

PARISH, SCHOOL, AND COLLEGE
SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

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With a Memoir of the Author's Life,

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE editing of this volume has been strictly confined to selecting the Sermons here printed from among the large number of admirable discourses left by the lamented Author, arranging them in order, and correcting the press. I need scarcely add that no variations from the Author's MSS. have been made: the Sermons are printed precisely as he left them. Doubtless, if they had been revised by him with a view to publication, they would have been in places improved: but even as it is, I feel the utmost confidence that the judgment of the Church respecting them will be, that Sermons of such excellence ought not to have been let die. I pray God to bless them to the benefit of many souls.

H. R.

St. Matthew's, Quebec, July, 1867.

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MEMOIR.

THE Reverend GEORGE CLERK IRVING, the author of the following Sermons, received his education at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he held a Scholarship; and came to Canada in November, 1851, in consequence of having received the appointment of Professor of Mathematics in Trinity College, Toronto. This appointment he held from the first opening of the College in January, 1852, until the autumn of 1856, when he returned to England. Four years later, the Mathematical Professorship having again become vacant, Mr. Irving was induced, on the pressing invitation of the Corporation of Trinity College, to return to this country and to resume his former duties, with the position of Vice-Provost. He was thus connected with the College for a further period of three years, from the autumn of 1860 to that of 1863, when, to the great regret of his many friends in Upper Canada, he was determined by circumstances to accept the Rectorship of the Grammar School in connexion with Bishop's College, Lennoxville. The duties of this new position he discharged with great ability and success until his lamented death, which took place on the 11th of August, 1866, while he was bathing at Rivière du Loup.

The great value of Mr. Irving's services, as a Professor in Trinity College, is well known to all who are acquainted with its history, and was recognized alike by the governing body, by those with whom he was associated in the work of

instruction, and by those who were placed under his care. He possessed, in a very high degree, the power of securing both the affection and the esteem of his pupils; his genial disposition and thoughtful kindness called forth their attachment, while a conscientious discharge of his own duties and a constant endeavour to secure, as far as possible, a corresponding diligence on the part of those whom he taught, led them to respect him at the time, and to regard him in after years as one who had ever consulted their true interests. On his return to England in 1866, he received from the students, including those who had left the College as well as the existing body, a model of the College beautifully executed in silver,—a most gratifying token of their high appreciation of his character and of the benefits which they had received from his instruction and example.

Mr. Irving's qualifications for the office which he held are best attested, so far as scientific attainment is concerned, by his place in the Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge in 1850, when he stood eighth on the list of Wranglers; while, in addition to natural ability and acquired knowledge, he possessed an unusual aptitude for communicating instruction and a keen interest in the work of tuition. He had a remarkable capacity of making clear to the apprehension of others that which it was his object to impart, and a most conscientious determination to render his instructions available, as far as possible, even to those whose natural abilities were small, and whose perceptive faculties were dull. He never allowed the more congenial and hopeful task of training the ready and intelligent scholar to divert him from the more irksome duty of leading slowly and for a little way those who were incapable of higher efforts. There was, indeed, a thoroughness in his mode of prosecuting any work

which he took in hand, of whatever kind it might be—he never spared himself—but gave, without grudging, both time and anxious attention to that which he had once resolved to do.

A long and very intimate intercourse with him has left with the writer a most pleasing remembrance of the manner in which he habitually recognized the claims of equals and of superiors, binding himself in innumerable particulars in which it is impossible that any written law should be provided for the regulation of the conduct. He thus rendered familiar and confidential communication with him not only practicable but most welcome; and promoted, to an extent not easily to be appreciated, the well-being of the College, by acting constantly on a good understanding with those with whom he was associated, and by obviating all the inconvenience and weakness which necessarily result from a want of cordiality or from divided councils.

It may be expected that something should be said of Mr. Irving's theological attainments, and of his qualifications as a preacher. Though mathematics were his favorite—they were, by no means, his exclusive—study; and, as he accepted his post at Toronto with a full understanding that it would be his duty to take part in the religious teaching given in the College Chapel, so did he address himself to this portion of his work with characteristic earnestness and diligence. His classical attainments were by no means slight, and would probably have enabled him to secure a very fair position in the *Tripes*; and these attainments he very diligently employed in qualifying himself to interpret Holy Scripture. His sermons were, accordingly, the work of a thoughtful and honest mind, unusually disposed to a searching investigation of the meaning of the sacred text, and most

reluctant to acquiesce in vague or superficial views. Nor did he fail to discover the same straight-forward honesty in drawing practical inferences from the doctrine of Holy Scripture; his hearers would ever feel that he was not inculcating on others any duty, the obligation of which he had not carefully weighed, and fully recognized in its application to himself.

In consenting, at the desire of some of the author's friends in Canada, to furnish this brief and very imperfect sketch of a portion of his life, in order that it might be prefixed to the present volume, the writer cannot but regret that he is not in a position to give other details which would no doubt have possessed an interest for many, to whom Mr. Irving was well known in England; yet he gladly offers this small tribute to the memory of one whom he very highly esteemed and most deeply regrets, and in whom he found an intelligent adviser and generous friend, amid the many difficulties inseparable from the establishment of a new College, and more especially at a time of great perplexity and discouragement, which followed on Mr. Irving's return from England in 1860.

G. W.

SERMON I.

JOY.

Christmas Day.

ST. JOHN xvi. 22.

Your joy no man taketh from you.

SUCH is our Lord's description of the inheritance which He was about to leave to His disciples—a widely different one from what the Jews expected from the Messiah, probably from what the disciples had themselves looked for when they first became followers of Christ. True they would have expected a joy, a happiness which the malice neither of men nor devils should be *allowed* to destroy—perhaps they scarcely understood that it would be such as from its very nature would be beyond the reach of these enemies, such as *they* could scarcely comprehend and never either give or take away. And wherein was it that this joy was to consist? What was this happiness to be which should be thus strangely independent of all external accidents? We may learn from the chapter from which our text is taken wherein it was to con-

sist—a chapter which records our Lord's teaching very shortly before His suffering, wherein He describes both the temporary sorrow which was to come upon them and the deep enduring joy which was to follow. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy... Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name, ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." The first great source of comfort to the disciples was to be the restoration to them of their Master, His triumph over the powers of evil just when they fancied He had fallen beneath them, His re-appearance among them when they thought they were to see Him no more. We can well understand the ecstasy of joy which the disciples must have felt in seeing their Lord restored to them. But we must remember that there was a much higher source of comfort and satisfaction than the enjoyment of His human presence among them again. For he was now to them something more than before—something more

even than the merciful and sympathizing Friend and Teacher whom they had followed those three years. He had borne their griefs and carried their sorrows; He who knew no sin had been made a sin-offering for them—had tasted the original punishment of sin—death, but being Himself without sin could not be holden of death. His re-appearance was a sign and a proof that His sacrifice was accepted, that He was truly the Mediator between God and man; that in His Name they might venture to ask for anything—for the forgiveness of past sin—for help to conquer the evil tendencies of their nature; that for His sake the Holy Spirit would take up His abode in them to guide them unto all truth; that they might look forward to a future life of unalloyed happiness afterwards. And this joy, *history* tells us, no man could take from the Christian of early days; no mere worldly sorrow could crush that joy, no hopes of worldly prosperity could eclipse it. The stake or the rack were not merely borne, but borne cheerfully, the heavenly happiness, the consciousness of the reality of their Christian privileges shining through the bodily torture and the instinctive fear of death. Much must they have had to try them which we can scarcely understand. The breaking of family ties—the changed and angry looks of those whom they loved best—the necessity of persevering in

depriving themselves of all the pleasures of domestic life—of the dearest joys that humanity can give—all these sacrifices made steadily, deliberately, and issuing not in misery but in real happiness, may shew us that in the case of the sincere Christian of primitive times, it might with truth be said that his joy no man could take from him; that in his earnest conviction that he had a God in whom he could trust, that beneath him were the everlasting arms to comfort him in sorrow, and to help him in temptation, he had a safeguard against both the terrors and the seductions of the world; that though these might make him uneasy or sad, yet his source of joy was above their reach, and that even while suffering from them he could still rejoice.

Let us remember that if we are to be like those early Christians, this must be *our* true source of happiness—this sense of the presence of God, of our being able to serve Him, of the help given us in our efforts to improve, of the hope of everlasting life given us in our Saviour. It is not that there are no other sources of enjoyment; it would be most ungrateful to deny or fail to be thankful for the many mercies which we have received—are daily receiving — of a less purely spiritual character. Health and strength, affection of friends, the capacity for intellectual enjoyment,

even the possession of mere worldly advantages—all these are real and actual sources of happiness in a certain sense, and it would be saying that which is untrue to deny it. But when we compare them with the real joy of the Christian they look small indeed by contrast. They are temporal and contingent; the other looks beyond time and is independent of the accidents of life. We perhaps scarcely realize, especially in very early life, the mere thread upon which our earthly enjoyments hang; how small a cause may rob us of the health on which so much of our happiness rests; how soon those friends on whose affection we depend may be snatched from us; how fickle is fortune as regards our external prosperity. Perhaps it is scarcely intended that we should have this too much before us, but that we should be capable of enjoying these benefits as they arise with simple thankfulness. But the danger is that we do more than avoid such an undue anxiety about the future as would prevent our enjoying God's gifts—that we forget that there *is* a future—that we cling to all the present because that present contains everything that is valuable to us—that we lose the real, the enduring joy, which might remain with us when all our earthly comforts had crumbled away, which will last for ever, which depends on no conjuncture of external circum-

stances, which no man can take from us. And besides, we must remember, our secondary enjoyments are of themselves sadly incomplete. How one after the other, left to themselves, they become wearisome and unprofitable : how the man whom all around him consider so happy is often more to be pitied than those who envy him, and ready to exclaim in the midst of his prosperity that all is vanity and vexation of spirit ! Yes, we may be sure that, in the long run, a religious spirit is necessary even for the full enjoyment of earthly blessings. It is he who remembers that they are blessings—gifts from God—who most keenly appreciates them, on whom they are least likely to pall, who least urgently requires continual novelty of enjoyment. And of course such a person will have besides his peculiar joy—the joy which no man takes from him—the happy and ever present thought of the covenant relation in which he stands towards God—the help, the pardon ever ready to be granted for the asking—the remembrance that if he shall ask the Father anything in the name of Christ it shall be given him.

