

CHARLES KINGSLEY

SERMONS ON
NATIONAL
SUBJECTS

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I.

THE KING OF THE EARTH

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

[Preached in 1849.]

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.—Matthew xxi. 4.

This Sunday is the first of the four Sundays in Advent. During those four Sundays, our forefathers have advised us to think seriously of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—not that we should neglect to think of it at all times. As some of you know, I have preached to you about it often lately. Perhaps before the end of Advent you will all of you, more or less, understand what all that I have said about the cholera, and public distress, and the sins of this nation, and the sins of the labouring people has to do with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But I intend, especially

in my next four sermons, to speak my whole mind to you about this matter as far as God has shown it to me; taking the Collect, Epistle, and Gospels, for each Sunday in Advent, and explaining them. I am sure I cannot do better; for the more I see of those Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, and the way in which they are arranged, the more I am astonished and delighted at the wisdom with which they are chosen, the wise order in which they follow each other, and fit into each other. It is very fit, too, that we should think of our Lord's coming at this season of the year above all others; because it is the hardest season—the season of most want, and misery, and discontent, when wages are low, and work is scarce, and fuel is dear, and frosts are bitter, and farmers and tradesmen, and gentlemen, too, are at their wits' end to square their accounts, and pay their way. Then is the time that the evils of society come home to us—that our sins, and our sorrows, which, after all, are the punishment of our sins, stare us in the face. Then is the time, if ever, for men's hearts to cry out for a Saviour, who will deliver them out of their miseries and their sins; for a Heavenly King who will rule them in righteousness, and do justice and judgment on the earth, and see that those who are in need and necessity have right; for a Heavenly Counsellor who will guide them into all truth—who will teach them what they are, and whither they are going, and what the Lord requires of them. I say the hard days of winter are a fit time to turn men's hearts to Christ their King—the fittest of all times for a clergyman to get up in his pulpit, as I do now, and tell his people,

as I tell you, that Jesus Christ your King has not forgotten you—that He is coming speedily to judge the world, and execute justice and judgment for the meek of the earth.

Now do not be in a hurry, and fancy from what I have just said, that I am one of those who think the end of the world is at hand. It may be, for aught I know. “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels of God, nor the Son, but the Father only.” If you wish for my own opinion, I believe that what people commonly call the end of the world, that is, the end of the earth and of mankind on it, is not at hand at all.

As far as I can judge from Scripture, and from the history of all nations, the earth is yet young, and mankind in its infancy. Five thousand years hence, our descendants may be looking back on us as foolish barbarians, in comparison with what they know: just as we look back upon the ignorance of people a thousand years ago. And yet I believe that the end of this world, in the real Scripture sense of the word “world,” is coming very quickly and very truly—The end of this system of society, of these present ways in religion, and money-making, and conducting ourselves in all the affairs of life, which we English people have got into nowadays. The end of it is coming. It cannot last much longer; for it is destroying itself. It will not last much longer; for Christ and not the devil is the King of the earth. As St. Paul said to his people, so say I to you, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.”

These may seem strange words, but almost every one is saying them, in his own way. One large party among religious people

in these days is complaining that Christ has left His Church, and that the cause of Christianity will be ruined and lost, unless some great change takes place. Another large party of religious people say, that the prophecies are on the point of being all fulfilled that the 1260 days, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, are just coining to an end; and that Christ is coming with His saints, to reign openly upon earth for a thousand years. The wisest philosophers and historians of late years have been all foretelling a great and tremendous change in England, and throughout all Europe; and in the meantime, manufacturers and landlords, tradesmen and farmers, artisans and labourers, all say, that there *must* be a change and will be a change. I believe they are all right, every one of them. They put it in their words; I think it better to put it in the Scripture words, and say boldly, "Jesus Christ, the King of the earth, is coming."

But you will ask, "What right have you to stand up and say anything so surprising?" My friends, the world is full of surprising things, and this age above all ages. It was not sixty years ago, that a nobleman was laughed at in the House of Lords for saying that he believed that we should one day see ships go by steam; and now there are steamers on every sea and ocean in the world. Who expected twenty years ago to see the whole face of England covered with these wonderful railroads? Who expected on the 22nd of February last year, that, within a single month, half the nations of Europe, which looked so quiet and secure, would be shaken from top to bottom with revolution and

bloodshed—kings and princes vanishing one after the other like a dream—poor men sitting for a day as rulers of kingdoms, and then hurled down again to make room for other rulers as unexpected as themselves? Can anyone consider the last fifty years?—can anyone consider that one last year, 1848, and then not feel that we do live in a most strange and awful time? a time for which nothing is too surprising—a time in which we all ought to be prepared, from the least to the greatest, to see the greatest horrors and the greatest blessings come suddenly upon us, like a thief in the night? So much for Christ's coming being too wonderful a thing to happen just now. Still you are right to ask: "What do you mean by Christ's being our King? what do you mean by His coming to us? What reason have you for supposing that He is coming *now*, rather than at any other time? And if He be coming, what are we to do? What is there we ought to repent of? what is there we ought to amend?"

Well, my friends—it is just these very questions which I hope and trust God will help me to answer to you, in my next few sermons—I am perfectly convinced that we must get them answered and act upon them speedily. I am perfectly convinced that if we go on as most of us are going in England now, the Lord of us all will come in an hour when we are not aware, and cut us asunder in the deepest and most real sense, as He came and cut asunder France, Germany, and Austria only last year, and appoint us our portion with the unbelievers. And I believe that our punishment will be seven times as severe as that of either

France, Germany, or Austria, because we have had seven times their privileges and blessings, seven times their Gospel light and Christian knowledge, seven times their freedom and justice in laws and constitution; seven times their wealth, and prosperity, and means of employing our population. Much has been given to England, and of her much will be required. And if you could only see the state of mankind over the greatest part of the globe, how infinitely fewer opportunities they have of knowing God's will than you have, you would feel that to you, poor and struggling as some of you are—to you much has been given, and of you much will be required.

Now first, what do I mean by Christ being our king? I daresay there are some among you who are inclined to think that, when we talk of Christ being a king, that the word king means something very different from its common meaning—and, God knows, that that is true enough. Our blessed Lord took care to make people understand that—how He was not like one of the kings of the nations, how His kingdom was not of this world.

But yet the Bible tells us again and again that all good kings, all real kings, are patterns of Christ; and, therefore, that when we talk of Christ being a king, we mean that He is a king in everything that a king ought to be; that He fulfils perfectly all the duties of a king; that He is the pattern which all kings ought to copy. Kings have been in all ages too apt to forget that, and, indeed, so have the people too. We English have forgotten most thoroughly in these days, that Christ is our king, or even a king

at all. We talk of Christ being a “spiritual” king, and then we say that that merely means that He is king of Christians’ hearts. And when anyone asks what that means, it comes out, that all we mean is, that Christ has a very great influence over the hearts of believing Christians—when He can obtain it; or else that it means that He is king of a very small number of people called the elect, whom He has chosen out, but that He has absolutely nothing to do with the whole rest of the world. And then, when anyone stands up with the Bible in his hand, and says, in the plain words of Scripture: “Christ is not only the king of believers, He is the king of the whole earth; the king of the clouds and the thunder, the king of the land and the cattle, and the trees, and the corn, and to whomsoever He will He giveth them. Christ is not only the king of believers—He is the king of all—the king of the wicked, of the heathen, of those who do not believe Him, who never heard of Him. Christ is not only the king of a few individual persons, one here and one there in every parish, but He is the king of every nation. He is the king of England, by the grace of God, just as much as Queen Victoria is, and ten thousand times more.” If any man talks in this way, people stare—think him an enthusiast—ask him what new doctrine this is, and call his words unscriptural, just because they come out of Scripture and not out of men’s perversions and twistings of Scripture. Nevertheless Christ is King; really and truly King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and He will make men know it. What He was, that He is and ever will be; there is no change in Him; His kingdom is an everlasting

kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all ages, and woe unto those, small or great, who rebel against Him!

But what sort of a king is He? He is a king of law, and order, and justice. He is not selfish, fanciful, self-willed. He said himself that He came not to do His own will, but His Father's. He is a king of gentleness and meekness too: but do not mistake that.

There is no weak indulgence in Him. A man may be very meek, and yet stern enough and strong enough. Moses was the meekest of men, we read, and yet He made those who rebelled against him feel that he was not to be trifled with. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram found that to their cost. He would not even spare his own brother Aaron, his own sister Miriam, when they rebelled. And he was right. He showed his love by it; indulgence is not love. It is no sign of meekness, but only of cowardice and carelessness, to be afraid to rebuke sin. Moses knew that he was doing God's work, that he was appointed to make a great nation of those slavish besotted Jews, his countrymen; that he was sent by God with boundless blessings to them; and woe to whoever hindered him from that. Because he loved the Jews, therefore he dared punish those who tempted them to forget the promised land of Canaan, or break God's covenant, in which lay all their hope.

And such a one is our King, my friends; Jesus Christ the Son of God. Like Moses, says St. Paul, He is faithful in all His office.

Therefore He is severe as well as gentle. He was so when on earth. With the poor, the outcast, the neglected, those on whom men trampled, who was gentler than the Lord Jesus? To the

proud Pharisee, the canting Scribe, the cunning Herodian, who was sterner than the Lord Jesus? Read that awful 23rd chapter of St. Matthew, and then see how the Saviour, the lamb dumb before His shearers, He of whom it was said “He shall not strive nor cry, nor shall His voice be heard in the streets”—how He could speak when He had occasion. . . . “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”

My friends, those were the words of our King; of Him in whom was neither passion nor selfishness; who loved us even to the death, and endured for us the scourge, the cross, the grave.

And believe me, such are His words now; though we do not hear Him, the heaven and the earth hear Him and obey Him.

His message is pardon, mercy, deliverance to the sorrowful, and the oppressed, and the neglected; and to the proud, the tyrannical, the self-righteous, the hypocritical, tribulation and anguish, shame and woe.

Because He is the Saviour, therefore He is a consuming fire to all those who try to hinder Him from saving men. Because He is the Son of God, He will sweep out of His Father’s kingdom all who offend, and whosoever maketh and loveth a lie. Because He is boundless mercy and love, therefore He will show no mercy to those who try to stop His purposes of love. Because He is the King of men, the enemies of mankind are His enemies; and He will reign till He has put them all under His feet.

II. HOLY SCRIPTURE

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our example, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.—Romans xv. 4.

“Whatsoever was written aforetime.” There is no doubt, I think, that by these words St. Paul means the Bible; that is, the Old Testament, which was the only part of the Bible already written in his time. For it is of the Psalms which he is speaking. He mentions a verse out of the 69th Psalm, “The reproaches of Him that reproached thee fell on me;” which, he says, applies to Christ just as much as it did to David, who wrote it. Christ, he says, pleased not Himself any more than David, but suffered willingly and joyfully for God’s sake, because He knew that He was doing God’s work. And we, he goes on to say, must do the same; do as Christ did; we must not please ourselves, but every one of us please our brother for his good and edification; that is, in order to build him up, strengthen him, make him wiser, better, more comfortable. For, he says, Christ pleased not Himself, but like David, lived only to help others; and therefore this verse

out of David's Psalms, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me," is a lesson to us; a pattern of what we ought to feel, and do, and suffer. "For whatsoever was written aforetime," all these ancient psalms and prophets, and histories of men and nations who trusted in God, "were written for our example, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

Yes, my friends, this is true; and the longer you live a life of faith and godliness, the longer you read and study that precious Book of books which God has put so freely into your hands in these days, the more true you will find it. And if it was true of the Old Testament, written before the Lord came down and dwelt among men, how much more must it be true of the New Testament, which was written after His coming by apostles and evangelists, who had far fuller light and knowledge of the Lord than ever David or the old prophets, even in their happiest moments, had. Ah, what a treasure you have, every one of you, in those Bibles of yours, which too many of you read so little! From the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations, it is all written for our example, all profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all good works.

Ah! friends, friends, is not this the reason why so many of you do not read your Bibles, that you do not wish to be furnished for good works?—do not wish to be men of God, godly and godlike men, but only to be men of the world, caring only for money and

pleasure?—some of you, alas! not wishing to be men and women at all, but only a sort of brute beasts with clothes on, given up to filth and folly, like the animals that perish, or rather worse than the animals, for they could be no better if they tried, but you might be. Oh! what might you not be, what are you not already, if you but knew it! Members of Christ, children of God, heirs of the kingdom of heaven, heirs of a hope undying, pure, that will never fade away, having a right given you by the promise and oath of Almighty God himself, to hope for yourselves, for your neighbours, for this poor distracted world, for ever and ever; a right to believe that there is an everlasting day of justice, and peace, and happiness in store for the whole world, and that you, if you will, may have your share in that glorious sunrise which shall never set again. You may have your share in it, each and every one of you; and if you ask why, go to the Scriptures, and there read the promises of God, the grounds of your just hope, for all heaven and earth.

First, of hope for yourselves.—I say first for yourselves, not because a man is right in being selfish, and caring only for his own soul, but because a man must care for his own soul first, if he ever intends to care for others; a man must have hope for himself first, if he is to have hope for others. He may stop there, and turn his religion into a selfish superstition, and spend his life in asking all day long, “Shall I be saved, shall I be damned?” or worse still, in chuckling over his own good fortune, and saying to himself, “I shall be saved, whoever else is damned;” but whether he ends

there or not, he must begin there; begin by trying to get himself saved. For if he does not know what is right and good for himself, how can he tell what is right and good for others? If he wishes to bring his neighbours out of their sins, he must surely first have been brought out of his own sins, and so know what forgiveness and sanctification means. If he wishes to make others at peace with God, he must first be at peace with God himself, to know what God's peace is. If he wants to teach others their duty, he must first know his own duty, for all men's duty is one and the same. If he wishes to have hope for the world, he must first have hope for himself, for he is in the world, a part of it, and he must learn what blessings God intends for him, and they will teach him what blessings God has in store for the earth. Faith and hope, like charity, must begin at home. By learning the corruption of our own hearts, we learn the corruption of human nature. By learning what is the only medicine which can cure our own sick hearts, we learn what is the only medicine which can cure human nature. We learn by our own experience, that God is all-forgiving love; that His peace shines bright upon the soul which casts itself utterly on Jesus Christ the Lord for pardon, strength, and safety; that God's Spirit is ready and able to raise us out of all our sin, and sottishness, and weakness, and wilfulness, and selfishness, and renew us into quite new men, different characters from what we used to be; and so, by having hope for ourselves, we learn step by step and year by year to have hope for our friends, for our neighbours, and for the whole world.

For that is another great lesson which the Bible teaches us—hope for the world. Men say to us, “This world has always gone on ill, and will always go on so. Tyrants and knaves and hypocrites have always had the power in it; idlers have always had the enjoyment of it; while the humble, and industrious, and godly, who would not foul their hands with the wicked ways of the world, have been always laughed at, neglected, oppressed, persecuted. The world,” they say, “is very bad, and we cannot live in it without giving way a little to its badness, and going the old road.”

But he who, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, has hope, can answer “Yes—and yet no.” “Yes—we agree that the world has gone on badly enough: perhaps we think the world worse than it thinks itself; for God’s Spirit has taught us to see sin, and shame, and ruin, in many a thing which the world thinks right and reasonable. And yet,” says the true Christian man, “although we think the world worse than anyone else thinks it, and are more unhappy than anyone else about all the sin, and injustice, and misery we see in it, we have the very strongest faith—we are perfectly certain—we are as sure as if we saw it coming to pass here before us, that the world will come right at last. For the Bible tells us that the Son of God is the king of the world; that He has been the master and ruler of it from the beginning. He, the Bible tells us, condescended to come down on earth and be born in the likeness of a poor man, and die on the cross for this poor world of His, that He might take away the sins of it.” “Behold

the Lamb of God,” said John the Baptist, “who takes away the sin of the world.” How dare we, who call ourselves Christians, we who have been baptized into His name, we who have tasted of His mercy, we who know the might of His love, the converting and renewing power of His Spirit—how dare we doubt but that He *will* take away the sins of the world? Ay; step by step, nation by nation, year by year, the Lord shall conquer; love, and justice, and wisdom shall spread and grow; for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. He has promised to take away the sins of the world, and He is God, and cannot lie. There is the Christian’s hope: let him leave infidels to say “The world always was bad, and it must remain so to the end;” the Christian ought to be able to answer, “The world was bad, and is bad; but for that very reason it will *not* remain so to the end: for the Lord and king of the earth is boundless love, justice, goodness itself, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and cast out of His kingdom all things that offend, and make in His good time the kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of God and of His Christ.”

“Ah but,” someone may say, “that, if it ever happens at all, will not happen till we are dead, and what part or lot shall *we* have in it? we who die in the midst of all this sin, and injustice, and distress?” There again the Bible gives us hope: “I believe,” says the Creed, “in the resurrection of the flesh.” The Bible teaches us to believe, that we, each of us, as human beings, men and women, shall have a share in that glorious day; not merely as ghosts, and disembodied spirits—of which the Bible, thanks

be to God, says little or nothing, but as real live human beings, with new bodies of our own, on a new earth, under a new heaven.

“Therefore,” says David, “my flesh shall rest in hope;” not merely my soul, my ghost, but my flesh. For the Lord, who not only died, but rose again with His body, shall raise our bodies, according to the mighty working by which He subdues all things to Himself; and then the whole manhood of each of us, body, soul, and spirit, shall have one perfect consummation and bliss, in His eternal and everlasting glory.—That is our hope. If that is not a gospel, and good news from heaven to poor distressed creatures in hovels, and on sick beds, to people racked with life-long pain and disease, to people in crowded cities, who never from week’s end to week’s end look on the green fields and bright sky—if that is not good news, and a dayspring of boundless hope from on high for them, what news can be?

But how are we to get this hope? The text tells us; through comfort of the Scriptures; through the strengthening and comforting promises, and examples, and rules of God’s gracious dealings which we find therein. Through comfort of the Scriptures, but also through patience. Ah, my friends, of that too we must think; we must, as St. James says, “let patience have her perfect work,” or else we shall not be perfect ourselves. If we are hasty, self-conceited, covetous, ready to help ourselves by the first means that come to hand; if we are full of hard judgments about our neighbours, and doubts about God’s good purpose toward the world; in short, if we are not *patient*, the

Bible will teach us little or nothing. It may make us superstitious, bigoted, fanatical, conceited, pharisaical, but like Jesus Christ the Lord it will not make us, unless we have patience.

And where are we to get patience? God knows it is hard in such a world as this for poor creatures to be patient always. But faith can breed patience, though patience cannot breed itself;—and faith in whom? Faith in our Father in heaven, even in the Almighty God Himself. He calls Himself “the God of Patience and Consolation.” Pray for His Holy Spirit, and He will make you patient; pray for His Holy Spirit, and He will console and comfort you. He has promised That Spirit of His, The Spirit of love, trust, and patience—The Comforter—to as many as ask Him. Ask Him now, this day—come to His holy table this day, and ask Him to make you patient; ask Him to take all the hastiness, and pride, and ill-temper, and self-will, and greediness out of you, and to change your wills into the likeness of His will. Then your eyes will be opened to understand His law. Then you will see in the Scriptures a sure promise of hope and glory and redemption for yourself and all the world. Then you will see in the blessed sacrament of the Lord’s body and blood, a sure sign and warrant, handed down from land to land, and age to age, from year to year, and from father to son, that these promises shall come true; that hope shall become fact; that not one of the Lord’s words shall fail, or pass away, till all be fulfilled.

