

CHARLES KINGSLEY

TOWN AND
COUNTRY
SERMONS

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SERMON I. HOW TO KEEP PASSION WEEK

(Preached before the Queen.)

Philippians ii. 5-11. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This the first day of Passion Week; and this text is the key-note of Passion Week. It tells us of the obedience of Christ; of the unselfishness of Christ; and, therefore, of the true glory of Christ.

It tells us of One who was in the form of God; the Co-equal

and Co-eternal Son; the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his Father's person: but who showed forth his Father's glory, and proved that he was the express likeness of his Father's character, by the very opposite means to those which man takes, when he wishes to show forth his own glory.

He was in the form of God. But he did not (so the text seems to mean) think that the bliss of God was a thing to be seized on greedily for himself. He did not think fit merely to glorify himself; to enjoy himself. He was not like the false gods of whom the heathen dreamed, who sat aloft in heaven and enjoyed themselves, careless of mankind.

No. He obeyed his Father utterly, and at all costs. He emptied himself (says St. Paul). He took on him the form of a slave. He humbled himself. He became obedient; obedient to death; and that death the shameful and dreadful death of the cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him; has declared him to be perfectly good, worthy of all praise, honour, glory, power, and dominion; and has given him a name above all names, the name of Jesus—Saviour. One who saved others, and cared not to save himself.

And therefore, too, God has given him that dominion of which he is worthy, and has proclaimed him Lord and Creator of all beings and all worlds, past, present, and to come.

It is of him; of his obedience; of his unselfishness, that Passion Week speaks to us. It tell us of the mind of Christ, and says, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'

How, then, shall we keep his Passion Week? There are several ways of keeping it, and all more or less good. Wisdom is justified of all her children.

But no way will be safe for us, unless we keep in mind the mind of Christ—obedience and self-sacrifice.

Some, for instance, are careful this week to attend church as often as possible; and who will blame them?

But unless they keep in mind the mind of Christ, they are apt to fall into the mistake of using vain repetitions, as the heathen do; and of fancying, like them, that they shall be heard for their much speaking, forgetting their Father in heaven knows what they have need of, before they ask him. And that is not like the mind of Christ. It is not like the mind of Christ to fancy that God dwells in temples made with hands; or that he can be worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; and (as even the heathen poet knew), are the offspring, the children, of God.

It is *not* according to the mind of Christ, to worship God as the heathen do, in order to win him to do our will. It *is* according to the mind of Christ to worship God, in order that we may do his will; to believe that God's will is a good will, good in itself, and good for us, and for all things and beings; and, therefore, to ask for strength to do God's will, whatever it may cost us. That is the mind of Christ, who came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him; who taught us to pray, as the greatest

blessing for which we can ask, 'Father, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;' who himself, in his utter agony, cried, 'Father, not my will, but thine, be done.'

Therefore, it is good to go to church; and good, for some at least, to go as often as possible: but only if we remember why we go, and whom we go to worship—a Father, who asks of us to worship him in spirit and in truth. A Father who has told us what that worship is like.

'Is this (God asked the Jews of old) the fast which I have chosen? Is it a day for a man to afflict his soul, and bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him (playing at being sad, while God has not made him sad)?

Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?'

'Is not this the fast which I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to thine house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.'

This is that pure worship and undefined before God and the Father, of which St. James tells us; and says that it consists in this—'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.'

In a word, this worship in the spirit, and in truth, is nought else but the mind of Christ. To believe in, to adore the Father's perfect goodness; to long and try to copy that goodness here on

earth. That is what Christ did utterly and perfectly, that is what we have to do, each according to our powers; and without it, without the spirit of obedience, all our church-going is of little worth in the eyes of our heavenly Father.

Others, again, go into retirement for this week, and spend it in examining themselves, and thinking over the sufferings of Christ.

And who, again, will blame them, provided they do not neglect their daily duty meanwhile?

But they, too, need to keep in mind the mind of Christ, if they mean to keep Passion Week aright.

They need it, indeed. And such a man, before he shuts himself up, and begins to examine himself, would do well *to examine himself as to why he is going to examine himself*, and to ask, Why am I going to do this? Because it is my interest? Because I think I shall gain more safety for my soul? Because I hope it will give me more chance of pleasure and glory in the next world? But, if so; have I the mind of Christ? For he did *not* think of his own interest, his own gain, his own pleasure, his own glory. How is this, then? I confess that the root of all my faults is selfishness.

Shall I examine into my own selfishness for a selfish end—to get safety and pleasure by it hereafter? I confess that the very glory of Christ is, that there is no selfishness in him. Shall I think over the sufferings of the unselfish Christ for a selfish end—to get something by it after I die? I am too apt already to make myself the centre, round which all the world must turn: to care for everything only as far as it does *me* good or harm. Shall I

make myself the centre round which heaven is to turn? Shall I think of God and of Christ only as far as it will profit *me*? And this week, too, of all weeks in the year? God forgive me! Into what a contradiction I am running unawares!

No. If I do shut myself up from my fellowmen, it shall be only to think how I may do my duty better to my fellowmen. If I do think over Christ's sufferings, it shall be only that I may learn from him how to suffer, if need be, at the call of duty; at least, to stir up in me obedience, usefulness, generosity, that I may go back to my work cheerfully, willingly, careless what reward I get, provided only I can do good in my station.

But, after all, will not the text tell us best how to keep Passion Week? Will not our Lord's own example tell us? Can we go wrong, if we keep our Passion Week as Christ kept his?

And how did he keep it? Certainly not by shutting himself up apart. Certainly not by mere thinking over the glory of self-sacrifice. He taught daily, we read, in the temple. Instead of giving up his work for a while, he seems to have worked more earnestly than ever. As the terrible end drew near; and his soul was troubled; and he was straitened as he looked forward to his baptism of fire; and the struggle in him grew fiercer (for the Bible tells us that there was a struggle) between the Man's natural desire to save his life, and the God's heavenly desire to lay down his life, he threw himself more and more into the work which he had to do. We hear more, perhaps, of our Lord's saying and doings during this week, up to the very moment before he was betrayed

to death, than we do of the whole three years of his public life.

His teaching was never, it seems, so continual; his appeals to the nation which he was trying to save were never so pathetic as at the very last; his warnings to the bigots who were destroying his nation never so terrible; his contempt for personal danger never so clear. The Bible seems to picture him to us as gathering up all his strength for one last effort, if by any means he might save that doomed city of Jerusalem, and in his divine spirit, courting death the more, the more his human flesh shrank from it.

This—the pattern of perfect obedience, perfect unselfishness, perfect generosity, perfect self-sacrificing love—is what we are to look at in Passion Week. This, I believe, is what we are meant to copy in Passion Week; that we may learn the habit of copying it all our lives long.

Why should not we, then, keep Passion Week somewhat as our Lord kept it before us? Not by merely hiding in our closets to meditate, even about *him*: but by going about our work, each in his place, dutifully, bravely, as he went? By doing the duty which lies nearest us, and trying to draw our lesson out of it.

Thus we may keep Passion Week in spirit and in truth; though some of us may hardly have time to enter a church, hardly have time for an hour's private thought about religion.

Amid the bustle of daily duties; amid the buzz of petty cares; amid the anxieties of great labours; amid the roar of the busy world, which cannot stop (and which ought not to stop), for our convenience; we may keep Passion Week in spirit and in truth,

if we will do the duty which lies nearest us, and try to draw our lesson out of it.

For practice—and, I believe, practice alone—will teach us to restrain ourselves, and conquer ourselves. Experience—and, I believe, experience alone—will show us our own faults and weaknesses.

Every man—every human spirit on God's earth has spiritual enemies—habits and principles within him—if not other spirits without him, which hinder him, more or less, from being all that God meant him to be. And we must find out those enemies, and measure their strength, not merely by reading of them in books; not merely by fancying them in our own minds; but by the hard blows, and sudden falls, which they too often give us in the actual battle of daily life.

And how can we find them out?

This at least we can do.

We can ask ourselves at every turn,—For what end am I doing this, and this? For what end am I living at all? For myself, or for others?

Am I living for ambition? for fame? for show? for money? for pleasure? If so, I have not the mind of Christ. I have not found out the golden secret. I have not seen what true glory is; what the glory of Christ is—to live for the sake of doing my duty—for the sake of doing good.

And am I—I surely shall be if I am living for myself—straggling, envying, casting an evil eye on those more fortunate

than I; perhaps letting loose against them a cruel tongue? If I am doing thus, God forgive me. What have I of the mind of Christ? What likeness between me and him who emptied himself of self, who humbled himself, gave himself up utterly, even to death? Is this the mind of Christ? Is this the spirit whose name is Love?

And yet there should be a likeness. A likeness between Christ and us. A likeness between God and us. For Christ is the likeness of his Father; and not only of his Father, but of our Father, The Father in heaven. And what should a child be, but like his father?

What should man be, but like God?

But how shall we get that likeness? How shall we get the mind of Christ which is the Spirit of God?

This at least we know. That the father will surely hear the child, when the child cries to him. Perhaps will hear him all the more tenderly, the more utterly the child has strayed away.

Our highest reason, the instincts of our own hearts, tell us so. Christ himself has told us so; and said to the Jews of old: 'Ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask *him*?'

Shall give? Yes; and has given already. From that Spirit of God have come, and will always come, all our purest, highest, best thoughts and feelings.

From him comes all which raises us above the animals, and makes us really and truly men and women. All sense of duty,

obedience, order, justice, law; all tenderness, pity, generosity, honour, modesty; all this, if you will receive it, is that Christ in us of whom St. Paul tells us, and tells us that he is our hope of glory.

Yes, these feelings in us, which, just as far as we obey them, make us respect ourselves, and make us blessings to our fellow-men; what are they but the Spirit of Christ, the likeness of Christ, the mind of Christ in us; the hope of our glory; because, if we obey them, we shall attain to something of the true glory, the glory with which Christ himself is glorious.

Then let us pray to God, now in this Passion Week, to stir up in us that generous spirit; to deepen in us that fair likeness; to fill us with that noble mind. Let us ask God to quench in us all which is selfish, idle, mean; to quicken to life in us all which is godlike, and from God; that so we may attain, at last, to the true glory, the glory which comes not from selfish ambition; not from selfish pride; not from selfish ease; but from getting rid of selfishness, in all its shapes. The glory which Christ alone has in perfection. The glory before which every knee will one day bow, whether in earth or heaven. Even the glory of doing our duty, regardless of what it costs us in the station to which each of us has been called by his Father in heaven. Amen.