The great danger is lest this, the only true and sure happiness, become considered less valuable than that which is the result of outward prosperity. Our Saviour, you will remember, in the course of His teaching, speaks of *having* riches, and of *trusting in*

riches as almost the same thing. Of course it is the same with all other earthly blessings ; the danger is that we come to *trust in* them, to rest upon them, to derive our whole happiness from them. And then remember that our Saviour said of such, that it was impossible they could enter into the kingdom of heaven. What do we suppose He would say of those who being under that kingdom—living in the Gospel covenant—are acquiring just the very spirit which He said would bar the entrance to those without ? And we may therefore well ask ourselves, when all is going smoothly with us—when the course of our life is happy and undisturbed—what is the real cause of our content, whether our joy is full because we have asked and have received, or whether we are “trusting in” the riches or pleasures of this world, even the purest and best of such. And if we really want to answer this question fairly, let us venture to look the future in the face. Let us remember that in the ordinary course of life many of these blessings must drop off, that of many we may be deprived by the evil will of our fellows, that *all* must pass from us at death. Let us try for a moment to imagine the effect of such losses upon us. We may lose the high spirits which are the result of good health ; we may be deprived of friends who are dearer to us than our own lives ; the

caprices of fortune may leave us poor and destitute of many things which seem almost necessary: and how would it be with us then? "Your joy no man taketh from you," says our Saviour—no man, no human causes. Can we persuade ourselves that when trouble comes—and come it must some day to all of us—we shall have this resource wherewith to meet it? That while earthly hopes shall suffer shipwreck we shall be able to go on calmly and trustfully—not without pain—we must suffer when that we have enjoyed is withdrawn—but with pain through which is felt the joy which even such losses cannot take away? It is good to ask ourselves such a question in the days of prosperity, and to try to answer it fairly and honestly, because if we feel that we have not that deep interest in religion which could carry us through such trials—if we feel that there is one earthly loss which could utterly wreck our happiness and leave us without comfort, then it is time to be on our guard as to the nature of our present content, time that we began to reflect that the cause of our joy may be other than that to which our Saviour points; that we may be rejoicing not because we have the prospect of seeing Him at the second Advent, and the privilege of being in communion with Him now, but because we have forgotten both His actual and His

future presence ; happy, not because through Him we have access to the Father, but because we have ceased to value that access, to be conscious of the frailty and weakness which render it so needful for us to look for help from Him. “ Your joy no man taketh from you.” If we feel that the course of human events could take *all* joy from us: that disease, or loss of friends, or ingratitude, or loss of affection, or any earthly evil could leave us in wretchedness which there would be no joy to penetrate, then is our happiness now *not* of the right sort—we have not *that* happiness which our Saviour promised. If only for the sake of our future comfort in this life, we should endeavour to set this right. We should try earnestly to make God the first great object of our love—obedience to Him the first great effort of our lives: this and this only can make the consciousness of our Lord’s presence and mediation the real source of comfort. And let us remember, that if those thoughts are to be a consolation to us in trouble, if they are to support us when in danger of being swallowed up with over much sorrow, we must know what they mean now, must feel that the purest and keenest of earthly delights are really as nothing when compared to those privileges which Christ has purchased for us, must feel the joy which no man taketh from us rising superior to that which it

has pleased God to make dependent on the course of events.

We are likely to forget all this in proportion to the degree of our present happiness. In times of sorrow we can scarcely fail to remember that there *is* a joy which might be ours even if it actually is not so. But it is when all is well with us that we are most likely quite to lose sight of that joy, to mistake for it perhaps the pleasure which springs from other causes. And this is especially the case with the great Festival which we celebrate to-day. On this day it is our duty to rejoice ; if we are really in earnest we cannot do otherwise when we commemorate the nativity of our Lord, that day on which the heavenly host proclaimed the “ glad tidings of great joy ” — “ peace on earth, goodwill towards man ” — the entrance of the world’s Maker into His own creation in human form. And the church has transmitted to us the wholesome custom of observing that day, and the usages of society have conformed so far to the rule of the Church that the very name of Christmas bears with it a cheerful sound.

It is associated I suppose in the minds of all of us with domestic charities and neighbourly courtesies. It reminds us of families, dispersed throughout the year, gathering on that day round the hearth where they sat

as children, catching something of that indescribable happiness which children only fully enjoy. And may it be long before we cease to associate such ideas with Christmas—may it be long before we give up any of the good old customs which make our hearts warm towards each other on the day of our Saviour's birth—may it be long before we cease to welcome the return of that day with joy—to keep it as a festival! But let us not omit to ask ourselves the *source* of the joyousness of the day; to be on our guard lest the observances by which we seek to do it honour should lead us to forget why we honour it. “Your joy no man taketh from you.” Surely we may well jealously watch ourselves to see if this is so: to see whether, if we had to spend our Christmas as many a martyr and confessor has spent it, we could rejoice *then*; or whether we have rejoiced only in the external festivity of the season. Remember that all *that* must in all human probability drop off some day: the places in the family group may become vacant, or we may be separated from it—we may have to keep a solitary Christmas, among strangers whose greetings must sound coldly to us; we may have to keep a Christmas in weariness and pain, disappointment and distress; and should we then rejoice? Can we feel that behind all the temporal blessings,—giving force to them and ready

to take their place when they are gone — is the true joy of the day ; the thankful memory of the events commemorated, the deep sense of the benefit they have gained us, the quiet resting on the assurance that for the sake of Him whose birth we now celebrate we can approach God as our Father, with the peaceful security that whatsoever we ask shall be heard ? If so, it is well ; then our joy is of the right sort, that which no man taketh from us. But it may be very different ; with many we must fear it is very different : we must fear that there are those who enter into all the heartiness and good-will towards their fellows—who enjoy the human element of the festival—but sadly forget the Divine. And any one who does so may easily convince himself of it by asking himself what Christmas would be to him if deprived of these, which are really its secondary pleasures. To such it would be a day merely of double gloom—the day on which more than any other he would realize that “ sorrow’s crown of sorrows,” the memory of past happiness—the contrast between the enjoyment of days gone by and the bitterness of the present. Do we fear that *this* would be the case with us if our external blessings were removed ? Do we fear that we should be spending the day in mourning over our lost pleasures or our disappointed hopes instead of joining

the song of the Angels, the glorious triumph of the host of Heaven? If so, let us be wise enough at once to seek for that joy which we ought to have, but which in such a case we certainly have not. Let us not be contented, till, surrounded by earthly blessings and comforts, with health and prosperity and the affection of friends, we can honestly and truly feel that while we are grateful for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life—we are thankful *above all* for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. To arrive at this, we must wage war in earnest upon every practice and every inclination which is opposed to our Lord's will. We cannot be thankful for our redemption while we take pleasure in that from which we have been redeemed. And if you say, that this involves repentance, and that the sorrow of the penitent is not a fit companion of the joy of Christmas, then you only show how very necessary it is that some alteration should be made—that the attempt should be abandoned to enter into the joy of the festival, when it can be gained only by slurring over and forgetting the evil of the past. Far better to spend our Christmas in the bitterness of the deepest penitence, than in such fictitious, such unreal happiness as this. And besides, let us remember that though the struggle

with our evil nature may be a hard one, though it may be hard to keep our gaze steadily fixed upon the reality when we have been so long amusing ourselves with shadows, yet there must be a satisfaction in the midst of it all—a joy which not even the shame and humiliation can quite take away—a joy such as could never accompany the merriment of the thoughtless. That joy belongs more or less to all who are in earnest in the matter of religion—more or less according to the progress they have made. In those who have but lately been roused from a life of carelessness, it may be feeble and uncertain: in one who has been all his life trying to follow God's will, it must be strong and intense. No man—no earthly power—nothing but our own indifference to it can deprive us of it. Let us then be careful to guard against the growth of that indifference. Let us try to hold fast the real joy and happiness of this season—enjoying, and with thankfulness, the external blessings bestowed upon us—but remembering to rejoice above all at the thought that we may look forward with hope to Christ's second Advent, and praying both for ourselves and others that He would so turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at His second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in His sight.

SERMON II.
CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE DOCTORS.
HIS LIFE AT NAZARETH.

First Sunday after Epiphany.

ST. LUKE, ii. 49, 50.

And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.

THIS, and a few succeeding Sundays, are called the Sundays after the Epiphany, which is the name of the festival which fell in the middle of last week. The word Epiphany means "manifestation" or "showing;" and the particular *showing* which we are taught at this season to celebrate, is the showing of our blessed Lord to the Gentiles. Thus, the event to which our minds are drawn both by the Collect and by the Gospel for the Epiphany, is, as you will see by looking at your Prayer Book, the coming of the wise men from the East to worship our Lord; they having been the first heathens who came to acknowledge in Him the Saviour of the world. But it is to be noticed that the word

Epiphany in itself simply means showing, and any event in which our Lord's power and character were made known, might properly be called one of His Epiphanies. Thus, in ancient times, the word was applied as a name of Christmas Day, on which our Lord began to be made manifest in the flesh ; and in the services for the Sundays after the Epiphany, our Church seems to wish to illustrate this more general meaning of the word, by selecting for the Gospel the accounts of the most remarkable occasions on which our Lord made known His Divine wisdom and power, whether to the Jews or to the Gentiles.

Perhaps we do not always see the full importance of these manifestations. We are apt to look upon the feast of the Epiphany as something almost superfluous. The other Holy Days on which we commemorate the chief events in the history of our Lord—Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day—for these we can more easily see a reason. But we are inclined to say, Why should we be taught to set apart a special season for the consideration of the occasions on which our Lord was manifested to His people ? Was He not from His very birth declared to be the Son of God with power ? was He not manifested once for all when the heavenly host proclaimed the glad tidings of His advent to the shepherds of Bethlehem ?

All this is true : but what we forget is, that after He was thus manifested, there followed some thirty years, during which He withdrew himself from the gaze of the world and lived at Nazareth in obscurity and subjection to His mother and Joseph. We are very apt to forget those thirty years. In the course of every year we celebrate all the chief events of our Saviour's life, and it is natural to be led to think of the events themselves following with something like the same quickness as do the days on which we celebrate them. Let us try to picture to our minds rather more clearly the distance of these events, and the kind of obscurity into which our Lord's pretensions must have sunk by the time He began His public ministry. His birth was made known, in the first place, to the shepherds by the Angel ; next the Magi appeared to do Him homage ; His infancy was further marked by the murder of the children at Bethlehem by the command of Herod ; but then for thirty years, except on one occasion, nothing was heard of Him. Now, think what a long time of silence and obscurity this was. Of those who were old when our Lord was born, none would be left on earth when He began His ministry ; not many would be left of those who were of middle age when the story of His birth was told ; and of those who then were young and had heard that

story—who had been among those who wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds—some would have had the remembrance driven out by the bustle and pleasures or business of thirty of the most active years of man's life ; others would suppose that the cruel cunning of Herod had succeeded, and that He who was said to be born King of the Jews, had perished among the innocents at Bethlehem : few would, like the Virgin Mary, have kept all these things and pondered them in their heart. And perhaps it will best enable us to appreciate the way in which it was lost sight of that our Lord was anything more than man—that it became needful that His true character should be *manifested* to the world—if we think that even His mother understood not the saying which He spake when He referred to His divine mission, when He asked her whether she knew not that He must be about His Father's business. And if even His mother thus needed that His true character should be made known to her, much more would the world at large need a manifestation of it. The notes of the first Christmas hymn were echoed in the hearts of only a few, and feebler and feebler as the years rolled by. Men needed to be reminded, when those years were over, that it was really Jesus of Nazareth over whose birth the hosts of heaven had exulted,

through whom they had proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Of this time, in which our Lord lived in obscurity the ordinary life of man, the Holy Scriptures give us no information, or scarcely any, and it is vain to seek for authentic intelligence from any other source. It is not, as we shall try to show presently, that that time can be considered as one of no importance—far from it,—but rather that the history of what may be called the private life of our Lord yields so entirely in interest to the history of His public ministry, that the sacred writers dwell almost exclusively on the latter. Once, and once only, St. Luke breaks the silence in which the doings of those years are concealed. One Epiphany he records between the adoration of the Magi and the baptism of St. John, the story which we have heard as the Gospel for the day. There we are told that, when our Lord was twelve years old, He went up for the first time with His parents to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. It should be noticed that this incident is not chosen arbitrarily, but is recorded as a step in His course of obedience to the Law, the next after His circumcision. We are told it was at the age of twelve years that a boy was called "a son of the law," and considered to be bound to obey all its pre-

cepts and to be old enough to partake in the ordinances of religion. Accordingly, as soon as He was of the proper age, our Lord went up with His parents to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem.