III.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.—Isaiah lxi. 1.

My friends, I do entreat those of you who wish to get any real good from this sermon, to listen to me carefully all through it. Not that I have to complain of you in general for not attending to me. I thank God, and thank you, that you do listen to what is said in this pulpit. But there are many people who have a bad trick of minding the preacher carefully enough for a minute or two, and then letting their wits wander, and think about something else; and then if any word in the sermon strikes them, waking up suddenly, and thinking again for a little, and then letting their thoughts run wild again; and so on. Whereby it happens that they only recollect a few scraps of the sermon, a word here, and a sentence there, and get into their heads all sorts of mistakes and false notions about the preacher's meaning.

That is not right; that is not worthy of reasonable grown men: that is only pardonable in little scatter-brained children. Men and women should listen steadily, reverently throughout; so, and so only, will they be able to judge of the message which the preacher brings them. Listen to me, therefore, all through this sermon, and may God give you grace to understand it and lay it to heart, for it is the good news of the kingdom of God.

You recollect, I hope, that I have often told you, that the Lord Jesus Christ's words would never pass away; that His prophecies are continually coming true, and being fulfilled over and over again. Now this text is not one of His prophecies, but it is a prophecy about Him; one which He fulfilled, and which He has been fulfilling again and again. He is fulfilling it, as I believe, more than ever, now in these very days.

If you will look at the 61st chapter of Isaiah, you will find this prophecy; and you will find, too, what will surprise you at first, that Isaiah was speaking of himself. He says, "That the Spirit of the Lord was upon *him*"—Isaiah—"because the Lord had appointed *him* to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and deliverance to the captives, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Isaiah must have spoken truly about himself. He could not have meant to tell a falsehood, to say a thing was true of himself which was only true of Jesus, who did not come till 800 years afterwards. And he did speak the truth: you cannot read his prophecies without seeing that the Spirit of the Lord was indeed upon him; that the words which he spoke

must have comforted all those who were sorrowing for their sins and the sins of the nation in their time. We know, for a fact, that his prophecies came true; that the Jewish captives were delivered and brought back out of Judæa to Jerusalem again, and that Jerusalem was rebuilt as Isaiah prophesied, and the Jewish nation raised to far greater holiness, and prosperity, and happiness than it had ever been in before. And yet 800 years afterwards the Lord took those very same words to Himself, and said, that *He* fulfilled them. He read them aloud once in a Jewish synagogue, out of the book of the prophet Isaiah; and then told the congregation, “This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” And again, as we read in the Gospel for this day, when John the Baptist sent to ask Him if He was really the Christ, He made use of another prophecy of Isaiah, and told John’s disciples that He *was* the Christ, because He was fulfilling that prophecy; because He *was* making the deaf hear, and the blind see, and preaching the gospel to the poor. Now, how is that? Could Isaiah be right in applying those words to himself, and yet Christ be right in applying them to Himself? Can a prophecy be fulfilled twice over?

No doubt it can, my friends, and two hundred times over. No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, says St. Peter. That is, it does not apply to any one private, particular thing that is to happen. Every prophecy of Scripture goes on fulfilling itself more and more, as time rolls on and the world grows older. St. Peter tells us the reason why. No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation; because it does not come from the will

of man, from any invention or discovery of poor short-sighted human beings, who can only judge by what they see around them in their own times: but holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. And who is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit of God; the everlasting Spirit; the Spirit who cannot change, for He *is* God. The Spirit who searcheth the deep things of God, and teaches them to men. And what are the deep things of God?

They are eternal as God is. Eternal laws; everlasting rules which cannot alter. That is the meaning of it all. The Spirit of God is the Spirit which teaches men the laws of God; the unchangeable rules and ordinances by which He governs all heaven and earth, and men, and nations; the laws which come into force, not once only, but always; the laws of God which are working round us now, just as much as they were eighteen hundred years ago, just as much as they were in Isaiah's time. Therefore it is, that I said that these old Jewish prophecies, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit, are coming true now, and will keep on coming true, time after time, in their proper place and order, and whensoever the times are fit for them, even to the end of the world.

But again, we read that the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. And what are the things of Christ? They must be eternal things, unchangeable things, for Christ is unchangeable—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is over all, God blessed for ever. To Him all power is given in heaven and earth. He reigns, and He will reign. Do you think He is less a Saviour now, than He was when

He spoke those things to John's disciples? Do you think He is less able to hear and to help than He was in John's time? Do you think He used to care about people's bodies then, but that He only cares about their souls now? Do you think that He is less compassionate, and less merciful, as well as less powerful, than He was when He made the blind see, and the lame walk, and the deaf hear, in Judæa of old?

Less powerful! less compassionate! One would have expected that Christ was *more* powerful, *more* compassionate, if that were possible. At least one would expect that His power and compassion would show itself more and more, and make itself felt more and more, year by year, and age by age; more and more healing disease; more and more comforting sorrow; more and still more casting out cunning and evil spirits, till He had put all under His feet. He Himself said it should be so. He always spoke of His own kingdom as a thing which was to grow and increase by laws of its own, men knew not how, but He knew. Like seed cast into the ground, His kingdom was, He said, at first the smallest of all seeds; but it was to grow, and take root, and spread into a mighty tree, He said, till the very birds in the air lodged in the branches of it; and David's words should be fulfilled, "Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast." And does not St. Paul speak of His kingdom in the same way, as a kingdom which should grow? that He was to reign till He had put all enemies under His feet? that He would deliver at last the whole creation? the earth on which we stand, the dumb animals around us? For,

as St. Paul says, the whole creation is groaning in labour-pangs, waiting to be raised into a higher state. And it shall be raised.

The whole creation shall be set free into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

What does that mean? How can I tell you?

This I can tell you, that it cannot mean that Jesus Christ was merciful enough to heal people's bodies at first, but that He has given up doing it now, and will never do it again. "Well, but," some would say, "what does all this come to? You are merely telling us what we knew before—that if any of us are cured from disease, or raised up from a sick bed, it is all the Lord's doing."

If you do believe that, really, my friends, happy are you! Many of you, I think, do believe it. The poor are more inclined to believe it, I think, than the rich. But even in the mouths of the poor one often hears words which make one suspect that they do *not* believe it. I am very much afraid that a great many have got into the trick of saying that it was God's mercy that they were cured, and that it pleased the Lord to raise them up from a sick bed, very much as a piece of cant. They say the words by rote, because they have been accustomed to hear them said by others, without thinking of the meaning of them; just as, on the other hand, a great many people curse and swear without thinking of the awful oaths they use. Ay, and often enough the very same persons will say that it was the Lord's mercy they were cured of their sickness; and then, if they get into a passion, pray the very same Lord to do that to the bodies and souls of their neighbours

which it is a shame to speak of here. Out of the same mouth proceed blessings and cursings: showing that whether or not they are in earnest in cursing, they are not earnest in blessing.

Again: If people really believed that it was the Lord Jesus Christ who cured their sicknesses for them, they would behave, when they got well, more as the Lord Jesus Christ would wish them to behave. They would show forth their thankfulness not only with their lips, but in their lives. You who believe—you who say—that Christ has cured your sicknesses, show your faith by your works. Live like those who are alive again from the dead; who are not your own, but bought with a price, and bound to work for God with your bodies and your spirits, which are His—then, and then only, can either God or man believe you.

Again: There is a third reason which makes one suspect that people do not mean what they say about this matter. I think too many say, “It has pleased God,” merely as an empty form of words, when all they mean is, “What must be, must, and it cannot be helped.” Else, why do they say, “It has pleased the Lord to send me sickness?” What is the use of saying, “It has pleased the Lord to cure me,” when you say in the same breath, “It has pleased the Lord to make me ill?” I know you will say that, “Of course, whatever happens must be the Lord’s will; if it did not please Him it would not happen.” I do not care for such words; I will have nothing to do with them. I will neither entangle you nor myself in those endless disputings and questions about freewill and necessity, which never yet have come to any

conclusion, and never will, because they are too deep for poor short-sighted human beings like us. "To the law and to the testimony," say I. I will hold to the words of the Bible; what it says, I will say; what it does not say I will not say, to please any man's system of doctrines. And I say from the Bible that we have no more right to say, "It has pleased the Lord to make me sick," than, "It has pleased the Lord to make me a sinner."

Scripture everywhere speaks of sickness as a real evil and a curse—a breaking of the health, and order, and strength, and harmony of God's creation. It speaks of madmen as possessed with evil spirits; did *that* please God? The woman who was bowed with a spirit of infirmity, and could not lift herself up—did our Lord say that it had pleased God to make her a wretched cripple? No; he spoke of her as this daughter of Israel, whom Satan had bound, and not God, this eighteen years; and that was His reason for healing her, even on the sabbath-day, because her disease was not the work of God, but of the cruel, disordering, destroying evil spirit which is at enmity with God. That was why Christ cured her. And *that*—for this is the point I have been coming to, step by step—that was the reason why, when John the Baptist sent to ask if Jesus was the Christ, our Lord answered: "Go and show John again those things which ye do see and hear: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Do not be in a hurry, my friends, and suppose that our

Lord meant merely: "Tell John what wonderful miracles I am working." If He had meant that why would He have put in as the last proof that He was the Christ, that He was preaching the gospel to the poor? What wonderful miracle was there in *that*?

No: it was as if He had said: "Go and tell John that I am the Christ, because I am the great physician, the healer and deliverer of body and soul: one who will and can cure the loathsome diseases, the uselessness, the misery, the ignorance of the poorest and meanest." He has proved Himself the Christ by showing not only His boundless power, but His boundless love and mercy; and *that*, not only to men's souls, but to their bodies also. To prove Himself the Christ by wonderful and astonishing miracles was exactly what He would not do. He refused, when the Scribes and Pharisees came and asked of Him a sign from heaven to prove that He was Christ—wanting Him, I suppose, to bring some apparition, or fiery comet, or great voice out of the sky, to astonish them with His power; He told them peremptorily that He would give them no such thing: and yet He said that His mighty works did prove Him to be Christ; He pronounced woe against Chorazin and Bethsaida for not believing Him on account of His mighty works: He told the Scribes and Pharisees that they ought to believe on Him merely for His works' sake. And why would they not believe on Him? Just because they could not see that God's power was shown more in healing and delivering sufferers, than in astonishing and destroying. They could not see that God's perfect likeness shone out in Christ—that He was the express

image of the Father, just because He went about doing good, and healing all manner of sicknesses and all manner of infirmities among the people. But so it is, my friends! Jesus is the Saviour, the deliverer, the great physician, the healer of soul and body.

Not a pang is felt or a tear shed on earth, but He sorrows over it. Not a human being on earth dies young, but He, as I believe, sorrows over it. What it is which prevents Him healing every sickness, soothing every sorrow, wiping away every tear *now*, we cannot tell. But this we can tell, that it is His will that none should perish. This we *can* tell; that He is willing as ever to heal the sick, to cleanse the leper, to cast out devils, to teach the ignorant, to bind up the broken-hearted. This we *can* tell; that He will go on doing so more and more, year by year, and age by age. This we *can* tell, from Scripture, that Christ is stronger than the devil.

This we can tell; that Christ, and all good men, the spirits of just men made perfect, the wise and the great in God's sight, who have left us their books, their sayings, their writings, as precious health-giving heirlooms—have been fighting, and are fighting, and will fight to the end against the devil, and sin, and oppression, and misery, and disease, and everything which spoils and darkens the face of God's good earth. And this we *can* tell; that they will conquer at the last, because Christ is stronger than the devil; good is stronger than evil; light is stronger than darkness; God's Spirit, the giver of life, and health, and order, is stronger than all the evil customs, and ignorance, and carelessness, and cruelty, and superstition, which makes miserable the lives and, as far as

we can see, destroys the souls of thousands. Yes, I say, Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of health and deliverance for body and soul; and it will conquer, and it will spread, and it will grow, till the nations of the world have become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. Christ reigns, and Christ will reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet; and the last of His enemies which shall be destroyed is *Death*. Death is His enemy. He has conquered death by rising from the dead. And the day will come when death will be no more—when sickness and sorrow shall be unknown, and God shall wipe away tears from all eyes. I say it again—never forget it—Christ is King, and His kingdom is a kingdom of health, and life, and deliverance from all evil. It always has been so, from the first time our Lord cured the leper in Galilee; it will be so to the end of the world. And, therefore—to come back to the very place from which I started at the beginning of my sermon—therefore, whenever one of the days of the Lord is at hand, whenever God's kingdom makes a great step forward, this same prophecy in our text is fulfilled in some striking and wonderful way. And I say it is fulfilled now in these days more than it ever has been. Christ is healing the sick, cleansing the leper, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel to the poor, seven times more in these days in which we live than He did when He walked upon earth in Judæa.

Do you doubt my words? At all events you confess that the cure of all diseases comes from Christ. Then consider, I beseech you, how many more diseases are cured now than were

formerly. One may say that the knowledge of medicine is not one hundred years old. Nothing, my friends, makes me feel more strongly what a wonderful and blessed time we live in, and how Christ is showing forth mighty works among us, than this same sudden miraculous improvement in the art of healing, which has taken place within the memory of man. Any country doctor now knows more, thank God, or ought to know, than the greatest London physicians did two generations ago. New cures for deafness, blindness, lameness, every disease that flesh is heir to, are being discovered year by year. Oh, my friends! you little know what Christ is doing among you, for your bodies as well as for your souls. There is not a parish in England now in which the poorest as well as the richest are not cured yearly of diseases, which, if they had lived a hundred years ago, would have killed them without hope or help. And then, when one looks at these great and blessed plans for what is called sanitary reform, at the sickness and the misery which has been done away with already by attending to them, even though they have only just begun to be put in practice—our hearts must be hard indeed if we do not feel that Christ is revealing to us the gifts of healing far more bountifully and mercifully than even He did to the first apostles.

But you will say, perhaps, the dead are not raised in these days. Oh, my friends! which shows Christ's mercy most, to raise those who are already dead, or to save those alive who are about to die? Those in this church who have read history know as well as I, how in our forefathers' time people died in England by thousands

of diseases which are scarcely ever deadly now; ay, of diseases which have now actually vanished out of the land, before the new light of medicine and of civilisation which Christ has revealed to us in these days. For one child who lived and grew up in old times, two live and grow up now. In London alone there are not half as many deaths in proportion to the number of people as there were a hundred years ago. And is not that a mightier work of Christ's power and love than if He had raised a few dead persons to life?

And now for the last part of our Lord's witness about Himself.

To the poor the gospel is preached. Oh! my friends, is not *that* coming true in our days as it never came true before? Look back only fifty years, and consider the difference between the doctrines which were preached to the poor and the doctrines which are preached to them now. Look round you and see how everywhere earnest and godly ministers have sprung up, of all sects and opinions, as well as of the Church of England, not only to preach the gospel in the pulpit, but to carry it to the sick bedside of the lonely cottage, to the prison, and to those fearful sties, worse than prisons, where in our great cities the heathen poor live crowded together. Look at the teaching which the poor man can get now, compared to what he used to—the sermons, the Bibles, the tracts, the lending libraries, the schools—just consider the hundreds of thousands of pounds which are subscribed every year to educate the children of the poor, and then say whether Christ is not working a mighty work among us

in these days. I know that not half as much is done as ought to be done in that way; not half as much as will be done; and what is done will have to be done better than it has been done yet; but still, can anyone in this church who is fifty years old deny that there is a most enormous and blessed improvement which is growing and spreading every year? Can anyone deny that the gospel is preached to the poor now in a way that it never was before within the memory of man?

Now, recollect that this is an Advent sermon—a sermon which proclaims to you that Christ is *come*; yes, He is come—come never to leave mankind again! Christ reigns over the earth, and will reign for ever. At certain great and important times in the world's history, like this present time, times which He Himself calls “days of the Lord,” He shows forth His power, and the mightiness and mercy of His kingdom, more than at others. But still He is always with us; we have no need to run up and down to look for Christ: to say, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Him down? Who shall descend into the deep to bring Him up?

For the kingdom of God, as He told us Himself, is among us, and within us. Yes, within us. All these wonderful improvements and discoveries, all things beneficial to men which are found out year by year, though they seem to be of men's invention, are really of Christ's revealing, the fruits of the kingdom of God within us, of the Spirit of God, who is teaching men, though they too often will not believe it; though they disclaim God's Spirit and take all the glory to themselves. Truly Christ is among us;

and our eyes are held, and we see Him not. That is our English sin—the sin of unbelief, the root of every other sin. Christ works among us, and we will not own Him. Truly, Jesus Christ may well say of us English at this day, There were ten cleansed, but where are the nine? How few are there, who return to give glory to God! Oh, consider what I say; the kingdom of God is among us now; its blessings are growing richer, fuller among us every day. Beware, lest if we refuse to acknowledge that kingdom and Christ the King of it, it be taken away from us, and given to some other nation, who will bring forth the fruits of it, fellow-help and brotherly kindness, purity and sobriety, and all the fruits of the Spirit of God.

IV. A PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Rejoice in the Lord always.—Philippians iv. 4.

This is the beginning of the Epistle for to-day, the Sunday before Christmas. We will try to find out why it was chosen for to-day, and what lesson we may learn from it.

Now Christmas-time was always a time of rejoicing among many heathen nations, and long before the Lord Jesus Christ came. That was natural and reasonable enough, if you will consider it. For now the shortest day is past. The sun is just beginning to climb higher and higher in the sky each day, and bring back with him longer sunshine, and shorter darkness, and spring flowers, and summer crops, and a whole new year, with new hopes, new work, new lessons, new blessings. The old year, with all its labours and all its pleasures, and all its sorrows and all its sins, is dying, all but gone. It lies behind us, never to return. The tears which we shed, we never can shed again. The mistakes we made, we have a chance of mending in the year to come. And

so the heathens felt, and rejoiced that another year was dying, another year going to be born.

And Christmas was a time of rejoicing too, because the farming work was done. The last year's crop was housed; the next year's wheat was sown; the cattle were safe in yard and stall, and men had time to rest, and draw round the fire in the long winter nights, and make merry over the earnings of the past year, and the hopes and plans of the year to come. And so over all this northern half of the world Christmas was a merry time.

But the poor heathens did not know the Lord. They did not know who to thank for all their Christmas blessings. And so some used to thank the earth for the crops, and the sun for coming back again to lengthen the days, as if the earth and sun moved of themselves. And some used to thank false gods and ancient heroes, who, perhaps, never really lived at all. And some, perhaps the greater number, thanked nothing and no one, but just enjoyed themselves, and took no thought, as too many do now at Christmas-time. So the world went on, Christmas after Christmas; and the times of that ignorance, as St. Paul says, God winked at. But when the fulness of time was come, He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, to be the judge and ruler of the world; and commanded all men everywhere to repent, and turn from all their vanities to serve the living God, who had made heaven and earth, and all things in them.

