, because they do not believe what the Church Catechism tells them.

What that is; what the Church Catechism does tell us, which the favourite religious books now-a-days do not tell us; and what that has to do with turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, I must tell you hereafter. God grant that my words may sink into all hearts, as far as they are right and true; if sooner or later we are not all brought to understand the meaning of those two simple words, Father and Son, neither Baptism, nor Confirmation, nor Schools, nor this Church, nor the very body and blood of Him who died for us, to share which you are all called this day, will be of avail for the well-being of this parish, or of this country, or any other country upon earth. For where the root is corrupt, the fruit will be also; and where family life

and family ties, which are the root and foundation of society, are out of joint, there the Nation and the Church will decay also; as it is written, 'If the foundations be cast down, what can the righteous do?'

And whensoever, in any family, or nation and church, the root of the tree (which is the conduct of parents to children, and of children to parents) grows corrupt and rotten, then 'last days,' as St. Paul calls them, are indeed come to it, and evil times therewith; for the Lord will surely lay the axe to the root of it, and cut it down and cast it into the fire: neither will the days of that family, or that people, or that Church, be long in the land which the Lord their God has given them. So it has been as yet, in all ages and in all countries on the face of God's earth, and so it will be until the end. Wheresoever the hearts of the fathers are not turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, there will a great and terrible day of the Lord come; and that nation, like Judæa of old, like many a fair country in Europe at this moment, will be smitten with a curse.

SERMON II. SALVATION

John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

Before I can explain what this text has to do with the Church Catechism, I must say to you a little about what it means.

Now if I asked any of you what ‘salvation’ was, you would probably answer, ‘Eternal life.’

And you would answer rightly. That is exactly what salvation is, and neither more nor less. No more than that; for nothing greater than that can belong to any created being. No less than that; for God’s love and mercy are eternal and without bound.

But what is eternal life?

Some will answer, ‘Going to heaven when we die.’ But what before you die? You do not know? cannot tell?

Let us listen to what God Himself says. Let us listen to what the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, says. Let us listen to what He who spake as man never spake, says. Surely His words must be the clearest, the simplest, the most exact, the deepest, the widest; the exactly fit and true words, the complete words, the perfect words, which cannot be improved on by adding to them or taking away one jot or tittle. What did the Lord Jesus Christ say that eternal life was?

‘This is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’

To know God and Jesus Christ; that is eternal life. That is all the eternal life which any of us will ever have, my friends. Unless our Lord's words are not complete and perfect, and do not tell us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about eternal life, that is all the eternal life any one will ever have; and we must make up our minds to be content therewith.

To which some will answer, almost angrily, 'Of course. The way to obtain eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ; for if we do not, we cannot obtain it.'

What words are these, my friends? what rash words are these, which men thrust into Scripture out of their own carnal conceits, as if they could improve upon the speech of the Son of Man Himself? He says, not that to know God is the way to eternal life: but rather that eternal life is the way to know God. He does not say, This is to know God and Jesus Christ, *in order that* they may have eternal life. Whatever He says, He does not say that.

Nay, more, if we are to be very exact (and can we be too exact?) with the Lord's words, He says, that 'This is eternal life, *in order that* they may know God and Jesus Christ.' Not that we are to know God that we may obtain eternal life, but that we must have eternal life in order that we may know God; that eternal life is the means, and the knowledge of God the end and purpose for which eternal life is given us. However this may be, at least He says what the noble collect which we repeat every Sunday says, 'That our eternal life stands in the knowledge of God,' depends on it, and will fall without it.

‘That we may know God.’ Not merely that we may know doctrines about salvation, and the ways of winning God’s favour, and turning away His vengeance; not merely to know what God has done ages ago, or may do ages hence, for us: but to know God Himself; to know His person, His likeness, His character, and what He is, and what He does, now and always; to know His righteousness, His goodness, His truth, His love, His mercy, His strength, His willingness and mightiness to save; in a word, what the Bible calls His glory; and therefore to admire and delight in Him utterly. That is what our eternal life stands in; that is why God has given to us eternal life in His Son, that we may know that. Oh, believe your Saviour simply, like little children, and enter into the joy of your Lord. Acquaint yourselves with God, and be at peace.

To know God; and also to know Jesus Christ whom He has sent. For St. John, when he tells us that God has already given to us eternal life, says also, that this life is in His Son. To know the Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased, because He is His perfect Son; His exact likeness, the likeness of that glory of His, and the express image of that person and character of His, which I described to you just now; One whose life was and is and ever will be eternally all love, and mercy, and self-sacrifice, and labour, for lost and sinful men; all trust and obedience to His Father. To know Him and His life, and to come to Him, and receive from Him an eternal life, which this world did not give us, and cannot take away from us; which neither man, devil,

nor angel, nor the death of our bodies, the ruin of empires, the destruction of the whole universe, and of time, and space, and all things whereof man can conceive or dream, can alter in the slightest, because it is a life of goodness, and righteousness, and love, which are eternal as the God from whom they spring, eternal as Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and nothing but our own sinful wills can rob us of them.

This is eternal life, and therefore this is salvation. A very different account of it (though it is the Bible account) from that narrow and paltry one which too many have in their minds now-a-days; a narrow and paltry notion that it means only being saved from the punishment of our sins after we die; and a very unbelieving, and godless, and atheistical notion too; which, like all unbelief hurts and spoils men's lives.

For too many say to themselves, 'God must save me after I am dead, of course, for no one else can: but as long as I am alive I must save myself. God must save me from hell; but I must save myself from poverty, from trouble, from what the world may say of me or do to me, if I offend it.' And so salvation seems to have to do altogether with the next life, and not at all with this; and people lose entirely the belief that God is our deliverer, our protector, our guide, our friend, now, here, in this life; and do not really think that they can get on better in this world by knowing God and Jesus Christ; and so they set to work to help themselves by cunning, by covetousness, by cowardly truckling to the wicked ways of the very world which they renounced at

baptism, by following after a multitude to do evil, and standing by, saying, 'I saw it not,' when they see wrong and cruelty done upon the earth; afraid to fight God's battles like men of God, because they say it is 'dangerous.' And so, in these evil days, thousands who call themselves Christians live on, worldly and selfish, *without God in the world*; while they talk busily enough of 'preparing to meet God,' in the world to come; dreaming, poor souls, of arriving at what they call 'salvation' after they die, while they are too often, I fear, deep enough in what the Scripture calls 'damnation,' before they die.

'But,' say some, 'is not salvation going to a place called heaven?' My friends, let the Bible speak. It tells us that salvation is not in a place at all, but in a person, a living, moving, acting person, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the Psalmists speak, and shame us, who ought to know (being Christians) even better than they, that The Lord Himself is Salvation. The whole Book of Psalms, what is it but the blessed discovery that salvation is not merely in a place, or a state, not even in some 'beatific vision' after men die; but in the Lord Himself all day long in this world; that salvation is a life in God and with God? 'The Lord is my light, and my salvation, of whom then shall I be afraid? The Lord is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever.' This is their key-note. Shame on us Christians, that we should have forgotten it for one so much lower. 'The name of the Lord,' says Solomon, 'is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.' Into it: not merely into

some pleasant place after he dies, but all day long; and is safe: not merely after he dies, but in every chance and change of this mortal life. My friends, I am ashamed to have to put Christian men in mind of these things. Truly, 'Evil communications have corrupted good manners; awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God.' I am ashamed, I say; for there are old hymns in the mouths of every one to this day, which testify against their want of faith; which say, 'Christ is my life,' 'Christ is my salvation;' and which were written, I doubt not, by men who meant literally what they said, whatever those who sing them now-a-days may mean by them. Now what do those hymns mean by such words, if they mean anything at all?

Surely what I have been preaching to you, and what seems to some of you, I fear, strange and new doctrine. And what else does the Church Catechism mean, when it bids every child thank God for having brought him into a state of salvation? For mind, throughout the whole Church Catechism there is not one word about what people commonly call heaven and hell; not one word though 'heaven and hell' are now-a-days generally the first things about which children are taught. Not one word is the child taught about what will happen to him after death, except that his body will rise again, and that Christ will be his Judge after he is dead as well as while he is alive: but not one word about that salvation after he is dead, which is almost the only thing of which one hears in many pulpits. And why, but because the Catechism teaches the child to believe that Jesus Christ is his salvation now, in this

life, and believes that to be enough for him to know? For if Christ be eternal, His salvation must be eternal also. If Christ's life be in the child, eternal life must be in the child; for Christ's life must be eternal, even as Christ Himself; and that is enough for the child, and for us also.