The rest of the story is remarkable and deserves our best attention. It has been supposed, with good reason, that it must have been told to the Evangelist by our Lord's mother ; and it seems probable that it struck her, because it was the first instance in which her wonderful Son showed a consciousness of His own mission, in which He declared His own character. "When they had fulfilled the days, as they returned the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it." They thought He was in the company. For the sake of safety and convenience, the persons who were going up from the same place to Jerusalem travelled all together, and thus the *company* here mentioned would be made up of those persons who had come up to Jerusalem from Nazareth, and were now returning thither. His parents thought that He was with some of their kinsfolk or friends who were in this company, and so did not trouble themselves about His not being with them until they had finished their day's journey and were preparing to rest for the night. Then they sought Him in vain, and when they could not find Him, they returned to

Jerusalem to seek for Him. After three days they found Him in the temple, that is, in one of the rooms of the temple buildings where the Rabbis taught the law. Here He was found "sitting among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions." It would, I believe, be a mistake to imagine that these words imply that He was assuming the position of a *teacher*. When He is said to have been *hearing* the doctors, it is merely meant that He was listening to their teaching. By His asking them questions is meant His appealing to them for instruction. It was indeed the regular custom in Jewish schools for the scholars to put questions to their masters for them to answer. So that our Lord seems to have occupied only the place suited to His age, and to have been engaged as a learner when His parents found Him, though all were surprised at the wisdom which he showed—at His understanding and His answers.

And when his parents saw Him "they were amazed; and his mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." His answer is a remarkable one, and deserves notice in several points. "He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" It is worth noticing the way in which he

here corrects His mother's error in calling Joseph His father. Hitherto, no doubt, he had called His mother's husband by that name, but now he claims His own—His real Father—from this time we find Him speaking of "My Father which is in heaven." The gradual growth in mind as well as in body of the Son of man, is one of those mysteries which we cannot attempt to comprehend ; but it is quite clear, from what we read, that His mind did grow in power, and that therefore as a child He must have been like other children ; unable to grasp the idea of His own mission—unconscious of His own dignity. Here, for the first time apparently, (if we may judge from His mother's being unable to understand what He said) here for the first time broke forth the consciousness that He was something more than the carpenter's son at Nazareth—that He had a Father in heaven whose business it was His work to discharge. And so He says, "How is it that ye were seeking Me?" How is it that ye were at a loss where to find Me? How is it that ye spent three days looking for Me throughout the city? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business, and that therefore you would be sure to find Me in My Father's house?

I may just notice that it seems to me to be not improbable that when it is said "the child Jesus tarried

behind in Jerusalem," it may be meant not that He remained of His own accord, but that He was left behind owing to His not being with His parents when the Nazareth company set off; and so, finding Himself left alone in the city, He betook Himself to His Father's house, the temple, and seems, by His reply, to have considered that to be the natural place for His earthly parents to come and seek Him.

And what follows this Epiphany—this showing forth of His real character—this claiming of God for His Father not merely in the sense in which men call God their Father, but as being to Him in the place of a human parent? Does He at once enter upon His public ministry? Does He, as soon as He has shewn His consciousness of His own character, throw off at once His obedience to His earthly parents, and commence an independent career? No: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." And we hear no more of Him for the next eighteen years, except that "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

And now let us consider for a few minutes the significance of these thirty years of silence thus once interrupted, and of the interruption itself. And to see this, we must remember exactly what our Lord came to do. He came to reconcile fallen man to God

by the sacrifice of His own life. He came also to make known to men the nature of the service which God requires of them, and to set them a pattern of obedience to that service. Others before Him—prophets and inspired teachers—had been commissioned to declare in part God's will and commandments to mankind, but He alone was to be their pattern and their atonement; and in order that He might be fitted to be these He lived his life of retirement and innocence at Nazareth. There it was that, as man, He yielded the perfect obedience both to the moral and ceremonial law, which must needs be rendered by Him who was to pay the penalty due from man for the transgression of the law. There He lived the life of perfect righteousness which enabled Him to teach with authority and not as the Scribes,—not as any mere human teachers before or since, to whom more or less must always apply the saying "Physician, heal thyself." And we may learn a lesson from the very silence of the Evangelists about this period. We should have naturally wished it to be otherwise—we should have liked to have some information as to the employments and habits of this disguised Prince of the world—we should have liked to have been told anecdotes of His gentleness, and love, and self-denial—to have been enabled to perceive how, as His frame increased and

His human mind opened, the Divine nature within made Itself more and more manifest; and, instead of all this, we have only this one short story of His boyhood, and the general information that He was subject to His parents, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. And yet the life thus briefly described was the very pattern of human life, it was the one life free from all sin which made Him who lived it, fit, as regarded his humanity, to be the Example and Redeemer of all mankind. In the three years of His ministry He is presented to us in another character; then He is the teacher, the founder of a new system. He then has scarcely any *private* life; that ended with His baptism by St. John. When the Baptist objected to his request to be baptized, and said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee and comest Thou to me." His answer was, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"—or rather to fill up all righteousness; to complete the requirements of the new dispensation; as if this one act of compliance with God's commands, was the only one lacking to make Him perfect. And you will remember that, as if to justify this claim of having fulfilled all righteousness, when He came from the water there followed a wonderful Epiphany or showing forth of His glorious nature. "The heaven was opened, and

the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him ; and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased ;” and then began his public life. His private life of obedience went before, in the years of which we hear so little. And the incident which we have been considering shows us that He was not thus content to remain in obscurity because he was ignorant of His own character. It was not, as some ancient heretics would have it, that up to the time of His baptism Jesus was merely human, but then the Divine Nature united Himself to Him. It was the same Being who said, “ I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God ”—it was the same Being who in His boyhood said that He must be about His Father’s business. No : from that first Passover it is clear that it was with the full knowledge of who He was, that He set men the example of quiet, unpretending discharge of the duties of social life. And let us remember this when we hear of the duty of endeavouring to follow the example of our Blessed Lord. Let us remember that in that part of His life which ours must most resemble, we hear so little of Him—indeed only that He was subject to His parents, and that He began at the proper time to attend upon the public services of religion. And be sure that those are not

imitating Him,—they cannot really be about their Father's business—however great may be the sacrifice they are making—however noble the work which they are undertaking—who venture either to neglect their obvious, straightforward duties to those around them, or to make the honesty and sincerity of their labours a reason why they may safely go without the appointed means of grace. When our Lord assumed His office of man's teacher and the founder of a new religion, then He left His home and pronounced that they who believed the news which He proclaimed were bound to Him by a nearer tie than those who were His relations according to the flesh. But, while He lived in a private station, that is, while His course of life was similar to our own, we hear only that He was subject to His parents, and that He strictly fulfilled the requirements of the religious system under which He lived. And surely it should be a comfort to us to remember that, however lowly—however much removed from notice our life may be—however humble or laborious our employment, it may still, if we are but honestly discharging our duties and seeking to obey God's will, resemble the early life of our great Example more exactly than many a career of which much is heard among men. Let us then turn to our daily duties; let us be regular in the use of the means of grace, in

the conviction that thus, and not by self-willed methods of our own choosing, we shall best carry out God's will concerning us, and be securing the favour of our great Intercessor, so that, at His last Epiphany, when He shall come to judge the world, He may receive us to Himself, as those who here have been about His Father's business.

SERMON III.

THE STORM ON THE SEA OF GALILEE.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

ST. MATTHEW, viii. 26.

And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

IN this morning's gospel, we have read of two of our Lord's wonderful exhibitions of divine power, and to the significance of the former of them I wish now to direct your attention. I allude to the story of His controlling the storm on the lake of Gennesareth. The story itself is simply told by the first three Evangelists, their narrations differing only in some very minute particulars. We learn something about the time of the miracle from St. Mark. He tells us that our Lord, being thronged by the multitude who came to listen to His teaching by the shores of the sea of Galilee, had got into a vessel, and spoken to the crowd from it while they stood upon the shore. And having apparently spent the greater part of the day in teaching them, during which time He delivered some of

His most remarkable parables, and having dismissed His hearers as the evening drew on, He said to His disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side." And as they went, He fell asleep in the vessel, being wearied, probably, with the toil of His day's teaching, sharing, as He did, all the sinless infirmities of our nature, proving His real and true manhood by showing that He partook of its weakness. And while He was sleeping, a sudden storm came down upon the ship. We are told by travellers that the lake of Gennesareth is very liable to be thus disturbed. Its banks are surrounded by high hills, intersected by valleys or ravines, down which the wind suddenly rushes with extreme fury; and it was, apparently, in one of these squalls that the vessel was caught which carried our Lord and His disciples, and it was so violent that, as St. Matthew tells us, the ship was covered with the waves. In the extremity of their danger, they began to think of Him who was sleeping peacefully in the hinder part of the ship, and in their terror they awoke Him with entreaties for help; crying, as the three Evangelists tell us, "Lord, save us, we perish;" "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" "Master, master, we perish." It is scarcely worth while to stay for a moment to consider the difference between the speeches attributed to the disciples by

the three Evangelists. When a number of men, all under the influence of strong fear, were entreating the help of Him from whom alone they hoped for safety, it is not very likely that they would all use the same form of words; and each Evangelist would naturally give us either that form of words which he himself remembered using or hearing used, as in the case of St. Matthew, or that which had been given him by the eye-witness from whom he derived his information, as in the case of St. Mark and St. Luke. Whatever may have been the exact words in which they prayed for help, that help was graciously given, and He who had just shown that He was "very man," by yielding to the pressure of human weariness, now showed that He was "very God," by exerting His power over the furious waves. "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

But while He thus saved His disciples from their danger, He accompanied His help with a rebuke. This rebuke, again, is variously worded in the three narratives, and, moreover, while in St. Matthew's account it is placed *before* the stilling of the storm, in those of St. Mark and St. Luke it comes afterwards. And it is curious to notice how the strength of the

reproof varies with the degree of unbelief exhibited in the several exclamations attributed to the disciples, as if different answers had been addressed to different individuals among them by our Lord. In St. Matthew, the disciples exclaim, "Lord, save us, we are perishing," and the answer is, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith." In St. Luke they cry simply, "Master, master, we are perishing" without saying "save us," and He replies, "Where is your faith?" In St. Mark, their distrust is more conspicuous—"Master, carest thou not that we perish?" and so His rebuke is more decided, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" At present, however, we must confine our attention to the reply contained in our text, which is taken from St. Matthew, and which may be read as a useful lesson. "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?"—"of little trust" it might, perhaps, be better rendered, for that is what is here implied; but it will be more convenient to keep to the usual expression, only bearing in mind that our Lord here means by faith, belief, or trust in His power and will to save them. And notice that in St. Matthew's version He does not say "Ye have no faith." *Some* faith they had shown in Him in the words "Lord save us," but not such faith as they ought to have shown, as was made evident by their

adding, "We are perishing." They gave Him credit, if we may so speak, for having the power to preserve them if He were made aware of their danger, but they had not learnt to feel that His presence among them was of itself enough to carry them safely through the peril, and to take away from them all cause for alarm.