He did not wish them to give up their Christmas mirth. No: all along He had been trying to teach them by it about His love

to them. As St. Paul told them once, God had not left Himself without witness, in that He gave them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness.

God did not wish them, or us, to give up Christmas mirth.

The apostles did not wish it. The great men, true followers of the apostles, who shaped our Prayer-book for us, and sealed it with their life-blood, did not wish it. They did not wish farmers, labourers, servants, masters, to give up one of the old Christmas customs; but to remember who made Christmas, and its blessings; in short, to rejoice in The Lord. Our forefathers had been thanking the wrong persons for Christmas. Henceforward we were to thank the right person, The Lord, and rejoice in Him.

Our forefathers had been rejoicing in the sun, and moon, and earth; in wise and valiant kings who had lived ages before; in their own strength, and industry, and cunning. Now they were to rejoice in Him who made sun, and moon, and earth; in Him who sent wise and valiant kings and leaders; in Him who gives all strength, and industry, and cunning; by whose inspiration comes all knowledge of agriculture, and manufacture, and all the arts which raise men above the beasts that perish. So their Christmas joys were to go on, year by year while the world lasted: but they were to go on rightly, and not wrongly. Men were to rejoice in The Lord, and then His blessing would be on them, and the thanks and praise which they offered Him, He would return with interest, in fresh blessings for the coming year.

Therefore, I think, this Epistle was chosen for to-day, the

Sunday before Christmas, to show us in whom we are to rejoice; and, therefore, to show us how we are to rejoice. For we must not take the first verse of the Epistle and forget the rest. That would neither be wise nor reverent toward St. Paul, who wrote the whole, and meant the whole to stand together as one discourse, or to the blessed and holy men who chose it for our lesson on this day. Let us go on, then, with the Epistle, line by line, throughout.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.” As much as to say, you cannot rejoice too much, you cannot overdo your happiness, thankfulness, merriment. You do not know half—no, not the thousandth part of God’s love and mercy to you, and you never will know. So do not be afraid of being too happy, or think that you honour God by wearing a sour face, when He is heaping blessings on you, and calling on you to smile and sing. But “let your moderation be known unto all men.”

There is a right and a wrong way of being merry. There is a mirth, which is no mirth; whereof it is written, in the midst of that laughter there is a heaviness, and the end thereof is death.

Drunkenness, gluttony, indecent words and jests and actions, these are out of place on Christmas-day, and in the merriment to which the pure and holy Lord Jesus calls you all. They are rejoicing in the flesh and the devil, and not in the Lord at all; and whosoever indulges in them, and fancies them merriment, is keeping the devil’s Christmas, and not Jesus Christ’s. So let your moderation be known to all men. Be *merry and wise*. The fool lets his mirth master him, and carry him away, till he forgets

himself, and says and does things of which he is ashamed when he gets up next morning, sick and sad at heart. The wise man remembers that, let the occasion be as joyful a one as it may, "the Lord is at hand." Christ's eye is on him, while he is eating, and drinking, and laughing. He is not afraid of Christ's eye, because, though it is Divine it is a human, loving, smiling eye; rejoicing in the happiness of His poor, hard-worked brothers here below. But he remembers that it is a holy eye, too; an eye which looks with sadness and horror on anything which is wrong; on all drunkenness, quarrelling, indecency; and so on in all his merriment, he is still master of himself. He remembers that his soul is nobler than his body; that his will must be stronger than his appetite; and so he keeps himself in check; he keeps his tongue from evil, and his stomach from sottishness, and though he may be, and ought to be, the merriest of the whole party, yet he takes care to let his moderation, his sobriety, be known and plain to everyone, remembering that the Lord is at hand.

And that man—I will stand surety for him—will be the one who will rise from his bed next morning, best able to carry out the next verse of the Epistle, and "be careful for nothing."

Now that is no easy matter here in England; to rich and poor, Christmas is the time for settling accounts and paying debts. And therefore in England, where living is dear, and everyone, more or less, struggling to pay his way, Christmas is often a very anxious, disturbing time of year. Many a family, for all their economy, cannot clear themselves at the year's end; and though they are

able to forget that now and then, thank God, through great part of the year, yet they cannot forget it at Christmas. But, as I said, the man who at Christmas-time will be most able to be careful for nothing, will be the man whose moderation has been known to everyone; for he will, if he has lived the year through in the same temper in which he has spent Christmas, have been moderate in his expenses; he will have kept himself from empty show, and pretending to be richer than he is. He will have kept himself from throwing away his money in drink, and kept his daughters from throwing away money in dress, which is just what too many, in their foolish, godless, indecent hurry to get rid of their own children off their hands do not do.

And he will be the man who will be in the best humour, and have the clearest brain, to kneel down when he gets up to his daily work, and “in everything, by prayer and supplication, make his requests known to God.” And then, whether he can make both ends meet or not, whether he can begin next year free from debt or not, still “the peace of God will keep his heart.” He may be unable to clear himself, but still he will know that he has a loving and merciful Father in heaven, who has allowed distress and difficulty to come on him only as a lesson and an education.

That this distress came because God chose, and that when God chooses it will go away—and that till then—considering that the Lord God sent it—it had better *not* go away. He will believe that God’s gracious promises stand true—that the Lord will never let those who trust in Him be confounded and brought to shame—

that He will let none of us be tempted beyond what we are able, but will always with the temptation make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it. And so the peace of God which passes understanding, will keep that man's mind. And in whom?

“In Jesus Christ.” Now what did St. Paul mean by putting in the Lord Jesus Christ's name there? what is the meaning of “in Jesus Christ”? This is what it means; it means what Christmas-day means. A man may say, “Your sermon promises fine things, but I am miserable and poor; it promises a holy and noble rejoicing to everyone, but I am unholy and mean. It promises peace from God, and I am sure I am not at peace: I am always fretting and quarrelling; I quarrel with my wife, my children, and my neighbours, and they quarrel with me; and worst of all,” says the poor man, “I quarrel with myself. I am full of discontented, angry, sulky, anxious, unhappy thoughts; my heart is dark and sad and restless within me—would God I were peaceful, but I am not: look in my face and see!”

True, my friend, but on Christmas-day the Son of God was born into the world, a man like you.

“Well,” says the poor man, “but what has that to do with my anxiety and my ill-temper?”

It would take the whole year through, my friend, to show you all that it has to do with you and your unhappiness. All the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels of the year are set out to show you what it has to do with you. But in the meanwhile, before Christmas-day comes, consider this one thing: Why are

you anxious? Because you do not know what is to happen to you? Then Christmas-day is a witness to you, that whatsoever happens to you, happens to you by the will and rule of Jesus Christ, The perfect man; think of that. *The perfect man*—who understands men's hearts and wants, and all that is good for them, and has all the wisdom and power to give us what is good, which we want ourselves. And what makes you unhappy, my friends?

Is it not at heart just this one thing—you are unhappy because you are not pleased with yourselves? And you are not pleased with yourselves because you know you ought not to be pleased with yourselves; and you know you ought not to be pleased with yourselves, because you know, in the bottom of your hearts, that God is not pleased with you? What cure, what comfort for such thoughts can we find?—This.

The child who was born in a manger on Christmas-day, and grew up in poverty, and had not where to lay his head, went through all shame and sorrow to which man is heir. He, Jesus, the poor child of Bethlehem, is Lord and King of heaven and earth. He will feel for us; He will understand our temptations; He has been poor himself, that He might feel for the poor; He has been evil spoken of, that He might feel for those whose tempers are sorely tried. He bore the sins and felt the miseries of the whole world, that He might feel for us when we are wearied with the burden of life, and confounded by the remembrance of our own sins.

Oh, my friends, consider only Who was born into the world on

Christmas-day; and that thought alone will be enough to fill you with rejoicing and hope for yourselves and all the world, and with the peace of God which passes understanding, the peace which the angels proclaimed to the shepherds on the first Christmas night—"On earth peace, and good will toward men"—and if God wills us good, my friend; what matter who wishes us evil?

V.

CHRISTMAS-DAY

He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a slave.—Philippians ii. 7.

On Christmas-day, 1851 years ago, if we had been at Rome, the great capital city, and mistress of the whole world, we should have seen a strange sight—strange, and yet pleasant. All the courts of law were shut; no war was allowed to be proclaimed, and no criminals punished. The sorrow and the strife of that great city had stopped, in great part, for three days, and all people were giving themselves up to merriment and good cheer—making up quarrels, and giving and receiving presents from house to house.

And we should have seen, too, a pleasanter sight than that. For those three days of Christmas-time were days of safety and merriment for the poor slaves—tens of thousands of whom—men, women, and children—the Romans had brought out of all the countries in the world—many of our forefathers and mothers among them—and kept them there in cruel bondage and shame, worked and fed, bought and sold, like beasts, and not like human beings, not able to call their lives or their bodies their own, forced to endure any shame or sin which their tyrants required of them, and liable any moment to be beaten, tortured, or crucified at the mercy of cruel and foul masters and mistresses. But on that

Christmas-day, according to an old custom, they were allowed for once in the whole year to play at being free, to dress in their masters' and mistresses' clothes, to say what they thought of them boldly, without fear of punishment, and to eat and drink at their masters' tables, while their masters and mistresses waited on them. It was an old custom, that, among the heathen Romans, which their forefathers, who were wiser and better than they, had handed down to them. They had forgotten, perhaps, what it meant: but still we may see what it must have meant: That the old forefathers of the Romans had intended to remind their children every year by that custom, that their poor hard-worked slaves were, after all, men and women as much as their masters; that they had hearts and consciences, and sense in them, and a right to speak what they thought, as much as their masters; that they, as much as their masters, could enjoy the good things of God's earth, from which man's tyranny had shut them out; and to remind those cruel masters, by making them once every year wait on their own slaves at table, that they were, after all, equal in the sight of God, and that it was more noble for those who were rich, and called themselves gentlemen, to help others, than to make others slave for them.

I do not mean, of course, that those old heathens understood all this clearly. You will see, by the latter part of my sermon, why they could not understand it clearly. But there must have been some sort of dim, confused suspicion in their minds that it was wrong and cruel to treat human beings like brute beasts,

which made them set up that strange old custom of letting their slaves play at being free once every Christmas-tide.

But if on this same day, 1851 years ago, instead of being in the great city of Rome, we had been in the little village of Bethlehem in Judæa, we might have seen a sight stranger still; a sight which we could not have fancied had anything to do with that merrymaking of the slaves at Rome, and yet which had everything to do with it.

We should have seen, in a mean stable, among the oxen and the asses, a poor maiden, with her newborn baby laid in the manger, for want of any better cradle, and by her her husband, a poor carpenter, whom all men thought to be the father of her child. . . .

There, in the stable, amid the straw, through the cold winter days and nights, in want of many a comfort which the poorest woman, and the poorest woman's child would need, they stayed there, that young maiden and her newborn babe. That young maiden was the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that poor baby was the Son of God. The Son of God, in whose likeness all men were made at the beginning; the Son of God, who had been ruling the whole world all along; who brought the Jews out of slavery, a thousand years before, and destroyed their cruel tyrants in the Red Sea; the Son of God, who had been all along punishing cruel tyrants and oppressors, and helping the poor out of misery, whenever they called on Him. The Light which lightens every man who comes into the world, was that poor babe. It was He who gives men reason, and conscience, and a tender heart, and delight in

what is good, and shame and uneasiness of mind when they do wrong. It was He who had been stirring up, year by year, in those cruel Romans' hearts, the feeling that there was something wrong in grinding down their slaves, and put into their minds the notion of giving them their Christmas rest and freedom. He had been keeping up that good old custom for a witness and a warning that all men were equal in His sight; that all men had a right to liberty of speech and conscience; a right to some fair share in the good things of the earth, which God had given to all men freely to enjoy. But those old Romans would not take the warning. They kept up the custom, but they shut their eyes to the lesson of it. They went on conquering and oppressing all the nations of the earth, and making them their slaves. And now He was come—He Himself, the true Lord of the earth, the true pattern of men. He was come to show men to whom this world belonged: He was come to show men in what true power, true nobleness consisted—not in making others minister to us, but in ministering to them: He was come to set a pattern of what a man should be; He was the Son of Man—THE MAN of all men—and therefore He had come with good news to all poor slaves, and neglected, hard-worked creatures: He had come to tell them that He cared for them; that He could and would deliver them; that they were God's children, and His brothers, just as much as their Roman masters; and that He was going to bring a terrible time upon the earth—"days of the Son of Man," when He would judge all men, and show who were true men and who were not—such

a time as had never been before, or would be again; when that great Roman empire, in spite of all its armies, and its cunning, and its riches, plundered from every nation under heaven, would crumble away and perish shamefully and miserably off the face of the earth, before tribes of poor, untaught, savage men, the brothers and countrymen of those very slaves whom the Romans fancied were so much below them, that they had a right to treat them like the beasts which perish.

That was the message which that little child lying in the manger there at Bethlehem, had been sent out from God to preach. Do you not see now what it had to do with that strange merrymaking of the poor slaves in Rome, which I showed you at the beginning of my sermon?

If you do not, I must remind you of the song, which, St. Luke says, the shepherds in Judæa heard the angels sing, on this night 1851 years ago. That song tells us the meaning of that babe's coming. That song tells us what that babe's coming had to do with the poor slaves of Rome, and with all poor creatures who have suffered and sorrowed on this earth, before or since.

“Glory to God in the highest,” they sang, “and on earth peace, good will to men.”

Glory to God in the highest. That little babe, lying in the manger among the cattle, was showing what was the very highest glory of the great God who had made heaven and earth. Not to show His power and His majesty, but to show His condescension and His love. To stoop, to condescend, to have mercy, to forgive,

that is the highest glory of God. That is the noblest, the most Godlike thing for God or man. And God showed that when He sent down His only-begotten Son—not to strike the world to atoms with a touch, not to hurl sinners into everlasting flame, but to be born of a village maiden, to take on Himself all the shame and weakness and sorrow, to which man is heir, even to death itself; to make Himself of no reputation, and take on Himself the form of a slave, and forgive sinners, and heal the sick, and comfort the outcast and despised, that He might show what God was like—show forth to men, as a poor maiden's son, the brightness of God's glory, and the express likeness of His person.

“And on earth peace” they sang. Men had been quarrelling and fighting then, and men are quarrelling and fighting now.

That little babe in the manger was come to show them how and why they were all to be at peace with each other. For what causes all the war and quarrelling in the world, but selfishness?

Selfishness breeds pride, passion, spite, revenge, covetousness, oppression. The strong care for themselves, and try to help themselves at the expense of the weak, by force and tyranny; the weak care for themselves in their turn, and try to help themselves at the expense of the strong, by cunning and cheating. No one will condescend, give way, sacrifice his own interest for his neighbour's, and hence come wars between nations, quarrels in families, spite and grudges between neighbours. But in the example of that little child of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ the Lord, God was saying to men, “Acquaint yourselves with Me, and be at

peace.” God is not selfish; it is our selfishness which has made us unlike God. God so loved the sinful world, that He gave His only-begotten Son for it. Is that an action like ours? The Son of God so obeyed His Father, and so loved this world, that He made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the likeness of a slave, and became obedient to death, even to the most fearful and shameful of all deaths, the death of the cross; not for Himself, but for those who did not know Him, hated Him, killed Him.

In short, He sacrificed Himself for us. That is God’s likeness.

Self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, proved Himself the Son of God, and the express likeness of the Father, by sacrificing Himself for us. Sacrifice yourselves then for each other! Give up your own pride, your own selfishness, your own interest for each other, and you will be all at peace at once.

But the angels sang, “Good will toward men.” Without that their song would not have been complete. For we are all ready to say, at such words as I have been speaking, “Ah! pleasant enough, and pretty enough, if they were but possible; but they are not possible. It is in the nature of man to be selfish. Men have gone on warring, grudging, struggling, competing, oppressing, cheating from the beginning, and they will do so to the end.”

Yes, it is not in the *nature* of man to do otherwise. In as far as man yields to his nature, and is like the selfish brute beasts, it is not possible for him to do anything but go on quarrelling, and competing, and cheating to the last. But what man’s nature cannot do, God’s grace can. God’s good will is toward you. He

loves you, He wills—and if He wills, what is too hard for Him? —He wills to raise you out of this selfish, quarrelsome life of sin, into a loving, brotherly, peaceful life of righteousness. His spirit, the spirit of love by which He made and guides all heaven and earth, the spirit of love in which He gave His only Son for you, the spirit of love in which His Son Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for you, and took on Himself a meaner state than any of you can ever have—the likeness of a slave—that spirit is promised to you, and ready for you. That little baby in the manger at Bethlehem —God sacrificing Himself for you in the spirit of love—is a sign that that spirit of love is the spirit of God, and therefore the only right spirit for you and me, who are men and women made in the image of God. That babe in the manger at Bethlehem is a sign to you and me, that God will freely give us that spirit of love if we ask for it. For He would not have set us that example, if He had not meant us to follow it, and He would not ask us to follow it, if He did not intend to give us the means of following it. Therefore, my friends, it is written, Ask and ye shall receive.

If your heavenly Father spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him for you, will He not with Him likewise freely give you all things? Oh! ask and you shall receive. However poor, ignorant, sinful you may be, God's promises are ready for you, signed and sealed by the bread and wine on that table, the memorial of Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem. Ask, and you shall receive! Comfort from sorrow, peaceful assurance of God's good will toward you, deliverance from your sins, and a share in the likeness of Him

who on this day made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a slave.

VI.

TRUE ABSTINENCE

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.—1
Cor. ix. 27.

In the Collect for this day we have just been praying to God, to give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to our spirit, we may follow His godly motions.

Now we ought to have meant something when we said these words. What did we mean by them? Perhaps some of us did not understand them. They could not be expected to mean anything by them. But it is a sad thing, a very sad thing, that people will come to church Sunday after Sunday, and repeat by rote words which they do not understand, words by which they therefore mean nothing, and yet never care or try to understand them.

What are the words there for, except to be understood? All of you call people foolish, who submit to have prayers read in their churches in a foreign language, which none, at least of the poor, can understand. But what right have you to call them foolish, if you, whose Prayer-books are written in English, take no trouble

to find out the meaning of them? Would to Heaven that you would try to find out the meaning of the Prayer-book! Would to Heaven that the day would come, when anyone in this parish who was puzzled by any doctrine of religion, or by any text in the Bible, or word in the Prayer-book, would come confidently to me, and ask me to explain it to him! God knows, I should think it an honour and a pleasure, as well as a duty. I should think no time better spent than in answering your questions. I do beseech you to ask me, every one of you, when and where you like, any questions about religion which come into your minds.