And with this agrees that great text of Scripture, 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' People now-a-days are apt to make two mistakes about that one text.

First they forget the 'when,' and read it as if it stood, 'If the wicked man turn away from his wickedness in this life, he shall save his soul in the next life:' but the Bible says much more than that. It says, that when he turns, then and there, that moment he shall save his soul alive. And next, they read the text as if it stood, 'he shall save his soul.' Here again, my friends, the Bible says a great deal more; it says, that he shall save his soul alive. Perhaps that does not seem to you any great difference? Alas, alas, my friends, I fear that there are too many now, as there have been in all times, who do not care for the difference. Provided 'their souls are saved,' by which they mean, provided they escape torment after they die, it matters nothing to them whether their souls are saved alive, or saved dead; they do not even know the difference between a dead soul and a live soul; because they know nothing about eternal death and eternal life, which are the death and the life of eternal persons such as souls are; they say to themselves, if they be Protestants, 'I hope I shall have faith enough to be saved;'

or if they be Papists, 'I hope I shall have good works enough to be saved;' valuing faith and works not for themselves; yea, valuing—for I must say it—Almighty God Himself, not for Himself and His own glory, but valuing faith and works, and the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, only because, as they dream, they are so many helps to a life of pleasure beyond the grave; not knowing this, that living faith and good works do not merely lead to heaven, but are heaven itself, that true, real eternal heaven wherein alone men really live; that true, real eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested in Jesus Christ, whom St. John saw living upon earth that same Eternal Life, and bore witness of Him that His life was the light of men; that eternal life whereof it is written, that God hath brought us to life together with Christ, and raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:—not knowing this, that the only life which any soul ought to live, is the life of God and of Christ, and of the Spirit of God and Christ; a life of righteousness, and justice, and truth, and obedience, and mercy, and love; a life which God has given to us, that we may know and copy Him, and do His works, and live His life, for ever:—not knowing this also that eternal death is not merely some torture of fire and worms beyond the grave: but that this is eternal death, not to live the eternal life which is the only possible life for souls, the life of righteousness and love; a death which may come on respectable people, and high religious professors, while they are fancying themselves sure to be saved, as easily and surely as it may on thieves and harlots,

wallowing in the mire of sins.

For what is this same eternal death? The opposite surely to eternal life. Eternal life is to know God, and therefore to obey Him. Eternal life is to know God, whose name is love; and therefore, to rejoice to fulfil His law, of which it is written, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law;' and therefore to be full of love ourselves, as it is written, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;' and again, 'Every one that loveth, knoweth God, for God is love.' And on the other hand, eternal death is not to know God, and therefore not to care for His law of love, and therefore to be without love; as it is written on the other hand, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.' 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;' and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; and again, 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.' Eternal death, then, is to love no one; to be shut up in the dark prison-house of our own wilful and wayward thoughts and passions, full of spite, suspicion, envy, fear; in fact, in one word, to be a devil.

Oh, my friends, is not that damnation indeed, to be a devil here on earth, and for aught we know, for ever and ever?

Do you not know what frame of mind I mean? Thank God, none of us, I suppose, is ever utterly without some grain of love left for some one; none of us, I suppose, is ever utterly shut up in himself; and as long as there is love there is life and as long as there is life there is hope: but yet there have been moments when one has felt with horror how near, and how terrible, and how easy

was this same eternal death which some fancy only possible after they die.

For, my friends, were you ever, any one of you, for one half hour, completely angry, completely *sulky*? displeased and disgusted with everybody and everything round you, and yet displeased and disgusted with yourself all the while; liking to think everyone wrong, liking to make out that they were unjust to you; feeling quite proud at the notion that you were an injured person: and yet feeling in your heart the very opposite of all these fancies: feeling that you were wrong, that you were unjust to them, and feeling utterly ashamed at the thought that they were the injured persons, and that you had injured them. And perhaps, to make all worse, the person about whom all this storm had arisen in your heart, was some dear friend or relation whom you loved (strange contradiction, yet most true) at the very moment that you were trying to hate. Oh, my friends, if one such dark hour has ever come home to you; if you have ever let the sun go down upon your wrath, and so given place to the devil, then you know something at least of what eternal death is. You know how, in such moments, there is a worm in the heart, and a fire in the heart, compared with which all bodily torment would be light and bearable; a worm in the heart which does not die: and a fire in the heart which you cannot quench: but which if they remained there would surely destroy you. So intolerable are they, that you feel that you will actually and really die, in some strange unspeakable way, if you continue in that temper long. Do not

there open at such times within our hearts black depths of evil, a power of becoming wicked, a chance of being swept off into sin if one gives way, which one never suspected till then; and yet with all these, the most dreadful sense of helplessness, of slavery, of despair?—God grant that may not remain, for then comes the mad hope to escape death by death, to try by one desperate stroke to rid oneself of that self which is for the time one's torment, worm, fire, death, and hell. And what is this dark fight within us? What does the Bible call it? It is death and life, eternal death and eternal life, salvation and damnation, hell and heaven, fighting together within our hapless hearts, to see which shall be our masters. It is the battle of the evil spirit, who is the Devil, fighting with the good spirit, who is God. Nothing less than that, my friends. Yes, in those hateful and shameful moments of pride, or spite, or contempt, or self-will, or suspicion, or sneering, on which when they are past we look back with shame and horror, and wonder how we could have been such wretches even for a moment,—at such times, I say, our heart is a battlefield, on which no less than the Devil himself, and God Himself are fighting for our souls. On one side, Satan trying to bring us into that state of eternal death in which he lives himself; Satan, the loveless one, the self-willed one, the accuser, the slanderer, slandering God to us, slandering man to us, slandering to us the friends we love best and trust most utterly; yea, slandering our own selves to us, trying to make us believe that we are as bad, ought to be as bad, and must always be as bad as we seem for the

time to be; that we cannot shake off our evil passions, that we cannot rise again out of the eternal death of sin into the eternal life of righteousness. And on the other side, the Spirit of God and of His Christ, the Spirit of eternal life, the Spirit of justice, and righteousness, love, joy, peace, duty, self-sacrifice, trying to make us know Him and see His beauty, and obey Him, and be at peace; trying to raise us again into that eternal life and state of salvation which the Lord Jesus Christ has bought for us with His most precious blood.

Oh, awful thought! Life and death, the Devil himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, fighting in your heart and in mine, and in the heart of every human being round us! And yet most blessed thought, hopeful, glorious,—full of the promise of eternal victory! For greater is He that is with us, than he that is against us; and He who conquered Satan for Himself, can and will conquer him for us also. No thing can separate us from the love of Christ; no thing, yea no angel, or devil, principality, or power; no thing, but only ourselves, only our own proud and wayward will and determination to the Devil's voice in our hearts, and not the voice of Christ, the Word of Life, who is nigh us, in our hearts, even in our darkest moments, loving us still, pitying us, ready, able and willing to help all who cast themselves on Him, and raise us, there and then, the very moment we cry to Him and renounce the Devil and our own foolish will, out of self-will into God's will, out of darkness into light, out of hatred into love, out of despair into hope, out of doubt into faith, out of tempest into

peace, out of the death of sin into the life of righteousness, the life of love and charity, which abideth for ever. Oh, listen not to the lying, slanderous Devil, who tells you that by your own sin you have lost your share in Christ, lost baptismal grace, lost Christ's love—Lost His love? His, who, were you in the very lowest depths of hell, would pity you still? His love, who Himself went down into hell, and preached to the spirits in prison, to show that he did care even for them? Not so: into Him you have been baptized. His cross is on your foreheads, His Father is your Father:—and can a father desert his child, even though he sinned seventy and seven times, if seventy and seven times he turn and repent? Can man weary God? Can the creature conquer and destroy the love of his Creator? Can Christ deny Himself? Not so; whosoever thou art, however sorely tempted, however deeply fallen, however disgusted and terrified at thyself, turn only to that blessed face which wept over Jerusalem, to that great heart which bled for thee upon the cross, and thou shalt find him unchanged, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the Lord of life and love, able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him, and the accusing Devil shall turn and flee, and thou shalt know that thy Redeemer liveth still, and in thy flesh thou shalt see the salvation of God, and cry, 'Rejoice not against me, Satan, mine enemy; for when I fall I shall arise.'