SERMON II. THE DIVINE HUNGER AND THIRST

(Preached before the Queen.)

Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8, 9. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

This is a great saying. So great that we shall never know, certainly never in this life, how much it means.

It speaks of being satisfied; of what alone can satisfy a man.

It speaks of man as a creature who is, or rather ought to be, always hungering and thirsting after something better than he has, as it is written: 'Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.' So says David, also, in this Psalm.

I say man ought to be always hungering and thirsting for something better. I do not mean by that that he ought to be discontented. Nothing less. For just in as far as a man hungers and thirsts after righteousness and truth, he will hunger and thirst after nothing else. As long as a man does not care for righteousness, does not care to be a better man himself, and

to see the world better round him, so long will he go longing after this fine thing and that, tormenting himself with lusts and passions, greediness and covetousness of divers sorts; and little satisfaction will he get from them. But, when he begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness, that heavenly and spiritual hunger destroys the old carnal hunger in him. He cares less and less to ask, What shall I eat and drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed?—Or how shall I win for myself admiration, station, and all the fine things of this world?—What he thinks of more and more is,—How can I become better and more righteous? How can I make my neighbours better likewise? How the world? As for the good things of this life, if they will make me a better man, let them come. If not, why should I care so much about them? What I want is, to be righteous like God, beneficent and good-doing like God.

That is the man of whom it is written, that he shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of God's house, God's kingdom; for with God is the fountain of life.

Again, as long as a man has no hunger and thirst after truth, he is easily enough interested, though he is not satisfied. He reads, perhaps, and amuses his fancy, but he does no more. He reads again, really to instruct his mind, and learns about this and that: but he does not learn the causes of things; the reasons of the chances and changes of this world; and so he is not satisfied; he takes up doctrines, true ones, perhaps, at secondhand out of books and out of sermons:, without having had any personal

experience of them; and so, when sickness or sorrow, doubt or dread, come, they do not satisfy him. Then he longs—he ought at least to long—for truth. He thirsts for truth. O that I could know the truth about myself; about my fellow-creatures; about this world. What am I really? What are they? Where am I? What can I know? What ought I to do? I do not want secondhand names and notions. I want to be sure.

That is the divine thirst after truth, which will surely be satisfied. He will drink of the pleasure of true knowledge, as out of an overflowing river; and the more he knows, the more he will be glad to know, and the more he will find he can know, if only he loves truth for truth's own sake; for, as it is written, in God's light shall that man see light.

With God is the well of life; and in his light we shall see light. The first is the answer to man's hunger after righteousness, the second answers to his thirst after truth.

With God is the well of life. There is the answer. Thou wishest to be a good man; to live a good life; to live as a good son, good husband, good father, good in all the relations of humanity; as it is written, 'And Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God.' Then do thou walk with God. For in him is the life thou wishest for. He alone can quicken thee, and give thee spirit and power to fulfil thy duty in thy generation. Is not his Spirit the Lord and Giver of life—the only fount and eternal spring of life? From him life flows out unto the smallest blade of grass beneath thy feet, the smallest

gnat which dances in the sun, that it may live the life which God intends for it. How much more to thee, who hast an altogether boundless power of life; whom God has made in his own likeness, that thou mayest be called his son, and live his life, and do, as Christ did, what thou seest thy heavenly Father do.

Thou feelest, perhaps, how poor and paltry thine own life is, compared with what it might have been. Thou feelest that thou hast never done thy best. When the world is praising thee most, thou art most ashamed of thyself. Thou art ready to cry all day long, 'I have left undone that which I ought to have done;' till, at times, thou longest that all was over, and thou wert beginning again in some freer, fuller, nobler, holier life, to do and to be what thou hast never done nor been here; and criest with the poet—

'Tis life, whereof my nerves are scant;
'Tis life, not death, for which I pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

Then have patience. With God is the fount of life. He will refresh and strengthen thee; and raise thee up day by day to that new life for which thou longest. Is not Holy communion his own pledge that he will do so? Is not that God's own sign to thee, that though thou canst not feed and strengthen thine own soul, he can and will feed and strengthen it; and feed it—mystery of mysteries—with himself; that God may dwell in thee, and thou in God. And if God and Christ live in thee, and work in thee to will and to do of their own good pleasure, that shall be enough

for thee, and thou shall be satisfied.

And just so, again, with that same thirst after truth. That, too, can only be satisfied by God, and in God. Not by the reading of books, however true; not by listening to sermons, however clever; can we see light: but only in the light of God. Know God. Know that he is justice itself, order itself, love itself, patience itself, pity itself. In the light of that, all things will become light and bright to thee. Matters which seemed to have nothing to do with God, the thought of God will explain to thee, if thou thinkest aright concerning God; and the true knowledge of him will be the key to all other true knowledge in heaven and earth. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do thereafter. Must it not be so? How can it be otherwise? For in God all live and move and have their being; and all things which he has made are rays from off his glory, and patterns of his perfect mind. As the Maker is, so is his work; if, therefore, thou wouldest judge rightly of the work, acquaint thyself with the Maker of it, and know first, and know for ever, that his name is Love.

Thus, sooner or later, in God the Father's good time, will thy thirst for truth be satisfied, and thou shalt see the light of God. He may keep thee long waiting for full truth. He may send thee by strange and crooked paths. He may exercise and strain thy reason by doubts, mistakes, and failures; but sooner or later, if thou dost not faint and grow weary, he will show to thee the thing which thou knewest not; for he is thy Father, and wills that all his

children, each according to their powers, should share not only in his goodness, but in his wisdom also.

Do any of you say, 'These are words too deep for us; they are for learned people, clever, great saints?' I think not.

I have seen poor people, ignorant people, sick people, poor old souls on parish pay, satisfied with the plenteousness of God's house, and drinking so freely of God's pleasure, that they knew no thirst, fretted not, never were discontented. All vain longings after this and that were gone from their hearts. They had very little; but it seemed to be enough. They had nothing indeed, which we could call pleasure in this world; but somehow what they had satisfied them, because it came from God. They had a hidden pleasure, joy, content, and peace.

They had found out that with God was the well of life; that in God they lived and moved, and had their being. And as long as their souls lived in God, full of the eternal life and goodness, obeying his laws, loving the thing which he commanded, and desiring what he promised, they could trust him for their poor worn-out dying bodies, that he would not let them perish, but raise them up again at the last day. They knew very little; but what they did know was full of light. Cheerful and hopeful they were always; for they saw all things in the light of God.

They knew that God was light, and God was love; that his love was shining down on them and on all around them, warming, cheering, quickening into life all things which he had made; so that when the world should have looked most dark to them, it

looked most bright, because they saw it lightened up by the smile of their Father in heaven.

O may God bring us all to such an old age, that, as our mortal bodies decay, our souls may be renewed day by day; that as the life of our bodies grows cold and feeble, the life of our souls may grow richer, warmer, stronger, more useful to all around us, for ever and ever; that as the light of this life fades, the light of our souls may grow brighter, fuller, deeper; till all is clear to us in the everlasting light of God, in that perfect day for which St. Paul thirsted through so many weary years; when he should no more see through a glass darkly, or prophesy in part, and talk as a child, but see face to face, and know even as he was known.

SERMON III. THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Preached before the Queen.)

Matthew xvii. 2 and 9. And he was transfigured before them. . . . And he charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.

Any one who will consider the gospels, will see that there is a peculiar calm, a soberness and modesty about them, very different from what we should have expected to find in them.

Speaking, as they do, of the grandest person who ever trod this earth, of the grandest events which ever happened upon this earth—of the events, indeed, which settled the future of this earth for ever,—one would not be surprised at their using grand words—the grandest they could find. If they had gone off into beautiful poetry; if they had filled pages with words of astonishment, admiration, delight; if they had told us their own thoughts and feelings at the sight of our Lord; if they had given us long and full descriptions of our Lord's face and figure, even (as forged documents have pretended to do) to the very colour of his hair, we should have thought it but natural.

But there is nothing of the kind in either of the four gospels, even when speaking of the most awful matters. Their words are as quiet and simple and modest as if they were written of things

which might be seen every day. When they tell of our Lord's crucifixion, for instance, how easy, natural, harmless, right, as far as we can see, it would have been to have poured out their own feelings about the most pitiable and shameful crime ever committed upon earth; to have spoken out all their own pity, terror, grief, indignation; and to have stirred up ours thereby.

And yet all they say is,—‘And they crucified him.’ They feel that is enough. The deed is too dark to talk about. Let it tell its own story to all human hearts.

So with this account of the Lord's transfiguration. ‘And he took Peter, and James, and John, his brother, up into a high mountain, apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun; and his raiment was white as the light; . . . and while he yet spake a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.’

How soberly, simply, modestly, they tell this strange story.

How differently they might have told it. A man might write whole poems, whole books of philosophy, about that transfiguration, and yet never reach the full depth of its beauty and of its meaning. But the evangelists do not even try to do that.

As with the crucifixion, as with all the most wonderful passages of our Lord's life, they simply say what happened, and let the story bring its own message home to our hearts.

What may we suppose is the reason of this great stillness and soberness of the gospels? I believe that it may be explained thus.

The men who wrote them were too much *awed* by our Lord, to make more words about him than they absolutely needed.

Our Lord was too utterly *beyond* them. They felt that they could not understand him; could not give a worthy picture of him. He was too noble, too awful, in spite of all his tenderness, for any words of theirs, however fine. We all know that the holiest things, the deepest feelings, the most beautiful sights, are those about which we talk least, and least like to hear others talk.

Putting them into words seems impertinent, profane. No one needs to gild gold, or paint the lily. When we see a glorious sunset; when we hear the rolling of the thunder-storm; we do not *talk* about them; we do not begin to cry, How awful, how magnificent; we admire them in silence, and let them tell their own story. Who that ever truly loved his wife talked about his love to her? Who that ever came to Holy Communion in spirit and in truth, tried to put into words what he felt as he knelt before Christ's altar? When God speaks, man had best keep silence.