Why am I put in this parish, except to teach you? and how can I teach you better, than by answering your questions? As it is, I am disheartened, and all but hopeless, at times, about the state of this parish, and the work I am trying to do here; because, though you will come and hear me, thank God, willingly enough, you do not seem yet to have gained confidence enough in me, or to have learnt to care sufficiently about the best things, to ask questions of me about them. My dear friends, if you wanted to get information about anything you really cared for, you would ask questions enough. If you wanted to know some way to a place on earth you would ask it; why not ask your way to things better than this earth can give? But whether or not you will question me I must go on preaching to you, though whether or not you care to listen is more, alas! than I can tell.

But listen to me, now, I beseech you, while I try to explain to you the meaning of the words which you have been just using

in this Collect. You have asked God to give you grace to use abstinence. Now what is the meaning of abstinence? Abstinence means abstaining, refraining, keeping back of your own will from doing something which you might do. Take an example. When a man for his health's sake, or his purse's sake, or any other good reason, drinks less liquor than he might if he chose, he abstains from liquor. He uses abstinence about liquor. There are other things in which a man may abstain. Indeed, he may abstain from doing anything he likes. He may abstain from eating too much; from lying in bed too long; from reading too much; from taking too much pleasure; from making money; from spending money; from right things; from wrong things; from things which are neither right nor wrong; on all these he may use abstinence.

He may abstain for many reasons; for good ones, or for bad ones. A miser will abstain from all sorts of comforts to hoard up money. A superstitious man may abstain from comforts, because he thinks God grudges them to him, or because he thinks God is pleased by the unhappiness of His creatures, or because he has been taught, poor wretch, that if he makes himself uncomfortable in this life, he shall have more comfort, more honour, more reason for pride and self-glorification, in the life to come. Or a man may abstain from one pleasure, just to be able to enjoy another all the more; as some great gamblers drink nothing but water, in order to keep their heads clear for cheating. All these are poor reasons; some of them base, some of them wicked reasons for abstaining from anything. Therefore, abstinence is

not a good thing in itself; for if a thing is good in itself, it can never be wrong. Love is good in itself, and, therefore, you cannot love anyone for a bad reason. Justice is good in itself, pity is good in itself, and, therefore, you can never be wrong in being just or pitiful.

But abstinence is not a good thing in itself. If it were, we should all be bound to abstain always from everything pleasant, and make ourselves as miserable and uncomfortable as possible, as some superstitious persons used to do in old times. Abstinence is only good when it is used for a good reason. If a man abstains from pleasure himself, to save up for his children; if he abstains from over eating and over drinking, to keep his mind clear and quiet; if he abstains from sleep and ease, in order to have time to see his business properly done; if he abstains from spending money on himself, in order to spend it for others; if he abstains from any habit, however harmless or pleasant, because he finds it lead him towards what is wrong, and put him into temptation; then he does right; then he is doing God's work; then he may expect God's blessing; then he is trying to do what we all prayed God to help us to do, when we said, "Give us grace to use such abstinence;" then he is doing, more or less, what St. Paul says he did, "Keeping his body under, and bringing it into subjection."

For, see, the Collect does not say, "Give us grace to use abstinence," as if abstinence were a good thing in itself, but "to use such abstinence, that"—to use a certain kind of abstinence, and that for a certain purpose, and that purpose a good one;

such abstinence that our flesh may be subdued to our spirit; that our flesh, the animal, bodily nature which is in us, loving ease and pleasure, may not be our master, but our servant; so that we may not follow blindly our own appetites, and do just what we like, as brute beasts which have no understanding. And our flesh is to be subdued to our spirit for a certain purpose; not because our flesh is bad, and our spirit good; not in order that we may puff ourselves up and admire ourselves, and say, as the philosophers among the heathen used, “What a strong-minded, sober, self-restraining man I am! How fine it is to be able to look down on my neighbours, who cannot help being fond of enjoying themselves, and cannot help caring for this world’s good things.

I am above all that. I want nothing, and I feel nothing, and nothing can make me glad or sorry. I am master of my own mind, and own no law but my own will.” The Collect gives us the true and only reason, for which it is right to subdue our appetites; which is, that we may keep our minds clear and strong enough to listen to the voice of God within our hearts and reasons; to obey the motions of God’s Spirit in us; not to make our bodies our masters, but to live as God’s servants.

This is St. Paul’s meaning, when he speaks of keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection. The exact word which he uses, however, is a much stronger one than merely “keeping under;” it means simply, to beat a man’s face black and blue; and his reason for using such a strong word about the matter is, to show us that he thought no labour too hard, no training too

sharp, which teaches us how to restrain ourselves, and keep our appetites and passions in manful and godly control.

Now, a few verses before my text, St. Paul takes an example from foot-racers. "These foot-racers," he says, "heathens though they are, and only trying to win a worthless prize, the petty honour of a crown of leaves, see what trouble they take; how they exercise their limbs; how careful and temperate they are in eating and drinking, how much pain and fatigue they go through to get themselves into perfect training for a race. How much more trouble ought we to take to make ourselves fit to do God's work? For these foot-racers do all this only to gain a garland which will wither in a week; but we, to gain a garland which will never fade away; a garland of holiness, and righteousness, and purity, and the likeness of Jesus Christ."

The next example of abstinence which St. Paul takes, is from the prize-fighters, who were very numerous and very famous, in the country in which the Corinthians lived. "I fight," he says, "not like one who beats the air;" that is, not like a man who is only brandishing his hands and sparring in jest, but like a man who knows that he has a fight to fight in hard earnest; a terrible lifelong fight against sin, the world, and the devil; "and, therefore," he says, "I do as these fighters do." They, poor savage and brutal heathens as they are, go through a long and painful training. Their very practice is not play; it is grim earnest. They stand up to strike, and be struck, and are bruised and disfigured as a matter of course, in order that they may learn not to flinch

from pain, or lose their tempers, or turn cowards, when they have to fight. “And so do I,” says St. Paul; “they, poor men, submit to painful and disagreeable things to make them brave in their paltry battles. I submit to painful and disagreeable things, to make me brave in the great battle which I have to fight against sin, and ignorance, and heathendom.” “Therefore,” he says, in another place, “I take pleasure in afflictions, in persecutions, in necessities, in distresses;” and that not because those things were pleasant, they were just as unpleasant to him as to anyone else; but because they taught him to bear, taught him to be brave; taught him, in short, to become a perfect man of God.

This is St. Paul’s account of his own training: in the Epistle for to-day we have another account of it; a description of the life which he led, and which he was content to lead—“in much suffering, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watching, in fastings”—and an account, too, of the temper which he had learnt to show amid such a life of vexation, and suffering, and shame, and danger—“approving himself in all things the minister of God, by pureness, by wisdom, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the spirit of holiness, by love unfeigned;” “as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.”—In all things proving himself a true messenger from God, by being able to dare and to endure for God’s sake, what no man ever would have dared and endured for his own sake.

“But”—someone may say—“St. Paul was an apostle; he had a great work to do in the world; he had to turn the heathen to God; and it is likely enough that he required to train himself, and keep strict watch over all his habits, and ways of thinking and behaving, lest he should grow selfish, lazy, cowardly, covetous, fond of ease and amusement. He had, of course, to lead a life of strange suffering and danger; and he had therefore to train himself for it. But what need have we to do as St. Paul did?”

Just as much need, my good friends, if you could see it.

Which of us has not to lead a life of suffering? We shall each and all of us, have our full share of trouble before we die, doubt it not.

And which of us has not to lead a life of danger? I do not mean bodily danger; of that, there is little enough—perhaps too little—in England now; but of danger to our hearts, minds, characters?

Oh, my friends, I pity those who do not think themselves in danger every day of their lives, for the less danger they see around them, the more danger there is. There is not only the common danger of temptation, but over and above it, the worse danger of not knowing temptation when it comes. Who will be most likely to walk into pits and mires upon the moor—the man who knows that they are there around him, or the man who goes on careless and light of heart, fancying that it is all smooth ground?

Woe to you, young people, if you fancy that you are to have no woe! Danger to you, young people, if you fancy yourselves in no danger!

“This is sad and dreary news”—some of you may say. Ay, my friends, it would be sad and dreary news indeed; and this earth would be a very sad and dreary place; and life with all its troubles and temptations, would not be worth having, if it were not for the blessed news which the Gospel for this day brings us.

That makes up for all the sadness of the Epistle; that gives us hope; that tells us of one who has been through life, and through death too, yet without sin. That tells us of one who has endured a thousand times more temptation than we ever shall, a thousand times more trouble than we ever shall, and yet has conquered it all; and that He who has thus been through all our temptations, borne all our weaknesses, is our King, our Saviour, who loves us, who teaches us, who has promised us His Holy Spirit, to make us like Himself, strong, brave, and patient, to endure all that man or devil, or our own low animal tempers and lusts, can do to hurt us.

The Gospel for this day tells us how He went and was alone in the wilderness with the wild beasts, and yet trusted in God, His Father and ours, to keep Him safe. How He went without food forty days and nights, and yet in His extreme hunger, refused to do the least self-willed or selfish thing to get Himself food.

Is that no lesson, no message of hope for the poor man who is tempted by hunger to steal, or tempted by need to do a mean and selfish thing, to hear that the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore need and hunger far worse than his, understands all his temptations, and feels for him, and pities him, and has promised him God’s Spirit to make him strong, as He himself was?

Is it no comfort to young people who are tempted to vanity, and display, and self-willed conceited longings, tempted to despise the advice of their parents and elders, and set up for themselves, and choose their own way—Is it no good news, I say, for them to hear that their Lord and Saviour was tempted to it also, and conquered it?—That He will teach them to answer the temptation as He did, when He refused even to let angels hold Him over the temple, up between earth and heaven, for a sign and a wonder to all the Jews, because God His Father had not bidden Him to do it, and therefore He would not tempt the Lord His God?

Is it no good news, again, to those who are tempted to do perhaps one little outward wrong thing, to yield on some small point to the ways of the world, in order to help themselves on in life, to hear that their Lord and Saviour conquered that temptation too?—That he refused all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, when the devil offered them, because he knew that the devil could not give them to Him; that all wealth, and power, and glory belonged to God, and was to be got only by serving Him?

Oh do you all, young people especially, think of this. As you grow up and go out into life, you will be tempted in a hundred different ways, by things which are pleasant—everyone knows that they are pleasant enough—but wrong. One will be tempted to be vain of dress; another to be self-conceited; another to be lazy and idle; another to be extravagant and roving; another to

be over fond of amusement; another to be over fond of money; another to be over fond of liquor; another to go wrong, as too many young men and young women do, and bring themselves, and those with whom they keep company, and whom they ought, if they really love them, to respect and honour, down into sin and shame. You will all be tempted, and you will all be troubled; one by poverty, one by sickness, one by the burden of a family, one by being laughed at for trying to do right. But remember, oh remember, whenever a temptation comes upon you, that the blessed Jesus has been through it all, and conquered all, and that His will is, that you shall be holy and pure like Him, and that, therefore, if you but ask Him, He will give you strength to keep pure. When you are tempted, pray to Him: the struggle in your own minds will, no doubt, be very great; it will be very hard work for you—sin looks so pleasant on the outside! Poor souls, it is a sad struggle for you! Many a poor young fellow, who goes wrong, deserves rather to be pitied than to be punished. Well then, if no man else will pity him, Jesus, the Man of all men, will.

Pray to Him! Cry aloud to Him! Ask Him to make you stout-hearted, patient, really manful, to fight against temptation. Ask Him to give you strength of mind to fight against all bad habits.

Ask Him to open your eyes to see when you are in danger. Ask Him to help you to keep out of the way of temptation. Ask Him, in short, to give you grace to use such abstinence that your flesh may be subdued to your spirit. And then you will not follow, as the beasts do, just what seems pleasant to your flesh; no, you will

be able to obey Christ's godly motions, that is, to do, as well as to love, the good desires which He puts into your hearts. You will do not merely what is pleasant, but what is right; you will not be your own slaves, you will be your own masters, and God's loyal and obedient sons; you will not be, as too many are, mere animals going about in the shape of men, but truly men at heart, who are not afraid of pain, poverty, shame, trouble, or death itself, when they are in the right path, about the work to which God has called them.

But if you ask Christ to make true men and women of you, you must believe that He will give you what you ask; if you ask Him to help you, you must believe that He will and does help you—you must believe that it is He Himself who has put into your hearts the very desire of being holy and strong at all; and therefore you must believe that you can help yourselves. Help yourselves, and He will help you. If you ask for His help, He will give it. But what is the use of His giving it, if you do not use it?

To him who has shall be given, and he shall have more; but from him who has not shall be taken away even what he seems to have.

Therefore do not merely pray, but struggle and try *yourselves*.

Train yourselves as St. Paul did; train yourselves to keep your temper; train yourselves to bear unpleasant things for the sake of your duty; train yourselves to keep out of temptation; train yourselves to be forgiving, gentle, thrifty, industrious, sober, temperate, cleanly, as modest as little children in your words, and thoughts, and conduct. And God, when He sees you trying to

be all this, will help you to be so. It may be hard to educate yourselves. Life is a hard business at best—you will find it a thousand times harder, though, if you are slaves to your own fleshly sins. But the more you struggle against sin, the less hard you will find it to fight; the more you resist the devil, the more he will flee from you; the more you try to conquer your own bad passions, the more God will help you to conquer them; it may be a hard battle, but it is a sure one. No fear but that everyone can, if he will, work out his own salvation, for it is God Himself who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. All you have to do is to give yourselves up to Him, to study His laws, to labour as well as long to keep them, and He will enable you to keep them; He will teach you in a thousand unexpected ways; He will daily renew and strengthen your hearts by the working of His Spirit, that you may more and more know, and love, and do, what is right; and you will go on from strength to strength, to the height of perfect men, to the likeness of Jesus Christ the Lord, who conquered all human temptations for your sake, that He might be a high-priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

VII.

GOOD FRIDAY

In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.—Isaiah lxiii. 9.

On this very day, at this very hour, 1817 years ago, hung one nailed to a cross; bruised and bleeding, pierced and naked, dying a felon's death between two thieves; in perfect misery, in utter shame, mocked and insulted by all the great, the rich, the learned of His nation; one who had grown up as a man of low birth, believed by all to be a carpenter's son; without scholarship, money, respectability; even without a home wherein to lay His head—and here was the end of His life! True, He had preached noble words, He had done noble deeds: but what had they helped Him? They had not made the rich, the learned, the respectable, the religious believe on Him; they had not saved Him from persecution, and insult, and death. The only mourners who stood by to weep over His dying agonies were His mother, a poor countrywoman; a young fisherman; and one who had been a harlot and a sinner. There was an end!

Do you know who that Man was? He was your King; the King of rich and poor; and He was your King, not in spite of His

suffering all that shame and misery, but just because He suffered it; because He chose to be poor, and miserable, and despised; because He endured the cross, despising the shame; because He took upon Himself to fulfil His Father's will, all ills which flesh is heir to—therefore He is now your King, the Saviour of the world, the poor man's friend, the Lord of heaven and earth. Is He such a King as *you* wish for?

Is He the sort of King you want, my friends? Does He fulfil your notions of what the poor man's friend should be? Do you, in your hearts, wish He had been somewhat richer, more glorious, more successful in the world's eyes—a wealthy and prosperous man, like Solomon of old? Are any of you ready to say, as the money-blinded Jews said, when they demanded their true King to be crucified, “We have no king but Cæsar?—Provided the law-makers and the authorities take care of our interests, and protect our property, and do not make us pay too many rates and taxes, that is enough for us.” Will you have no king but Cæsar? Alas! those who say that, find that the law is but a weak deliverer, too weak to protect them from selfishness, and covetousness, and decent cruelty; and so Cæsar and the law have to give place to Mammon, the god of money. Do we not see it in these very days? And Mammon is weak, too. This world is not a shop, men are not merely money-makers and wages-earners. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in that sort of philosophy. Self-interest and covetousness cannot keep society orderly and peaceful, let sham philosophers say what they will.

And then comes tyranny, lawlessness, rich and poor staining their hands in each other's blood, as we saw happen in France two years ago; and so, after all, Mammon has to give place to Moloch, the fiend of murder and cruelty; and woe to rich and poor when he reigns over them! Ay, woe—woe to rich and poor when they choose anyone for their king but their real and rightful Lord and Master, Jesus, the poor man, afflicted in all their afflictions, the Man of sorrows, crucified on this day.

Is He the kind of King you like? Make up your minds, my friends—make up your minds! For whether you like Him or not, your King He was, your King He is, your King He will be, blessed be God, for ever. Blessed be God, indeed! If He were not our King; if anyone in heaven or earth was Lord of us, except the Man of sorrows, the Prince of sufferers, what hope, what comfort would there be? What a horrible, black, fathomless riddle this sad, diseased, moaning world would be! No king would suit us but the Prince of sufferers—Jesus, who has borne all this world's griefs, and carried all its sorrows—Jesus, who has Himself smarted under pain and hunger, oppression and insult, treachery and desertion, who knows them all, feels for them all, and will right them all, in His own good time.

Believing in Jesus, we can travel on, through one wild parish after another, upon English soil, and see, as I have done, the labourer who tills the land worse housed than the horse he drives, worse clothed than the sheep he shears, worse nourished than the hog he feeds—and yet not despair: for the Prince of

sufferers is the labourer's Saviour; He has tasted hunger, and thirst, and weariness, poverty, oppression, and neglect; the very tramp who wanders houseless on the moorside is His brother; in his sufferings the Saviour of the world has shared, when the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, while the Son of God had not where to lay His head. He is the King of the poor, firstborn among many brethren; His tenderness is Almighty, and for the poor He has prepared deliverance, perhaps in this world, surely in the world to come—boundless deliverance, out of the treasures of His boundless love.

Believing in Jesus, we can pass by mines, and factories, and by dungeons darker and fouler still, in the lanes and alleys of our great towns and cities, where thousands and tens of thousands of starving men, and wan women, and children grown old before their youth, sit toiling and pining in Mammon's prison-house, in worse than Egyptian bondage, to earn such pay as just keeps the broken heart within the worn-out body;—ay, we can go through our great cities, even now, and see the women, whom God intended to be Christian wives and mothers, the slaves of the rich man's greed by day, the playthings of his lust by night—and yet not despair; for we can cry, No! thou proud Mammon, money-making fiend! These are not thine, but Christ's; they belong to Him who died on the cross; and though thou heedest not their sighs, He marks them all, for He has sighed like them; though there be no pity in thee, there is in Him the pity of a man, ay, and the indignation of a God! He treasures up

their tears; He understands their sorrows; His judgment of their guilt is not like thine, thou Pharisee! He is their Lord, who said, that to those to whom little was given, of them shall little be required. Generation after generation, they are being made perfect by sufferings, as their Saviour was before them; and then, woe to thee! For even as He led Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm, and signs and wonders, great and terrible, so shall He lead the poor out of their misery, and make them households like a flock of sheep; even as He led Israel through the wilderness, tender, forbearing, knowing whereof they were made, having mercy on all their brutalities, and idolatries, murmurings, and backslidings, afflicted in all their afflictions—even while He was punishing them outwardly, as He is punishing the poor man now—even so shall He lead this people out in His good time, into a good land and large, a land of wheat and wine, of milk and honey; a rest which He has prepared for His poor, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. He can do it; for the Almighty Deliverer is His name. He will do it; for His name is Love. He knows how to do it; for He has borne the griefs, and carried the sorrows of the poor.