SERMON III. A

GOOD CONSCIENCE

1 Peter iii. 21. The like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These words are very wide words; too wide to please most people. They preach a very free grace; too free to please most people. Such free and full grace, indeed, that some who talk most about free grace, and insist most on man's being saved only by free grace, are the very men who shrink from these words most, and would be more comfortable in their minds, I suspect, if they were not in the Bible at all, because the grace they preach is too free. But so it always has been, and so it is, and so, I suppose, it always will be. Man preaches his notions of God's forgiveness, his notions of what he thinks God ought to do; but when God proclaims His own forgiveness, and tells men what He has actually done, and bids His apostle declare boldly that baptism doth now save us, then man is frightened at the vastness of God's generosity, and thinks God's grace too free, His forgiveness too complete; and considers this text and many another in the Bible as 'dangerous' forsooth, if it is 'preached unreservedly,' and not to be quoted without some words of man's

invention tacked to it, to water it down, and narrow it, and take all the strength and life out of it; and if he be asked whether he believes the words of Scripture,—for instance, whether St. Paul spoke truth when he told the heathen Athenians that they and all men were the offspring of God;—or when he told the Romans that as by the offence of one, judgment came on all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life;—or when he told the Corinthians, that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;—or whether St. Peter spoke truth when he said, that ‘baptism doth also now save us,’—then they answer, that the words are true ‘in a sense;’ that is, not in their plain sense; true, if they were only true; true, and yet somehow at the same time not true; and not to be preached ‘unreservedly:’ as if man could be more cautious and correct in his language than the Spirit of God, who inspired the Apostles; as if man could be more careful of God’s honour than God is of His own; as if man could hate sin and guard against sin more carefully than God Himself.

Just in the same way do people stumble at certain invaluable words in the Church Catechism, which teach children to thank God for having brought them into that state of salvation. Even very good people, and people who really wish to believe and honour the Church Catechism, and the Sacrament of Baptism, find these words too strong to please them, and say, that of course a child’s being in a state of salvation cannot mean that he is saved, but that he may be saved after he dies.

My friends, I never could find that we have a right to take liberties with the Bible and the Prayer Book which we dare not take with any other book, and to put meanings into the words of them which, in the case of any other book, would be contrary to plain grammar and the English tongue, if not to common sense and honesty.

If you say of a man, 'he is in a state of happiness,' you mean, do you not, that he is happy now, not that he may perhaps be happy some day? If you came to me and told me that you were in a state of hunger, you would think it a very strange answer to receive if I say, 'Very well then, if you become hungry, come to me, and I will feed you?' You all know that a man's being in a state of poverty, or of misery, means that he is poor or miserable now, here, at this very time; that if a man is in a state of sickness, he is sick; if he is in a state of health, he is healthy. Then what can a man's being in a state of salvation mean, by all rules of English, but that he is saved? If I were to say to any one of the good people who do not think so, 'My friend, you are in a state of damnation,' he would answer me quickly enough, 'I am not, for I am not damned.' He would agree that a man's being in a state of damnation means that the man is damned; why will he not agree that a man's being in a state of salvation means that he is saved?

Because, my friends, God's grace is too full for fallen man's notions; and therefore there is an evil fashion abroad in the world, that where a text speaks of wrath, and misery and punishment, you are to interpret it exactly, and to the very letter: but where it

speaks of love, and mercy, and forgiveness, you are to do no such thing, but narrow it, and fence it, and explain it away, for fear you should make sinners too comfortable,—a plan which seems wise enough, but which, like other plans of man's wisdom, has not succeeded too well, to judge by the number of sinners who are already too comfortable though they hear the Bible misused, and God's grace narrowed in this way every Sunday of their lives.

But, my friends, we call ourselves Englishmen and churchmen; let us be honest Englishmen and plain churchmen, and take our Catechism as it stands. For rightly or wrongly, truly or falsely, it does teach every christened child to thank God, not merely that it has some chance of being saved, when it dies, but that it is saved already, now, here on earth.

Whether that is true or false is another question. I believe it to be true. I believe the text to be true; I believe that why people shrink from it is, that they have got into their minds a wrong, unscriptural, superstitious notion of what being saved, and saving one's soul alive, and salvation mean. And I beg all of you who read your Bibles to search the Scriptures from beginning to end, and try to find out what these words mean, and whether the Catechism has not kept close, after all, to the words of Scripture.

It will be better for you, my friends; it will be worth your while, to know exactly what being saved means; for to judge by the signs of the times, there are, very probably, days coming in which it will be as needful for you and for your children to save your souls alive lest you die, as ever it was for the Jews in Isaiah's or

Jeremiah's time, or for the Romans in St. Paul's time; and that in that day you will find the Catechism wider, and deeper, and sounder than you have ever suspected it to be, and see, I trust, that in these very words it preaches to you, and me, and our children after us, the one true Gospel and good news, which will stand, and grow, and shine brighter and brighter for ever, when all the paltry, narrow, counterfeit gospels which man invents in its place have been burnt up by the unquenchable fire with which the merciful Lord purges the chaff from His floor.

I told you this morning what I believe that salvation was,—to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. To know God's likeness, God's character, what God has shown of His own character, what He has done for us. To know His boundless love, and mercy, and knowing that, to trust in Him utterly, and submit to Him utterly, and obey Him utterly, sure that He loves us, that His will to us is goodwill, that His commandments must be life.

To know God, and therefore to love Him and to serve Him, that is salvation.

Now what hinders a little child, from the very moment that it can think or speak, from entering into that salvation? Not the child's own heart. There is evil in the child—true. Is there none in you and me? There is a corrupt nature in the child—true. Is there not in you and me? Woe to us if we have not found it out: woe to us if we dare to think that we are in ourselves—or out of ourselves either—one whit better than our own children. What should hinder any child whom you or I ever saw from knowing

God, and His Name, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

Has he not an earthly father, through whom he may know *The Father*? Is he not an earthly son; and through that may he not know *The Son*? Has he not a conscience, a spirit in him which knows good from evil? holiness from wickedness—far more clearly and tenderly than the souls of most grown people do? and can he not, therefore, understand you when you speak of a Holy Spirit, a Spirit which puts good desires into his heart, and can enable him to bring those good desires into practice?

I know one hindrance at least; and that is his parents' sins; when the parents' harshness or neglect tempts the child to fancy that God *The Father* is such a Father to him as his parents are, and that to be a child of God is to look up to his heavenly Father with dread and suspicion as to a hard taskmaster whose anger has to be turned away, and not with that perfect love, and trust, and respect, and self-sacrifice, with which the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled His Father's will and proclaimed His Father's glory: or when the parents' unholiness and lip-religion teach the child to fancy that the Holy Spirit means only certain religious fancies and feelings, or the learning by heart of certain words and doctrines, or, worst of all, a spirit of bondage unto fear; instead of knowing Him to be, as He is, the Spirit of righteousness, and love, and joy, and peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance: or when, again, parents by their own teaching, do despite to the Spirit of Grace in their own child, and destroy their child's good conscience toward God, by telling the child

that it does not really love God, when it loves Him, perhaps, far better than they do; by telling the child that its sins have parted it from God, when its sins are light, yea, are as nothing in the balance compared to the sins they themselves commit every day, while they claim for themselves clearer light and knowledge than the child, and thereby condemn themselves rather than the child; when they darken and defile the pure and beautiful trust and admiration for its Heavenly Father, which God's Spirit puts into the child's heart, by telling it that it is doomed to I know-not-what horrible misery and torture when it dies; but that it can escape from that wretched end by thinking certain thoughts, and feeling certain feelings; and so (after stirring up in the child all manner of dreadful doubts of God's love and justice, and perhaps driving it away from religion altogether by making it believe that it has committed sins which it has not committed, and deserves horrible tortures which it has not deserved), do perhaps at last awaken in it a new love for God, but one which is not like that first love, that childlike love; one which, I fear, is hardly a love for God at all, but principally a selfish joy and delight at having escaped from coming torments. This is the reason, my friends; and this hindrance, at least, I know. I will not copy those parents, my friends, and tell them, as they tell their children, that they are bringing on themselves endless torture; but I must tell them, for the Lord Christ has told them, that they are bringing on themselves something—I know not what—of which it is written, that it were better for them that a millstone

were hanged about their necks, and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea. Oh, my friends, if I speak sternly, almost bitterly, when I speak of parents' sins, it is because I speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. I plead for Christ's little ones: I plead for the souls and consciences of those little children of whom Christ said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me;' not that they might become His, but because they were His already; not that they might win His love, but because He loved them from all eternity: not that they might enter into the kingdom of heaven, but, because they were in the kingdom of heaven already; because the kingdom of heaven was made up of such as them, and the angels who ministered unto them always beheld the face of our Father who is in heaven. Yes; I plead for those children, of whom the Lord said, 'Except ye be converted,' that is, utterly turned and changed, 'and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Deep and blessed words, which are the root-rule of all true righteousness; which so few really believe at heart, any more than the Pharisees, and Sadducees, and Herodians of old did. Up and down, all over England, I hear men of all denominations saying, not, 'Except we grown people be converted and become as little children;' but, 'except the little children be converted, and become like us, grown people.' God grant that the little children may not become like too many grown people! God grant it, I say. God grant that our children may not become like us! God grant that they may keep through youth and manhood, and through the grave,

and through all worlds to come, the tender and childlike heart, which we too often have hardened in ourselves by bigotry and superstition, and dead faith, and lip-worship! And I can have good hope that God will grant it. I can have hope that God will teach our children and our children's children truly to know Him whose name is Love and Righteousness, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as long as I see His providence preserving for us this old Church Catechism, to teach our children what we forget to teach them, or what we have not faith enough to teach them.