So it was, I suppose, with the writers of the gospels. They had been in too grand company for them to speak freely of what they felt there. They had seen such sights, and heard such words, that they were inclined to be silent, and think over it all, and only wrote because they must write. They felt that our Lord, as I say, was utterly beyond them, too unlike any one whom they had ever met before; too perfect, too noble, for them to talk about him. So they simply set down his words as he spoke them, and his works as he did them, as far as they could recollect, and left them to

tell their own story. Even St. John, who was our Lord's beloved friend, who seems to have caught and copied exactly his way of speaking, seems to feel that there was infinitely more in our Lord than he could put into words, and ends with confessing,—‘And there are also many more things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’

The first reason then, I suppose, for the evangelists' modesty, was their awe and astonishment at our Lord. The next, I think, may have been that they wished to copy him, and so to please him. It surely must have been so, if, as all good Christians believe, they were inspired to write our Lord's life. The Lord would inspire them to write as he would like his life to be written, as he would have written it (if it be reverent to speak of such a thing) himself. They were inspired by Christ's Spirit; and, therefore, they wrote according to the Spirit of Christ, soberly, humbly, modestly, copying the character of Christ.

Think upon that word *modestly*. I am not sure that it is the best; I only know that it is the best which I can find, to express one excellence which we see in our Lord, which is like what we call modesty in common human beings.

We all know how beautiful and noble modesty is; how we all admire it; how it raises a man in our eyes to see him afraid of boasting; never showing off; never requiring people to admire him; never pushing himself forward; or, if his business forces him to go into public, not going for the sake of display, but simply

because the thing has to be done; and then quietly withdrawing himself when the thing is done, content that none should be staring at him or thinking of him. This is modesty; and we admire it not only in young people, or those who have little cause to be proud: we admire it much more in the greatest, the wisest, and the best; in those who have, humanly speaking, most cause to be proud. Whenever, on the other hand, we see in wise and good men any vanity, boasting, pompousness of any kind, we call it a weakness in them, and are sorry to see them lowering themselves by the least want of divine modesty.

Now, this great grace and noble virtue should surely be in our Lord, from whom all graces and virtues come; and I think we need not look far through the gospels to find it.

See how he refused to cast himself down from the temple, and make himself a sign and a wonder to the Jews. How he refused to show the Pharisees a sign. How, in this very text, when it seemed good to him to show his glory, he takes only three favourite apostles, and commands them to tell no man till he be risen again. See, again, how when the Jews wanted to take him by force, and make him a king, he escaped out of their hands.

How when He had been preaching to, or healing the multitude, so that they crowded on him, and became excited about him, he more than once immediately left them, and retired into a desert place to pray.

See, again, how when he did tell the Jews who he was, in words most awfully unmistakeable, the confession was, as it

were, drawn from him, at the end of a long argument, when he was forced to speak out for truth's sake. And, even then, how simple, how modest (if I dare so speak), are his words. 'Before Abraham was, I am.' The most awful words ever spoken on earth; and yet most divine in their very simplicity. The Maker of the world telling his creatures that he is their God! What might he *not* have said at such a moment? What might we not fancy his saying? What words, grand enough, awful enough, might not the evangelists have put into his mouth, if they had not been men full of the spirit of truth? And yet what does the Lord say? 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Could he say more? If you think of the matter, No. But could he say less? If you think of the manner, No, likewise.

Truly, 'never man spake as he spake:' because never man was like him. Perfect strength, wisdom, determination, endurance; and yet perfect meekness, simplicity, sobriety. Zeal and modesty. They are the last two virtues which go together most seldom. In him they went together utterly; and were one, as he was one in spirit.

Him some of the evangelists saw, and by him all were inspired; and, therefore, they toned their account of him to his likeness, and, as it were, took their key-note from him, and made the very manner and language of their gospels a pattern of his manners and his life.

And, if we wanted a fresh proof (as, thank God, needs not) that the gospels are true, I think we might find it in this. For when

a man is inventing a wonderful story out of his own head, he is certain to dress it up in fine words, fancies, shrewd reflections of his own, in order to make people see, as he goes on, how wonderful it all is. Whereas, no books on earth which describe wonderful events, true or false, are so sober and simple as the gospels, which describe the most wonderful of all events. And this is to me a plain proof (as I hope it will be to you) that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not inventing but telling a plain and true story, and dared not alter it in the least; and, again, a story so strange and beautiful, that they dared not try to make it more strange, or more beautiful, by any words of their own.

They had seen a person, to describe whom passed all their powers of thought and memory, much more their power of words. A person of whom even St. Paul could only say, 'that he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.'

Words in which to write of him failed them; for no words could suffice. But the temper of mind in which to write of him did not fail them; for, by gazing on the face of the Lord, they had been changed, more or less, into the likeness of his glory; into that temper, simplicity, sobriety, gentleness, modesty, which shone forth in him, and shines forth still in their immortal words about him. God grant that it may shine forth in us. God grant it truly. May we read their words till their spirit passes into us. May we (as St. Paul expresses it) looking on the face of the Lord, as into a glass, be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.

May he who inspired them to write, inspire us to think and work, like our Lord, soberly, quietly, simply. May God take out of us all pride and vanity, boasting and forwardness; and give us the true courage which shows itself by gentleness; the true wisdom which show itself by simplicity; and the true power which show itself by modesty. Amen.

SERMON IV. A SOLDIER'S TRAINING

Luke vii. 2-9. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them.

And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

There is something puzzling in this speech of the centurion's. One must think twice, and more than twice, to understand clearly what he had in his mind. *I*, indeed, am not quite sure

that I altogether understand it. But I may, perhaps, help you to understand it, by telling you what this centurion was.

He was not a Jew. He was a Roman, and a heathen; a man of our race, very likely. And he was a centurion, a captain in the army; and one, mind, who had risen from the ranks, by good conduct, and good service. Before he got his vine-stock, which was the mark of his authority over a hundred men, he had, no doubt, marched many a weary mile under a heavy load, and fought, probably, many a bloody battle in foreign parts. That had been his education, his training, namely, discipline, and hard work. And because he had learned to obey, he was fit to rule.

He was helping now to keep in order those treacherous, unruly Jews, and their worthless puppet-kings, like Herod; much as our soldiers in India are keeping in order the Hindoos, and their worthless puppet-kings.

Whether the Romans had any *right* to conquer and keep down the Jews as they did, is no concern of ours just now. But we have proof that what this centurion did, he did wisely and kindly.

The elders of the Jews said of him, that he loved the Jews, and had built them a synagogue, a church. I suppose that what he had heard from them about a one living God, who had made all things in heaven and earth, and given them a law, which cannot be broken, so that all things obey him to this day—I suppose, I say, that this pleased him better than the Roman stories of many gods, who were capricious, and fretful, and quarrelled with each other in a fashion which ought to have been shocking to the conscience

and reason of a disciplined soldier.

There was a great deal, besides, in the Old Testament, which would, surely, come home to a soldier's heart, when it told him of a God of law, and order, and justice, and might, who defended the right in battle, and inspired the old Jews to conquer the heathen, and to fight for their own liberty. For what was it, which had enabled the Romans to conquer so many great nations? What was it which enabled them to keep them in order, and, on the whole, make them happier, more peaceable, more prosperous, than they had ever been? What was it which had made him, the poor common soldier, an officer, and a wealthy man, governing, by his little garrison of a hundred soldiers, this town of Capernaum, and the country round?

It was this. Discipline; drill; obedience to authority. That Roman army was the most admirably disciplined which the world till then had ever seen. So, indeed, was the whole Roman Government. Every man knew his place, and knew his work.

Every man had been trained to obey orders; if he was told to go, to go; if he was told to do, to do, or to die in trying to do, what he was bidden.

This was the great and true thought which had filled this good man's mind—duty, order, and obedience. And by thinking of order, and seeing how strength, and safety, and success lie in order, and by giving himself up to obey orders, body and soul, like a good soldier, had that plain man (who had certainly no scholarship, perhaps could barely read or write) caught sight of

a higher, wider, deeper order than even that of a Roman army.

He had caught sight of that divine and wonderful order, by which God has constituted the services of men, and angels, and all created things; that divine and wonderful order by which sun and stars, fire and hail, wind and vapour, cattle and creeping things fulfil his word.

Fulfil God's word. That was the thought, surely, which was in the good soldier's mind, and which he was trying to speak out; clumsily, perhaps, but truly enough. I suppose, then, that he thought in his own mind somewhat in this way. 'There is a word of command among us soldiers. Has God, then, no word of command likewise? And that word of command is enough. Is not God's word of command enough likewise? I merely speak, and I am obeyed. I am merely spoken to, and I obey. Shall not God merely speak, and be obeyed likewise? There is discipline and order among men, because it is necessary. An Army cannot be manœuvred, a Government cannot be carried on, without it. Is there not a discipline and order in all heaven and earth? And that discipline is carried out by simple word of command. A word from me will make a man rush upon certain death. A word from certain other men will make me rush on certain death. For I am a man under authority. I have my tribune (colonel, as we should say) over me; and he, again, the perfect (general of brigade) over him. Their word is enough for me. If they want me to do a thing, they do not need to come under my roof, to argue with me, to persuade me, much less to thrust me about, and make me obey

them by force. They say to me, 'Go,' and I go; and I say to those under me, 'Go,' and they go likewise.

And if I can work by a word, cannot this Jesus work by a word likewise? He is a messenger of God, with commission and authority from God, to work his will on his creatures. Are not God's creatures as well ordered, disciplined, obedient, as we soldiers are? Are they not a hundred times better ordered?

A messenger from God? Is he not a God himself; a God in goodness and mercy; a God in miraculous power? Cannot he do his work by a word, far more certainly than I can do mine? If my word can send a man to death, cannot his word bring a man back to life? Surely it can. 'Lord, thou needest not to come under my roof; speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.'

By some such thoughts as these, I suppose, had this good soldier gained his great faith; his faith that all God's creatures were in a divine, and wonderful order, obedient to the will of God who made them; and that Jesus Christ was God's viceroy and lieutenant (I speak so, because I suppose that is what he, as a soldier, would have thought), to carry out God's commands on earth.

Now remember that he was the first heathen man of whom we read, that he acknowledged Christ. Remember, too, that the next heathen of whom we read, that he acknowledged Christ, was also a Roman centurion, he whom the old legends call Longinus, who, when he saw our Lord upon the cross, said, 'Truly this *was* the Son of God.' Remember, again, that the next heathen of

whom we read as having acknowledged Christ, he to whom St. Peter was sent, at Joppa, who is often called the first fruits of the heathen, was a Roman centurion likewise.

Surely, there must have been a reason for this. There must be a lesson in this; and this, I think, is the lesson. That the soldierlike habit of mind is one which makes a man ready to receive the truth of Christ. And why? Because the good soldier's first and last thought is Duty. To do his duty by those who are set over him, and to learn to do his duty to those who are set under him.