Such, then, is the simple historical narrative. But, from the earliest ages of Christianity, the most pious and learned expositors of Holy Writ have found in the story a deep doctrinal significance. In the boat, tempest-tossed on the sea of Gennesareth, they saw the Church of Christ troubled and shaken by the temptations and persecutions of a faithless world ; that Church containing all the professed followers of our Lord, with which He promised He would always be present, even to the end of the world. Perhaps we should feel the lesson even more strongly if we were to think of ourselves as each representing such a vessel, or the disciples who were on board it ; or rather, let us try to combine the two views. There are storms and troubles which affect us in our capacity of members of Christ's Church ; there are storms and troubles which beset especially individual members of that Church. With regard to the former, we must look upon ourselves as represented by the whole crew of

our Lord's little vessel : when affected by the latter, each one of us is rather like the simple members of that crew. But, in either case, let us take a lesson from their example. If the prospects around us look gloomy—if we dread the signs of the times, which seem to portend that simple, sober, and pure religion is losing its hold upon our people and being swallowed up, on the one hand by cold worldly unbelief, on the other by fanaticism and the love of fierce excitement, the two playing into each other's hands as history and experience tell us they always do—then the vessel of Christ's Church is labouring amid the billows of a stormy sea, and we seem in danger of sinking with it. Or, when we are personally afflicted with distress, whether that distress arises from outward causes or is rather of a spiritual nature ; then again we seem to be covered with the waters, and all God's waves and storms seem to be going over us. I say, whether our distress arises from outward causes, such as loss of health, or friends, or fortune, or whether it be of a more spiritual nature. And I conceive that I am not speaking of a very small class when I refer to those who suffer under this latter description of troubles. I do not mean that there are many who have experienced such troubles in that extreme form in which we find them described in the writings of some eminent men

of powerful imagination and excitable minds ; still less would I represent a perturbation which seems at least partially due to physical causes as being among the essential marks of true religion ; but undoubtedly any man or woman or child who has ever thought to any purpose at all about matters of religion, must have felt more or less of that spiritual trouble. Every one whose thoughts travel beyond the mere every-day circle of his daily life ; any one whose philosophy exceeds that of those who said, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ; any one who has ever thought to himself, What is to be the end of all this, and where shall I find myself, and in Whose presence, when the routine of my present life is broken through?—must know something of these spiritual troubles—something of the dissatisfaction with one's actual condition—something of the feeling that one might have done more, and was meant to do more in the way of advancing in the likeness of our great Model—something of the feeling of hopelessness, when we compare our weakness with the work which we have to do. And therefore I hope and believe that it is not a small class of those who know more or less of these spiritual troubles—whose bark seems sometimes in danger of being overwhelmed by such waves as these. We, then, in these several ways, either in our corpo-

rate capacity as members of Christ's Church, or privately in our own separate persons, are liable to share in the dangers answering to that which overtook the disciples on the sea of Galilee. Let us take heed to their example, and derive a warning from the rebuke which their want of trust drew from Him.

Remember, as I said before, it was not that they had *no* trust—some trust they had or they would not have gone to their Master for help. They believed that if He had known of their danger, He could relieve them from it; but they could not trust to the protection of His presence because He was asleep and seemed to them unconscious of the peril. And, my brethren, do you think that there is no likelihood of our showing a similar infirmity of faith when either the welfare of Christ's church, the interests of true religion, seems threatened; or when we ourselves are on the point of being overwhelmed with personal distress? Most of us, I suppose, are ready to admit that there is One who is mighty to save His church, One who can rule over and moderate the conflicting rush of human thoughts; most of us admit that He has promised to be present with that Church—with each section of it—even to the end of the world: and knowing that His promise cannot fail, we are constrained to believe that He *is* present with it as really as His bodily presence was in

the vessel on the lake of Gennesareth. But He seems to us too often, as He appeared to the disciples, to be *asleep*: to be taking no heed to the dangers in which the vessel is involved. It is a feeling as old as Elijah and Isaiah. "They have thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left." "Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence." But let us remember that this feeling is just that which drew down upon the disciples our Lord's rebuke, and is one which we are bound to keep in check. "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?" He seems to say to us when we are tempted thus to mourn over the languishing condition of His church, and, like the Jews of old, to demand a sign of His presence, "Is it not enough for you that that Church is the bark which carries Me in this world? Can you not trust My wisdom and My knowledge as well as My power?" Seek not for signs which you have been given no reason to expect; above all, beware of finding signs for yourselves in the workings of an over-heated mind. He is with us still, and though He seem to us to slumber, be sure that if His hand is not raised it is because it is best for us that it should as yet lie at rest, and that it is for us, while we ask Him for help, to ask it with the quiet

confidence of those who know that their prayer will be granted, not with the agony of dismay with which the disciples cried "Lord, save us, we perish."

And still more frequently, and perhaps more forcibly, should this lesson come home to us with regard to times of personal and individual suffering. The lesson, I mean, that we have something yet to learn, progress yet to make, so long as, even during the fiercest storm, we lose the *comfort* of the sense of our Saviour's presence. No doubt it is a hard lesson to learn—harder perhaps for some than others—but hard enough for all, to sit still patiently, and let the cold waves of misfortune or of pain break over our heads till we can scarcely breathe, and yet feel safe in the hand of Him who seems to sleep in the hinder part of our little bark. "Lord, save us, we perish:" this is the prayer only of partial faith, in times, at any rate, of merely temporal sorrow, when we fancy that we are forgotten by our Master. We ought not to feel that we are perishing. We ought to feel and know that we are safe while He is with us. Do you say that this is a degree of trust to which it would be difficult to attain? No doubt it is so; so are all the virtues which it is the object of our Christian warfare to gain, difficult to attain. But what we have to reflect upon is, not whether such a trust is hard to acquire, but whether it is an object

which it is our Christian duty to pursue. And therefore when we are in any earthly trouble whatever, and all seems dark and dreary around us, and we think that if indeed our blessed Saviour is near us, He heeds us not, but sleepeth and must needs be awakened, and we draw near to Him with an agonized cry for relief from our sorrow, which seems more than we can bear; let us try to bear in mind the contrast that there is between the prayer of the disciples in their trouble and that of their Master in His. "Lord save us, we perish." "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." Here is our model. We must never forget that though it is most true that often the despairing cry for help is heard, and the much dreaded calamity turned aside or the crushing misery removed, yet there may be reasons which we cannot fathom why the aid which we blindly crave should be withheld; and that, in order to bring our souls to the haven of rest, it may be needful that the bark of our earthly happiness should continue to battle with the waves. Yes, let us try to learn to feel in the midst of the darkest night and the most furious storm, not only that our Lord is with us, but that if He seems to slumber and to be leaving us unprotected, it is only *seeming*, and that His eye is ever watchful; that the Lord is mindful of His own, and that He ever remembers His children.

And above all let us try and fortify ourselves with such thoughts against the day of spiritual distress—of trial and temptation. Now, when for a short time we are set free from external danger, let us gather up our thoughts and renew our confidence in Him who is among us now, and by His Spirit will be with us still when we are restored to the world and its temptations. Let us think of our great Christian privilege, that so the remembrance of it may be our safeguard. Here again our faith is imperfect, and needs to grow, so long as we cry “Lord save us, we perish.” “Lord save us,” we *must* indeed cry, save us from our own weak hearts, save us from the seductions of the flesh, from the evil example of the world, from the crafts and assaults of the Devil ; but so long as we are members of Christ and remain in the ark of His Church, it is not for us to exclaim, we are perishing. That was the cry of the world before our Saviour came ; the cry of men who could do no more than blindly abhor the evil that surrounded them, and long for something better. But if ever with us distrust of self degenerates into distrust of God,—if ever indolence disguises itself as humility —if ever we are tempted to say, It is no use my struggling any longer, I will give up trying to obey God, and let the world, the flesh and the devil have their own way, I am perishing ; then may we hear the voice of our Lord saying to us as He did to the disci-

ples on the sea of Galilee, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?" Why are ye so fearful? Did not I live and die as man just to save you in such trials as these? Did not I tell you that strait was the gate and narrow the way that should lead you to life? Did I ever give you any reason to suppose that your voyage was to be all a smooth water one? And, above all, have I not promised that though the waters might rage and swell they shall never overwhelm those who trust in Me? Have I not declared that I would with each temptation make a way to escape, that ye might be able to bear it? Wherefore, then are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?

In a word, let us carry away this lesson from the story of the miracle before us: that whatever may be the trouble by which we are beset, we are not to fancy that our Lord does not see us, or seeing does not care for us. Of course I do not mean to say that we are not to tell Him of our wants—that we are not to ask for His assistance. The fact that He knows beforehand our weakness and our needs, does not prevent us from doing this, does not make it less true that we shall lose His protection if we do not ask for it. We might have doubted this had we been living under the light, or rather the darkness of mere natural religion; but He who revealed to us the Father has expressly bidden us go to Him and lay our wants before Him. But still

when we do so, and, even more, when we are meditating on our wants and troubles in our own mind, let us beware of thinking that because He seems to be sleeping His presence is no protection to us, and of clamouring for some manifestation of His power which He may not see fit to give. And, above all, let us fear the downward course by which, from being of little faith, we may become of no faith at all, and at last may lose the sense of our Saviour's presence altogether. We *may* lose that sense, we may learn—we must fear that many do learn—to go about the world to their work or their pleasures, forgetting all about the Divine Being who is ever within them, and marks their every word and action ; we may make ourselves like sailors, of whom we may have read, who in time of great danger made themselves drunk in order that they might lose the consciousness of their peril, and have only been restored to their sense of it by the cruel waters bubbling round them as they sank. Brethren, may God preserve us from such an insensibility and such an awakening. May He keep us mindful of Him who is ever ready to hear the devout prayers even of those whose trust in Him is feeble,—that we may obtain our petitions may He teach us more and more to ask such things, and in such a manner as shall please Him ; and to use, above all, that prayer which His disciples addressed to Him while on earth, “ Lord increase our faith.”

SERMON IV.
THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF THE VIRGIN.

Festival of the Annunciation.

St. LUKE i. 38.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.