Yes, I can have hope for England; and hope for those mighty nations across the seas, whose earthly mother God has ordained that she should be, as long as the Catechism is taught to her children.

For see. This Catechism does not begin with telling children that they are sinners: they will find that out soon enough for themselves, poor little things, from their own wayward and self-willed hearts. Nor by telling them that man is fallen and corrupt: they will find out that also soon enough, from the way in which they see people go on around them. It does not even begin by telling them that they ought to be good, or what goodness and righteousness is; because it takes for granted that they know that already; it takes for granted that The Light who lights every man who comes into the world is in them; even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, stirring up in their hearts, as He does in the heart of every child, the knowledge of good and the love of good. But it begins at once by teaching the child the name of God. It goes at

once to the root of the matter; to the fountain of goodness itself; even to God, the Father of lights. It is so careful of God's honour, so careful that the child should learn from the first to look up to God with love and trust, that it dare not tell the child that God can destroy and punish, before it has told him that God is a Father and a Maker; the Father of spirits, who has made him and all the world. It dare not tell him that mankind is fallen, before it has told him that all the world is redeemed. It dare not talk to him of unholiness, before it has taught him that the Holy Spirit of God is with him, to make him holy. It tells him of a world, a flesh, and a devil: but he has renounced them. He has neither part nor lot in them; and he is not to think of them yet. He is to think of that in which he has part and lot, of which he is an inheritor.

He is to know where he is and ought to be, before he knows where he is not and ought not to be: he is to think of the name of God, by which he can trample world, flesh, and devil under foot, if they dare hereafter meddle with his soul. In its God-inspired tenderness and prudence, it dare not darken the heart of one little child, or tempt him to hard thoughts of God, or to cry, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' lest it put a stumbling-block in the way of Christ's little ones, and dishonour the name and glory of God.

It tells him of the love, before it tells him of the wrath; of the order, before it tells him of the disorder; of the right, before the wrong; of the health, before the disease; of the freedom, before the bondage; of the truth, before the lies; of the light, before the darkness; in one word, it tells him first of the eternal and good

God, who was, and is, and shall be to all eternity, before and above the evil devil. It tells him of the name of God; and tells him that God is with him, and he with God, and bids him believe that, and be saved, from his birth-hour, to endless ages. It does not tell him to pray that he may become God's child; but to pray, because he is God's child already. It does not tell him to love God, in order that he may make God love him; but to love God because God loves him already, and has loved him from all eternity. It does not tell him to obey Jesus Christ, in order that Christ may save him; but to obey Christ because Christ has saved him, and bought him with his own blood. It does not tell him to do good works, in order that God's Spirit may be pleased with him, and come to him, and make him one of the elect; neither does it tell him, that some day or other, if he is converted, and feels certain religious experiences, he will have a right to consider himself one of God's elect: but it tells him to look man and devil in the face, he, the poor little ignorant village child, and say boldly in the name of God, 'I am one of God's elect. The Holy Spirit of God is sanctifying me, and making me holy. God has saved me; and I heartily thank my Heavenly Father, who has called me to this state of salvation.' It tells him to believe that he is safe—safe in the ark of Christ's Church, as Noah was safe in the ark at the deluge; and that the one way to keep himself within that ark is to obey Him to whom it belongs, who judges it and will guide it for ever, Jesus Christ, the likeness of God; and that as long as he does that, neither world, flesh, nor devil, can harm him; even as

Noah was safe in the ark, and nothing could drown him but his own wilful casting himself out of the ark, and trying to free the flood of waters by his own strength and cunning.

It tells him, I say, that he is safe, and saved, even as David, and Isaiah, and all holy men who ever lived have been, as long as he trusts in God, and clings to God, and obeys God; and that only when he forsakes God, and follows his own selfishness and pride, can anything or being in earth or hell harm him.

And do not fancy, my friends, that this is a mere unimportant question of words and doctrines, because a baptized and educated child may be lost after all, and fall from his state of salvation into a state of damnation. Still more, do not fancy that if a child is taught that he is already a child of God, regenerated in baptism, and elect by God's Spirit, that therefore he will neglect either vital faith or good works—heaven forbid!

Is it likely to make a child careless, and inclined to neglect vital truth, to tell him that God is his Father and loves him utterly, and has given His only begotten Son to die for him? Is it not the very way, the only way, to stir up in him faith, and real hearty trust and affection towards God? How can you teach him to trust God, but by telling him that God has shown himself boundlessly and perfectly worthy to be trusted by every soul of man; or to love God, but by showing him that God loves him already? Is it likely to make a child careless of good works, to tell him that God has elected and chosen him, and all his brothers and schoolfellows, to be conformed into the likeness of Jesus

Christ, and that every good, and honourable, and gentle thought or feeling which ever crosses his little heart, does not come from himself, is not part of his own nature or character, but is nothing less than the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, nothing less than the voice of Almighty God Himself, speaking to the child's heart, that he may answer with Samuel—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth?" Is it likely to make a child careless about losing eternal life, to tell him that God has already given to him eternal life, and that that life is in His Son Jesus Christ, to whom the child belongs, body, soul, and spirit?

Judge for yourselves, my friends. Think what awe, what reverence, purity, dread of sin, would grow up in a child who was really taught all this, and yet what faith and love to God, what freedom, and joyfulness, and good courage about his own duty and calling in life.

And then look at the fruits which in general follow a religious education, as it is miscalled; and take warning. For if you really train up your children in the way in which they should go, be sure that when they are old they will not depart from it—a promise which is not fulfilled to most religious education which we see around us now-a-days; from which sad fact, if Scripture be inspired and infallible, we can only judge that such is not the way in which the children should go; and that because it is a wrong way, therefore God will not, and man cannot, keep them in it.

SERMON IV. NAMES

Matthew i. 21. And thou shall call his name Jesus.

Did it ever seem to you a curious thing that the Catechism begins by asking the child its name? ‘What is your name?’ ‘Who gave you this name?’ I think that if you were not all of you accustomed to the Church Catechism from your childhood, that would seem a strange way of beginning to teach a child about religion.

But the more I consider, the more sure I am that it is the right way to begin teaching a child what the Catechism wishes to teach.

Do not fancy that it begins by asking the child’s name just because it must begin somehow, and then go on to religion afterwards. Do not fancy that it merely supposes that the clergyman does not know the child’s name, and must ask it; for this Catechism is intended to be taught by parents to their children, and masters to their apprentices and servants; by people, therefore, who know the child’s name perfectly well already, and yet they are to begin by asking the child his name.

Now, why is this? What has a child’s name to do with his Faith and duty as a Christian?

You may answer, Because his Christian name is given him when he is baptized.

But *why* is his Christian name given him when he is baptized? Why then rather than at any other time?

Because it is the old custom of the Church. No doubt it is; and a most wise and blessed custom it is; and one which shows us how much more about God and man the churchmen in old times knew, than most of our religious teachers now-a-days. But how did that old custom arise? What put into the minds of church people, for the last sixteen hundred years at least, that being baptized and being named had anything to do with each other?

Men had names of their own long before the Lord Jesus came, long before His Baptism was heard of on earth;—the heathens of old had their names—the heathens have names still;—why, then, did church people feel it right to mix a new thing like baptism with a world-old thing like giving a name?