To turn his whole mind and soul to doing, not just what he fancies, but to what must be done, because it is his duty. This is the character which makes a good soldier, and a good Christian likewise. If we be undisciplined and undutiful, and unruly; if we be fanciful, self-willed, disobedient; then we shall not understand Christ, or Christ's rule on earth and in heaven. If there be no order within us, we shall not see his divine and wonderful order all around us. If there be no discipline and obedience within us, we shall never believe really that Christ disciplines all things, and that all things obey him. If there be no sense of duty in us, governing our whole lives and actions, we shall never perceive the true beauty and glory of Christ's character, who sacrificed himself for his duty, which was to do his Father's will.

I tell you, my friends, that nothing prevents a man from gaining either right doctrines or right practice, so much as the undutiful, unruly, self-conceited heart. We may be full of religious knowledge, of devout sentiments, of heavenly

aspirations: but in spite of them all, we shall never get beyond false doctrine, and loose practice, unless we have learned to obey; to rule our own minds, and hearts, and tempers, soberly and patiently; to conform to the laws, and to all reasonable rules of society, to believe that God has called us to our station in life, whatever it may be; and to do our duty therein, as faithful soldiers and servants of Christ. For, if you will receive it, the beginning and the middle, and the end of all true religion is simply this. To do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven.

SERMON V. CHRIST'S SHEEP

Mark vi. 34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

This is a text full of comfort, if we will but remember one thing: that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and, therefore, what he did when he was upon earth, he is doing now, and will do till the end of the world. If we will believe this, and look at our Lord's doings upon earth as patterns and specimens, as it were, of his eternal life and character, then every verse in the gospels will teach us something, and be precious to us.

The people came to hear Jesus in a desert place; a wild forest country, among the hills on the east side of the Lake of Gennesaret. 'And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep having no shepherd: and he taught them many things.'

And, what kind of people were these, who so moved our Lord's pity? The text tells us, that they were like sheep. Now, in what way were they like sheep?

A sheep is simple, and harmless, and tractable, and so, I suppose, were these people. They may not have been very clever and shrewd; not good scholars. No doubt they were a poor,

wild, ignorant, set of people; but they were tractable; they were willing to come and learn; they felt their own ignorance, and wanted to be taught. They were not proud and self-sufficient, not fierce or bloodthirsty. The text does not say that they were like wild beasts having no keeper: but like sheep having no shepherd.

And therefore Christ pitied them, because they were teachable, willing to be taught, and worth teaching; and yet had no one to teach them.

The Scribes and Pharisees, it seems, taught them nothing.

They may have taught the people in Jerusalem, and in the great towns, something: but they seem, from all the gospels, to have cared little or nothing for the poor folk out in the wild mountain country. They liked to live in pride and comfort in the towns, with their comfortable congregations round them, admiring them; but they had no fancy to go out into the deserts, to seek and to save those who were lost. They were bad shepherds, greedy shepherds, who were glad enough to shear God's flock, and keep the wool themselves: but they did not care to feed the flock of God. It was too much trouble; and they could get no honour and no money by it. And most likely they did not understand these poor people; could not speak, hardly understand, their country language; for these Galileans spoke a rough dialect, different from that of the upper classes.

So the Scribes and Pharisees looked down on them as a bad, wild, low set of people, with whom nothing could be done; and said, 'This people who knoweth not the law, is accursed.'

But what they would not do, God himself would. God in Christ had come to feed his own flock, and to seek the lost sheep, and bring them gently home to God's fold. He could feel for these poor wild foresters and mountain shepherds; he could understand what was in their hearts; for he knew the heart of man; and, therefore, he could make them understand him. And it was for this very reason, one might suppose, that our Lord was willing to be brought up at Nazareth, that he might learn the country speech, and country ways, and that the people might grow to look on him as one of themselves. Those Scribes and Pharisees, one may suppose, were just the people whom they could not understand; fine, rich scholars, proud people talking very learnedly about deep doctrines. The country folk must have looked at them as if they belonged to some other world, and said,—Those Pharisees cannot understand us, any more than we can them, with their hard rules about this and that. Easy enough for rich men like them to make rules for poor ones. Indeed our Lord said the very same of them—‘Binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's shoulders; while they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers.’

Then the Lord himself came and preached to these poor wild folk, and they heard him gladly. And why? Because his speech was too deep for them? Because he scolded and threatened them? No.

We never find that our Lord spoke harshly to them. They had plenty of sins, and he knew it: but it is most remarkable

that the Evangelists never tell us what he said about those sins.

What they do tell us is, that he spoke to them of the common things around them, of the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, of sowing and reaping, and feeding sheep; and taught them by parables, taken from the common country life which they lived, and the common country things which they saw; and shewed them how the kingdom of God was like unto this and that which they had seen from their childhood, and how earth was a pattern of heaven. And they could understand that. Not all of it perhaps: but still they heard him gladly. His preaching made them understand themselves, and their own souls, and what God felt for them, and what was right and wrong, and what would become of them, as they never felt before. It is plain and certain that the country people could understand Christ's parables, when the Scribes and Pharisees could not. The Scribes and Pharisees, in spite of all their learning, were those who were without (as our Lord said); who had eyes and could not see, and ears and could not hear, for their hearts were grown fat and gross. With all their learning, they were not wise enough to understand the message which God sends in every flower and every sunbeam; the message which Christ preached to the poor, and the poor heard him gladly; the message which he confirmed to them by his miracles. For what were his miracles like? Did he call down lightning to strike sinners dead, or call up earthquakes, to swallow them? No; he went about healing the sick, cleansing the leper, feeding the hungry in the wilderness; that therefore they might

see by his example, the glory of their Father in heaven, and understand that God is a God of Love, of mercy, a deliverer, a Saviour, and not, as the Scribes and Pharisees made him out, a hard taskmaster, keeping his anger for ever, and extreme to mark what was done amiss.

Ah that, be sure, was what made the Scribes and Pharisees more mad than anything else against Christ, that he spoke to the poor ignorant people of their Father in heaven. It made them envious enough to see the poor people listening to Christ, when they would not listen to them; but when he told these poor folk, whom they called ‘accursed and lost sinners,’ that God in heaven was their Father, then no name was too bad for our Lord; and they called him the worst name which they could think of—a friend of publicans and sinners. That was the worst name, in their eyes: and yet, in reality, it was the highest honour. But they never forgave him. How could they? They felt that if he was doing God’s work, they were doing the devil’s, that either he or they must be utterly wrong: and they never rested till they crucified him, and stopped him for ever, as they fancied, from telling poor ignorant people laden with sins to consider the flowers of the field how they grow, and learn from them that they have a Father in heaven who knoweth what they have need of before they ask him.

But they did not stop Christ: and, what is more, they will never stop him. He has said it, and it remains true for ever; for he is saying it over and over again, in a thousand ways, to his sheep,

when they are wandering without a shepherd.

Only let them be Christ's sheep, and he will have compassion on them, and teach them many things. Many may neglect them: but Christ will not. Whoever you may be, however simple you are, however ignorant, however lonely, still, if you are one of Christ's sheep, if you are harmless and teachable, willing and wishing to learn what is right, then Christ will surely teach you in his good time. There never was a soul on earth, I believe, who really wished for God's light, but what God's light came to it at last, as it will to you, if you be Christ's sheep. If you are proud and conceited, you will learn nothing. If you are fierce and headstrong, you will learn nothing. If you are patient and gentle, you will learn all that you need to know; for Christ will teach you. He has many ways of teaching you. By his ministers; by the Bible; by books; by good friends; by sorrows and troubles; by blessings and comforts; by stirring up your mind to think over the common things which lie all around you in your daily work. But what need for me to go on counting by how many ways Christ will lead you, when he has more ways than man ever dreamed of? Who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who shall be his counsellor? Only be sure that he will teach you, if you wish to learn; and be sure that this is what he will teach you—to know the glory of his Father and your Father, whose name is Love.

SERMON VI. THE HEARING EAR AND THE SEEING EYE

Proverbs xx. 12. The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.

This saying may seem at first a very simple one; and some may ask, What need to tell us that? We know it already. God, who made all things, made the ear and the eye likewise.

True, my friends: but the simplest texts are often the deepest; and that, just because they speak to us of the most common things. For the most common things are often the most wonderful, and deep, and difficult to understand.

The hearing of the ear, and the seeing of the eye.—Every one hears and sees all day long, so perpetually that we never think about our hearing or sight, unless we find them fail us. And yet, how wonderful are hearing and sight. How we hear, how we see, no man knows, and perhaps ever will know.

When the ear is dissected and examined, it is found to be a piece of machinery infinitely beyond the skill of mortal man to make. The tiny drum of the ear, which quivers with every sound which strikes it, puts to shame with its divine workmanship all the clumsy workmanship of man. But recollect that *it* is not all the wonder, but only the beginning of it. The ear is wonderful: but still more wonderful is it how the ear *hears*. It is wonderful, I

mean, how the ear should be so made, that each different sound sets it in motion in a different way: but still more wonderful, how that sound should pass up from the ear to the nerves and brain, so that we *hear*. Therein is a mystery which no mortal man can explain.

So of the eye. All the telescopes and microscopes which man makes, curiously and cunningly as they are made, are clumsy things compared with the divine workmanship of the eye. I cannot describe it to you; nor, if I could, is this altogether a fit place to do so. But if any one wishes to see the greatness and the glory of God, and be overwhelmed with the sense of his own ignorance, and of God's wisdom, let him read any book which describes to him the eye of man, or even of beast, and then say with the psalmist, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'

Marvellous are thy works, O Lord, and that my soul knoweth right well.'

And remember, that as with the ear, so with the eye, the mere workmanship of it is only the beginning of the wonder. It is very wonderful that the eye should be able to take a picture of each thing in front of it; that on the tiny black curtain at the back of the eye, each thing outside should be printed, as it were, instantly, exact in shape and colour. But that is not sight. Sight is a greater wonder, over and above that. Seeing is this, that the picture which is printed on the back of the eye, is also printed on our brain, so that we *see* it. There is the wonder of wonders.

Do some of you not understand me? Then look at it thus. If

you took out the eye of an animal, and held it up to anything, a man or a tree, a perfect picture of that man or that tree would be printed on the back of the dead eye: but the eye would not *see* it. And why? Because it is cut off from the live brain of the animal to which it belonged; and therefore, though the picture is still in the eye, it sends no message about itself up to the brain, and is not seen.