ARE we justified in fancying that we have an undertone of sorrow in these words? that they imply a presentiment of that sword which was to pass through the soul of her by whom they were spoken? For my own part I think that we can trace something of this sort in them, though it is hard to tell how far we are influenced by our knowledge of what was to come, how far to us the glory and the joy of the angelic Annunciation is overshadowed by the anticipation of the earthly sorrow and trouble by which the fulfilment of the promise was to be accompanied. This, at any rate, I think we may say, that in the humble and reverent words of the maiden of Nazareth we see depicted a readiness of heart to become the instrument in the hand of Jehovah, even though that lofty honour might,

for aught she knew, prove perilous to her present happiness ; and some of the trouble and reproach that it might bring upon her she might then dimly foresee. It is in the unshaken faith and unqualified submissiveness of the Virgin Mary that we trace that obedience of her's which so many of the Fathers are fond of telling us is correlative to the disobedience of Eve. I may here quote the words of one who certainly cannot be accused of any theological bias which would lead him to unduly exalt the mother of our Lord—I mean Dr. Alford. He says, “ Her own humble and faithful assent is here given to the Divine announcement which had been made to her She was no unconscious vessel of the Divine will, but, in humility and faith, a fellow worker with the purpose of the Father, *and therefore her own unity with that purpose was required*, and is here recorded.” I think that Dr. Alford here well puts before us the share which the Virgin herself took in the wondrous event which we commemorate to-day ; and I think that as the miraculous nature of our Lord's birth was the trial of her faith, so the dim anticipation of coming trouble may have been the trial of her submissiveness ; the two trials constituting together—we must not say the ground of the *merit* of her assent, but the difficulties which stood in the way of that assent—the reason why it would not be given

as a matter of course. For if we do not bear this in mind it will seem to us as if that which is represented as the dutiful obedience of the Virgin, was the mere eager grasping at the highest conceivable earthly honours. Without doubt the message of the Angel is, in its first and most obvious sense, a promise of the greatest earthly exaltation. "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." And, looking at the matter in this light, the words of my text will be only the reverent recognition of an immense privilege; the humble acceptance of a mighty joy. And we know too that her expectations were more than fulfilled. Her Son was to be more than even she had been told. The fuller truth was first revealed to her betrothed husband shortly before the birth. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for He shall save His people *from their sins*." Not the mere temporal head of a mighty nation, not the mere earthly expression of the Divine power over the external affairs of man; but He who should carry His healing and restoring power

into their souls, and save them from the guilt and the consequences of their sins. Well may we say that the Virgin's prophetic hymn was no more than an adequate expression of holy joy for the vast honour bestowed upon her;—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, for he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." It is really a grievous thing that the perverseness of man's heart should have so distorted the teaching of Scripture that we cannot permit ourselves unreservedly to contemplate the blessedness of her whom her inspired kinswoman had just saluted as the mother of her Lord, grievous that it is necessary (as it is necessary) to guard our words lest the honour paid to the Virgin Mother should intrench upon the unapproachable prerogative of her Divine Son. I shall endeavour, before we conclude, to point out to you exactly where, as I believe, the exaggeration of the honour paid to the Virgin creeps in; the distinction which we must draw, and draw sharply, and which the consideration of the Gospel history will help us to draw, if we would guard against such a view of her position, as, I will not say exactly involves *adoration* of her, but which will naturally and logically lead to adoration of her.

But, having entered one strong protest against

anything approximating to the idea of associating the Virgin with our Lord in His great work, let us venture to look back with admiration on that wondrous picture of the pure and spotless maiden, the conscious instrument chosen by the Almighty to introduce the world's Maker into His fallen creation—rejoicing in her lofty mission and bending submissively beneath the will of her God. The purest pleasure that man can know is to feel that he has been of use to his kind—to know that he has increased the happiness or diminished the woe of the world. That pleasure is only exalted and intensified by the deep consciousness that the talents or the power which have enabled him to do this have been God's gifts, and that he himself has been but a humble instrument in God's hands. What shall we say of the raptures of her of whom we speak, when she learned to understand the mission of her Divine Son to save all mankind—herself among the number,—from the curse of disobedience, to gain salvation freely for all who should accept the terms on which it was to be offered?

Or again, think of another way in which the bright vision, called up by the message of the Angel, must have been more than realized. Pass over the stormy period which succeeded the young child's birth—the first threatening of “the sword”—the murder of the Inno-

cents and the flight to Egypt, and turn to that quiet home at Nazareth on which the fancy loves to dwell, though of actual information about it we have so little. A trial of faith no doubt it must have been again. That the Child so wondrously born should grow up like any other child, that He should be, as I think we must conclude He was in His earlier years, apparently unconscious of His lofty claims, must have been a trial of faith to her who kept all those sayings in her heart. But we must conclude that she did keep them in her heart, and that, as before, she was willing to accept God's way of working, so now she was content to wait for His time for carrying out His purpose. But who shall dare to speculate upon the mysterious happiness of those thirty years, the time of our Lord's private life at Nazareth—the time when the Divine Word manifest in the flesh was increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man? We must not indulge in the feeling of regret that we know so little of this time; we may be quite sure that if it were good for us we should have known more. And I think we may just see a glimpse of the reason why such information is withheld in the consideration that to many minds there might have been a temptation to linger too much upon the contemplation, I will not say of the Humanity of our Lord, but on that Humanity as

it exhibited itself exclusively to ordinary human life ; whereas, to us men that Humanity is above all significant in this, that it was the means through which His official work as Man's Restorer was to be performed. It was when He came forth from the retirement of Nazareth, having, so to speak, lived through the ordinary human life as man, and assumed His character as the Mediator, that His words and deeds are the words and deeds by which our souls are to be saved. To us it is not given to see the bright picture of the preparation time for the struggle ; but who can doubt that it was indeed bright ? that pure and spotless character unfolding itself in the perfect fulfilment of the duties of the holiest and tenderest relationships, shining with a chaste but intense splendour amidst the world of that little village, before He was known as the Enlightener of all the earth. Surely we cannot be wrong in imagining that to His mother, with her quiet, trustful character, those years must have been years of the deepest happiness while she retained her Divine Son as *her own*, while, as yet, He had not entered upon that mission, which in its vastness was well nigh to swallow up nearer and closer ties.

For this, I should be inclined to believe, would be the first threatening of "the sword;" the discovery that this peaceful life could not continue, and that she

could keep Him as her own no longer. One warning of it indeed she had received already, when as a boy in the Temple courts at Jerusalem He had asked her, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"—a warning that if He was "Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world, He was also God of the substance of His Father, begotten before the worlds." Yet after this He had returned home again and lived eighteen years longer subject to His mother and Joseph, and it was not until after His interview with the Baptist that He came forth in His public character. And then most instructive to us is it to watch the change that passed over His relationship to those who had had the charge of His boyhood, and with whom He had spent the years of His early manhood. Of Joseph, indeed, we hear no more, and it seems probable that he was dead. But she who occupies so conspicuous a place in the early chapters of the first and third Evangelists, is now displaced—her functions discharged—henceforth to learn to depend upon another union with her Saviour than that which had united her to her Son. "Woman, what have I do with thee?" such is the gentle rebuke which she receives on the earliest occasion on which we hear of her after her Son had begun His mission—words how striking! He addresses her indeed in terms

of perfect respect. "Lady" or "Madam" would convey the tone of His *γυναι* better to our modern ears. But it is *not* "Mother;" for the lesson which He has to teach her is, that her being His mother can give her no claim to attempt to control His display of power. "What have I to do with thee?" what union is there between us in this matter? And though the Virgin by her direction to the servants "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," does show us that her meek submission was equal to the trial, yet surely it must have *been* a trial thus, as it were, to be set aside. And still more would this be so afterwards, as the real nature of our Lord's relationship to her was more and more revealed. We hear, indeed, but little more of her till the last sad scene of all, nor until that does she appear at all again as an actor. Twice we hear of her. Once when our Lord is thronged by a crowd of hearers, she and His brethren seek to come to Him. And some one says to Him, "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren seek Thee." And what is His answer? "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? And he looked round about upon them which sat about Him and said, Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." We may easily imagine that, after thus explaining the closeness of the tie which

bound those to Him who were united to Him by that faith whose outward expression is obedience, He would receive her whom, to the end, He treated with tenderness and respect; but again I say it would be a trial of her faith to learn that there was a tie which could bind to Him others as strictly as her who had borne Him, albeit it was a tie which might bind *her* too closer than ever. And the same thing may be said of His speech when “a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and cried, Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked; and He answered, Yea, rather blessed are they which hear the word of God and keep it.” Yes, her own prophecy should be fulfilled. All generations should call her blessed; but blessed though we may feel that she was in respect of the high honour conferred upon her, we may, I think, consider her rather blessed in that she heard this word of God and kept it; that she was not offended at a saying which assigned to her no exclusive privilege in the kingdom of her Son; which made it necessary that she should hold her membership of that kingdom on terms in no wise different from those on which it was offered to every member of the human race.

And here I think will be the best place to notice the wide gulf of principle which separates the honour which the Church of England, following the

example of the Church of the earliest ages, has ever paid to the Blessed Virgin; and that false sentiment which develops itself into the idolatry of the Church of Rome. From the day when our Lord was baptized in Jordan, and recognized as the well-beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased, the lesson which His mother had to learn was, that her relation to Him as her *Son* was to be swallowed up in that which she bore to Him as her *Saviour*. And I think that the more we meditate upon the scattered notices which we find of the Virgin Mary in the Gospels, the more we shall believe that they are introduced for the very purpose of guarding against anything like dependence upon her, anything like the idea of her having any *influence* with our Lord, which seem to be the first germs of that worship of the Virgin which has been idolatrously set up by the Church of Rome. Follow our Lord's own practical teaching and there will be no danger. So long as He is living merely as a man among men He pays her the highest honour and respect; even from the cross, as we shall shortly see, He interrupts, as it were, His sacrificial work to discharge the last tender duty of His human life. But when He is engaged in His official duties, His human relationships are lost sight of, and there is but one condition which is required as a qualification for His favour, either in those that are far off, or those that

are nigh, and that is, real and earnest faith in Him, the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. And so I think should it be in our thoughts of her—thoughts as of one highly privileged above all the rest of our race as regards external blessings; as one also whose meek trust and steadfastness under trial we may admire and seek to imitate; as one of whom we can scarcely say or think too much, provided only we bear in mind that her affinity extends only to the merely human side of our Lord's existence; but of whom we shall begin to think wrongly in principle—no matter to how small an extent we carry the error—the very moment we think of her as the mother of the Atoner and the Reconciler, as well as of the *man* Jesus of Nazareth.

For, in conclusion, think how deeply instructive on this point is the Gospel narrative of the end of our blessed Lord's sojourn upon earth. Once again we see His mother, at the foot of the cross, and the disciple standing by whom Jesus loved—loved, we cannot but feel, because he, more than others, was filled full of the Divine Spirit of his Master. You remember the few touching words, "Woman, behold thy son, and he saith to the disciple, behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." It seems most natural to believe that St. John at once took the Blessed Virgin from the spot, and that our Lord meant him to do so in order to spare His mother the agony

of that awful sight ; and that this accounts for her not being among the number of the women who beheld the end afar off. But I am inclined myself to go further than this, and to see in these words of our Lord a reference to some conversation that had gone before, some solemn leave-taking of which we have no record. At any rate it is most remarkable that the Virgin's name is not mentioned among those who were witnesses of the Resurrection and of the Ascension. In fact we hear her name but once more, and that is in the first chapter of the Acts, where she is mentioned incidentally as being one of the company of the Apostles and disciples. It is of course hazardous to make conjectures upon such a point, but I am inclined myself to believe that she did not see our Lord after He had risen ; and that in the words addressed to St. John we see a reference to a previous farewell which she understood to be a final one. But whether it be so or not, nothing can be more plain than that after our Lord's resurrection we see no trace left of His relationship to His earthly mother. Only think how different is the account of the Divine writers from what we should have expected. How a merely human writer would have seized upon the opportunity of expressing in glowing language the solemn pathos of the scene when the Virgin mother first beheld her son risen victoriously from the grave. One touching scene of this kind indeed we have, but

she who first greeted her risen Saviour was one united to Him by other ties ; one whom the Son of God had delivered from the thralldom of Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is not the Virgin but the Magdalen to whom the Lord says, Mary, and she answers, Rabboni.

“ Yea, rather blessed are they which hear the word of God and keep it,” this is the sum of the matter. All generations shall call her blessed, but blessed with a blessing the same in kind (though higher in degree) as that wherewith Sarah and other holy women, under the old covenant, were blessed. But the higher and more spiritual blessings are open to all alike. There is no respect of persons with God, and both the words and the silence of the Scriptures assure us that this principle extends even to her who was our Lord's mother upon earth. Exclusive privileges we may imagine our Lord to have said, were not His to give as man to a parent, any more than to earthly friends. The highest rewards are open to all alike, and shall be given to them for whom they have been prepared by the Father ; and those will be they, who, as they have known the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ by the message of an Angel, so, by His Cross and Passion, shall first have been most closely conformed to the image of His perfect humanity and then brought unto the glory of His resurrection.