My friends, I feel and say honestly, that there is more in this matter than I understand; and what little I do understand, I could not explain fully in one sermon, or in many either. But let this be enough for to-day. God grant that I may be able to make you understand me.

Any one's having a name—a name of his own, a Christian name, as we rightly call it—signifies that he is a person; that is, that he has a character of his own, and a responsibility, and a calling and duty of his own, given him by God; in one word, that he has an immortal soul in him, for which he, and he alone, must answer, and receive the rewards of the deeds which it does in the body, whether they be good or evil. But names are not given at random, without cause or meaning. When Adam named all the beasts, we read that whatsoever he called any beast, that

was the name of it. The names which he gave *described* each beast, were taken from something in its appearance, or its ways and habits, and so each was its right name, the name which expressed its nature. And so now, when learned men discover animals or plants in foreign countries, they do not give them names at random, but take care to invent names for them which may describe their natures, and make people understand what they are like, as Adam did for the beasts of old. And much more, in old times, had the names of men each of them a meaning. If it was reasonable to give names full of meaning to each kind of dumb animal, which are mere things, and not persons at all, how much more to each man separately, for each man is a person of himself; each man has a character different from all others, a calling different from all others, and therefore he ought to have his own name separate from all others: and therefore in old times it was the custom to give each child a separate name, which had a meaning in it, was, as it were, a description of the child, or of something particular about the child.

Now, we may see this, above all, in The adorable Name of Jesus. That name, above all others, ought to show us what a name means; for it is the name of the Son of Man, the one perfect and sinless man, the pattern of all men; and therefore it must be a perfect name, and a pattern for all names; and it was given to the Lord not by man, but by God; not after He was born, but before He was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin. And therefore, it must show and mean not merely some

outward accident about Him, something which He seemed to be, or looked like, in men's eyes: no, the Name of Jesus must mean what the Lord was in the sight of His Father in Heaven; what He was in the eternal purpose of God the Father; what He was, really and absolutely, in Himself; it must mean and declare the very substance of His being. And so, indeed, it does; for The adorable Name of Jesus means nothing else but God the Saviour—God who saves. This is His name, and was, and ever will be. This Name He fulfilled on earth, and proved it to be His character, His exact description, His very Name, in short, which made Him different from all other beings in heaven or earth, create or uncreate; and therefore, He bears His name to all eternity, for a mark of what He has been, and is, and will be for ever—God the Saviour; and this is the perfect name, the pattern of all other names of men.

Now though the Christian names which we give our children here in England, have no especial meaning to them, and have nothing to do with what we expect or wish the children to be when they grow up, yet the names of people in most other countries in the world have. The Jewish names which we find in the Bible have almost all of them a meaning. So Simeon, I believe, means 'Obedient'; Jehoshaphat means, 'The Lord will judge'; Daniel, 'God is my judge'; Isaiah means, 'The Salvation of the Lord'; Isaac means, 'She laughs,' as a memorial of Sarah's laughing, when she heard that she was to have a child; Ishmael means, 'The Lord hears,' in remembrance of God's hearing

Hagar's cry in the wilderness, when Ishmael was dying of thirst. Especially those names of which we read that God commanded them to be given, have meanings, and to tell the persons who bore those names what God expected of them, or would do for them. So Abraham means, 'The father of many nations.' So the children of both Isaiah and Hosea had names given them by God, each of them meaning something which God was going to do to the nation of the Jews. And so John means, 'Given by the Lord,' which name was given to John the Baptist by the Angel, before his strange birth, in his mother's old age.

But we must remember that the heathens also gave names to their children, though they did not know that their children owed any duty to God, or belonged to God, and therefore we cannot call their names Christian names. Yes, the heathens did give their children names; some of them give their children names still. And there is to me something most sad and painful in those heathen names, and yet most full of meaning. A solemn lesson to us, to show us what the fall means; what man becomes, when he gives way to his fallen nature, and is parted from Christ, the Head of man.

First, these heathens had a dim remembrance that man was made in the likeness of God, and lived by Faith in God, and therefore that men's names were to express that, as indeed many of their old names do. But, alas! the likeness of God in fallen man is like a tree without roots, or rather a tree without soil to grow in. God's likeness in man can only flourish as long as he

is joined to Christ, the perfect likeness of God, the true life and the true light of men, the foundation which is already laid, and the soil in which man was meant to grow and flourish for ever, and as long as he is fed by the Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds—never forget that, or you will lose the understanding both of who God is and what man is—proceeds not only from God the Father, but also from God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, in the heathen, God's likeness withered and decayed, as a tree withers and decays when torn up from the soil. And first, they began to call themselves after the names of false gods, which they had invented out of their own carnal fancies. Then they called themselves after the names of their dumb animal's. So, Pharaoh means, 'The Sun-God'; the Ammonites mean, 'The people who worshipped the ram as a god'; Potiphar means, 'A fat bull,' which the Egyptians used to worship; and I could tell you of hundreds of heathen names more, like these, which are ridiculous enough to make one smile, if we did not keep in mind what tokens they are of sin and ignorance, and the likeness not of God, but of the beasts which perish.

Then comes another set of names, showing a lower fall still, when heathens have quite forgotten that man was originally made in God's likeness, and are not only content to live after the likeness of the beasts which perish, but pride themselves on being like beasts, and therefore name their children after dumb animals,—the girls after the gentler and fairer animals, and the boys after ravenous and cruel beasts of prey. That has been the

custom among many heathen nations; perhaps among almost all of them, at some time or other. It is the custom now among the Red Indians in North America, where you will find one man in a tribe called 'The Bull,' another 'The Panther,' and another 'The Serpent,' and so on; showing that they would like to be, if they could, as strong as the bull, as cruel as the panther, as venomous as the serpent. What wonder that those Red Indians, who have so put on the likeness of the beasts, are now dying off the face of the earth like the beasts whom they admire and imitate?

And this was the way with our own heathen forefathers before the blessed Gospel was preached to them. It is frightful, in reading old histories, to find how many Englishmen, our own forefathers, were named after fierce wild beasts, and tried, alas! to be like their names—children of wrath, whose feet were swift to shed blood, under whose lips was the poison of adders, and destruction and bloodshed following in their paths, not knowing the way of peace. The wolf was the common wild beast of England then; and there are, I should say, twenty common old English names ending in wolf, besides as many more ending in bear, and eagle, and raven. Fearful sign! that men of our own flesh and blood should have gloried in being like the wolf, the cruellest, the greediest, the most mean of savage beasts! How shall we thank God enough, who sent to them the knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ, and called them to be new men in Christ Jesus, and called them to holy baptism, to receive new names, and begin new lives in the righteous likeness of God Himself?

—that as by nature they had been the children of wrath, so in baptism they might become the children of grace; that as from their forefathers they had inherited a corrupt nature, original sin, and the likeness of the foul and ravenous beasts which perish, they might have power from the Spirit of God to become the sons of God, conformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, in peace, and love, and righteousness, and all holiness.

And yet, in names there is a lower depth still among fallen and heathen men; when they lose utterly the last dim notion that God intends men to be persons, even as God the Father is a person, and God the Son a person, and God the Holy Spirit is a person, and so lose the custom of giving their children personal names at all; either giving them, after they grow up, mere nicknames, taken from some peculiarity of their bodies, or something which they have done, or some place where they happen to live; or else, like many tribes of heathen negroes, just name them after the day of the week on which they were born, as some way of knowing them apart; or, last and most shocking of all, give them no names at all, and have no names themselves, knowing each other apart as the dumb animals do, only by sight. I can conceive no deeper fall into utter brutishness than that; and yet some few of the most savage tribes, both in Africa and in the Indian islands, are said—God help them!—to live in that way, and to have no names;—blotted, indeed, out of the book of life!

But is this the right state for men? No; it is the wrong state. It is a disease into which men are fallen; a disease out of which

Christ came to raise men; and out of which He does raise us in Holy Baptism. Baptism puts the child into its right state—into the right state for a human being, a human soul, a human person. And baptism declares what that right state is—a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. A member of Christ, and therefore a person, because Christ is a person. A child of God, and therefore a person, because a child's duty is to love and trust and obey his father—and only a person can do that, not an animal or a thing. An inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, and therefore bound to cherish all heavenly thoughts and feelings, all righteousness, love, and obedience, which only spirits and persons, not animals or things, can feel.