Oh, sad hearts and suffering! Anxious and weary ones! Look to the cross this day! There hung your king! The King of sorrowing souls, and more, the King of sorrows. Ay, pain and grief, tyranny and desertion, death and hell, He has faced them one and all, and tried their strength, and taught them His, and

conquered them right royally! And, since He hung upon that torturing cross, sorrow is divine, god-like, as joy itself. All that man's fallen nature dreads and despises, God honoured on the cross, and took unto Himself, and blessed, and consecrated for ever. And now, blessed are the poor, if they are poor in heart, as well as purse; for Jesus was poor, and theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the hungry, if they hunger for righteousness as well as food; for Jesus hungered, and they shall be filled.

Blessed are those who mourn, if they mourn not only for their afflictions, but for their sins, and for the sins they see around them; for on this day, Jesus mourned for our sins; on this day He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; and they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who are ashamed of themselves, and hate themselves, and humble themselves before God this day; for on this day Jesus humbled Himself for us; and they shall be exalted. Blessed are the forsaken and the despised.—Did not all men forsake Jesus this day, in His hour of need? and why not thee, too, thou poor deserted one? Shall the disciple be above his Master? No; everyone that is perfect, must be like his master.

The deeper, the bitterer your loneliness, the more are you like Him, who cried upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He knows what that grief, too, is like. He feels for thee, at least. Though all forsake thee, He is with thee still; and if He be with thee, what matter who has left thee for a while? Ay, blessed are those that weep now, for they shall laugh. It is those whom the Lord loveth that He chasteneth. And

because He loves the poor, He brings them low. All things are blessed now, but sin; for all things, excepting sin, are redeemed by the life and death of the Son of God. Blessed are wisdom and courage, joy, and health, and beauty, love and marriage, childhood and manhood, corn and wine, fruits and flowers, for Christ redeemed them by His life. And blessed, too, are tears and shame, blessed are weakness and ugliness, blessed are agony and sickness, blessed the sad remembrance of our sins, and a broken heart, and a repentant spirit. Blessed is death, and blessed the unknown realms, where souls await the resurrection day, for Christ redeemed them by His death. Blessed are all things, weak, as well as strong. Blessed are all days, dark, as well as bright, for all are His, and He is ours; and all are ours, and we are His, for ever.

Therefore sigh on, ye sad ones, and rejoice in your own sadness; ache on, ye suffering ones, and rejoice in your own sorrows. Rejoice that you are made free of the holy brotherhood of mourners, that you may claim your place, too, if you will, among the noble army of martyrs. Rejoice that you are counted worthy of a fellowship in the sufferings of the Son of God.

Rejoice and trust on, for after sorrow shall come joy. Trust on; for in man's weakness God's strength shall be made perfect.

Trust on, for death is the gate of life. Endure on to the end, and possess your souls in patience for a little while, and that, perhaps, a very little while. Death comes swiftly; and more swiftly still, perhaps, the day of the Lord. The deeper the sorrow, the nearer

the salvation:

The night is darkest before the dawn;
When the pain is sorest the child is born;
And the day of the Lord is at hand.

Ay, if the worst should come; if neither the laws of your country nor the benevolence of the righteous were strong enough to defend you; if one charitable plan after another were to fail; if the labour-market were getting fuller and fuller, and poverty were spreading wider and wider, and crime and misery were breeding faster and still faster every year than education and religion; all hope for the poor seemed gone and lost, and they were ready to believe the men who tell them that the land is over-peopled—that there are too many of us, too many industrious hands, too many cunning brains, too many immortal souls, too many of God's children upon God's earth, which God the Father made, and God the Son redeemed, and God the Holy Spirit teaches: then the Lord, the Prince of sufferers, He who knows your every grief, and weeps with you tear for tear, He would come out of His place to smite the haughty ones, and confound the cunning ones, and silence the loud ones, and empty the full ones; to judge with righteousness for the meek of the earth, to hearken to the prayer of the poor, whose heart he has been preparing, and to help the fatherless and needy to their right, that the man of the world may be no more exalted against them.

In that day men will find out a wonder and miracle. They will

see many that are first last, and many that are last first. They will find that there were poor who were the richest after all; the simple who were wisest, and gentle who were bravest, and weak who were strongest; that God's ways are not as men's ways, nor God's thoughts as men's thoughts. Alas, who shall stand when God does this? At least He who will do it is Jesus, who loved us to the death; boundless love and gentleness, boundless generosity and pity; who was tempted even as we are, who has felt our every weakness. In that thought is utter comfort, that our Judge will be He who died and rose again, and is praying for us even now, to His Father and our Father. Therefore fear not, gentle souls, patient souls, pure consciences and tender hearts. Fear not, you who are empty and hungry, who walk in darkness and see no light; for though He fulfil once more, as He has again and again, the awful prophecy before the text; though He tread down the people in His anger, and make them drunk in His fury, and bring their strength to the earth; though kings with their armies may flee, and the stars which light the earth may fall, and there be great tribulation, wars, and rumours of wars, and on earth distress of nations with perplexity—yet it is when the day of His vengeance is at hand, that the year of His redeemed is come.

And when they see all these things, let them rejoice and lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh.

Do you ask how I know this? Do you ask for a sign, for a token that these my words are true? I know that they are true.

But, as for tokens, I will give you but this one, the sign of that

bread and that wine. When the Lord shall have delivered His people out of all their sorrows, they shall eat of that bread and drink of that wine, one and all, in the kingdom of God.

VIII.

EASTER-DAY

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.—
Colossians iii. 1.

I know no better way of preaching to you the gospel of Easter, the good news which this day brings to all men, year after year, than by trying to explain to you the Epistle appointed for this day, which we have just read.

It begins, “If ye then be risen with Christ.” Now that does not mean that St. Paul had any doubt whether the Colossians, to whom he was speaking, were risen with Christ or not. He does not mean, “I am not sure whether you are risen or not; but perhaps you are not; but if you are, you ought to do such and such things.” He does not mean that. He was quite sure that these Colossians were risen with Christ. He had no doubt of it whatsoever. If you look at the chapter before, he says so. He tells them that they were buried with Christ in baptism, in which also they were risen with Christ, through faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead.

Now what reason had St. Paul to believe that these Colossians were risen with Jesus Christ? Because they had given up sin and were leading holy lives? That cannot be. The Epistle for

this day says the very opposite. It does not say, "You are risen, because you have left off sinning." It says, "You must leave off sinning, because you are risen." Was it then on account of any experiences, or inward feeling of theirs? Not at all. He says that these Colossians had been baptized, and that they had believed in God's work of raising Jesus Christ from the dead, and that therefore they were risen with Christ. In one word, they had believed the message of Easter-day, and therefore they shared in the blessings of Easter-day; as it is written in another place, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in thy heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now these seem very wide words, too wide to please most people. But there are wider words still in St. Paul's epistles. He tells us again and again that God's mercy is a free gift; that He has made to us a free present of His Son Jesus Christ. That He has taken away the effect of all men's sin, and more than that, that men are God's children; that they have a right to believe that they are so, because they are so. For, He says, the free gift of Jesus Christ is not like Adam's offence. It is not less than it, narrower than it, as some folks say. It is not that by Adam's sin all became sinners, and by Jesus Christ's salvation an elect few out of them shall be made righteous. If you will think a moment, you will see that it cannot be so. For Jesus Christ conquered sin and death and the devil. But if, as some think, sin and death and the devil have destroyed and sent to hell by far the greater part of mankind,

then they have conquered Christ, and not Christ them. Mankind belonged to Christ at first. Sin and death and the devil came in and ruined them, and then Christ came to redeem them; but if all that He has been able to do is to redeem one out of a thousand, or even nine out of ten, of them, then the devil has had the best of the battle. He, and not Christ, is the conqueror. If a thief steals all the sheep on your farm, and all that you can get back from him is a part of the whole flock, which has had the best of it, you or the thief? If Christ's redemption is meant for only a few, or even a great many elect souls out of all the millions of mankind, which has had the best of it, Christ, the master of the sheep, or the devil, the robber and destroyer of them? Be sure, my friends, Christ is stronger than that; His love is deeper than that; His redemption is wider than that. How strong, how deep, how wide it is, we never shall know. St. Paul tells us that we never shall know, for it is boundless; but that we shall go on knowing more and more of its vastness for ever, finding it deeper, wider, loftier than our most glorious dreams could ever picture it. But this, he says, we do know, that we have gained more than Adam lost. For if by one man's offence many were made sinners, much more shall they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life by one even Jesus Christ. For, he says, where sin abounded, God's grace and free gift has much more abounded. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. Upon

all men, you see. There can be no doubt about it. Upon you and me, and foreigners, and gipsies, and heathens, and thieves, and harlots—upon all mankind, let them be as bad or as good, as young or as old, as they may, the free gift of God has come to justification of life; they are justified, pardoned, and beloved in the sight of Almighty God; they have a right and a share to a new life; a different sort of life from what they are inclined to lead, and do lead, by nature—to a life which death cannot take away, a life which may grow, and strengthen, and widen, and blossom, and bear fruit for ever and ever. They have a share in Christ's resurrection, in the blessing of Easter-day. They have a share in Christ, every one of them whether they claim that share or not. How far they will be punished for not claiming it, is a very different matter, of which we know nothing whatsoever. And how far the heathen who have never heard of Christ, or of their share in Him, will be punished, we know not—we are not meant to know. But we know that to their own Master they stand or fall, and that their Master is our Master too, and that He is a just Master, and requires little of him to whom He gives little; a just and merciful Master, who loved this sinful world enough to come down and die for it, while mankind were all rebels and sinners, and has gone on taking care of it, and improving it, in spite of all its sin and rebellion ever since, and that is enough for us.

St. Paul knew no more. It was a mystery, he says, a wonderful and unfathomable matter, which had been hidden since the foundation of the world, of which he himself says that he saw

only through a glass darkly; and we cannot expect to have clearer eyes than he. But this he seems to have seen, that the Lord, when He rose again, bought a blessing even for the dumb beasts and the earth on which we live. For he says, the whole creation is now groaning in the pangs of labour, being about to bring forth something; and the whole creation will rise again; how, and when, and into what new state, we cannot tell. But St. Paul seems to say that when the Lord shall destroy death, the last of his enemies, then the whole creation shall be renewed, and bring forth another earth, nobler and more beautiful than this one, free from death, and sin, and sorrow, and redeemed into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But this, on the other hand, St. Paul did see most clearly, and preached it to all to whom he spoke, that the ground and reason of this great and glorious mystery was the thing which happened on the first Easter-day, namely, the Lord Jesus rising from the dead. About that, at least, there was no doubt at all in his mind. We may see it by the Easter anthem, which we read this morning, taken out of the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians:

“Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Now he is not talking here merely of the rising again of our bodies at the last day. That was in his mind only the end, and outcome, and fruit, and perfecting, of men's rising from the dead in this life. For he tells these same Corinthians, and the Colossians, and others to whom he wrote, that life, the eternal life which would raise their bodies at the last day, was even then working in them.

Neither is he speaking only of a few believers. He says that, owing to the Lord's rising on this day, all shall be made alive—not merely all Christians, but all men. For he does not say, as in Adam all Christians die, but all men; and so he does not say, all Christians shall be made alive, but all men. For here, as in the sixth chapter of Romans, he is trying to make us understand the likeness between Adam and Jesus Christ, whom he calls the new Adam. The first Adam, he says, was only a living soul, as the savages and heathens are; but the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the true pattern of men, is a quickening, life-giving spirit, to give eternal life to every human being who will accept His offer, and claim his share and right as a true man, after the likeness of the new Adam, Jesus Christ.

We then, every one of us who is here to-day, have a right to believe that we have a share in Christ's eternal life: that our original sin, that is, the sinfulness which we inherited from our forefathers, is all forgiven and forgotten, and that mankind is now redeemed, and belongs to the second Adam, the true and original head and pattern of man, Jesus Christ, in whom was no sin; and

that because mankind belongs to him, God is well pleased with them, and reconciled to them, and looks on them not as a guilty, but as a pardoned and beloved race of beings.

And we have a right to believe also, that because all power is given to Christ in heaven and earth, there is given to Him the power of making men what they ought to be—like His own blessed, and glorious, and perfect self. Ask him, and you shall receive; knock at the gate of His treasure-house, and it shall be opened. Seek those things that are above, and you shall find them. You shall find old bad habits die out in you, new good habits spring up in you; old meannesses become weaker, new nobleness and manfulness become stronger; the old, selfish, covetous, savage, cunning, cowardly, brutal Adam dying out, the new, loving, brotherly, civilised, wise, brave, manful Adam growing up in you, day by day, to perfection, till you are changed from grace to grace, and glory to glory into the likeness of the Lord of men.

“These are great promises,” you may say, “glorious promises; but what proof have you that they belong to us? They sound too good to be true; too great for such poor creatures as we are; give us but some proof that we have a right to them; give us but a pledge from Jesus Christ; give us but a sign, an assurance from God, and we may believe you then.”

My friends, I am certain—and the longer I live I am the more certain—that there is no argument, no pledge, no sign, no assurance, like the bread and the wine upon that table.

Assurances in our own hearts and souls are good, but we may be mistaken about them; for, after all, they are our own thoughts, notions in our own souls, these inward experiences and assurances; delightful and comforting as they are at times, yet we cannot trust them—we cannot trust our own hearts, they are deceitful above all things, who can know them? Yes: our own hearts may tell us lies; they may make us fancy that we are pleasing God, when we are doing the things most hateful to Him.

They have made thousands fancy so already. They may make us fancy we are right in God's sight, when we are utterly wrong.

They have made thousands fancy so already. These hearts of ours may make us fancy that we have spiritual life in us; that we are in a state higher and nobler than the sinners round us, when all the while our spirits are dead within us. They made the Pharisees of old fancy that their souls were alive, and pure, and religious, when they were dead and damned within them; and they may make us fancy so too. No: we cannot trust our hearts and inward feelings; but that bread, that wine, we can trust. Our inward feelings are a sign from man; that bread and wine are a sign from God. Our inward feelings may tell us what we feel toward God: that bread, that wine, tell us something ten thousand times more important; they tell us what God feels towards us. And God must love us before we can love Him; God must pardon us before we can have mercy on ourselves; God must come to us, and take hold of us, before we can cling to Him; God must change us, before we can become right; God must give us eternal

life in our hearts before we can feel and enjoy that new life in us.

Then that bread, that wine, say that God has done all that for us already; they say: "God does love you; God has pardoned you; God has come to you; God is ready and willing to change and convert you; God has given you eternal life; and this love, this mercy, this coming to find you out while you are wandering in sin, this change, this eternal life, are all in His Son Jesus Christ; and that bread, that wine, are the signs of it." It is for the sake of Jesus' blood that God has pardoned you, and that cup is the new covenant in His blood. Come and drink, and claim your pardon. It is simply because Jesus Christ was man, and you, too, are men and women, wearing the flesh and blood which Christ wore; eating and drinking as Christ ate and drank, and not for any works or faith of your own, that God loves you, and has come to you, and called you into His family. This is the Gospel, the good news of Christ's free grace, and pardon, and salvation; and that bread, that wine, the common food of all men, not merely of the rich, or the wise, or the pious, but of saints and penitents, rich and poor. Christians and heathens, alike—that plain, common, every-day bread and wine—are the signs of it. Come and take the signs, and claim your share in God's love, in God's family.

And it is in Jesus Christ, too, that you have eternal life. It is because you belong to Jesus Christ, to mankind, of which He is the head and king, that God will change you, strengthen your soul to rise above your sins, raise you up daily more and more out of spiritual death, out of brutishness, and selfishness, and

ignorance, and malice, into an eternal life of wisdom, and love, and courage, and mercifulness, and patience, and obedience; a life which shall continue through death, and beyond death, and raise you up again for ever at the last day, because you belong to Christ's body, and have been fed with Christ's eternal life. And that bread, that wine are the signs of it. "Take, eat," said Jesus, "this is my body; drink, this is my blood." Those are the signs that God has given you eternal life, and that this life is in His Son. What better sign would you have? There is no mistaking their message; they can tell you no lies. And they can, and will, bring your own Gospel-blessings to your mind, as nothing else can. They will make you feel, as nothing else can, that you are the beloved children of God, heirs of all that your King and Head has bought for you, when He died, and rose again upon this day.

He gave you the Lord's Supper for a sign. Do you think that He did not know best what the best sign would be? He said: "Do this in remembrance of me." Do you think that He did not know better than you, and me, and all men, that if you did do it, it would put you in remembrance of Him?

Oh! come to His table, this day of all days in the year; and claim there your share in His body and His blood, to feed the everlasting life in you; which, though you see it not now, though you feel it not now, will surely, if you keep it alive in you by daily faith, and daily repentance, and daily prayer, and daily obedience, raise you up, body and soul, to reign with Him for ever at the last day.

IX.

THE COMFORTER

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.—John xvi. 7.

We are now coming near to two great days, Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday, which our forefathers have appointed, year by year, to put us continually in mind of two great works, which the Lord worked out for us, His most unworthy subjects, and still unworthier brothers.

On Ascension-day He ascended up into Heaven, and received gifts for men, even for His enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them; and on Whit-Sunday, He sent down those gifts. The Spirit of God came down to dwell in the hearts of men, to be the right of everyone who asks for it, white or black, young or old, rich or poor, and never to leave this earth as long as there is a human being on it. And because we are coming near to these two great days, the Prayer-book, in the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, tries to put us in mind of those days, and to make us ready to ask for the blessings of which they are the

yearly signs and witnesses. The Gospel for last Sunday told us how the Lord told His disciples just before His death, that for a little while they should not see Him; and again a little while and they should see Him, because he was going to the Father, and that they should have great sorrow, but that their sorrow should be turned into joy. And the Gospel for to-day goes further still, and tells us why He was going away—that He might send to them the Comforter, His Holy Spirit, and that it was expedient—good for them, that He should go away; for that if He did not, the Comforter would not come to them. Now, in these words, I do not doubt He was speaking of Ascension-day, and of Whit-Sunday; and therefore it is that these Gospels have been chosen to be read before Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday; and in proportion as we attend to these Gospels, and take in the meaning of them, and act accordingly, Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday will be a blessing and a profit to us; and in proportion as we neglect them, or forget them, Ascension-day and Whit-Sunday will be witnesses against our souls at the day of judgment, that the Lord Himself condescended to buy for us with His own blood, blessings unspeakable, and offer them freely unto us, in spite of all our sins, and yet we would have none of them, but preferred our own will to God's will, and the little which we thought we could get for ourselves, to the unspeakable treasures which God had promised to give us, and turned away from the blessings of His kingdom, to our own foolish pleasure and covetousness, like “the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her

wallowing in the mire.”