SERMON V.

INSTITUTION OF LORD'S SUPPER—GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Thursday in Passion Week.

ST. MARK xiv. 21.

The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.

IN following our Lord's footsteps during the last week of His ministry, we find it by no means easy to trace exactly the course of events: and the theories that have been devised for the purpose of explaining the difficulties are almost endless. You might have thought with regard to the events of the Thursday, there could be little question. It was on this day that the preparations were made for the last Supper—that Judas completed his bargain with the rulers—that the Holy Communion was instituted. All this at any rate is certain, and if we had only the accounts of the three first Evangelists all would be quite simple. But when we turn to St. John's Gospel, there is a difficulty, and a great one. St. John, you will probably remember, does *not* record the institution of the Lord's Supper.

He does mention a meal which our Lord partook of with His disciples, and after which He performed the symbolic act of washing their feet. Is this meal to be considered the same as that described by the other three Evangelists as the Passover? I think it must be so. The account of the discovery of the treachery of Judas and the warning given to St. Peter seem sufficiently to identify the two. But whereas the three first Evangelists describe this as the passover meal, St. John expressly says that it was before the feast of the Passover; and moreover, when Judas goes out on his wretched errand it is said that some of them thought he had been directed to buy what they had need of against the feast. And further still, the Jews are said by St. John to have abstained from entering the judgment hall of Pilate, lest they should be defiled and so prevented from eating the Passover. How then could our Lord and His disciples have eaten of it already? And again it has been shrewdly remarked that it seems that Joseph of Arimathea must have eaten the Passover previously, for otherwise he would not have gone to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.

Now in all such questions of difficulty—and only too many such are raised now-a-days—there is one principle which it is most important to bear in mind. The Evangelists wrote for those who were familiar with the

circumstances of the times, which for us have utterly perished ; and the leaving out of some little point, which a Jew would take for granted at once, may throw the whole narrative into apparent confusion. Let us suppose a somewhat analogous case. Suppose we had two accounts of the same event which happened soon after the alteration of the Calendar in England. For some time after that event many persons continued to reckon by the Old Style ; and thus one writer might for instance describe an event as happening some days after Michaelmas, and the other, some days before because the one would mean by Michaelmas the 29th of September, the other the 11th of October. But if the accounts of these writers had gone down to posterity without the explanation of the discrepancy, it would seem that their accounts must be absolutely irreconcilable. Now some such discrepancy, it seems to me, may very well be at the bottom of this difficulty before us ; and I may say at once that I call your attention to it, not merely as a point of exceeding interest in itself, but because that which seems to me to be the most probable explanation does appear to carry with it a very deep significance. The sacred narrative seems to indicate some difference among the Jews as to the time of eating the Paschal meal. Have we any indication elsewhere of there being a doubt as to the

proper time for doing so? This we certainly have. In the original account of the institution of the Passover the Israelites are directed to kill the Paschal lamb on the 14th day of the month Nisan *at evening*. The following day was to be the day of a holy convocation—*i. e.* the 15th of Nisan. Now the phrase which in our Bibles is rendered “in the evening,” is in the Hebrew “between the evenings”; and it is just here that the ambiguity arises. Some say that this means between three o’clock p.m. and six; others, between six and nine. Now the point which seems to have escaped all the commentators, so far as I know, is this. The Jewish day began at six o’clock in the evening. The fourteenth of Nisan would be from six on Thursday evening to six on Friday evening. If then “between the evenings” meant from six to nine, the proper time for the Paschal meal would be *Thursday* evening—if it meant from three to six, the proper time would be on *Friday* afternoon. Now we do know that there was some difference of opinion on this point. It is said that the Samaritans held to the former interpretation. If we imagine that the doubt was a *recognized* one, that some of the Jews decided the question one way, and some another; then the whole difficulty is at an end. Our Lord and His disciples following the one rule with Joseph of Arimathea, ate the Passover between

six and nine on Thursday, the scribes and rulers between three and six on Friday, one at the beginning, the other at the end of the fourteenth Nisan; and all would agree in considering the next day, the fifteenth, beginning at six on Friday, to be the day of Holy Convocation, which, falling that year on the seventh day of the week, made that Sabbath day an high day.

And as I said before, it is not a mere point of antiquarian interest. The existence of this double practice would just enable our Lord doubly to fulfil the Jewish ordinance. Partaking of the feast Himself and His followers according to the one rule, He consecrates and develops it into the Christian Sacrament. The bread and the cup, both essential parts of the Paschal meal, are quickened into the elements of the Christian Eucharist. And then at the ninth hour on the following day, as the mysterious darkness rolls away, He dies, Himself the true Paschal lamb, just as the rulers of the nation are preparing to eat *their* passover: dies that wondrous death which gave life and meaning both to the Jewish Ordinance and the Christian Sacrament. The Son of Man went as it was written of Him. It had all worked round to this. The great plan of the Almighty Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, had calmly carried itself out, working through the feeble wills of men—the greed of Judas—the irresolution of Pilate—

the ferocity of the rulers—and even, if we are right in our conjecture, through the little pedantic controversies of the scribes—all, unknown to the actors, converging to the one fearful and yet most blessed end—the awful central point of the world's history.

“The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him.” What wonderful words they are when we come to think of them! Not hath gone, but goeth. He was not looking back. He was looking forward—and with the knowledge of what was coming. In a certain sense it may be said of every one of us, “He goeth as it is written of him.” I suppose that many of us know what it is to feel its truth with a kind of bewilderment. To think that all the course of our life, which to us is everything, is after all only a mere scratch on the vast map of the life of Creation, important only because it is an essential part in the history of that life, a part of the great scheme of the Creator: and so, with our poor finite ideas of great and small, we feel that our course is shaped with reference to the good of the whole, while our own good may be left out of sight. We forget that to the Infinite One there is neither great nor little; that there is no such thing as His forgetting any part, however small, from its insignificance, that there is no such thing as His leaving anything out of His calculations. And soon we are

brought back to the other view of the subject—that although we do go as it is written of us, we do go truly by our own free-will—that our wills are not overborne but made use of, that it is not by compelling men's actions, but by adjusting and interlacing their histories that God's wondrous wisdom is shewn. But it is essential to this view that we should not know beforehand what is written of us: that we should be able to find it out only by going through it. If we turn back and read over the story of our past lives, we may trace with reverent hand the workings of God's providence. More and more, I honestly believe, as we dwell on the records of the past, shall we be disposed to attribute all the good that we have ever done to His help, the evil to our own perverse wills: and through the chequered story of good and ill—the ill often so wonderfully overruled into good—we may feel truly that we have gone as it was written of us. But if we look onward again to the future, we must feel that it is only because we do not know what is written that we are free, responsible creatures. We feel that a knowledge of the future would make us sheer fatalists: that such fore-knowledge is the incommunicable privilege of God alone. And here it is that we ought to see the wonderful nature of the words of my text. The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him

said our Lord—said it of Himself—said it, not in mere general terms, but with the whole history of that direful night as clearly before His gaze as it is now before ours—and said it, not as God, but as man. As it is written of Him—betrayed by one of the little band of chosen followers—His own familiar friend whom he trusted—that was the special sting of the moment: with the wicked in His death—bearing the sin of many—with limbs unbroken, but mocked, and pierced, and crucified; that was how the Son of Man knew that He was going. And yet though He saw the road so well, He spared Himself not one human struggle against His fate. It was with no deadened perceptions—no sullen submission to the predestined—that He went to meet His doom. He was very Man, and to the last His man's nature, true to itself, rebelled against the suffering. Ah brethren, how infinitely wonderful are those two sayings of His when laid beside each other. “The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him,” and, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me.” Can it be the same Being who utters them both? Yes, but it is He who is Very God and Very Man—Very God in His power to foreknow—Very Man in his power to suffer.

And He suffered for the sins of the whole world. Let us try to think of Him as on this night presiding at that Passover meal with the full knowledge in His

mind that the lamb which they were eating was only the type of Himself ; that on the morrow, while the blood of a multitude of paschal victims would be flowing within the Temple precincts, He Himself, the true passover, would be suffering without the camp. Surely now, if ever, we may heed His warning words, " The Son of Man indeed goeth as it is written of Him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." Here is the awful truth facing us again, the truth which we would so willingly shut our eyes to ; that though the evil deeds of evil men work into the plan of God's government of the world, yet they are none the less to be accounted evil, and to be punished as evil. Judas Iscariot, when for the sake of his miserable greed, he sold his Master, was carrying out that which was written, was forwarding the great scheme of salvation ; and yet woe, unutterable woe to him by whom the Son of man was betrayed : better for him if he had never been born. My brethren, these words are well worth pondering in these days when men are so fond of talking, in what we may call a sentimental way, of the goodness and mercy of God, when they seem sometimes almost inclined to deny the existence of such a thing as criminality. Our evil may issue in good—must issue in good, they say, if we are under the government of an all-good God.

Aye! no doubt it will issue in the greatest amount of good. No doubt the key to the vast problem of the existence of evil is that in the end the result will be found to have been a greater amount of happiness than could have been secured by a creation free from evil: but we can do little more than grope about in the dark when we talk of such a question at present. Do you mean to say that our evil must necessarily issue in good for ourselves? Thank God, no doubt it is so sometimes,

"Sin itself is found,
"The cloudy porch oft opening on the sun."

But it is not always so. Thomas may doubt for the more confirmation of the faith. Peter may deny, and his fall may teach him first humility and then constancy: but Judas betrays, and there is for him but woe unutterable. His deed may have been a necessary step in the world's salvation, but it was the utter ruin of his own wretched soul.

And, my brethren, our lesson should be this, that we dare not tempt God by one wilful deliberate sin, for we cannot tell whether in His eyes our act will be seen as a doubt, a denial, or a betrayal. The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him still. Though pain cannot reach Him in His glorious abode in Heaven, yet here on earth His body, the Church, suffers still.

He and His Apostles have warned us that so it must be—that even the wondrous story of His ineffable love—even the gracious workings of His loving spirit will not prevail so as to keep all within His fold. Alas! no. He is betrayed into the hands of His enemies every day. If men point to the lives of baptized Christians as a triumphant proof that the grace of baptism is a nullity, is He not betrayed then? If unbelievers ask us how it is that this marvellous sacrifice of which we speak so much has still left the mass of crime and pollution which we daily witness in the world, do not we feel that it is traitors to His cause who have laid us open to this reproach? nay, must we not accuse ourselves every day of taking the bribes of His enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil, to betray Him into their hands? Let us try to remember the next time that forbidden pleasures, or evil tempers, or indolence tempt us to follow their leading, that we hear our Master's voice, saying, "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him"—it must needs be that I shall have unworthy followers—"but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed," woe unto him who makes My prediction good.