And how does the picture on the eye send its message about itself to the brain, so that the brain sees it? And how, again—for here is a third wonder, greater still—do *we* ourselves see what our brain sees?

That no man knows, and, perhaps, never will know in this world. For science, as it is called, that is, the understanding of this world, and what goes on therein, can only tell us as yet what happens, what God does: but of how God does it, it can tell us little or nothing; and of why God does it, nothing at all; and all we can say is, at every turn, “God is great.”

Mind, again, that these are not all the wonders which are in the ear and in the eye. It is wonderful enough, that our brains should hear through our ears, and see through our eyes: but it is more wonderful still, that they should be able to recollect what they have heard and seen. That you and I should be able to call up in our minds a sound which we heard yesterday, or even a minute ago, is to me one of the most utterly astonishing things I know of. And so of ordinary recollection. What is it that we call remembering a place, remembering a person’s face? That

place, or that face, was actually printed, as it were, through our eye upon our brain. We have a picture of it somewhere; we know not where, inside us. But that we should be able to call that picture up again, and look at it with what we rightly call our mind's eye, whenever we choose; and not merely that one picture only, but thousands of such;—that is a wonder, indeed, which passes understanding. Consider the hundreds of human faces, the hundreds of different things and places, which you can recollect; and then consider that all those different pictures are lying, as it were, over each other in hundreds in that small place, your brain, for the most part without interfering with, or rubbing out each other, each ready to be called up, recollected, and used in its turn.

If this is not wonderful, what is? So wonderful, that no man knows, or, I think, ever will know, how it comes to pass. How the eye tells the brain of the picture which is drawn upon the back of the eye—how the brain calls up that picture when it likes—these are two mysteries beyond all man's wisdom to explain. These are two proofs of the wisdom and the power of God, which ought to sink deeper into our hearts than all signs and wonders;—greater proofs of God's power and wisdom, than if yon fir-trees burst into flame of themselves, or yon ground opened, and a fountain of water sprung out. Most people think much of signs and wonders. Just in proportion as they have no real faith in God, just in proportion as they forget God, and will not see that he is about their path, and about their bed, and spying out all their ways, they

are like those godless Scribes and Pharisees of old, who must have signs and wonders before they would believe. So it is: the commonest things are as wonderful, more wonderful, than the uncommon; and yet, people will hanker after the uncommon, as if they belonged to God more immediately than the commonest matters.

If yon trees burst out in flame; if yon hill opened, and a fountain sprang up, how many would cry, 'How awful! How wonderful! Here is a sign that God is near us! It is time to think about our souls now! Perhaps the end of the world is at hand!'

And all the while they would be blind to that far more awful proof of God's presence, that all around them, all day long, all over the world, millions of human ears are hearing, millions of human eyes are seeing, God alone knows how; millions of human brains are recollecting, God alone knows how. That is not faith, my friends, to see God only in what is strange and rare: but this is faith, to see God in what is most common and simple; to know God's greatness not so much from disorder, as from order; not so much from those strange sights in which God seems (but only seems) to break his laws, as from those common ones in which he fulfils his laws.

I know it is very difficult to believe that. It has been always difficult; and for this reason. Our souls and minds are disorderly; and therefore order does not look to us what it is, the likeness and glory of God. I will explain. If God, at any moment, should create a full-grown plant with stalk, leaves, and flowers,

all perfect, all would say, There is the hand of God! How great is God! There is, indeed, a miracle!—Just because it would seem not to be according to order. But the tiny seed sown in the ground, springing up into root-leaf, stalk, rough leaf, flower, seed, which will again be sown and spring up into leaf, flower, and seed;—in that perpetual miracle, people see no miracle: just because it is according to order: because it comes to pass by regular and natural laws. And why? Because, such as we are, such we fancy God to be. And we are all of us more or less disorderly: fanciful; changeable; fond of doing not what we ought, but what we like; fond of showing our power, not by keeping rules, but by breaking rules; and we fancy too often that God is like ourselves, and make him in our image, after our own likeness, which is disorder, and self-will, and changeableness; instead of trying to be conformed to his image and his likeness, which is order and law eternal: and, therefore, whenever God seems (for he only *seems* to our ignorance) to be making things suddenly, as we make, or working arbitrarily as we work, then we acknowledge his greatness and wisdom. Whereas his greatness, his wisdom, are rather shown in not making as we make, not working as we work: but in this is the greatness of God manifest, in that he has ordained laws which must work of themselves, and with which he need never interfere: laws by which the tiny seed, made up only (as far as we can see) of a little water, and air, and earth, must grow up into plant, leaf, and flower, utterly unlike itself, and must produce seeds which have the truly miraculous

power of growing up in their turn, into plants exactly like that from which they sprung, and no other. Ah, my friends, herein is the glory of God: and he who will consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, that man will see at last that the highest, and therefore the truest, notion of God is, not that the universe is continually going wrong, so that he has to interfere and right it: but that the universe is continually going right, because he hath given it a law which cannot be broken.

And when a man sees that, there will arise within his soul a clear light, and an awful joy, and an abiding peace, and a sure hope; and a faith as of a little child.

Then will that man crave no more for signs and wonders, with the superstitious and the unbelieving, who have eyes, and see not; ears, and cannot hear; whose hearts are waxen gross, so that they cannot consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: but all his cry will be to the Lord of Order, to make him orderly; to the Lord of Law, to make him loyal; to the Lord in whom is nothing arbitrary, to take out of him all that is unreasonable and self-willed; and make him content, like his Master Christ before him, to do the will of his Father in heaven, who has sent him into this noble world. He will no longer fancy that God is an absent God, who only comes down now and then to visit the earth in signs and wonders: but he will know that God is everywhere, and over all things, from the greatest to the least; for in God, he, and all things created, live and move and have their being. And therefore, knowing that he is always in the presence of God, he

will pray to be taught how to use all his powers aright, because all of them are the powers of God; pray to be taught how to see, and how to hear; pray that when he is called to account for the use of this wonderful body which God has bestowed on him, he may not be brought to shame by the thought that he has used it merely for his own profit or his own pleasure, much less by the thought that he has weakened and diseased it by misuse and neglect: but comforted by the thought that he has done with it what the Lord Jesus did with his body—made it the useful servant, and not the brutal master, of his immortal soul.

And he will do that, I believe, just as far as he keeps in mind what a wonderful and useful thing his body is; what a perpetual token and witness to him of the unspeakable greatness and wisdom of God; just in proportion as he says day by day, with the Psalmist, ‘Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go, then, from thy Spirit; or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there. If I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, thy right hand shall hold me.’

Just in proportion as he recollects that, will he utter from his heart the prayer which follows, ‘Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the

way everlasting.’

SERMON VII. THE VICTORY OF FAITH

(First Sunday after Easter.)

1 John v. 4, 5. Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

What is the meaning of ‘overcoming the world?’ What is there about the world which we have to overcome? lest it should overcome us, and make worse men of us than we ought to be. Let us think awhile.

1. In the world all seems full of chance and change. One man rises, and another falls, one hardly knows why: they hardly know themselves. A very slight accident may turn the future of a man’s whole life, perhaps of a whole nation. Chance and change—there seems to us, at times, to be little else than chance and change. Is not the world full of chance? Are not people daily crushed in railways, burnt to death, shot with their own guns, poisoned by mistake, without any reason that we can see, why one should be taken, and another left? Why should not an accident happen to us, as well as to others? Why should not we have the thing we love best snatched from us this day? Why not, indeed? What, then, will help us to overcome the fear of chances

and accidents? How shall we keep from being fearful, fretful, full of melancholy forebodings! Where shall we find something abiding and eternal, a refuge sure and steadfast, in which we may trust, amid all the chances and changes of this mortal life? St. John tells us—In that within you which is born of God.

2. In the world so much seems to go by fixed law and rule. That is even more terrible to our minds and hearts—to find that all around us, in the pettiest matters of life, there are laws and rules ready made for us, which we cannot break; laws of trade; laws of prosperity and adversity; laws of health and sickness; laws of weather and storms; laws by which not merely we, but whole nations, grow, and decay, and die.—All around us, laws, iron laws, which we do not make, and which we dare not try to break, lest they go on their way, and grind us to powder.

Then comes the awful question, Are we at the mercy of these laws? Is the world a great machine, which goes grinding on its own way without any mercy to us or to anything; and are we each of us parts of the machine, and forced of necessity to do all we do? Is it true, that our fate is fixed for us from the cradle to the grave, and perhaps beyond the grave? How shall we prevent the world from overcoming us in this? How shall we escape the temptation to sit down and fold our hands in sloth and despair, crying, What we are, we must be; and what will come, must come; whether it be for our happiness or misery, our life or death? Where shall we find something to trust in, something to give us confidence and hope that we can mend ourselves, that

self-improvement is of use, that working is of use, that prudence is of use, for God will reward every man according to his work?

St. John tells us—In that within you which is born of God.

3. Then, again, in the world how much seems to go by selfishness. Let every man take care of himself, help himself, fight for himself against all around him, seems to be the way of the world, and the only way to get on in the world. But is it really to be so? Are we to thrive only by thinking of ourselves?

Something in our hearts tells us, No. Something in our hearts tells us that this would be a very miserable world if every man shifted for himself; and that even if we got this world's good things by selfishness, they would not be worth having after all, if we had no one but ourselves to enjoy them with. What is that? St. John answers—That in you which is born of God. It will enable you to overcome the world's deceits, and to see that selfishness is *not* the way to prosper.

4. Once, again; in the world how much seems to go by mere custom and fashion. Because one person does a thing right or wrong, everybody round fancies himself bound to do likewise.

Because one man thinks a thing, hundreds and thousands begin to think the same from mere hearsay, without examining and judging for themselves. There is no silliness, no cruelty, no crime into which people have not fallen, and may still fall, for mere fashion's sake, from blindly following the example of those round him. 'Everybody does so; and I must. Why should I be singular?'

Or, 'Everybody does so; what harm can there be in my doing

so?

But there is something in each of us which tells us that that is not right; that each man should act according to his own conscience, and not blindly follow his neighbour, not knowing whither, like sheep over a hedge; that a man is directly responsible at first for his own conduct to God, and that 'my neighbours did so' will be no excuse in God's sight. What is it which tells us this? St. John answers, That in you which is born of God; and it, if you will listen to it, will enable you to overcome the world's deceit, and its vain fashions, and foolish hearsays, and blind party-cries; and not to follow after a multitude to do evil.