I said that God had promised to us an unspeakable treasure: and so He has; a treasure that will make the poorest and weakest man among us, richer than if he had all the wealth gathered from all the nations of the world, which everyone is admiring now in that Great Exhibition in London, and stronger than if he had all the wisdom which produced that wealth. Let us see now what it is that God has promised us—and then those to whom God has given ears to hear, and hearts to understand, will see that large as my words may sound, they are no larger than the truth.

Christ said, that if He went away, He would send down the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God. The Nicene Creed says, that the Holy Spirit of God is the Lord and Giver of life; and so He is. He gives life to the earth, to the trees, to the flowers, to the dumb animals, to the bodies and minds of men; all life, all growth, all health, all strength, all beauty, all order, all help and assistance of one thing by another, which you see in the world around you, comes from Him. He is the Lord and Giver of life; in Him, the earth, the sun and stars, all live and move and have their being.

He is not them, or a part of them, but He gives life to them. But to men He is more than that—for we men ourselves are more than that, and need more. We have immortal spirits in us—a reason, a conscience, and a will; strange rights and duties, strange hopes and fears, of which the beasts and the plants know nothing.

We have hearts in us which can love, and feel, and sorrow, and be weak, and sinful, and mistaken; and therefore we want a

Comforter. And the Lord and Giver of life has promised to be our Comforter; and the Father and the Son, from both of whom He proceeds, have promised to send Him to us, to strengthen and comfort us, and give our spirits life and health, and knit us together to each other, and to God, in one common bond of love and fellow-feeling even as He the Spirit knits together the Father and the Son.

I said that we want a Comforter. If we consider what that word Comforter means, we shall see that we do want a Comforter, and that the only Comforter which can satisfy us for ever and ever, must be He, the very Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of life.

Now Comforter means one who gives comfort; so the meaning of it will depend upon what comfort means. Our word comfort, comes from two old Latin words, which mean *with* and *to strengthen*. And, therefore, a Comforter means anyone who is with us to strengthen us, and do for us what we could not do for ourselves. You will see that this is the proper meaning of the word, when you remember what bodily things we call comforts.

You say that a person is comfortable, or lives in comfort, if he has a comfortable income, a comfortable house, comfortable clothes, comfortable food, and so on. Now all these things, his money, his house, his clothes, his food, are not himself. They make him stronger and more at ease. They make his life more pleasant to him. But they are not *him*; they are round him, with him, to strengthen him. So with a person's mind and feelings; when a man is in sorrow and trouble, he cannot comfort himself.

His friends must come to him and comfort him; talk to him, advise him, show their kind feeling towards him, and in short, be with him to strengthen him in his afflictions. And if we require comfort for our bodies, and for our minds, my friends, how much more do we for our spirits—our souls, as we call them! How weak, and ignorant, and self-willed, and perplexed, and sinful they are—surely our souls require a comforter far more than our bodies or our minds do! And to comfort our spirits, we require a spirit; for we cannot see our own spirits, our own souls, as we can our bodies. We cannot even tell by our feelings what state they are in. We may deceive ourselves, and we do deceive ourselves, again and again, and fancy that our souls are strong when they are weak—that they are simple and truthful when they are full of deceit and falsehood—that they are loving God when they are only loving themselves—that they are doing God’s will when they are only doing their own selfish and perverse wills.

No man can take care of his own spirit, much less give his own spirit life; “no man can quicken his own soul,” says David, that is, no man can give his own soul life. And therefore we must have someone beyond ourselves to give life to our spirits. We must have someone to teach us the things that we could never find out for ourselves, someone who will put into our hearts the good desires that could never come of themselves. We must have someone who can change these wills of ours, and make them love what they hate by nature, and make them hate what they love by nature. For by nature we are selfish. By nature we are inclined to

love ourselves, rather than anyone else; to take care of ourselves, rather than anyone else. By nature we are inclined to follow our own will, rather than God's will, to do our own pleasure, rather than follow God's commandments, and therefore by nature our spirits are dead; for selfishness and self-will are *spiritual death*. Spiritual life is love, pity, patience, courage, honesty, truth, justice, humbleness, industry, self-sacrifice, obedience to God, and therefore to those whom God sends to teach and guide us. *That* is spiritual life. That is the life of Jesus Christ; His character, His conduct, was like that—to love, to help, to pity, all around—to give up Himself even to death—to do His Father's will and not His own. That was His life. Because He was the Son of God He did it. In proportion as we live like Him, we shall be living like sons of God. In proportion as we live like Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our spirits will be alive. For he that hath Jesus Christ the Son of God in him, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life, says St. John. But who can raise us from the death of sin and selfishness, to the life of righteousness and love? Who can change us into the likeness of Jesus Christ?

Who can even show us what Jesus Christ's likeness is, and take the things of Christ and show them to us; so that by seeing what He was, we may see what we should be? And who, if we have this life in us, will keep it alive in us, and be with us to strengthen us? Who will give us strength to force the foul and fierce and false thoughts out of our mind, and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan?" Who will give our spirits life? and who will strengthen

that life in us?

Can we do it for ourselves? Oh! my friends, I pity the man who is so blind and ignorant, who knows so little of himself, upon whom the lessons which his own mistakes, and sins, and failings should have taught him, have been so wasted that he fancies that he can teach and guide himself without any help, and that he can raise his own soul to life, or keep it alive without assistance. Can his body do without its comforts? Then how can his spirit? If he left his house, and threw away his clothes, and refused all help from his fellow-men, and went and lived in the woods like a wild beast, we should call him a madman, because he refused the help and comfort to his body which God has made necessary for him.

But just as great a madman is he who refuses the help and the strengthening which God has made necessary for his spirit—just as great a madman is he who fancies that his soul is any more able than his body is, to live without continual help. It is just because man is nobler than the beast that he requires help. The fox in the wood needs no house, no fire; he needs no friends; he needs no comforts, and no comforters, because he is a beast—because he is meant to live and die selfish and alone; therefore God has provided him in himself with all things necessary to keep the poor brute's selfish life in him for a few short years. But just because man is nobler than that; just because man is not intended to live selfish and alone; just because his body, and his mind, and his spirit are beautifully and delicately made, and intended for all sorts of wonderful purposes, therefore God has appointed

that from the moment he is born to all eternity he cannot live alone; he cannot support himself; he stands in continual need of the assistance of all around him, for body, and soul, and spirit; he needs clothes, which other men must make; houses, which other man must build; food, which other men must produce; he has to get his livelihood by working for others, while others get their livelihood in return by working for him. As a child he needs his parents to be his comforters, to take care of him in body and mind. As he grows up he needs the care of others; he cannot exist a day without his fellow-men: he requires school-masters to educate him; books and masters to teach him his trade; and when he has learnt it, and settled himself in life, he requires laws made by other men, perhaps by men who died hundreds of years before he was born, to secure to him his rights and property, to secure to him comforts, and to make him feel comfortable in his station; he needs friends and family to comfort him in sorrow and in joy, to do for him the thousand things which he cannot do for himself. In proportion as he is alone and friendless he is pitiable and miserable, let him be as rich as Solomon himself.

From the moment, I say, he is born, he needs continual comforts and comforters for his body, and mind, and heart. And then he fancies that, though his body and his mind cannot exist safely, or grow up healthily, without the continual care and comforting of his fellow-men, that yet his soul, the part of him which is at once the most important and the most in danger; the part of him of which he knows least; the part of him which he understands

least; the part of him of which his body and mind cannot take care, because it has to take care of them, can live, and grow, and prosper without any help whatsoever!

And if we cannot strengthen our own souls no man can strengthen them for us. No man can raise our bodies to life, much less can he raise our souls. The physician himself cannot cure the sicknesses of our bodies; he can only give us fit medicines, and leave them to cure us by certain laws of nature, which he did not make, and which he cannot alter. And though the physician can, by much learning, understand men's bodies somewhat, who can understand men's souls? We cannot understand our own souls; we do not know what they are, how they live; whence they come, or whither they go. We cannot cure them ourselves, much less can anyone cure them for us. The only one who can cure our souls is He that made our souls; the only one who can give life to our souls is He who gives life to everything.

The only one who can cure, and strengthen, and comfort our spirits, is He who understands our spirits, because He himself is the Spirit of all spirits, the Spirit who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God; because He is the Spirit of God the Father, who made all heaven and earth, and of Jesus Christ the Son, who understands the heart of man, who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and hath been tempted in all things, just as we are, yet without sin.

He is the Comforter which God has promised to our spirits, the only Comforter who can strengthen our spirits; and if we have

Him with us, if He is strengthening us, if He is leading us, if He is abiding with us, if He is changing us day by day, more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ, are we not, as I said at the beginning of my sermon, richer than if we possessed all the land of England, stronger than if we had all the armies of the world at our command? For what is more precious than—God Himself? What is stronger than—God Himself? The poorest man in whom God's Spirit dwells is greater than the greatest king in whom God's Spirit does not dwell. And so he will find in the day that he dies. Then where will riches be, and power? The rich man will take none of them away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him. Naked came he into this world, and naked shall he return out of it, to go as he came, and carry with him none of the comforts which he thought in this life the only ones worth having. But the Spirit of God remains with us for ever; that treasure a man shall carry out of this world with him, and keep to all eternity. That friend will never forsake him, for He is the Spirit of Love, which abideth for ever. That Comforter will never grow weak, for He is Himself the very eternal Lord and Giver of Life; and the soul that is possessed by Him must live, must grow, must become nobler, purer, freer, stronger, more loving, for ever and ever, as the eternities roll by. That is what He will give you, my friends; that is His treasure; that is the Spirit-life, the true and everlasting life, which flows from Him as the stream flows from the fountain-head.

X.

WHIT-SUNDAY

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—against such there is no law.—Galatians v. 22, 23.

In all countries, and in all ages, the world has been full of complaints of Law and Government. And one hears the same complaints in England now. You hear complaints that the laws favour one party and one rank more than another, that they are expensive, and harsh, and unfair, and what not?—But I think, my friends, that for us, and especially on this Whit-Sunday, it will be much wiser, instead of complaining of the laws, to complain of ourselves, for needing those laws. For what is it that makes laws necessary at all, except man's sinfulness? Adam required no laws in the garden of Eden. We should require no laws if we were what we ought to be—what God has offered to make us. We may see this by looking at the laws themselves, and considering the purposes for which they were made. We shall then see, that, like Moses' Laws of old, the greater part of them have been added because of transgressions.—In plain English—to prevent men from doing things which they ought not to do, and which, if they were in a right state of mind, they would not do. How many laws are passed, simply to prevent one man, or one class,

from oppressing or ill-using some other man or class? What a vast number of them are passed simply to protect property, or to protect the weak from the cruel, the ignorant from the cunning!

It is plain that if there was no cruelty, no cunning, no dishonesty, these laws, at all events, would not be needed. Again, one of the great complaints against the laws and the government, is that they are so expensive, that rates and taxes are heavy burdens—and doubtless they are: but what makes them necessary except men's sin? If the poor were more justly and mercifully treated, and if they in their turn were more thrifty and provident, there would be no need of the expenses of poor rates. If there was no love of war and plunder, there would be no need of the expense of an army. If there was no crime, there would be no need of the expense of police and prisons. The thing is so simple and self-evident, that it seems almost childish to mention it. And yet, my friends, we forget it daily. We complain of the laws and their harshness, of taxes and their expensiveness, and we forget all the while that it is our own selfishness and sinfulness which brings this expense upon us, which makes it necessary for the law to interfere and protect us against others, and others against us. And while we are complaining of the government for not doing its work somewhat more cheaply, we are forgetting that if we chose, we might leave government very little work to do—that every man if he chose, might be his own law-maker and his own police—that every man if he will, may lead a life “against which there is no law.”

I say again, that it is our own fault, the fault of our sinfulness, that laws are necessary for us. In proportion as we are what Scripture calls “natural men,” that is, savage, selfish, divided from each other, and struggling against each other, each for his own interest; as long as we are not renewed and changed into new men, so long will laws, heavy, severe, and burdensome, be necessary for us. Without them we should be torments to ourselves, to our neighbours, to our country. But these laws are only necessary as long as we are full of selfishness and ungodliness. The moment we yield ourselves up to God’s law, man’s laws are ready enough to leave us alone. Take, for instance, a common example; as long as anyone is a faithful husband and a good father, the law does not interfere with his conduct towards his wife and children. But it is when he is unfaithful to them, when he ill-treats them, or deserts them, that the law interferes with its “Thou shalt not,” and compels him to behave, against his will, in the way in which he ought to have behaved of his own will. It was free to the man to have done his duty by his family, without the law—the moment he neglects his duty, he becomes amenable to it.

But the law can only force a man’s actions: it cannot change his heart. In the instance which I have been just mentioning, the law can say to a man, “You shall not ill-treat your family; you shall not leave them to starve.” But the law cannot say to him “You shall love your family.” The law can only command from a man outward obedience; the obedience of the heart it cannot

enforce. The law may make a man do his duty, it cannot make a man *love* his duty. And therefore laws will never set the world right. They can punish persons after the wrong is done, and that not certainly nor always: but they cannot certainly prevent the wrongs being done. The law can punish a man for stealing: and yet, as we see daily, men steal in the face of punishment. Or even if the law, by its severity, makes persons afraid to commit certain particular crimes, yet still as long as the sinful heart is left in them unchanged, the sin which is checked in one direction is sure to break out in another. Sin, like every other disease, is sure, when it is driven onwards, to break out at a fresh point, or fester within some still more deadly, because more hidden and unsuspected, shape. The man who dare not be an open sinner for fear of the law, can be a hypocrite in spite of it. The man who dare not steal for fear of the law, can cheat in spite of it. The selfish man will find fresh ways of being selfish, the tyrannical man of being tyrannical, however closely the law may watch him.

He will discover some means of evading it; and thus the law, after all, though it may keep down crime, multiplies sin; and by the law, as St. Paul says, is the knowledge of sin.

What then will do that for this poor world which the law cannot do—which, as St. Paul tells us, not even the law of God given on Mount Sinai, holy, just, good as it was, could do, because no law can give life? What will give men a new heart and a new spirit, which shall love its duty and do it willingly, and not by compulsion, everywhere and always, and not merely just

as far as it commanded? The text tells us that there is a Spirit, the fruit of which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; a character such as no laws can give to a man, and which no law dare punish in a man.

Look at this character as St. Paul sets it forth—and then think what need would there be of all these burdensome and expensive laws, if all men were but full of the fruits of that Spirit which St. Paul describes?

I know what answer will be ready, in some of your minds at least, to all this. You will be ready to reply, almost angrily, “Of course if everyone was perfect, we should need no laws: but people are not perfect, and you cannot expect them to be.”

My friends, whether or not *we* expect baptized people, living in a Christian country, to be perfect, God expects them to be perfect; for He has said, by the mouth of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, “Be ye therefore perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.” And He has told us what being perfect is like; you may read it for yourselves in His sermon on the Mount; and you may see also that what He commands us to do in that sermon, from the beginning to the end, is the exact opposite and contrary of the ways and rules of this world, which, as I have shown, make burdensome laws necessary to prevent our devouring each other.

Now, do you think that God would have told us to be perfect, if He knew that it was impossible for us? Do you think that He, the God of truth, would have spoken such a cruel mockery against poor sinful creatures like us, as to command us a duty without

giving us the means of fulfilling it? Do you think that He did not know ten thousand times better than I what I have been just telling you, that laws could not change men's hearts and wills; that commanding a man to love and like a thing will not make him love and like it; that a man's heart and spirit must be changed in him from within, and not merely laws and commandments laid on him from without? Then why has He commanded us to love each other, ay, to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to pray for those who use us spitefully? Do you think the Lord meant to make hypocrites of us; to tell us to go about, as some who call themselves religious do go about, with their lips full of meek, and humble, and simple, and loving words, while their hearts are full of pride, and spite, and cunning, and hate, and selfishness, which are all the more deadly for being kept in and plastered over by a smooth outside? God forbid! He tells us to love each other, only because He has promised us the spirit of love. He tells us to be humble, because He can make us humble-hearted. He tells us to be honest, because He can make us love and delight in honesty. He tells us to refrain ourselves from foul thoughts as well as from foul actions, because He can take the foul heart out of us, and give us instead the spirit of purity and holiness. He tells us to lead new lives after the new pattern of Himself, because He can give us new hearts and a new spring of life within us; in short, He bids us behave as sons of God should behave, because, as He said Himself, "If we, being evil, know how to give our children what is good for them, much more will

our heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

If you would be perfect, ask your Father in heaven to make you perfect. If you feel that your heart is wrong, ask Him to give you a new and a right heart. If you feel yourselves—as you are, whether you feel it or not—too weak, too ignorant, too selfish, to guide yourselves, ask Him to send His Spirit to guide you; ask for the Spirit from which comes all love, all light, all wisdom, all strength of mind. Ask for that Spirit, and you *shall* receive it; seek for it, and you shall find it; knock at the gate of your Father’s treasure-house, and it shall be surely opened to you.

But some of you, perhaps, are saying to yourselves, “How will my being changed and renewed by the Spirit of God, render the laws less burdensome, while the crime and sin around me remain unchanged? It is others who want to be improved as much, and perhaps more than I do.” It may be so, my friends; or, again, it may not; those who fancy that others need God’s Spirit more than they do, may be the very persons who need it really the most; those who say they see, may be only proving their blindness by so saying; those who fancy that their souls are rich, and are full of all knowledge, and understand the whole Bible, and want no further teaching, may be, as they were in St. John’s time, just the ones who are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked in soul, and do not know it. But at all events, if you think others need to be changed by God’s Spirit, *pray* that God’s Spirit may change them. For believe me, unless you pray for God’s Spirit for each other, ay, for the whole world, there is no use asking

for yourselves. This, I believe, is one of the reasons, perhaps the chief reason, why the fruits of God's Spirit are so little seen among us in these days; why our Christianity is become more and more dead, and hollow, and barren, while expensive and intricate laws and taxes are becoming more and more necessary every year; because our religion has become so selfish, because we have been praying for God's Spirit too little for each other.

Our prayers have become too selfish. We have been looking for God's Spirit not so much as a means to enable us to do good to others, but as some sort of mysterious charm which was to keep us ourselves from the punishment of our sins in the next life, or give us a higher place in heaven; and, therefore, St. James's words have been fulfilled to us, even in our very prayers for God's Spirit, "Ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts"—save our selfish souls from the pains of hell; to give our selfish souls selfish pleasures and selfish glorification in the world to come: but not to spread God's kingdom upon earth, not to make us live on earth such lives as Christ lived; a life of love and self-sacrifice, and continual labour for the souls of others.