I say let us try to bear this in mind: but let us do more than that. If we are to think our Master's thoughts, it must be by being lively members of Him;

by using the means which He has given us of renewing our union with Him. On this night we need hardly remind you what that means must be. Do not His words seem even now ringing in our ears "Take, eat, this is my body," "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many?" To those who are gathered here on such a night as this I need probably say but little in the way of exhortation against the danger of staying away from that most touching memorial of our Saviour's love. But in connection with the view we have been taking of our life, and the solemnity of its unknown future, let me venture to urge upon you one view of that Holy Sacrament which it seems to me especially necessary to bear in mind. The distinction which I want to bring out in a few words is this. We ought to come to the Lord's table not so much to *do* something as to *get* something; something whose reception into our souls is just as real as the reception of the elements into our bodies. I have heard people, good, well-informed people too, deploring their having missed the benefit of receiving the Holy Communion, because at the time they could not keep their minds in the attitude of devotion. But surely this is entirely a mistake. Our minds may be weighed down to earth by other causes than want of faith. It is a great blessing when we can

receive the gift with the full consciousness at the moment of its magnitude : but do not let us mistake that consciousness for the gift itself. No, I believe we may approach the altar with a better feeling than this. As little children coming to be fed, *knowing*—not merely feeling, but knowing—that there the gift is ready spread out before them, that the bread which is broken is in very truth the communion of the Body of Christ, the cup which is blessed the communion of the Blood of Christ. We ought to feel there that we are taking in stores of spiritual strength, strength which we may perhaps sorely need hereafter. And this is specially worth the consideration of those whose days seem to flow on peacefully, who are conscious that by God's good Providence their life is hedged about and temptation kept far from them, so that they can hardly understand the language of those who have passed through a severer trial. Remember that you do not know what is written of you as yet. A slight shifting of the scenes of this variable life, a sudden access or loss of wealth, a change of companionship, a death, an illness, and you may, as many before you have done, find yourself shoot out from the calm river of your safe and happy existence, which you seem to take for granted is to last for ever, into a troubled raging ocean of passion and temptation.

whose very existence you could scarcely comprehend. And if so, what is to determine whether your vessel is to weather the storm or go down among the breakers? Not in all human probability anything you can do *then*, bewildered by the force of unaccustomed temptation; it must be what you are doing *now*—the grace that you are laying up now against the evil day. The grace that you are laying up. It is no figure of speech—it is the literal expression of the fact. Every time that we go to that Holy Table, believing—*knowing*—that we there are made partakers of the Glorified Manhood, which our Master carried with Him into heaven—every time that we show forth His death, as He taught us—every such time we sprinkle afresh upon ourselves the blood of our Paschal lamb; and though when the destroying angel of temptation shall come we can have no power of our own to resist him, yet we shall bear upon us a charm which shall force him to stay his hand, and save us from the doom of traitors. May He, who in the full view of His close approaching and most terrible death, instituted as on this night the Divine Means of renewing and quickening our life—He who knows what our future is to be, its trials, its dangers—may He give us, my brethren, the grace to come here on the festival of His Resurrection with simple childlike faith,

with an earnest desire to deepen our union with Him—to be taught how to grow like Him and to love Him—and then be sure we shall gain the strength we need—it may be only to fight against the petty temptations of a common-place existence—it may be against fiercer attacks of the evil one; until at last He shall bring us home to Himself, there to behold the very image of all that is pure and holy and satisfying, which, if there is any good in us, we do through all our weakness and inconsistency so crave and yearn after.

SERMON VI.
FITNESS TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

Easter Eve.

ST. JOHN, xiii, 37.

Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now ?

No one can fail to observe the tone of deep sadness that runs through the later discourses of our Lord recorded in St. John's Gospel. They are full of comfort and consolation it is true : but it is a soft, chastened comfort, not as we might have expected, cheering and triumphant. I think that we should have looked for something very different. We should have expected that He who knew all would have strongly and emphatically repeated His promise that He would rise again: that He would have taught His disciples to spend Easter-Eve, not in sorrow, but in triumphant waiting for the confusion of their enemies on the morrow. It is another instance of how dangerous it is to try to deduce inferences when at the bottom of our knowledge lies a tremendous mystery.

It is easy to pronounce the words that our Lord was very God, and very Man; but it is the greatest presumption to attempt to decide beforehand what must be the result in any particular instance of this wondrous union of the Divine and Human. Strange and seemingly almost contradictory are the effects of that union: nay, we might almost have expected that they would baffle us. He who because He was God knew what was in man's heart, declared that of the day and hour of the final judgment He the Son knew *not*. And so in the case before us, His last words to His followers sound like the mournful utterances of a departing human Friend. And very sorrowfully they must have called those words to mind on the day after His crucifixion. We can hardly picture to ourselves the utter desolation of their position on that first Easter-Eve. It does seem strange that they should have been so desolate, so utterly without hope of His rising again. But it is clear that so it was. Even Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who ventured to declare themselves His followers by begging His body from Pilate, seem to have thought only of embalming it, and to have made hasty preparations for preserving it from corruption during the Sabbath which began at sunset of the evening of Good-Friday. At the same time the Women—His mother amongst the number—

got ready spices for completing the pious work as soon as the Sabbath should be over. Doubtless she was misled by Her Son's having so solemnly committed her to the care of the beloved disciple. She took that for His last farewell. She knew not that He was only gently disengaging Himself from earthly ties ; that the truth was that after passing through the dread change which lies at the end of all human life, He would tread man's earth as a stranger—changed even physically—shewing that even the laws of nature were modified or met by a counter-force in the wondrous spiritual life that now dwelt within Him ; just as the laws that govern inanimate matter are modified in their operation by the presence of life and will. Yes, it was our Lord's will in the last scenes of His life to lay aside the anticipation of the coming victory. Perhaps it was part of what He had to bear for us, that the sense of all that was to come should be swallowed up in the fierce agony of the moment. What can be more awful, more bewildering to think of than His prayer that the cup might pass from Him : the piteous cry of the *Man* Jesus, " My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " And can we not understand how such utterances as these, coming at the very last, would crush out what hopes the disciples had, and leave them with a feeling very much akin to despair ?

The loss of their Master, their Head, left them utterly disorganized, a mere frightened company of friends amid the Paschal tumult. What a world of sorrow and disappointed hope there is in the words addressed by two of them to the Stranger who joined them on the road to Emmaus, "we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel!" That trust was gone, and the whole story of their life seemed, as it were, made purposeless. And then there was the contrast between their sorrow and the tumultuous joy of the multitude who were celebrating the Passover. "That sabbath day was an high day"; it was the 15th of Nisan, the first of the days of unleavened bread, on which, according to the law, there was to be an holy convocation, and on which we learn that there were great rejoicings and many sacrifices offered. This day might fall any day of the week; but in that year it happened to fall on the sabbath, which was thus made doubly holy. And as the passover could only be celebrated in Jerusalem, the city would be crowded with Jews living in distant lands, some come up for the first time to see the city of the Great King—ardent—enthusiastic—filled with the deep spirit of their religion. Imagine the poor timid band of believers in the Crucified One in the midst of such a crowd as this, a crowd discussing as they would the hopes of the com-

ing of the Messiah, who was to deliver their nation from bondage and disgrace ; hopes-which imperiously demanded that they should set down as an impostor Him who had been put to death as King of the Jews. There seems to us something almost absurd in the story of the rulers pretending to be afraid that the disciples might remove the Body and invent the story of a resurrection. They may indeed have thought of Joseph and Nicodemus, who appear to have been men of rank and influence ; and they may have feared a revival of that outbreak of popular favour which showed itself at the beginning of the week. But it seems more to me as if they were uneasy even now they had hunted their victim to His grave : that they set the guard and sealed the stone under the influence of a fear of which they were only half conscious, and did not acknowledge at all : perhaps with some idea of what the rough Roman soldiers would do even if He were to be raised again : for it is clear that they remembered His prediction much more carefully than His own followers had done. That prediction may have disquieted His enemies, but it seems to have failed to give any support to His friends. And in this hour of desolation and the overthrow of their hopes, how those later words of His with all their loving plaintiveness must have risen up in their minds ! Let us think only of

that discourse from which my text is taken, and try to listen to it as it must have been recalled to their minds after His death. "Little children yet a little while I am with you; and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say unto you." Here is the prediction of His departure, fulfilled really at His Ascension, but which they would refer to His death. Then follows His great commandment which they were to obey in His absence, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." I must not now stay to consider at any length the much disputed question, why our Lord calls this a *new* commandment. My own impression is, that it is called *new* because it is the law of *Christian* love. It is not that ye love *your neighbour*; but that ye love *one another*—that ye consider the fact of your belonging to Me to be another bond of union among you, in addition to that which unites you to all God's creatures. Simon Peter, with his usual warmth of affection, breaks in, not contented with thus loving his Master in the persons of his fellow-disciples. He is unwilling to be left behind. He asks, "Lord whither goest Thou? Jesus answered him, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but

“ thou shalt follow Me afterwards. Peter said unto Him, Lord why cannot I follow Thee now ? I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice.”

And now when the bitter end had come, and His prediction had been so grievously fulfilled, we may imagine St. Peter saying to himself, “ Why did I not follow Him then ? Why did I not make good my boast that I would lay down my life for His sake ? Why did I not follow Him to prison, to the cross, to the grave ? ” It is probable that he would be still ready to repeat in incredulous tones, “ Why cannot I follow Thee now ? ” For he would hardly know where our Lord really was on that day. We judge from the expressions used on the morning of the resurrection that the disciples had no idea of the living spirit separate from the lifeless body : they had no conception of the article of the creed which belongs especially to this day, in which we profess our belief that our Lord, after being crucified, dead and buried, descended into Hell—into the unseen or covered place, that is the place where the souls of those who have departed are represented as waiting for the final judgment of the last day. That place is described in the parable

of Dives and Lazarus—the place where the reward or punishment of the departed begins to work even before the great end of all things. And it is remarkable that it is the same St. Peter who was so ready with the demand to follow his Master while in ignorance whither he would have to go with Him; it is the same St. Peter from whom alone we learn anything of our Lord's occupation between His death and His resurrection. In the passage chosen as the Epistle for the day, St. Peter tells us that our Lord was put to death in the flesh, but quickened in His spirit (not by the Spirit, as in our Bible, but *in* His spirit) meaning that while His bodily frame died His spirit lived still: and in the spirit—with His soul separated from His body, He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, or in safe-keeping, that is, as we understand it, those who were being kept ready for the judgment. And what did He preach or proclaim? No doubt the glad tidings of the victory which He had won, the ransom which He had paid. He proclaimed it to those who during their lives had looked forward more or less dimly to that great event; to Abraham, and Moses, and David. To some also who during their life-time had been disobedient the good news seems to have reached, of whom the Apostle gives us a sample in those who were cut off by the

flood after the preaching of Noah had been disregarded. It would not be right to use this passage without telling you that other and quite different interpretations have been put upon it ; but the best modern commentators are all coming back to the plain straightforward interpretation of it, from which probably no one would ever have departed, if it had not been for an over eagerness to get rid of the doctrine of Purgatory, which doctrine however the passage does not give us any grounds for believing. At any rate, those who chose this passage as the Epistle for Easter-Eve evidently believed that in it was described our Lord's occupation during that day : and it is a grand thought that whilst His body lay motionless in the tomb, His soul had gone to take the glad tidings to millions who had passed away from earth before He set foot upon it ; to the illustrious heathen we may hope who had been a law to themselves, who had laid hold with a firm grasp on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, taught, one thinks sometimes as one reads their arguments, rather by some divine instinct than by any process of reasoning ; nay even holding out to some at last who had been disobedient under the lower dispensation, the hopes and blessings of the higher.