What, then, is this thing? St. John tells us that it is born of God; and that it is our faith. *Faith* will enable us to overcome the world. We shall overcome by believing and trusting in something which we do not see. But in what? Are we to believe and trust that we are going to heaven? St. John does not say so; he was far too wise, my friends, to say so: for a man's trusting that he is going to heaven, if that is all the faith he has, is more likely to make the world overcome him, than him overcome the world.

For it will make him but too ready to say, 'If I am sure to be saved after I die, it matters not so very much what I do before I die. I may follow the way of the world here, in money-making and meanness, and selfishness; and then die in peace, and go to heaven after all.'

This is no fancy. There are hundreds, nay thousands, I fear, in England now, who let the world and its wicked ways utterly

overcome them, just because their faith is a faith in their own salvation, and not the faith of which St. John speaks—Believing that Jesus is the Son of God.

But some may ask, ‘How will believing that Jesus is the Son of God help us more than believing the other? For, after all, we do believe it. We all believe that Jesus is the Son of God: but as for overcoming the world, we dare not say too much of that.

We fear we are letting the world overcome us; we are living too much in continual fear of the chances and changes of this mortal life. We are letting things go too much their own way. We are trying too much each to get what he can by his own selfish wits, without considering his neighbours. We are following too much the ways and fashions of the day, and doing and saying and thinking anything that comes uppermost, just because others do so round us.’

Is it so, my friends? But do you really believe that Jesus is the Son of God? For sure I am, that if you did, and I did, really and fully believe that, we could all lead much better lives than we are leading, manful and godly, useful and honourable, truly independent and yet truly humble; fearing God and fearing nothing else. But do you believe it? Have you ever thought of all that those great words mean, ‘Jesus is the Son of God’?—That he who died on the cross, and rose again for us, now sits at God’s right hand, having all power given to him in heaven and earth?

For, think, if we really believed that, what power it would give us to overcome the world, and all its chances and changes; all

its seemingly iron laws; all its selfish struggling; all its hearsays and fashions.

1. Those chances and changes of mortal life of which I spoke first. We should not be afraid of them, then, even if they came.

For we should believe that they were not chances and changes at all, but the loving providence of our Lord and Saviour, a man of the substance of his mother, born in the world, who therefore can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and knows our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, and orders all things for good to those who love him, and desire to copy his likeness.

2. Those stern laws and rules by which the world moves, and will move as long as it lasts—we should not be afraid of them either, as if we were mere parts of a machine forced by fate to do this thing and that, without a will of our own. For we should believe that these laws were the laws of the Lord Jesus Christ; that he had ordained them for the good of man, of man whom he so loved that he poured out his most precious blood upon the cross for us; and therefore we should not fear them; we should only wish to learn them, that we might obey them, sure that they are the laws of life; of health and wealth, peace and safety, honour and glory in this world and in the world to come; and we should thank God whenever men of science, philosophers, clergymen, or any persons whatsoever, found out more of the laws of that good God, in whom we and all created things live and move and have our being.

3. If we believe really that Jesus was the Son of God, we should never believe that selfishness was to be the rule of our lives. One sight of Christ upon his cross would tell us that not selfishness, but love, was the likeness of God, that not selfishness, but love, which gives up all that it may do good, was the path to honour and glory, happiness and peace.

4. If we really believe this, we should never believe that custom and fashion ought to rule us. For we should live by the example of some one else: but by the example of only one—of Jesus himself. We should set him before us as the rule of all our actions, and try to keep our conscience pure, not merely in the sight of men who may mistake, and do mistake, but in the sight of Jesus, the Word of God, who pierces the very thoughts and intents of the heart; and we should say daily with St. Paul, ‘It is a small thing for me to be judged by you, or any man’s judgment, for he that judges me is the Lord.’

And so we should overcome the world. Our hearts and spirits would rise above the false shows of things, to God who has made all things; above fear and melancholy; above laziness and despair; above selfishness and covetousness, above custom and fashion; up to the everlasting truth and order, which is the mind of God; that so we might live joyfully and freely in the faith and trust that Christ is our king, Christ is our Saviour, Christ is our example, Christ is our judge; and that as long as we are loyal to him, all will be well with us in this world, and in all worlds to come.—Amen.

SERMON VIII. TURNING-POINTS

Luke xix. 41, 42. And when Jesus was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

My dear friends, here is a solemn lesson to be learnt from this text. What is true of whole nations, and of whole churches, is very often true of single persons—of each of us.

To most men—to all baptized Christian men, perhaps—there comes a day of visitation, a crisis, or turning-point in our lives.

A day when Christ sets before us, as he did to those Jews, good and evil, light and darkness, right and wrong, and says, Choose!

Choose at once, and choose for ever; for by what you choose this day, by that you must abide till death. If you make a mistake now, you will rue it to the last. If you take the downward road now, you will fall lower and lower upon it henceforth. If you shut your eyes now to the things which belong to your peace, they will be hid from your eyes for ever; and nothing but darkness, ignorance, and confusion will be before you henceforth.

What will become of the man's soul after he dies, I cannot say. Christ is his judge, and not I. He may be saved, yet so as by fire, as St. Paul says. Repentance is open to all men, and forgiveness for those who repent. But from that day, if he chooses wrongly, true repentance will grow harder and harder to him—perhaps

impossible at last. He has made his bed, and he must lie on it.

He has chosen the evil, and refused the good; and now the evil must go on getting more and more power over him. He has sold his soul, and now he must pay the price. Again, I say, he may be saved at last. Who am I, to say that God's mercy is not boundless, when the Bible says it is? But one may well say of that man, 'God help him,' for he will not be able to help himself henceforth.

It is an awful thing, my friends, to think that we may fix our own fate in this world, perhaps in the world to come, by one act of wilful folly or sin: but so it is. Just as a man may do one tricky thing about money, which will force him to do another to hide it, and another after that, till he becomes a confirmed rogue in spite of himself. Just as a man may run into debt once, so that he never gets out of debt again; just as a man may take to drink once, and the bad habit grow on him till he is a confirmed drunkard to his dying day. Just as a man may mix in bad company once, and so become entangled as in a net, till he cannot escape his evil companions, and lowers himself to their level day by day, till he becomes as bad as they. Just as a man may be unfaithful to his wife once, and so blunt his conscience till he becomes a thorough profligate, breaking her heart, and ruining his own soul. Just as—but why should I go on, mentioning ugly examples, which we all know too well, if we will open our own eyes and see the world and mankind as they are? I will say no more, lest I should set you on judging other people, and saying 'There is no hope for them. They are lost.' No; let us rather judge ourselves, as any man can,

and will, who dares face fact, and look steadily at what he is, and what he might become. Do we not know that we could, any one of us, sell our own souls, once and for all, if we choose? I know that I could. I know that there are things which I might do, which if I did from that moment forth, I should have no hope, but only a fearful looking forward to judgment and fiery indignation. And have you never felt, when you were tempted to do wrong: 'I dare not do it for my own sake; for if I did this one wickedness, I feel sure that I never should be an honest man again?' If you have felt that, thank God, indeed; for then you have seen the things which belong to your peace; you have known the day of your visitation; and you will be a better man as long as you live, for having fought against that one temptation, and chosen the good, and refused the evil, when God put them unmistakably before you.

No; the real danger is, lest a man should be as those Jews, and not know the day of his visitation. Ah, that is ruinous indeed, when a man's eyes are blinded as those Jews' eyes were; when a great temptation comes on him, and he thinks it no temptation at all; when hell is opening beneath him, with the devils trying to pluck him down, and heaven opening above him, with God's saints and martyrs beckoning him up, looking with eyes of unutterable pity and anxiety and love on a poor soul; and that poor soul sees neither heaven nor hell, nor anything but his own selfish interest, selfish pleasure, or selfish pride, and snaps at the devil's bait as easily as a silly fish; while the devil, instead of striking to frighten him, lets him play with the bait, and gorge

it in peace, fancying that he is well off, when really he is fast hooked for ever, led captive thenceforth from bad to worse by the snare of the devil. Oh miserable blindness, which comes over men sometimes, and keeps them asleep at the very moment that they ought to be most wide awake!

And what throws men into that sleep? What makes them do in one minute something which curses all their lives afterwards?

Love of pleasure? Yes: that is a common curse enough, as we all know. But a worse snare than even that is pride and self-conceit. That was what ruined those old Jews. That was what blinded their eyes. They had made up their minds that they saw; therefore they were blind: that they could not go wrong; therefore they went utterly and horribly wrong thenceforth: that they alone of all people knew and kept God's law; therefore they crucified the Son of God himself for fulfilling their law. They were taken unawares, because they were asleep in vain security.

And so with us. By conceit and carelessness, we may ruin ourselves in a moment, once and for all. When a man has made up his mind that he is quite worldly-wise; that no one can take him in; that he thoroughly understands his own interest; then is that man ripe and ready to commit some enormous folly, which may bring him to ruin.

When a man has made up his mind that he knows all doctrines, and is fully instructed in religion, and can afford to look down on all who differ from him; then is that man ripe and ready for doing something plainly wrong and wicked, which will blunt his

conscience from that day forth, and teach him to call evil good, and good evil more and more; till, in the midst of all his fine religious professions, he knows not plain right from plain wrong—full of the form of godliness, but denying the power of it in scandal of his every-day life.

Yes, my friends, our only safeguard is humility. Be not high-minded, but fear. Avoid every appearance of evil. Believe that in every temptation heaven and hell may be at stake: and that the only way to be safe is to do nothing wilfully wrong at all, for you never know how far downward one wilful sin may lead you. The devil is not simple enough to let you see the bottom of his pitfall: but it is so deep, nevertheless, that he who falls in, may never get out again.

And do not say in your hearts about this thing and that, ‘Well, it is wrong: but it is such a little matter.’ A little draught may give a great cold; and a great cold grow to a deadly decline. A little sin may grow to a great bad habit; and a great bad habit may kill both body and soul in hell. A little bait may take a great fish; and the devil fishes with a very fine line, and is not going to let you see his hook. The only way to be safe is to avoid all appearance of evil, lest when you fancy yourself most completely your own master, you find yourself the slave of sin.

Oh, may God give us all the spirit of watchfulness and godly fear! Of watchfulness, lest sin overtake us unawares; and of godly fear, that we may have strength to say with Joseph, ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ Of

watchfulness, too, not only against sin, but for God; of godly fear, not only fear of God's anger, but fear of God's love.