Therefore it is, that God's Spirit is not poured out upon us in these days; for God's Spirit is the spirit of love and brotherhood, which delivers a man from his selfishness; and if we do not desire to be delivered from our selfishness, we do not desire the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God will not be bestowed upon us. And no man desires to be delivered from his own selfishness, who in his very prayers, when he ought to be thinking least about himself

alone, is thinking about himself most of all, and forgetting that he is the member of a family—that all mankind are his brethren—that he can claim nothing for himself to which every sinner around him has an equal right—that nothing is necessary for him, which is not equally necessary for everyone around him; that he has all the world besides himself to pray for, and that his prayers for himself will be heard only according as he prays for all the world beside. Baptism teaches us this, when it tells us that our old selfish nature is to be washed away, and a new character, after the pattern of Christ, is to live and grow up in us; that from the day we are baptized, to the day of our death, we should live not for ourselves, but for Jesus, in whom was no selfishness; when it teaches us that we are not only children of God, but members of Christ's Family, and heirs of God's kingdom, and therefore bound to make common cause with all other members of that Family, to live and labour for the common good of all our fellow-citizens in that kingdom. The Lord's prayer teaches us this, when He tells us to pray, not "My Father," but "Our Father;" not "my soul be saved," but "Thy kingdom come;" not "give *me*," but "give *us* our daily bread;" not "forgive *me*," but "forgive *us* our trespasses," and that only as we forgive others; not "lead *me* not," but "lead *us* not into temptation;" not "deliver *me*," but "deliver *us* from evil." After *that* manner the Lord told us to pray; and, in proportion as we pray in that manner, asking for nothing for ourselves which we do not ask for everyone else in the whole world, just so far and no farther will God *hear* our prayers. He

who asks for God's Spirit for himself only, and forgets that all the world need it as much as he, is not asking for God's Spirit at all, and does not know even what God's Spirit is. The mystery of Pentecost, too, which came to pass on this day 1818 years ago, teaches us the same thing also. Those cloven tongues of fire, the tokens of God's Spirit, fell not upon one man, but upon many; not when they were apart from each other, but when they were together; and what were the fruits of that Spirit in the Apostles?

Did they remain within that upper room, each priding himself upon his own gifts, and trying merely to gain heaven for his own soul? If they had any such fancies, as they very likely had before the Spirit fell upon them, they had none such afterwards. The Spirit must have taken all such thoughts from them, and given them a new notion of what it was to be devout and holy: for instead of staying in that upper room, they went forth instantly into the public place to preach in foreign tongues to all the people.

Instead of keeping themselves apart from each other in silence, and fancying, as some have done, and some do now, that they pleased God by being solitary, and melancholy, and selfish—what do we read? the fruit of God's Spirit was in them; that they and the three thousand souls who were added to them, on the first day of their preaching, “were all together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions, and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need, and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their bread in gladness and singleness of heart, praising

God and having favour with all the people.” Those were the fruits of God’s Spirit in *them*. Till we see more of that sort of life and society in England, we shall not be able to pride ourselves on having much of God’s Spirit among us.

But above all, if anything will teach us that the strength of God’s Spirit is not a strength which we must ask for for ourselves alone; that the blessings of God’s kingdom are blessings which we cannot have in order to keep them to ourselves, but can only enjoy in as far as we share them with those around us; if anything, I say, ought to teach us that lesson, it is the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Just consider a moment, my friends, what a strange thing it is, if we will think of it, that the Lord’s Supper, the most solemn and sacred thing with which a man can have to do upon earth, is just a thing which he cannot transact for himself, or by himself. Not alone in secret, in his chamber, but, whether he will or not, in the company of others, not merely in the company of his own private friends, but in the company of any or everyone, rich or poor, who chooses to kneel beside him; he goes with others, rich and poor alike, to the Lord’s Table, and there the same bread, and the same wine, is shared among all by the same priest. If that means anything, it means this—that rich and poor alike draw life for their souls from the same well, not for themselves only, not apart from each other, but all in common, all together, because they are brothers, members of one family, as the leaves are members of the same tree; that as the same bread and the same wine are needed to nourish the

bodies of all, the same spirit of God is needed to nourish the souls of all; and that we cannot have this spirit, except as members of a body, any more than a man's limb can have life when it is cut off and parted from him. This is the reason, and the only reason, why Protestant clergymen are forbidden, thank God! to give the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to any one person singly. If a clergyman were to administer the Lord's Supper, to himself in private, without any congregation to partake with him, it would not be the Lord's Supper, it would be nothing, and worse than nothing; it would be a sham and a mockery, and, I believe, a sin. I do not believe that Christ would be present, that God's Spirit would rest on that man. For our Lord says, that it is where two or three are gathered together in His name, that He is in the midst of them. And it was at a supper, at a feast, where all the Apostles were met together, that our Lord divided the bread amongst them, and told them to share the cup amongst themselves, just as a sign that they were all members of one body—that the welfare of each of them was bound up in the welfare of all the rest that God's blessing did not rest upon each singly, but upon all together. And it is just because we have forgotten this, my friends—because we have forgotten that we are all brothers and sisters, children of one family, members of one body—because in short, we have carried our selfishness into our very religion, and up to the altar of God, that we neglect the Lord's Supper as we do. People neglect the Lord's Supper because they either do not know or do not like that, of which the

Lord's Supper is the token and warrant. It is not merely that they feel themselves unfit for the Lord's Supper, because they are not in love and charity with all men. Oh! my dear friends, do not some of your hearts tell you, that the reason why you stay away from the Lord's Supper is because you do not *wish* to be fit for the Lord's Supper—because you do not like to be in love and charity with all men—because you do not wish to be reminded that you are equals in God's sight, all equally sinful, all equally pardoned—and to see people whom you dislike or despise, kneeling by your side, and partaking of the same bread and wine with you, as a token that God sees no difference between you and them; that God looks upon you all as brothers, however little brotherly love or fellow-feeling there may be, alas! between you? Or, again, do not some of you stay away from the Lord's Supper, because you see no good in going? because it seems to make those who go no better than they were before? Shall I tell you the reason of that?

Shall I tell you why, as is too true, too many do come to the Lord's Supper, and so far from being the better for it, seem only the worse? Because they come to it in selfishness. We have fallen into the same false and unscriptural way of looking at the Lord's Supper, into which the Papists have. People go to the Lord's Supper nowadays too much to get some private good for their own souls, and it would not matter to many of them, I am afraid, if not another person in the parish received it, provided they can get, as they fancy, the same blessing from it. Thus they come to it in an utterly false and wrong temper of mind. Instead of coming

as members of Christ's body, to get from Him life and strength, to work, in their places, as members of that body, they come to get something for themselves, as if there was nobody else's soul in the world to be saved but their own. Instead of coming to ask for the Spirit of God to deliver them from their selfishness, and make them care less about themselves, and more about all around them, they come to ask for the Spirit of God because they think it will make themselves higher and happier in heaven.

And of course they do not get what they come for, because they come for the wrong thing. Thus those who see them, begin to fancy that the Lord's Supper is not, after all, so very important for the salvation of their souls; and not finding in the Bible actually written these words, "Thou shalt perish everlastingly unless thou take the Lord's Supper," they end by staying away from it, and utterly neglecting it, they and their children after them; preferring their own selfishness, to God's Spirit of love, and saying, like Esau of old, "I am hungry, and I must live. I must get on in this selfish world by following its selfish ways; what is the use of a spirit of love and brotherhood to me? If I were to obey the Gospel, and sacrifice my own interest for those around me, I should starve; what good will my birthright do me?"

Oh! my friends, I pray God that some of you, at least, may change your mind. I pray God that some of you may see at last, that all the misery and the burdens of this time, spring from one root, which is selfishness; and that the reason why we are selfish, is because we have not with us the Spirit of God, which

is the spirit of brotherhood and love. Let us pray God now, and henceforth, to take that selfishness out of all our hearts. Let us pray God now, and henceforth, to pour upon us, and upon all our countrymen, ay, and upon the whole world, the spirit of friendship and fellow-feeling, the spirit which when men have among them, they need no laws to keep them from supplanting, and oppressing, and devouring each other, because its fruits are love, cheerfulness, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, honesty, meekness, temperance Then there will be no need, my friends, for me to call you to the Supper of the Lord. You will no more think of staying away from it, than the Apostles did, when the Spirit was poured out on them. For what do we read that they did after the first Whit-Sunday? That altogether with one accord, they broke bread daily; that is, partook of the Lord's Supper every day, from house to house. They did not need to be told to do it. They did it, as I may say, by instinct. There was no question or argument about it in their minds. They had found out that they were all brothers, with one common cause in joy and sorrow—that they were all members of one body—that the life of their souls came from one root and spring, from one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the light and the life of men, in whom they were all one, members of each other; and therefore, they delighted in that Lord's Supper, just because it brought them together; just because it was a sign and a token to them that they did belong to each other, that they had one Lord, one faith, one interest, one common cause for this life, and for all eternity. And

therefore the blessing of that Lord's Supper did come to them, and in it they did receive strength to live like children of God and members of Christ, and brothers to each other and to all mankind. They proved by their actions what that Communion Feast, that Sacrament of Brotherhood, had done for them. They proved it by not counting their own lives dear to them, but going forth in the face of poverty and persecution, and death itself, to preach to the whole world the good news that Christ was their King. They proved it by their conduct to each other when they had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need. They proved it by needing no laws to bind them to each other from without, because they were bound to each other from within, by the love which comes down from God, and is the very bond of peace, and of every virtue which becomes a man.

XI.

ASCENSION-DAY

And Jesus led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.—Luke xxiv. 50–53.

On this day it is fit and proper for us—if we have understood, and enjoyed, and profited by the wonder of the Lord's Ascension into Heaven—to be in the same state of mind as the Apostles were after His Ascension: for what was right for them is right for us and for all men; the same effects which it produced on them it ought to produce on us. And we may know whether we are in the state in which Christian men ought to be, by seeing how far we are in the same state of mind as the Apostles were. Now the text tells us in what state of mind they were; how that, after the Lord Jesus was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven, they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. It seems at first sight certainly very strange that they should go back with great joy. They had just lost their Teacher, their Master—One who had been more to them than all friends and fathers

could be; One who had taken them, poor simple fishermen, and changed the whole course of their lives, and taught them things which He had taught to no one else, and given them a great and awful work to do—the work of changing the ways and thoughts and doings of the whole world. He had sent them out—eleven unlettered working men—to fight against the sin and the misery of the whole world. And He had given them open warning of what they were to expect; that by it they should win neither credit, nor riches, nor ease, nor anything else that the world thinks worth having. He gave them fair warning that the world would hate them, and try to crush them. He told them, as the Gospel for to-day says, that they should be driven out of the churches; that the religious people, as well as the irreligious, would be against them; that the time would come when those who killed them would think that they did God service; that nothing but labour, and want, and persecution, and slander, and torture, and death was before them—and now He had gone away and left them.

He had vanished up into the empty air. They were to see His face, and hear His voice no more. They were to have no more of His advice, no more of His teaching, no more of His tender comfortings; they were to be alone in the world—eleven poor working men, with the whole world against them, and so great a business to do that they would not have time to get their bread by the labour of their hands. Is it not wonderful that they did not sit down in despair, and say, “What will become of us?” Is it not wonderful that they did not give themselves up to grief at losing

the Teacher who was worth all the rest of the world put together? Is it not wonderful that they did not go back, each one to his old trade, to his fishing and to his daily labour, saying, "At all events we must eat; at all events we must get our livelihood;" and end, as they had begun, in being mere labouring men, of whom the world would never have heard a word? And instead of that we read that they went back with great joy not to their homes but to Jerusalem, the capital city of their country, and "were continually in the temple blessing and praising God." Well, my friends, and if it is possible for one man to judge what another man would have done—if it is possible to guess what we should have done in their case—common-sense must show us this, that if He was merely their Teacher, they would have either given themselves up to despair, or gone back, some to their plough, some to their fishing-nets, and some, like Matthew, to their counting-houses, and we should never have heard a word of them. But if you will look in your Bibles, you will find that they thought Him much more than a teacher—that they thought Him to be the Lord and King of the whole world; and you will find that the great joy with which the disciples went back, after He ascended into heaven, came from certain very strange words that He had been speaking to them just before He ascended—words about which they could have but two opinions: either they must have thought that they were utter falsehood, and self-conceit, and blasphemy; and that Jesus, who had been all along speaking to them such words of wisdom and holiness as never man spake before, had

suddenly changed His whole character at the last, and become such a sort of person as it is neither fit for me to speak of, or you to hear me speak of, in God's church, and in Jesus Christ's hearing, even though it be merely for the sake of argument; or else they must have thought *this* about His words, that they were the most joyful and blessed words that ever had been spoken on the earth; that they were the best of all news; the most complete of all Gospels for this poor sinful world; that what Jesus had said about Himself was true; and that as long as it was true, it did not matter in the least what became of them; it did not matter in the least what difficulties stood in their way, for they would be certain to conquer them all; it did not matter in the least how men might persecute and slander them, for they would be sure to get their reward; it did not matter in the least how miserable and sinful the world might be just then, for it was certain to be changed, and converted, and brought to God, to righteousness, to love, to freedom, to light, at last.

If you look at the various accounts, in the four gospels, of the Lord's last words on earth, you will see, surely, what I mean. Let us take them one by one.

St. Matthew tells us that, a few days before the Lord's ascension, He met His disciples on a mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed them to await him; and there told them, that all power was given to Him in heaven and earth. Was not that blessed news—was not that a gospel? That all the power in heaven and earth belonged to *Him*? To Him, who had all His life

been doing good? To Him, in whom there had never been one single stain of tyranny or selfishness? To Him, who had been the friend of publicans and sinners? To Him, who had rebuked the very richest, and loved the very poorest? To him, who had shown that He had both the power and the will to heal every kind of sickness and disease? To Him, who had conquered and driven out, wherever He met them, all the evil spirits which enslave and torment poor sinful men? To Him, who had shown by rising from the dead, that He was stronger than even death itself? To Him, who had declared that He was the Son of God the Father, that the great God who had made heaven and earth, and all therein, was perfectly pleased and satisfied with Him, that He was come to do His Father's will, and not His own; that He was the ancient Lord of the earth, the I AM who was before Abraham? And He was now to have all power in heaven and earth! Everything which was done right in the world henceforth, was to be His doing. The kingdom and rule over the whole universe, was to be His. So He said; and His disciples believed Him; and if they believed Him, how could they but rejoice? How could they but rejoice at the glorious thought that He, the son of the village maiden, the champion of the poor and the suffering, was to have the government of the world for ever? That He, who all the while He had been on earth had showed that He was perfect justice, perfect love, perfect humanity, was to reign till He had put all His enemies under His feet? How could the world but prosper under such a King as that? How could wickedness triumph, while

He, the perfectly righteous one, was King? How could misery triumph, while He, the perfectly merciful one, was King? How could ignorance triumph, while He, the perfectly wise one, who had declared that God the Father hid nothing from Him, was King? Unless the disciples had been more dull and selfish than the dumb beasts around them, what could they do but rejoice at that news? What matter to them if Jesus were taken out of their sight, as long as all power was given to Him in heaven and earth?

But He had told them more. He had told them that they were not to keep this glorious secret to themselves. No: they were to go forth and preach the gospel of it, the good news of it, to every creature—to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. The good news that God was the King of men, after all; that cruel tyrants and oppressors, and conquerors, were not their kings; that neither the storms over their heads, nor the earth under their feet, nor the clouds and the rivers whom the heathens used to worship in the hope of persuading the earth and the weather to be favourable to them, and bless their harvests, were their kings; that idols of wood and stone, and evil spirits of lust, and cruelty, and covetousness, were not their kings; but that God was their King; that He loved them, He pitied them in spite of all their sins; that He had sent His only begotten Son into the world to teach them, to live for them—to die for them—to claim them for His own. And, therefore, they were to go and baptize all nations, as a sign that they were to repent, and change, and put away all their old false and evil heathen life, and rise to a new life, they

and their children after them, as God's children, God's family, brothers of the Son of God. And they were to baptize them into a name; showing that they belonged to those into whose name they were baptized; into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They were to be baptized into the name of the Father, as a sign that God was their Father, and they His children. They were to be baptized into the name of the Son, as a sign that the Son, Jesus Christ, was their King and head; and not merely their King and head, but their Saviour, who had taken away the sin of the world, and redeemed it for God, with His own most precious blood; and not merely their Saviour, but their pattern; that they might know that they were bound to become as far as is possible for mortal man such sons of God as Jesus himself had been, like Him obedient, pure, forgiving, brotherly, caring for each other and not for themselves, doing their heavenly Father's will and not their own. And they were to baptize all nations into the name of the Holy Spirit, for a sign that God's Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, would be with them, to give them new life, new holiness, new manfulness; to teach, and guide, and strengthen them for ever. That was the gospel which they had to preach. The good news that the Son of God was the King of men. That was the name into which they were to baptize all nations—the name of children of God, members of Christ, heirs of a heavenly and spiritual kingdom, which should go on age after age, for ever, growing and spreading men knew not how, as the grains of mustard-seed, which at first the least of all seeds, grows

up into a great tree, and the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it—to go on, I say, from age to age, improving, cleansing, and humanising, and teaching the whole world, till the kingdoms of the earth became the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. That was the work which the Apostles had given them to do. Do you not see, friends, that unless those Apostles had been the most selfish of men, unless all they cared for was their own gain and comfort, they must have rejoiced? The whole world was to be set right—what matter what happened to them?

And, therefore, I said at the beginning of my sermon, that a sure way to know whether our minds were in a right state, was to see whether we felt about it as the Apostles felt. The Bible tells us to rejoice always, to praise and give thanks to God always.

If we believe what the Apostles believed, we shall be joyful; if we do not, we shall not be joyful. If we believe in the words which the Lord spoke before He ascended on high, we shall be joyful. If we believe that all power in heaven and earth is His, we shall be joyful. If we believe that the son of the village maiden has ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, we shall be joyful. If we believe that, as our baptism told us, God is our Father, the Son of God our Saviour, the Spirit of God ready to teach and guide us, we shall be joyful. Do you answer me, “But the world goes on so ill; there is so much sin, and misery, and folly, and cruelty in it; how can we be joyful?” I answer: There was a hundred times as much sin, and misery, and folly, and cruelty, in the Apostles’ time, and yet they were joyful,

and full of gladness, blessing and praising God. If you answer, "But we are so slandered, and neglected, and misunderstood, and hard-worked, and ill-treated; we have no time to enjoy ourselves, or do the things which we should like best. How can we be joyful?" I answer: So were the Apostles. They knew that they would be a hundred times as much slandered, and neglected, and misunderstood, as you can ever be; that they would have far less time to enjoy themselves, far less opportunity of doing the things which they liked best, than you can ever have; they knew that misery, and persecution, and a shameful death were before them, and yet they were joyful and full of gladness, blessing and praising God. And why should you not be? For what was true for them is true for you. They had no blessing, no hope, but what you have just as good a right to as they had. They were joyful, because God was their Father, and God is your Father. They were joyful because they and all men belonged to God's family; and you belong to it. They were joyful, because God's Spirit was promised to them, to make them like God; and God's Spirit was promised to you. They were joyful, because a poor man was king of heaven and earth; and that poor man, Jesus Christ, who was born at Bethlehem, is as much your King now as He was theirs then. They were joyful, because the whole world was going to improve under His rule and government; and the whole world is improving, and will go on improving for ever. They were joyful, because Jesus, whom they had known as a poor, despised, crucified man on earth, had ascended up to heaven in glory; and

if you believe the same, you will be joyful too. In proportion as you believe the mystery of Ascension-day; if you believe the words which the Lord spoke before He ascended, you will have cheerful, joyful, hopeful thoughts about yourselves, and about the whole world; if you do not, you will be in continual danger of becoming suspicious and despairing, fancying the world still worse than it is, fancying that God has neglected and forgotten it, fancying that the devil is stronger than God, and man's sins wider than Christ's redemption till you will think it neither worth while to do right yourselves, nor to make others do right towards you.