Now can you not see why baptism is the proper time for giving the child a name? Because then Christ claims the child for His own;—because having a name shows that the child is a person who has a soul, a will, a conscience, a duty; a person who must answer himself for himself alone for what he does in the body, whether it be good or evil. And that will, and soul, and conscience were given the child by Christ, by whom all things are made, who is the Light which lights every man who comes into the world.

Thus in holy baptism God adopts the child for His own in Jesus Christ. He declares that the child is regenerate, and has a new life, a life from above, a seed of eternal personal life which he himself has not by nature. And that seed of eternal life is

none other but the Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Lord and Giver of Life, who does verily and indeed regenerate the child in holy baptism, and dwells with his soul, his person, his very self, that He may educate the child's character, and raise his affections, and subdue his will, and raise him up daily from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

Therefore, when in the Catechism you solemnly ask the child its name, you ask it no light question. You speak as a spirit, a person, to its spirit, to its very self, which God wills should never perish, but live for ever. You single the child out from all its schoolfellows, from all the millions of human beings who have ever lived, or ever will live; and you make the child, by answering to his name, confess that he is a person, an immortal soul, who must stand alone before the judgment seat of God; a person who has a duty and a calling upon God's earth, which he must fulfil or pay the forfeit. And then you ask the child who gave him his name, and make him declare that his name was given him in baptism, wherein he was made a member of Christ and a child of God. You make the child confess that he is a person in Jesus Christ, that Christ has redeemed him, his very self, and taken him to Himself, and made him not merely God's creature, or God's slave, but God's child. You make the child confess that his duty as a person is not towards himself, to do what *he* likes, and follow his own carnal lusts; but toward God and toward his neighbours, who are in God's kingdom of heaven as well as he. And then you go on in the rest of the Catechism to

teach him how he himself, the person to whom you are speaking, may live for ever and ever as a person, by faith in other Persons beside himself, even in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as you teach him in the Creed; by doing his duty to other persons beside himself, even to God and man, as you teach him in the Ten Commandments; and by diligent prayer to another Person beside himself, even to God his heavenly Father, to feed and strengthen him day by day with that eternal life which was given to him in baptism. Thus the whole Catechism turns upon the very first question in it—‘What is thy name?’ It explains to the child what is really meant, in the sight of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the whole Church in earth and heaven, by the child’s having a name of his own, and being a person, and having that name given to him in holy baptism.

And if this is true of our children, my friends, it is equally true of us. You and I are persons, and persons in Christ; each stands alone day and night before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each must answer for himself. None can deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him. Each of us has his calling from his heavenly Father; his duty to do which none can do instead of him. Each has his own sins, his own temptations, his own sorrows, which he must bring single-handed and alone to God his Father, as it is written, ‘The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy.’ There is a world, a flesh, and a devil, near to us, ready to drag us down, and destroy our personal and spiritual life, which God has given us in Christ;

a flesh which tempts us to follow our own appetites and passions, blindly and lawlessly, like the beasts which perish; a world which tempts us to become mere things, without free-wills of our own, or consciences of our own, without personal faith and personal holiness; the puppets of the circumstances and the customs which happen to be round us; blown about like the dead leaf, and swept helplessly down the stream of time. And there is a devil, too, near us, tempting us to the deepest lie of all,—to set up ourselves apart from God, and to try, as the devil tries, to be persons in our own strength, each doing what he chooses, each being his own law, and his own master; that is, his own lawlessness, and his own tyrant: and if we listen to that devil, that spirit of lawlessness and self-will, we shall become his slaves, persons in him, doing his work, and finding torment and misery and slavery in it. Awful thought, that so many enemies should be against us; yea, that we ourselves should be our own enemies! But here baptism gives us hope, baptism gives us courage; we are in Christ; God is our Father, and He can and will give us power to have victory, and to triumph against the world, the flesh, and the devil. His Spirit is given to us in baptism—that Spirit of God who is not merely a force or an influence, but a person, a living, loving, holy Person.

He is with us, to give our persons, our souls, eternal life from His life, eternal holiness from His holiness; that so, not merely some part of us, but we our very selves and souls—we the very same persons who were christened, and had a name given us in holy baptism, and have been answering to that name all our life,

and were reminded, whenever we heard that name, that we had a duty of our own, a history of our own, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows of our own, which none could share with us,—that we, I say, our own persons, our very selves, may be raised up again at the last day, free, pure, strong, filled with the life of God, which is eternal life.

And then, what blessed words are these from the Lord Jesus, which we read in the book of Revelation? ‘And I will give to him that overcometh, a new name.’ A new name for him that overcometh world, flesh, and devil; that shall be our portion in the world to come. A new name, perfect like the name of the Lord Jesus, which shall express and mean all that we are to do hereafter, and all that we have done well on earth. A name which shall declare to us our calling and work in God’s Church triumphant, throughout all ages and worlds to come: and yet a name which no man knoweth saving he who receiveth it.

Yes, if we may dare to guess at the meaning of those deep words, perhaps in that new name shall be recorded for each man all that went on, in the secret depths of the man’s own heart, between himself and his God, unknown and unnoticed even by the wife of his bosom. The cup of cold water given in Christ’s name; the little private acts of love, and kindness, and self-sacrifice, of which none but God knew; the secret prayers, the secret acts of contrition, the secret hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, the secret struggles and agonies of heart, which he could not, dare not, ought not to tell to any human being.

All these, he shall find, will go to make up his character in the life to come, to determine what work he is to do for God in the world to come; as it is written, 'Be thou faithful over a few things, and I will make thee ruler over many things.' All these, perhaps, shall be expressed and declared in that new name, the full meaning of which none will know but the man himself, because none but he knows the secret experiences and struggles which went toward the making of it; none but he and God; for God will know all, He who is the Lord and Saviour of our souls, our persons, our very selves, and can preserve them utterly to the fulness of eternal life, because He knows them thoroughly and utterly; because He judges not according to appearance, but judges righteous judgment; because He sees us not merely as we seem to others to be, not even as we seem at times to ourselves to be;—but searches the heart, and can be touched with the feeling of its infirmities, seeing that He himself has been tempted even as we are, yet without sin; because, blessed thought! He can pierce through the very marrow of our being, and discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts, and see what we long to be, and what we ought to be; so that we can safely and hopefully commend our spirits to His hand, day by day and hour by hour, and can trust Him to cleanse us from our secret faults, and to renew and strengthen our very selves day by day with that eternal life which He gives to all who cast themselves utterly upon Him.

SERMON V. SPONSORSHIP

1 Cor. xii. 26, 27. Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or whether one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

I have to tell you that there will be a confirmation held at . . . on the . . . All persons of fit age who have not yet been confirmed ought to be ready, and I hope and trust that most of them will be ready, on that day to profess publicly their faith and loyalty to the Lord who died for them. I hope and trust that they will, as soon as possible, tell me that they intend to do so, and come to me to talk over the matter, and to learn what I can teach them about it. They will find in me, I hope, nothing but kindness and fellow-feeling.

But I have not only to tell young persons of the Confirmation: I have to tell all godfathers and godmothers of it also. Have any of you here ever stood godfather or godmother to any young person in this parish who is not yet confirmed? If you have, now is the time for you to fulfil your parts as sponsors. You must help me, and help the children's parents, in bringing your godchildren to confirmation. It really is your duty. It will be better for you if you fulfil it. Better for you, not merely by preventing a punishment, but by bringing a blessing. Let me try to show you what I mean.

Now godparents must have some duty, some responsibility

or other;—that is plain. If you or I promise and vow things in another person's name, we must be bound more or less to see that that other person fulfils the promise which we made for him: and so the baptism service warns the sponsors as soon as the child is christened, 'Forasmuch as this child has promised,' &c.; and then we have a plain explanation of what a godfather and godmother's duties are. 'And that your godchild may know these things the better,' &c.: and finally, 'you shall take care that this child be brought to the bishop to be confirmed.'

That is the duty of godfathers and godmothers. Those who stand for any child do it on that understanding, and take upon themselves knowingly that duty.

Now, I will not threaten you, my friends; I will not pretend to tell you how God will punish those godfathers and godmothers who do not do their duty; because I do not know how he will punish them. He has not told us in the Bible; and who am I, to deal out God's thunders as if they belonged to me, and judge people of whose real merits and demerits in God's sight I have no fair means of judging? I always dread and dislike threatening any sinner out of this pulpit, except those who plainly break the plain laws which are written in those Ten Commandments, and hypocrites: because I stand in awe of our Lord's own words—'Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, while you yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers.' There is too much of that now-a-days, my friends, and

I have no mind to add my share to it. And sure I am, that any godfathers and godmothers who do their duty, only because they are afraid that God will punish them if they do not, will not do their duty at all. But sure I am also, and thankful to God, that we cannot neglect any duty whatsoever without being punished in some way or other for our neglect of it. That is not a curse, but a blessing: it is a blessing to us to be punished. The only real curse of God in this life is to be left unpunished for our sins. It is a blessing for us that our sins find us out. For if our sins did not find *us* out, we should very often, I fear, not find our sins out.