Do you ask what I mean? This, my friends; that as we cannot tell at any moment what danger may be coming on us, so we cannot tell at any moment what blessing from God may be coming on us. Those Jews, in the day of their visitation, were blind, and they rejected Christ: but recollect, that it was *Christ* whom they rejected; that Christ was there, not in anger, but in love; not to judge, but to save; that the power of the Lord was present, not to destroy, but to heal them. They would have none of him. True; but they might have had him if they had chosen.

They denied him; but he could not deny himself. He was there to teach and to save, as he comes to teach and to save every man.

Therefore, I say, be watchful. Believe that Christ is looking for you always, and expect to meet him at any moment. I do not mean in visible form, in vision or apparition. No. He comes, not by observation, that a man may say, 'Lo, here; and lo, there;' but he comes within you, to your hearts, with the still, small voice, which softens a man and sobers him for a moment, and makes him yearn after good, and say in his heart, 'Ah, that I were as when I was a child upon my mother's knee.' Oh! listen to that softening, sobering voice. Through very small things it may speak to you: but it is Christ himself who speaks. Whenever your heart is softened to affection toward parent, or child, or your fellowman, then Christ is speaking to you, and showing you the things which belong to your peace. Whenever the feeling

of justice, and righteous horror of all meanness rises strong in you, then Christ is speaking to you. Whenever your heart burns within you with admiration of some noble action, then Christ is speaking to you. Whenever a chance word in sermons or in books touches your conscience, and reproves you, then Christ is speaking to you. Oh turn not a deaf ear to those instincts. They may be the very turning-points of your lives. One such godly motion, one such pure inspiration of the Spirit of God listened to humbly, and obeyed heartily, may be the means of putting you into the right path thenceforward, that you may go on and grow in strength and wisdom, and favour with God and man; till you become again, in the world to come, what you were when you were carried home from the baptismal font, a little child, pure from all spot of sin.

SERMON IX. OBADIAH

1 Kings, xviii. 3, 4. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly: for it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

This is the first and last time throughout the Bible, that we find this Obadiah mentioned. We find the same name elsewhere, but not the same person. It is a common Jewish name, Obadiah, and means, I believe, the servant of the Lord.

All we know of the man is contained in this chapter. We do not read what became of him afterwards. He vanishes out of the story as quickly as he came into it, and, as we go on through the chapter and read of that grand judgment at Carmel between Elijah and the priests of Baal, and the fire of God which came down from heaven, to shew that the Lord was God, we forget Obadiah, and care to hear of him no more.

And yet Obadiah was a great man in his day. He was, it seems, King Ahab's vizier, or prime minister; the second man in the country after the king; and a prime minister in those eastern kingdoms had, and has now, far greater power than he has in a free country like this. Yes, Obadiah was a great man in his day, I doubt not; and people bowed before him when he went out, and looked up to him, in that lawless country, for

life or death, for ruin or prosperity. Their money, and their land, their very lives might depend on his taking a liking toward them, or a spite against them. And he had wealth, no doubt, and his fair and great house there among the beautiful hills of Samaria, ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion, with its olive groves and vineyards, and rich gardens full of gay flowers and sweet spices, figs and peaches, and pomegranates, and all the lovely vegetation which makes those Eastern gardens like Paradise itself. And he had his great household of slaves, men-servants and maidservants, guards and footmen, singing men and singing women—perhaps a hundred souls and more eating and drinking in his house day by day for many a year. A great man; full of wealth, and pomp, and power. We know that it must have been so, because we know well in what luxury those great men in the East lived. But where is it now?

Where is it now? Vanished and forgotten. Be not thou afraid, though one be made rich, or if the glory of his house be increased. For he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth; neither shall his pomp follow him.

See—of all Obadiah's wealth and glory, the Bible does not say one word. It is actually not worth mentioning. People admired Obadiah, I doubt not, while he was alive; envied him too, tried to thrust him out of his place, slander him to King Ahab, drive him out of favour, and step into his place, that they might enjoy his wealth and his power instead of him. The fine outside of Obadiah was what they saw, and coveted, and envied—as we are

tempted now to say in our hearts, ‘Ah, if I was rich like that man.

Ah, if I could buy what I liked, go where I liked, do what I liked, like that great Lord!’—and yet, that is but the outside, the shell, the gay clothing, not the persons themselves. The day must come, when they must put off all that; when nothing shall remain but themselves; and they themselves, naked as they were born, shall appear before the judgment-seat of God.

And did Obadiah, then, carry away nothing with him when he died? Yes; and yet again, No. His wealth and his power he left behind him: but one thing he took with him into the grave, better than all wealth and power; and he keeps it now, and will keep it for ever; and that is, a good, and just, and merciful action—concerning which it is written, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.’ Yes, though a man’s wealth will not follow him beyond the grave, his works will; and so Obadiah’s one good deed has followed him. ‘He feared the Lord greatly, and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.’

That has followed Obadiah; for by it we know him, now two thousand years and more after his death, here in a distant land of the name of which he never heard. By that good deed he lives. He lives in the pages of the Holy Bible; he lives in our minds and memories; and more than all, by that good deed he lives for ever in God’s sight; he is rewarded for it, and the happier for it, doubt

it not, at this very moment, and will be the happier for it for ever.

Oh blessed thought! that there is something of which death cannot rob us! That when we have to leave this pleasant world, wife and child, home and business, and all that has grown up round us here on earth, till it has become like a part of ourselves, yet still we are not destitute. We can turn round on death and say—‘Though I die, yet canst thou not take my righteousness from me!’ Blessed thought! that we cannot do a good deed, not even give a cup of cold water in Christ’s name, but what it shall rise again, like a guardian angel, to smooth our death-bed pillow, and make our bed for us in our sickness, and follow us into the next world, to bless us for ever and ever!

And blessed thought, too, that what you do well and lovingly, for God’s sake, will bless you here in this world before you die!

Yes, my friends, in the dark day of sorrow and loneliness, and fear and perplexity, you will find old good deeds, which you perhaps have forgotten, coming to look after you, as it were, and help you in the hour of need. Those whom you have helped, will help you in return: and if they will not, God will; for he is not unrighteous, to forget any work and labour of love, which you have showed for his name’s sake, in ministering to his saints. So found Obadiah in that sad day, when he met Elijah.

For he was in evil case that day, as were all souls, rich and poor, throughout that hapless land. For three weary years, there had been no drop of rain: the earth beneath their feet had been like iron, and the heavens above them brass; and Obadiah had

found poverty, want, and misery, come on him in the midst of all his riches: he had seen his fair gardens wither, and his olives and his vines burnt up with drought;—his cattle had perished on the hills, and his servants, too, perhaps, in his house. Perhaps his children at home were even then crying for food and water, and crying in vain, in spite of all their father's greatness.

What was the use of wealth? He could not eat gold, nor drink jewels. What was the use of his power? He could not command the smallest cloud to rise up off the sea, and pour down one drop of water to quench their thirst. Yes, Obadiah was in bitter misery that day, no doubt; and all the more, because he felt that all was God's judgment on the people's sins. They had served Baalim and Ashtaroth, the sun and moon and stars, and prayed to them for rain and fruitful seasons, as if they were the rulers of the weather and the soil, instead of serving the true God who made heaven and earth, and all therein: and now God had *judged* them: he had given his sentence and verdict about that matter, and told them, by a sign which could not be mistaken, that he, and not the sun and moon, was master of the sky and the sea, and the rain and the soil. They had prayed to the sun and moon; and this was the fruit of their prayers—that their prayers had not been heard: but instead of rain and plenty, was drought and barrenness;—carcasses of cattle scattered over the pastures—every village full of living skeletons, too weak to work (though what use in working, when the ground would yield no crop?)—crawling about, their tongues cleaving to the roof of their mouths,

in vain searching after a drop of water. Fearful and sickening sights must Obadiah have seen that day, as he rode wearily on upon his pitiful errand. And the thought of what a pitiful errand he was going on, and what a pitiful king he served, must have made him all the more miserable; for, instead of turning and repenting, and going back to the true God, which was the plain and the only way of escaping out of that misery, that wretched King Ahab seems to have cared for nothing but his horses.

We do not read that he tried to save one of his wretched people alive. All his cry was, 'Go into the land, to all fountains of water and all brooks; perhaps we shall find grass enough to save the horses and mules alive: that we lose not all the beasts.'

The horses were what he cared for more than the human beings, as many of those bad kings of Israel did. Moses had expressly commanded them not to multiply horses to themselves; but they persisted always in doing so, nevertheless. And why? Because they wanted horses to mount their guards; to keep up a strong force of cavalry and chariots, in order to oppress the poor country people, whom they had brought down to slavery, from having been free yeomen, as they were in the days of Moses and Joshua.

And what hope could he have for his wretched country? The people shewed no signs of coming to their senses; the king still less. His wicked Queen Jezebel was as devoted as ever to her idols; the false prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty men, and the prophets of the groves (where the stars were worshipped) four hundred; and these cheats contrived (as such false teachers

generally do) to take good care of themselves, and to eat at Jezebel's table, while all the rest of the people were perishing.

What could be before the country, and him, too, but utter starvation, and hopeless ruin? And all this while his life was in the hands of a weak and capricious tyrant, who might murder him any moment, and of a wicked and spiteful queen, who certainly would murder him, if she found out that he had helped and saved the prophets of the Lord. Who so miserable as he? But on that day, Obadiah found that his alms and prayers had gone up before God, and were safe with God, and not to be forgotten for ever.

When he fell on his face before Elijah, in fear for his life, he found that he was safe in God's hands; that God would not betray him or forsake him. Elijah promised him, with a solemn oath, that he would keep his word with him; he kept it, and before many days were past, Obadiah had an answer to all his prayers, and a relief from all his fears; and the Lord sent a gracious rain on his inheritance, and refreshed it when it was weary. Yes, my friends, though well-doing seems for a while not to profit you, persevere: in due time you shall reap, if you faint not. Though the Lord sometimes waits to be gracious, he only waits, he does not forget; and it is to be *gracious* that he waits, not ungracious.

Cast, therefore, thy bread upon the waters, and thou shall find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. Do thy diligence to give of what thou hast; for so gatherest thou thyself in the day of necessity, in which, with what measure you have

measured to others, God will measure to you again.

This is true, for the Scripture says so; this *must* be true, for reason and conscience—the voice of God within us—tell us that God is just; that God must be true, though every man be a liar.