XII.

THE FOUNT OF SCIENCE

*(A Sermon Preached at St. Margaret's
Church, Westminster, May 4th, 1851,
in behalf of the Westminster Hospital.)*

When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, even for his enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.—Psalm lxxviii. 18, and Ephesians iv. 8.

If, a thousand years ago, a congregation in this place had been addressed upon the text which I have chosen, they would have had, I think, little difficulty in applying its meaning to themselves, and in mentioning at once innumerable instances of those gifts which the King of men had received for men, innumerable signs that the Lord God was really dwelling amongst them. But amongst those signs, I think, they would have mentioned several which we are not now generally accustomed to consider in such a light. They would have pointed not merely to the building of churches, the founding of schools, the spread of peace, the decay of slavery; but to the importation of

foreign literature, the extension of the arts of reading, writing, painting, architecture, the improvement of agriculture, and the introduction of new and more successful methods of the cure of diseases. They might have expressed themselves on these points in a way that we consider now puerile and superstitious. They might have attributed to the efficacy of prayer, many cures which we now attribute—shall I say? to no cause whatsoever. They may have quoted as an instance of St. Cuthbert's sanctity, rather than of his shrewd observations, his discovery of a spring of water in the rocky floor of his cell, and his success in growing barley upon the barren island where wheat refused to germinate; and we might have smiled at their superstition, and smiled, too, at their seeing any consequence of Christianity, any token that the kingdom of God was among them, in Bishop Wilfred's rescuing the Hampshire Saxons from the horrors of famine, by teaching them the use of fishing-nets. But still so they would have spoken—men of a turn of mind no less keen, shrewd, and practical than we, their children; and if we had objected to their so-called superstition that all these improvements in the physical state of England were only the natural consequences of the introduction of Roman civilisation by French and Italian missionaries, they would have smiled at us in their turn, not perhaps without some astonishment at our stupidity, and asked: "Do you not see, too, that *that* is in itself a sign of the kingdom of God—that these nations who have been for ages selfishly isolated from each other, except for purposes of conquest and desolation, should

be now teaching each other, helping each other, interchanging more and more, generation by generation, their arts, their laws, their learning becoming fused down under the influence of a common Creed, and loyalty to one common King in Heaven, from their state of savage jealousy and warfare, into one great Christendom, and family of God?" And if, my friends, as I think, those forefathers of ours could rise from their graves this day, they would be inclined to see in our hospitals, in our railroads, in the achievements of our physical Science, confirmation of that old superstition of theirs, proofs of the kingdom of God, realisations of the gifts which Christ received for men, vaster than any of which they had ever dreamed. They might be startled at God's continuing those gifts to us, who hold on many points a creed so different from theirs. They might be still more startled to see in the Great Exhibition of all Nations, which is our present nine-days' wonder, that those blessings were not restricted by God even to nominal Christians, but that His love, His teaching, with regard to matters of civilisation and physical science, were extended, though more slowly and partially, to the Mahometan and the Heathen. And it would be a wholesome lesson to them, to find that God's grace was wider than their narrow theories; perhaps they may have learnt it already in the world of spirits.

But of its *being* God's grace, there would be no doubt in their minds. They would claim unhesitatingly, and at once, that great Exhibition established in a Christian country, as a point of union and brotherhood for all people, for a sign that God was indeed

claiming all the nations of the world as His own—proving by the most enormous facts that He had sent down a Pentecost, gifts to men which would raise them not merely spiritually, but physically and intellectually, beyond anything which the world had ever seen, and had poured out a spirit among them which would convert them in the course of ages, gradually, but most surely and really, from a pandemonium of conquerors and conquered, devourers and devoured, into a family of fellow-helping brothers, until the kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of God and of His Christ.

But I think one thing, if anything, would stagger their simple old Saxon faith; one thing would make them fearful, as indeed it makes the preacher this day, that the time of real brotherhood and peace is still but too far off; and that the achievements of our physical science, the unity of this great Exhibition, noble as they are, are still only dim forecastings and prophecies, as it were, of a higher, nobler reality. And they would say sadly to us, their children: “Sons, you ought to be so near to God; He seems to have given you so much and to have worked among you as He never worked for any nation under heaven. How is it that you give the glory to yourselves, and not to Him?”

For do we give the glory of our scientific discoveries to God, in any real, honest, and practical sense? There may be some official and perfunctory talk of God’s blessing on our endeavours; but there seems to be no real belief in us that God, the inspiration of God, is the very fount and root of the endeavours themselves;

that He teaches us these great discoveries; that He gives us wisdom to get this wondrous wealth; that He works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. True, we keep up something of the form and tradition of the old talk about such things; we join in prayer to God to bless our great Exhibition, but we do not believe—we do not believe, my friends—that it was God who taught us to conceive, build, and arrange that Great Exhibition; and our notion of God’s blessing it, seems to be God’s absence from it; a hope and trust that God will leave it and us alone, and not “visit” it or us in it, or “interfere” by any “special providences,” by storms, or lightning, or sickness, or panic, or conspiracy; a sort of dim feeling that we could manage it all perfectly well without God, but that as He exists, and has some power over natural phenomena, which is not very exactly defined, we must notice His existence over and above our work, lest He should become angry and “visit” us . . . And this in spite of words which were spoken by one whose office it was to speak them, as the representative of the highest and most sacred personage in these realms; words which deserve to be written in letters of gold on the high places of this city; in which he spoke of this Exhibition as an “approach to a more complete fulfilment of the great and sacred mission which man has to perform in the world;” when he told the English people that “man’s reason being created in the image of God, he has to discover the laws by which Almighty God governs His creations, and by making these laws the standard of his action, to conquer nature to his use,

himself a divine instrument;" when he spoke of "thankfulness to Almighty God for what he has already *given*," as the first feeling which that Exhibition ought to excite in us; and as the second, "the deep conviction that those blessings can only be realised in proportion to"—not, as some would have it, the rivalry and selfish competition—but "in proportion to the *help* which we are prepared to render to each other; and, therefore, by peace, love, and ready assistance, not only between individuals, but between all nations of the earth." We read those great words; but in the hearts of how few, alas! to judge from our modern creed on such matters, must the really important and distinctive points of them find an echo! To how few does this whole Exhibition seem to have been anything but a matter of personal gain or curiosity, for national aggrandisement, insular self-glorification, and selfish—I had almost said, treacherous—rivalry with the very foreigners whom we invited as our guests?

And so, too, with our cures of diseases. We speak of God's blessing the means, and God's blessing the cure. But all we really mean by blessing them, is permitting them. Do not our hearts confess that our notion of His blessing the means, is His leaving the means to themselves and their own physical laws—leaving, in short, the cure to us and not preventing our science doing its work, and asserting His own existence by bringing on some unexpected crisis, or unfortunate relapse—if, indeed, the old theory that He does bring on such, be true?

Our old forefathers, on the other hand, used to believe that

in medicine, as in everything else, God taught men all that they knew. They believed the words of the Wise Man when he said that “the Spirit of God gives man understanding.” The method by which Solomon believed himself to have obtained all his physical science and knowledge of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop which groweth on the wall, was in their eyes the only possible method. They believed the words of Isaiah when he said of the tillage and the rotation of crops in use among the peasants of his country, that their God instructed them to discretion and taught them; and that even the various methods of threshing out the various species of grain came “forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working.”

Such a method, you say, seems to you now miraculous. It did not seem to our forefathers miraculous that God should teach man; it seemed to them most simple, most rational, most natural, an utterly every-day axiom. They thought it was because so few of the heathen were taught by God that they were no wiser than they were. They thought that since the Son of God had come down and taken our nature upon Him, and ascended up on high and received gifts for men, that it was now the right and privilege of every human being who was willing to be taught of God, as the prophet foretold in those very words; and that baptism was the very sign and seal of that fact—a sign that for every human being, whatever his age, sex, rank, intellect, or race, a certain measure of the teaching of God and of the Spirit of God was

ready, promised, sure as the oath of Him that made heaven and the earth, and all things therein. That was Solomon's belief.

We do not find that it made him a fanatic and an idler, waiting with folded hands for inspiration to come to him he knew not how nor whence. His belief that wisdom was the revelation and gift of God did not prevent him from seeking her as silver, and searching for her as hid treasures, from applying his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; and we do not find that it prevented our forefathers. Ceadmon's belief that God inspired him with the poetic faculty, did not make him the less laborious and careful versifier. Bishop John's blessing the dumb boy's tongue in the name of Him whom he believed to be Word of God and the Master of that poor dumb boy, did not prevent his anticipating some of the discoveries of our modern wise men, in setting about a most practical and scientific cure. Alfred's continual prayers for light and inspiration made him no less a laborious and thoughtful student of war and law, of physics, language, and geography. These old Teutons, for all these superstitions of theirs, were perhaps as businesslike and practical in those days as we their children are in these. But that did not prevent their believing that unless God showed them a thing, they could not see it, and thanking Him honestly enough for the comparative little which He did show them. But we who enjoy the accumulated teaching of ages—we to whose researches He is revealing year by year, almost week by weeks wonders of which they never

dreamed—we whom He has taught to make the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, to exterminate the pestilence and defy the thunderbolt, to multiply millionfold the fruits of learning, to annihilate time and space, to span the heavens, and to weigh the sun—what madness is this which has come upon us in these last days, to make us fancy that we, insects of a day, have found out these things for ourselves, and talk big about the progress of the species, and the triumphs of intellect, and the all-conquering powers of the human mind, and give the glory of all this inspiration and revelation, not to God, but to ourselves?

Let us beware, beware—lest our boundless pride and self-satisfaction, by some mysterious yet most certain law, avenge itself—lest like the Assyrian conqueror of old, while we stand and cry, “Is not this great Babylon which I have built?” our reason, like his, should reel and fall beneath the narcotic of our own maddening self-conceit, and while attempting to scale the heavens we overlook some pitfall at our feet, and fall as learned idiots, suicidal pedants, to be a degradation, and a hissing, and a shame.

However strongly you may differ from these opinions of our own forefathers with regard to the ground and cause of physical science, and the arts of healing, I am sure that the recollection of the thrice holy ground upon which we stand, beneath the shadow of venerable piles, witnesses for the creeds, the laws, the liberties, which those our ancestors have handed down to us, will preserve you from the temptation of dismissing with hasty contempt their

thoughts upon any subject so important; will make you inclined to listen to their opinion with affection, if not with reverence; and save, perhaps, the preacher from a sneer when he declares that the doctrine of those old Saxon men is, in his belief, not only the most Scriptural, but the most rational and scientific explanation of the grounds of all human knowledge.

At least, I shall be able to quote in support of my own opinion a name from which there can be no appeal in the minds of a congregation of educated Englishmen—I mean Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, the spiritual father of the modern science, and, therefore, of the chemistry and the medicine of the whole civilised world. If there is one thing which more than another ought to impress itself on the mind of a careful student of his works, it is this—that he considered science as the inspiration of God, and every separate act of induction by which man arrives at a physical law, as a revelation from the Maker of those laws; and that the faith which gave him daring to face the mystery of the universe, and proclaim to men that they could conquer nature by obeying her, was his deep, living, practical belief that there was One who had ascended up on high and led captive in the flesh and spirit of a man those very idols of sense which had been themselves leading men's minds captive, enslaving them to the illusions of their own senses, forcing them to bow down in vague awe and terror before those powers of Nature, which God had appointed, not to be their tyrants, but their slaves.

I will not special-plead particulars from his works, wherein

I may consider that he asserts this. I will rather say boldly that the idea runs through every line he ever wrote; that unless seen in the light of that faith, the grounds of his philosophy ought to be as inexplicable to us, as they would, without it, have been impossible to himself. As has been well said of him: "Faith in God as the absolute ground of all human as well as of all natural laws; the belief that He had actually made Himself known to His creatures, and that it was possible for them to have a knowledge of Him, cleared from the phantasies and idols of their own imaginations and understandings; this was the necessary foundation of all that great man's mind and speculations, to whatever point they were tending, and however at times they might be darkened by too close a familiarity with the corruptions and meannesses of man, or too passionate an addiction to the contemplation of Nature. Nor should it ever be forgotten that he owed all the clearness and distinctness of his mind to his freedom from that Pantheism which naturally disposes to a vague admiration and adoration of Nature, to the belief that it is stronger and nobler than ourselves; that we are servants, and puppets, and portions of it, and not its lords and rulers. If Bacon had in anywise confounded Nature with God—if he had not entertained the strongest practical feeling that men were connected with God through One who had taken upon Him their nature, it is impossible that he could have discovered that method of dealing with physics which has made a physical science possible."

No really careful student of his works, but must have perceived this, however glad, alas! he may have felt at times to thrust the thought of it from him, and try to think that Francis Bacon's Christianity was something over and above his philosophy—a religion which he left behind him at the church-door—or only sprinkled up and down his works so much of it as should shield him in a bigoted age from the suspicion of materialism. A strange theory, and yet one which so determined is man to see nothing, whether it be in the Bible or in the *Novum Organum*, but what each wishes to see, has been deliberately put forth again and again by men who fancy, forsooth, that the greatest of English heroes was even such an one as themselves.

One does not wonder to find among the general characteristics of those writers who admire Bacon as a materialist, the most utter incapacity of philosophising on Bacon's method, the very restless conceit, the hasty generalisation, the hankering after cosmogonic theories, which Bacon anathematises in every page. Yes, I repeat it, we owe our medical and sanitary science to Bacon's philosophy; and Bacon owed his philosophy to his Christianity.

Oh! it is easy for us, amid the marvels of our great hospitals, now grown commonplace in our eyes from very custom, to talk of the empire of mind over matter; for us—who reap the harvest whereof Bacon sowed the seed. But consider, how great the faith of that man must have been, who died in hope, not having received the promises, but seeing them afar off, and haunted to his dying day with glorious visions of a time when famine

and pestilence should vanish before a scientific obedience—to use his own expression—to the will of God, revealed in natural facts. Thus we can understand how he dared to denounce all that had gone before him as blind and worthless guides, and to proclaim himself to the world as the one restorer of true physical philosophy. Thus we can understand how he, the cautious and patient man of the world, dared indulge in those vast dreams of the scientific triumphs of the future. Thus we can understand how he dared hint at the expectation that men would some day even conquer death itself; because he believed that man had conquered death already, in the person of its King and Lord—in the flesh of Him who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. The “empire of mind over matter?” What practical proof had he of it amid the miserable alternations of empiricism and magic which made up the pseudo-science of his time; amid the theories and speculations of mankind, which, as he said, were “but a sort of madness—useless alike for discovery or for operation.” What right had he, more than any other man who had gone before him, to believe that man could conquer and mould to his will the unseen and tremendous powers which work in every cloud and every flower? that he could dive into the secret mysteries of his own body, and renew his youth like the eagle’s? This ground he had for that faith—that he believed, as he says himself, that he must “begin from God; and that the pursuit of physical science clearly proceeds from Him, the Author of good, and Father of light.” This gave

him faith to say that in this as in all other Divine works, the smallest beginnings lead assuredly to some result, and that the “remark in spiritual matters, that the kingdom of God cometh without observation, is also found to be true in every great work of Divine Providence; so that everything glides on quietly without confusion or noise, and the matter is achieved before men either think or perceive that it is commenced.” This it was which gave him courage to believe that his own philosophy might be the actual fulfilment of the prophecy, that in the last days many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased—words which, like hundreds of others in his works, sound like the outpourings of an almost blasphemous self-conceit, till we recollect that he looked on science only as the inspiration of God, and man’s empire over nature only as the consequence of the redemption worked out for him by Christ, and begin to see in them the expressions of the deepest and most divine humility.

I doubt not that many here will be far more able than I am practically to apply the facts which I have been adducing to the cause of the hospital for which I am pleading. But there is one consequence of them to which I must beg leave to draw attention more particularly, especially at the present era of our nation.

If, then, these discoveries of science be indeed revelations and inspirations from God, does it not follow that all classes, even the poorest and the most ignorant, the most brutal, have an equal right to enjoy the fruits of them? Does it not follow that to give to the poor their share in the blessings which chemical

and medical science are working out for us, is not a matter of charity or benevolence, but of *duty*, of indefeasible, peremptory, immediate duty? For consider, my friends; the Son of God descends on earth, and takes on Him not only the form, but the very nature, affections, trials, and sorrows of a man. He proclaims Himself as the person who has been all along ruling, guiding, teaching, improving men; the light who lighteth every man who cometh into the world. He proclaims Himself by acts of wondrous power to be the internecine foe and conqueror of every form of sorrow, slavery, barbarism, weakness, sickness, death itself. He proclaims Himself as One who is come to give His life for His sheep—One who is come to restore to men the likeness in which they were originally created, the likeness of their Father in Heaven, who accepteth the person of no man—who causeth His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, who sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust, in whose sight the meanest publican, if his only consciousness be that of his own baseness and worthlessness, is more righteous than the most learned, respectable, and self-satisfied pharisee. He proclaims Himself the setter-up of a kingdom into which the publican and the harlot will pass sooner than the rich, the mighty, and the noble; a kingdom in which all men are to be brothers, and their bond of union loyalty to One who spared not His own life for the sheep, who came not to do His own, but the will of the Father who had sent Him, and who showed by His toil among the poor, the outcast, the ignorant, and the brutal, what that same

will was like. With His own life-blood He seals this Covenant between God and man. He offers up His own body as the first-fruits of this great kingdom of self-sacrifice. He takes poor fishermen and mechanics, and sends them forth to acquaint all men with the good news that God is their King, and to baptize them as subjects of that kingdom, bound to rise in baptism to a new life, a life of love, and brotherhood, and self-sacrifice, like His own. He commands them to call all nations to that sacred Feast wherein there is neither rich nor poor, but the same bread and the same wine are offered to the monarch and to the slave, as signs of their common humanity, their common redemption, their common interest—signs that they derive their life, their health, their reason, their every faculty of body, soul, and spirit, from One who walked the earth as the son of a poor carpenter, who ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He sends down His Spirit on them with gifts of language, eloquence, wisdom, and healing, as mere earnest and first-fruits; so they said, of that prophecy that He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, even upon slaves and handmaids. And these poor fishermen feel themselves impelled by a divine and irresistible impulse to go forth to the ends of the world, and face persecution, insult, torture, and death—not in order that they may make themselves lords over mankind, but that they may tell them that One is their Master, even Jesus Christ, both God and man—that *He*

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