And, therefore, when I tell godfathers and godmothers, not that God will perhaps punish them for their neglect, but that He does punish them for it already, I am telling them good news, if they will only open their hearts to that good news.

For God does punish people for neglecting their godchildren. Those who have eyes to see may see it round us now, in this very parish, and in every parish in England, in the selfishness, distrust, divisions, and quarrels which prevail. I do not mean that this parish is worse than others, or England worse than other countries. That is no concern of ours: our own parish, and our own evils, are quite concern enough for us.

Are people happy together? Do they pull well together? Look at the old-standing quarrels, misunderstandings, grudges, prejudices, suspicions, which part one man from another, one family from another; every man for his own house, and very few for the kingdom of God;—no, not even for the general welfare

of the parish! Do not men try to better themselves at the expense of the parish—to the injury of the parish? Do not men, when they try to raise their own family, seem to think that the simplest way to do it is to pull down their neighbour's family; to draw away their custom; oust them from their places, or hurt their characters in order to rise upon their fall? so that though they are brothers, members of the same church, nation and parish, the greater part of them are, in practice, at war with each other—trying to live at each other's expense. Now, is this profitable? So far from it, that if you will watch the history, either of the whole world, or of this country, or of this one parish, you will find that by far the greater part of the misery in it has sprung from this very selfishness and separateness—from the perpetual struggle between man and man, and between family and family: so that there have been men, and those learned, and thoughtful, and well-meaning men enough, who have said that the only cure for the world's quarrelling and selfishness was to take all children away from their parents, and bring them up in large public schools; ay, and even to try plans which are sinful, foul, and wicked, all in order to prevent parents knowing which were their own children, that they might care for all the children in the parish as much as if they were their own.

A foolish plan, my friends, and for this one reason, that it is driving out one evil by a still greater one. It destroys the root to get the fruit; by destroying family life, and love, and obedience, to get at the communion of saints, or rather at some

ghost of it. The real communion of saints is founded on the Fifth Commandment—‘Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother;’ and grows out of it, not by destroying it, but by fulfilling it, as the tree grows out of the root, without taking away from the life of the root, but rather by nourishing and increasing it. Now, the ancient institution of godfathers and godmothers would, it seems to me, if it were carried out honestly and really, do for us what we certainly have not done for ourselves as yet, and bind us all together as one family. It would do all the good which those fanciful philosophers of whom I first spoke, have dreamt, without any of the evil; and it would do it because it goes simply on the belief that the foundation is already laid, and that that foundation is Christ. It says, because this child is not merely the child of his father and mother, but the child of God, the universal Father, therefore other people besides his parents have an interest in him: all who are children of God as well as he have an interest in him; for they are all his brothers, and have a brother’s interest in his welfare. Because this child is not merely a member of the family whose surname he bears, but a member of Christ, a member of God’s great adopted family, in the hearts of every one of whom His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is working; therefore this child ought to be an object of awe, and of interest, and love, and care to every other member of Christ’s Church. Moreover, the child is an inheritor of a heavenly kingdom—a kingdom of grace—a kingdom of God,—which is love and justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—all personal, spiritual, heavenly, God-

given graces;—and he cannot have them without being a blessing to all around him; and he cannot be without them, without being a curse to all around him. If, in after life, when he comes to be confirmed, he claims his inheritance in this heavenly kingdom, he will be full of love, justice, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit. If he refuses to claim his inheritance, and despises his heavenly birthright, and lives as if he were a mere earthly creature, only to please himself, and help himself, he will not be full of those graces. And what then? That he will be full of their opposites, of course. If he has not love, he will be unloving, selfish, hard, cold—to *you* and yours. If he has not justice he will be unjust—to you and yours. If he is not at peace he will be at war, quarrelling, grudging, envying, backbiting—you and yours. If he has not joy in the Holy Spirit, he will have joy in an unholy spirit, for he must have joy in some spirit; he must take pleasure in some sort of way of thinking and feeling, and some sort of life—in short, in some sort of spirit; and whatsoever is not holy is unholy, whatsoever is not good is bad, whatsoever is not of God's Holy Spirit is of the Devil;—and therefore, if the child as he grows up has not joy in the Holy Spirit, and does not enjoy doing right and pleasing God, and being like the Lord Jesus Christ, then he will enjoy doing wrong, and pleasing himself, and being unlike the Lord Jesus Christ; and so he will set a bad example, and be a temptation to all young people of his own age, ready to lead them into sin, and draw them away to those sinful and unholy pleasures in which he takes delight,—whether it be to rioting and

drinking, or to uncleanness and unchastity, or to sneering and laughing at godliness, and at good people. And that, as you know by experience, may be the worse for you and the worse for your children. Is that the sort of young person with whom you would wish to see your children keeping company? Is that the sort of young person next door to whom you would wish to live? Is not such a person a curse, just because he is a person, a spiritual being with an evil spirit in him, which can harm you, and tempt you, and act on you for evil; just as if he had been a righteous person, with the holy and good Spirit in him, he would have helped you, and taught you, and worked on you for good? But so it is: we are members one of another, and if one member goes wrong, and gets diseased, and suffers, all the other members are sure to suffer more or less with it, sooner or later: you feel it so in your bodies—be sure it is so in God's church. But if one member is sound and healthy, all the other members must and will be the better for its health, and rejoice with it, and be able to do their own work the more freely, and strongly, and heartily.

Just think for yourselves; consider, you who are grown up, and have had experience of life, the harm you have known one bad man do, the sorrow he will cause, even to people who never saw him; and the good which you have seen one good man, not merely do with his own hands, but put into other people's hearts by his example. Is not both the good and the harm which is done on earth like the ripple of a stone dropt into water, which spreads and spreads for a vast distance round, however small the

stone may be? Indeed, bold as it may seem to say it, I believe that, if we could behold all hearts as the Lord Jesus does, we should find that there never was a good man but that the whole of Christendom, perhaps all mankind, was sooner or later, more or less, the better for him; and that there never was a bad man but that all Christendom, perhaps all mankind, was the worse for him. So fully and really true it is in everyday practice, that we are members one of another.

Now this is the principle on which the Church acts. For the little unconscious infant is treated as what it is, a most solemn and important person, who has other relations beside its father and mother, as a person who is the brother of all the people round it, and of all the Church of God, and who, too, may hereafter do to them boundless good or harm, and they to it.

Therefore we must have some persons to bear witness of that, to remind the child himself, and the whole Church, that he is not merely a soul by itself to be saved, but that he is a brother, a member of a family; that he is bound to that family henceforth, for good and for evil. And this the godfathers and godmothers do: they represent and stand in the place of the whole Church.

In one sense, every Christian who meets that child through life, or hears of it, ought to behave, as far as he can, as its godfather; ought to help and improve it if he can. But what is everybody's business, says the proverb, is nobody's business; and therefore these godfathers and godmothers are called out from the rest, as examples to the rest, to watch over the child, and to help and

advise its father and mother in guiding and training it: but not by interfering with a parent's rights, God forbid! or by drawing away the child's affections from its own flesh and blood; for if a child be not taught first to honour its father and mother, there is little use in teaching it anything else whatsoever; and a godfather's first duty is to see that his godchild obeys its earthly parents for the Lord's sake, for that is right, and God's will, whatever else is not.

Now just conceive—I am sure that you easily may—what a blessing to this parish, or this part of the country, it would be, were the duties of godfathers really carried out and practised.

Every child, beside his father and mother, would have some two or three elder friends at least, whom he had known from his childhood, whom he could trust, to whom he could go in trouble as to his own flesh and blood. The orphan would have, if not relations, still godparents, to comfort and protect him. No one could go abroad without meeting, if not a godparent, yet the godparent or godchild of a friend or a relation; someone, in short, who had an interest in him, and he in them. All would be bound together in threefold cords of interest and affection.