‘Hear,’ says our Lord, ‘what the *unjust* judge says: And shall not God (the just judge), avenge his own elect, who cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them?’ Yes, my friends, God’s promise stands sure, now and for ever. ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’

But now comes in a doubt—and it ought to come in—What are our works at best? What have we which is fit to offer to God?

Full of selfishness, vanity, self-conceit, the best of them; and not half done either. What have we ever done right, but what we might have done more rightly, and done more of it, also? Bad in quality our good works are, and bad in quantity, too. How shall we have courage to carry them in our hand to that God who charges his very angels with folly; and the very heavens are not clean in his sight?

Too true, if we had to offer our own works to God. But, thanks be to his holy name, we have not to offer them ourselves; for there is one who offers them for us—Jesus Christ the Lord. He it is who takes these imperfect, clumsy works of ours, all soiled and stained with our sin and selfishness, and washes them clean in his most precious blood, which was shed to take away the sin of the world: he it is who, in some wonderful and unspeakable way, cleanses our works from sin, by the merit of his death and

sufferings, so that nothing may be left in them but what is the fruit of God's own spirit; and that God may see in them only the good which he himself put into them, and not the stains and soils which they get from our foolish and sinful hearts.

Oh, my friends, bear this in mind. Whensoever you do a thing which you know to be right and good, instead of priding yourself on it, as if the good in it came from you, offer it up to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to your Heavenly Father, from whom all good things come, and say, 'Oh Lord, the good in this is thine, and not mine; the bad in it is mine, and not thine. I thank thee for having made me do right, for without thy help I should have done nothing but wrong; for mine is the laziness, and the weakness, and the selfishness, and the self-conceit; and thine is the kingdom, for thou rulest all things; and the power, for thou doest all things; and the glory, for thou doest all things well, for ever and ever. Amen.'

SERMON X. RELIGIOUS DANGERS

(Preached at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, 1861, for the London Diocesan Board of Education.)

St. Mark viii. 4, 5, 8. And the disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? . . . How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. . . . so they did eat and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

I think that I can take no better text for the subject on which I am about to preach, than that which the Gospel for this day gives me.

For is not such a great city as this London, at least in its present amorphous, unorganised state, having grown up, and growing still, any how and any whither, by the accidental necessities of private commerce, private speculation, private luxury—is it not, I say, literally a wilderness?

I do not mean a wilderness in the sense of a place of want and misery; on the contrary, it is a place of plenty and of comfort.

I think that we clergymen, and those good people who help our labours, are too apt exclusively to forget London labour, in our first and necessary attention to the London poor; to fix our eyes and minds on London want and misery, till we almost ignore the

fact of London wealth and comfort. We must remember, if we are to be just to God, and just to our great nation, that there is not only more wealth in London, but that that wealth is more equitably and generally diffused through all classes, from the highest to the lowest, than ever has been the case in any city in the world. We must remember that there is collected together here a greater number of free human beings than were ever settled on the same space of earth, earning an honest, independent, and sufficient livelihood, and enjoying the fruits of their labour in health and cheapness, freedom and security, such as the world never saw before. There is want and misery. I know it too well.

There are great confusions to be organised, great anomalies to be suppressed. But remember, that if want and misery, confusion and anomaly were *the rule* of London, and not (as they are) the exception, then London, instead of increasing at its present extraordinary pace, would decay; London work, instead of being better and better done, would be worse and worse done, till it stopped short in some such fearful convulsion as that of Paris in 1793. No, my friends; compare London with any city on the Continent; compare her with the old Greek and Roman cities; with Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, with that Imperial Rome itself, which was like London in nothing but its size, and then thank God for England, for freedom, and for the Church of Christ.

And yet I have called London a wilderness. I have. There is a wilderness of want; but there is a wilderness of wealth likewise.

And the latter is far more dangerous to human nature than the former one. It is not in the waste and howling wilderness of rock, and sand and shingle, with its scanty acacia copses, and groups of date trees round the lonely well, that nature shews herself too strong for man, and crushes him down to the likeness of the ape. There the wild Arab, struggling to exist, and yet not finding the struggle altogether too hard for him, can gain and keep, if not spiritual life, virtue and godliness, yet still something of manhood; something of—

The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, thought, and skill.

No; if you would see how low man can fall, you must go to the tropic jungle, where geniality of climate, plenty and variety of food, are in themselves a cause of degradation to the soul, as long as the Spirit of Christ is absent from it. Not in the barren desert, but in the rich forest, wanders the true savage, eating and eating all day long, like the ape in the trees above his head; and (I had almost said), like the ape, too, with no thoughts save what his pampered senses can suggest. I had almost said it. Thank God, I dare not say it altogether; for, after all, the savage is a man, and not an ape. Yes, to the lowest savage in the forests of the Amazon, comes a hunger of the soul, and whispers from the unseen world, to remind him of what he might have been, and still may be. In the dreams of the night they

come; in vague terrors of the unseen, vague feelings of guilt and shame, vague dread of the powers of nature; driving him to unmeaning ceremonies, to superstitious panics, to horrible and bloody rites—as they might drive, to-morrow, my friends, an outwardly civilized population, debauched by mere peace and plenty, entangled and imprisoned in the wilderness of a great city.

I can imagine—imagine?—Have we not seen again and again human souls so entangled and opprest by this vast labyrinth of brick and mortar, as never to care to stir outside it and expand their souls with the sight of God's works as long as their brute wants are supplied, just as the savage never cares to leave his accustomed forest haunt, and hew himself a path into the open air through the tangled underwood. I can imagine—nay, have we not seen that, too?—and can we not see it any day in the street?—human souls so dazzled and stupefied, instead of being quickened, by the numberless objects of skill and beauty, which they see in their walks through the streets, that they care no more for the wonders of man's making, than the savage does for the wonders of God's making, which he sees around him in every insect, bird, and flower. The man who walks the streets every day, is the very man who will see least in the streets. The man who works in a factory, repeating a thousand times a day some one dull mechanical operation, or even casting up day after day the accounts of it, is the man who will think least of the real wonderfulness of that factory; of the amount of prudence, skill,

and science, which it expresses; of its real value to himself and to his class; of its usefulness to far nations beyond the seas. He is like a savage who looks up at some glorious tree, capable, in the hands of civilized man, of a hundred uses, and teeming to him with a hundred scientific facts; and thinks all the while of nothing but his chance of finding a few grubs beneath its bark.

Think over, I beseech you, this fact of the stupefying effect of mere material civilization; and remember that plenty and comfort do not diminish but increase that stupefaction; that Hebrew prophets knew it, and have told us, again and again, that, by fulness of bread the heart waxeth gross; that Greek sages knew it, and have told us, again and again, that need, and not satiety, was the quickener of the human intellect. Believe that man requires another bread than the bread of the body; that sometimes the want of the bodily bread will awaken the hunger for that bread of the soul. Bear in mind that the period during which the middle and lower classes of England were most brutalized, was that of their greatest material prosperity, the latter half of the eighteenth century. Remember that with the distress which came upon them, at the end of the French war, their spiritual hunger awakened—often in forms diseased enough: but growing healthier, as well as keener, year by year; and that if they are not brutalized once more by their present unexampled prosperity, it will be mainly owing to the spiritual life which was awakened in those sad and terrible years. Remember that the present carelessness of the masses about either religious or political

agitation, though it may be a very comfortable sign to those who believe that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesses, is a very ominous sign to some who study history, and to some also who study their Bibles: and ask yourselves earnestly the question, 'From where shall a man find food for these men in this wilderness, not of want, but of wealth?' For, believe me, that spiritual hunger, though stopped awhile by physical comfort, will surely reawaken. Any severe and sudden depression in trade—the stoppage of the cotton crop, for instance, will awaken in the minds of hundreds of thousands deep questions—for which we, if we are wise, shall have an explicit answer ready.

For it is a very serious moment, my friends, when large masses have had enough to eat and drink, and have been saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;' and then, suddenly, by *not* having enough to eat and drink, and yet finding themselves still alive, are awakened to the sense that there is more in them than the mere capacity for eating and drinking. Then begin once more the world-old questions, Why are we thus? Who put us here? Who made us? God? Is there a God? and if there be, what is he like? What is his will toward us, good or evil? Is it hate or love?

My friends, those are questions which have been asked often enough in the world's history, by vast masses at once. And they may be answered in more ways than one.

They may be answered as the weavers of a certain country (thank God, not England) answered them in the potato famine

with their mad song, 'We looked to the earth, and the earth deceived us. We looked to the kings, and the kings deceived us. We looked to God, and God deceived us. Let us lie down and die.'

Or they may answer them—they will be more likely to answer them in England just now, because there are those who will teach them so to answer—in another, but a scarcely less terrible tone. 'Yes, there is a God; and he is angry with us. And why?

Because there is something, or some one, in the nation which he abhors—heretics, papists'—what not—any man, or class of men, on whom cowardly and terrified ignorance may happen to fix as a scapegoat, and cry, 'These are the guilty! We have allowed these men, indulged them; the accursed thing is among us, therefore the face of the Lord is turned from us. We will serve him truly henceforth—and hate those whom he hates. We will be orthodox henceforth—and prove our orthodoxy by persecuting the heretic.'

Does this seem to you extravagant, impossible? Remember, my friends, that within the last century Lord George Gordon's riots convulsed London. Can you give me any reason why Lord George Gordon's riots cannot occur again? Believe me, the more you study history, the more you study human nature, the more possible it will seem to you. It is not, I believe, infidelity, but fanaticism, which England has to fear just now. The infidelity of England is one of mere doubt and denial, a scepticism; which is in itself weak and self-destructive. The infidelity of France in

1793 was strong enough, but just because it was no scepticism, but a faith; a positive creed concerning human reason, and the rights of man, which men could formulize, and believe in, and fight for, and persecute for, and, if need was, die for. But no such exists in England now. And what we have most to fear in England under the pressure of some sudden distress, is a superstitious panic, and the wickedness which is certain to accompany that panic; mean and unjust, cruel and abominable things, done in the name of orthodoxy: though meanwhile, whether what the masses and their spiritual demagogues will mean by orthodoxy, will be the same that we and the Church of England mean thereby, is a question which I leave for your most solemn consideration. That, however, rather than any proclamation of the abstract rights of man, or installations of a goddess of Reason, is the form which spiritual hunger is most likely to take in England now. Alas! are there not tokens enough around us now, whereby we may discern the signs of this time?

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