How many spites, family quarrels, mistakes, and ignorances about each other would be done away, if people would but thus simply enter into that communion of saints to which, by right, they belong, and bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.—Unless you think that men are such ill-conditioned creatures that the less they mix with each other the better. I do not. I believe that the more we mix with each other, and the

better we know each other, the more we shall feel for each other: that the more we help people, the more we shall find that they are worth helping; that the more, in a word, we try to live, not after the likeness of the beasts, selfish and apart, but after the order and constitution of God's Church, to which we belong, and which is, that we are all fellow-members of one body, then the more we shall find that God's order is the right, good, blessed order, by obeying which we enter into comfort of which we never dream as long as we lead selfish, separate, worldly lives; as it is written, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'

This may seem a fanciful dream, too fair to be possible; but what prevents it from being possible, save and except our own selfishness and laziness?

And as for what fruit will spring from it, I have seen, by experience, the blessing of godfathership and godmothership, where it is really carried out; how it will knit together, in sacred bonds of friendship, not merely the children, but the grown persons of different families, and give them a fellow-feeling, a mutual interest, which will prevent a hundred quarrels and coldnesses among frail human creatures. And to those who are childless themselves, what a blessing to have their love and self-sacrifice called out, by being bound in holy bonds, if not to children of their own, at least to children of God!—to have young people to care for, to teach, to guide, and so to win for

themselves in the Church of God a name better than that of sons and daughters. And have no fear that by bringing your kindness to bear especially upon your godchildren you will narrow your love, and care less for children in general. Not so, my friends; you will find that your love to your godchildren, like love to your own children, will make all children lovable in your eyes: you will learn how worthy of your love children are, what capacities of good there are in them, how truly of such are the kingdom of heaven; and their simplicity will often teach you more than you can teach them. Their God-given instincts of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, which come from the indwelling Word of God, Jesus the Lord, will often enough shame us, will teach us more and more the depth of that great saying, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Thou, O God, hast perfected Thy praise.'

Now try, I entreat you, all godfathers and godmothers, to carry out these hints of mine, and so fulfil your duty to your godchildren, sure that you will find it a blessing to yourselves as well as to them.

After all it is your duty. But do not let the slandering Devil slander to you that blessed word, Duty, and make you afraid of it, and shrink from it, as if it meant something burdensome, and troublesome, and thankless, which you suppose you must do for fear of punishment, while you have a right to see how little of it you can do, and try to be let off as cheaply as possible.

Beware of that evil spirit, my friends, for he is very near you, and me, and every man, whenever we think of our duty. Very

near us he is, that evil Jesuit spirit, that spirit of bondage unto fear, which is continually setting us on to find out with how *little* service God will be contented, how human slaves may make the cheapest bargain with some stern taskmaster above, of whom they dream. And from that temptation there is no escape, save into the blessed name of God Himself—our Father.

Our Father!—whenever you think of your duty to God or man, think but of those two words. Remember that all duty is duty to a Father; your Father; and such a Father! Who gave His only begotten Son to die for you, who showed what He was in that Son—full of goodness, perfectly loving, perfectly merciful, perfectly just; and then you will not be inclined to ask how *little* obedience, how *little* love, how *little* service, He will allow you to pay to Him; but how much He will help you to pay to Him. Then you will feel that His service is perfect freedom, because it is service to a Father who loves you, and will help you to do His will.

Then you will feel that His commandments are not grievous, because they are a Father's commandments, because you are bound to do them, not by dread and superstition, but by gratitude, honour, affection, respect, trust. Then you will not be thinking of what punishment will come if you disobey—no, nor of what reward will come if you obey—but you will be thinking of the commandment itself, and how to carry it out most perfectly, and let the consequences take care of themselves, because you know that your *Father* takes care of them; that He loves you, and therefore what He commands must be good for you, utterly

the best thing for you; that He only gives you a commandment because it is good for you; that you are made in God's image, and therefore God's will must be for you the path of life, the only rule by which you can prosper now and for ever.

Do try, now, all you who are godfathers and godmothers, and for once look on your duty in this light. Be sure that in trying to do your duty you will bring a blessing on yourselves, because your duty is to a Father in heaven. Be sure that, in trying to better your godchildren, you will better yourselves; in trying to teach them, you will teach yourselves; in trying to bring them to confirmation, you will indeed confirm, root, and strengthen yourselves the more deeply in all that is good; because your godchildren are indeed God's children, and whatsoever you do for them you do for His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, as He Himself says, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these little ones, ye did it unto Me.' Do not be afraid of trying; you will have a hundred reasons for not trying rise in your mind, the Devil will find you a hundred lying excuses: 'It will be so difficult; and you do not like to interfere with other people's children; and you have never cared about your godchildren yet, and it will seem so odd to begin now; and the children may not listen to you; and besides, you do not know enough to teach them; you are not good scholar enough, good liver enough, you can't preach where you don't practice.' Oh, how ready the Devil is to help a man to excuses for not doing his duty; how careful he is to keep out of a man's mind the one thought which would sweep all those excuses

to the wind—the thought that this same duty, which he is trying to make look so ugly, is duty to a loving Father. Do not listen to his lies; look up to your good Father in heaven; and try. It is God's will that these children should be confirmed; it is His will that you should help to bring them to confirmation; and if it is His will, He will help you to do that will of His. It may seem difficult: but try, and the difficulty will vanish, for God will make it easy for you. You may be afraid of interfering: believe that God's Spirit is working in the hearts of your godchildren, and of their parents also; and trust to God's Spirit to make them kindly and thankful to you about the matter, and glad to see that you take an interest in their children. You may seem not to know enough: O, my friends, you know enough, every one of you, if you have courage to confess how much you know. Ask God for courage to speak out, and He will give it you. And even if you are no scholar, be sure that, as the old proverb says, 'Teaching is the best way of learning.' Any parent, or godfather, or godmother, who will try to teach their children God's truth and their duty, will find that in so doing they will teach themselves even more than they teach the children. I say it because I know it from my own experience. And for the rest, again I say, is not God your Father?

Therefore, if any man be in want of wisdom, or courage, or any other heavenly gift, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and he shall receive it. For after all, when you ask God to teach you, and strengthen you to do your duty, you do but ask Him for a part of that very inheritance which He

has already given you; a part of your inheritance in that kingdom of heaven which is a kingdom of spiritual gifts and graces, into which you were baptized as well as your godchildren.

Try then, each of you, what you can do to bring your own godchildren to confirmation, and what you can do to make them fit for confirmation; for you are members one of another, and if you will act as such, you will find strength to do your duty, and a blessing in your day from that heavenly Father from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth, and yours among the rest, is named.

SERMON VI.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Ephesians ii. 5. By grace ye are saved.

We all hold that we are justified by faith, that is, by believing; and that unless we are justified we cannot be saved. And of all men who ever believed this, perhaps those who gave us the Church Catechism believed it most strongly. Nay, some of them suffered for it; endured persecution, banishment, and a cruel death, because they would persist in holding, contrary to the Romanists, that men were justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law; and that this was one of the root-doctrines of Christianity, which if a man did not believe, he would believe nothing else rightly. Does it not seem, then, something strange that they should never in this Catechism of theirs mention one word about justifying or justification? They do not ask the child, ‘How is a man justified?’ that he may answer, ‘By faith alone;’ they do not even teach him to say, ‘I am justified already. I am in a state of justification;’ but not saying one word about that, they teach him to say much more—they teach him to say that he is in a state of salvation, and to thank God boldly because he is so; and then go on at once to ask him the articles of his belief. And even more strange still, they teach him to answer that question, not by repeating any doctrines, but by repeating

the simple old Apostles' Creed. They do not teach him to say, as some would now-a-days, 'I believe in original sin, I believe in redemption through Christ's death, I believe in justification by faith, I believe in sanctification by the Holy Spirit,'—true as these doctrines are; still less do they bid the child say, 'I believe in predestination, and election, and effectual calling, and irresistible grace, and vicarious satisfaction, and forensic justification, and vital faith, and the three assurances.'

Whether these things be true or false, it seemed to the ancient worthies who gave us our Catechism that children had no business with them. They had their own opinions on these matters, and spoke their opinions moderately and wisely, and the sum of their opinions we have in the Thirty-nine Articles, which are not meant for children, not even for grown persons, excepting scholars and clergymen. Of course every grown person is at liberty to study them; but no one in the Church of England is required to agree to them, and to swear that they are true, except scholars at our old Universities, and clergymen, who are bound to have studied such questions. But for the rest of Englishmen all the necessary articles of belief (so the old divines considered) were contained in the simple old Apostles' Creed.

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