On this journey, if he could have had his own way, would St. Peter have gone with his Lord. But he was

not ripe for it. He had been with his Master at the most solemn periods of His life. He had been one of the chosen three who had been present at the Transfiguration, and had waited for Him in Gethsemane : but into the world of spirits he could not follow Him, though he was to follow Him afterwards. This world had still much for him to do, much for him to learn. He was not ripe for the mighty change. He had still further to learn the lesson of distrust of self, and real confidence in God. He had had one lesson when he tried to walk upon the water and began to sink ; another, when the sound of the cock-crow reminded him of the prediction of his own faithlessness. He had at least one more, even after the descent of the Holy Ghost, when St. Paul at Antioch had to reproach him with dissimulation in the matter of associating with the Gentile converts. "Thou canst not follow me now"—the words must have rung in his ears during that sad Sabbath. And yet there must have been comfort in the thought that those other words had been added, "Thou shalt follow me afterwards"—uttered by the same voice which just after them pronounced the warning of his three-fold denial. He must have been beginning dimly to learn the lesson of saying humbly, "Thy will be done"—instead of complainingly, "Why cannot I follow Thee now?"

And if so, we may learn a lesson from him. In some ways our position is not unlike that of the Disciples on Easter Eve. Our Master is withdrawn from our sight. His enemies are never tired of telling us that He is dead : the world's noise, and bustle, and toil, and pleasure are like the tumultuous mob of Jerusalem, and rage round his Body the Church, His living Body, it is true, but which only too often, among the sins and unbeliefs and worldliness of its members, seems to be sleeping the sleep of death. And if our hearts are roused within us, may not our cry be " Why cannot I follow Thee now ?" We may use those words in two different senses, in both of which they deserve reproof, though in one much more than the other. They may be merely the piteous outcry of one wearied in body or soul, who clamours for rest—even if it be the rest, as we call it, of death. This day's teaching may set us right there. It is natural enough to think of death as a sleep and a rest ; but, in fact, we are forced to believe that it is but the beginning of a new life. We too, though we are to die in the flesh, shall be quickened in our spirit, our soul sent into a new world, just the same as it leaves our bodies with its desires and propensions checked or developed according to what our life has been here. " Thou canst not follow me now," we may imagine our Lord to say to many an

impatient disciple. Thou art not ready. Thy very impatience to depart shews it. There is much work for Thee still to do,—many a temptation still to endure—many a lesson still to learn before thou shalt be ready to follow Me to the land of spirits, to wait with thy work done for the arrival of the day of judgment.

But there is another and even more solemn sense in which we may use these words, and in which something equivalent to them must have come into the mind of every one who has ever thought in earnest about religion. We speak of our Lord having died to sin, of our being baptized into death, of our being members of Him. “Why cannot I follow Thee now?” Why cannot I escape from the region of sin and temptation? why cannot one strong effort of the soul carry me safely beyond the reach of danger? Why must I fight and struggle, aye and fail sometimes still? “I am ready to follow Thee to prison and to death.”—I am ready to make any one sacrifice which could bind me safely to Thy side—why cannot I follow Thee now? It is easy enough to answer such questions by saying that if the whole body of sin were removed at once, there would be an end of our probation. But that is only a half-answer. A fuller one, I take it, is that this world is not only a place of trial, but a place of education, and that one of the instruments of that education is the

being subjected to trial and temptation. Of course, I do not mean that any progress that the soul can make in this world, can render it *fit* for heaven. For the very best there must be a wondrous change—a change worked not by us but in us : a development of the work that we have done here, which will make all that we have done seem as nothing. Here, at the best, we are subject to the checks and restraints of our lower nature. We need to escape from our vile body—the body of our humiliation,—as St. Paul calls it, with its eternal lets and hindrances to the work of our souls. It must be changed into the likeness of the Body of our Master's glory,—the spiritual body which is to be the abode of the soul in the world to come. But what is to be the test whether we are to experience this change, or another and a most unutterably sad one—a change which shall fix and harden and perpetuate our evil propensions, and bad habits of mind ? The test must be whether we have improved or fallen off—whether we have yielded to temptation or successfully fought against it : whether we have made the most of ourselves, and used our talents to the best advantage—whether the love of Christ has expressed itself in us by making us try to obey His will and become like Him. “ Why cannot I follow Thee now ? ” Why cannot I at once escape from temptation and danger ? Be-

cause it may be that there are trials yet before thee, which are to bring out and correct hidden evils in thine heart, in thyself—because thy character is not developed as it will be hereafter. I grant you that here again we have only a partial answer: that we cannot pretend to know why God has drawn the line just where He has drawn it between the operation of His grace and the action of the free will of His creatures—we cannot understand how He holds in His hand the ends of all the threads of the tangled maze of the world's history—how it can be possible that amid all the jarring forces of that history, amid the working of natural law, of moral law, of the infinite complications of human will, this wondrous seeming chaos can yet be carrying out His plans, and it can be said to every one of us, The world's history circles round you, and your necessities, your feebleness, your wants, your wickedness, are really and truly as much provided for, or punished by what we call the course of events, as if you were the only responsible creature, and all the rest of creation merely unintelligent machinery. It is an awful view of the great Ruler of the universe, one which we can only get a glimpse of at times, and which it baffles all language to express. But it ought to do this—it ought to make us earnest in our endeavours to learn the lesson that every piece

of our personal history must be meant to teach us, and to be ready to go on learning by submitting to trial, so long as He tells us that trial has still more to teach us.

Only let us learn and strive with humility, with self-distrust, or a worse thing may come upon us. It may need correction in us if we are too impatient in asking "Why cannot I follow Thee now?" but it will be much worse if some day we find that we have ceased to wish to follow Him at all. Must we not fear that there are some who have ceased to wish it? who have lost altogether the love of their Master like the faithless Judas? Let us fear that. Let us treasure up the lessons of this His last week on earth, to help us in keeping Him before us ever—as our Pattern and our Strength. Let us ask Him not only to help us, but to show us where we need help, to save us from the danger—no small one—of letting some insidious evil grow up in our character, while we are sliding through the easy course of a peaceful and prosperous life. And let us seek to follow Him as our Pattern. We *must* follow Him one day to the grave—we must follow Him in His resurrection: but there will be a time when it will be the bitterest despair not to be able to follow Him beyond, to be shut out from the reach of His love. Let us seek to-day to renew our death unto sin with

Him, that to-morrow we may be partakers of the triumph of His resurrection, that so having learned to the end the lessons of Passion Week, we may be able to enter fully into the joy of Easter.

SERMON VII.

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

1 ST. JOHN iv. 17.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.

IN the margin of our Bibles, opposite to the words *our love*, you will find it noticed that in the Greek the expression is “love with us;” so that it would literally run in English, “Herein is love made perfect with us.” Now, this may have two rather different meanings, and our translators have shown by the note in the margin that they were not quite sure which is really the right one. The love here spoken of may be either “our love to God and our brethren,” or it may be “God’s love to us;” and I think it is hard to tell which is the meaning which the Apostle really meant it to bear. On the one hand, the thirteenth verse, “He that feareth is not made perfect in love,” would seem to point out that in the passage now before

us, St. John is speaking of love in our own heart. On the other hand, there are passages which seem in favour of the opposite view—for example, the twelfth verse of this chapter, “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us:” and again, the fifth verse of the second chapter, “Whoso keepeth his word, in him is the love of God perfected.” This much, however, is certain, that whichever view we take of the matter, the lesson conveyed by the passage will be very much the same: and, therefore, even if we are mistaken in our interpretation, we shall not be likely to deduce from St. John’s words a meaning other than that which he intended them to bear.

Let us, then, endeavour to follow out the line of thought which our text will suggest, if we understand by the love which is to be perfected with us, the love of God bestowed upon us. Let us inquire, in the first place, what is the meaning of God’s love being perfected with us; for whether we are right or wrong in our interpretation of this text, there can be no doubt that there *are* passages where the Apostle speaks of the love of God being perfected or completed in us. Perhaps you might not have expected that it would be so. Perhaps we should have said that though our love to God might grow or diminish, yet His

love is perfect and absolute in itself, and, like all His other attributes, can become neither greater nor less. But the answer to this is, that where God's love to us is not perfected, the incompleteness lies not in Him, but in us. If we may venture to illustrate such matters by an earthly example—suppose that there was a Father who dearly-loved all his children, but that one of the number was a bad child, and often guilty of serious faults. Might we not say that that disobedient child, though his father loved him as being his child, yet did not possess his father's love in perfection?—or, in St. John's words, “that his Father's love was not perfected with him”—was no complete and uninterrupted as in the case of the rest of his family? And in this sense there is only One in whom the love of God the Father is absolutely perfect. One there was who walked this earth as man, and yet, for that He was more than man, never did one single act, or said one single word, or conceived one single thought which could divert from Him the fulness of his Father's love; One who, alone of all human beings, could stand up with confidence in His own deservings in the day of judgment, and claim to have fulfilled the whole of God's law. I say that in Him alone is the love of God absolutely perfected; on Him alone does it rest unqualified and unchecked. But that love does rest

on us men too for His sake, and rests upon us the more fully in proportion as by His grace we have been made more like Him. And you will notice how well this view comes in with what St. John has been saying in the earlier part of the chapter. For what goes before is, in reality, the answer to the question, "How am I to know whether I have this love of God—whether His love is thus becoming more perfect with me?" To which St. John's answer is, that the perfection of our brotherly love argues the perfection of God's love with us; and, of course, it follows that the higher and more genuine is our love of our fellow-men, the stronger and more unchecked is the Divine love for ourselves.

And then the Apostle goes on to notice another mark, which we may call either a consequence or an object of this Love in its perfection. "Herein is love made perfect with us"—that is, by our abiding in love, as shown by our love of our brethren, it is brought to pass that we gain ourselves the perfect love of God,—that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we also in this world." Here, I believe, the fact of our being made like to our Blessed Lord is represented as the ground of our confidence or boldness in the day of judgment. Let us, however, first inquire what is meant by the day of judgment. In the first place, no doubt, is meant

the great day of final account, when our Lord shall come to judge the quick and the dead and to render to every one according to his deeds. But although this is the primary and most solemn meaning of the phrase, yet there is another very important way in which we ought to look upon it. There are days of judgment which come long before the last day of all—days of judging—days when a man is called to account, or rather made to call himself to account for the ordinary course of his life. Every day, indeed, ought to be such. We ought never to lie down to rest without trying to bring to mind the doings of the past day, with a view of asking God's forgiveness where we have done amiss. But there are times which are more especially days of judgment, *marked* periods in our lives, as we may call them—times when a change of career or locality sets us thinking over what we have been doing in the period that is just passed away. And, above all, days of sorrow, or sickness, or worldly trouble, are days of judgment. Do not misunderstand me. Do not think that I would venture in any one instance to call the trouble or distress which God sees fit to send a judgment in the sense of a punishment. If, as every body will admit, we cannot *always* say that God sends trouble by way of punishment; we ought *never* to say that He so sends it. We see the

outward effect, but we cannot penetrate the design of the Sender. All that we can say is that in general terms we may be sure that He sends that which is best for all and most likely to bring them to a right mind; it is not for us to presume in any case to interpret His providences as instances of his vengeance. No; we here call the time of trouble, the day of sickness or mental distress, we call such a day of judgment in a far different sense. We call them so, because they are times, as we said before, when we seem specially invited to judge ourselves: nay, when sometimes the work is, as it were, forced upon us: when the remembrance of the past rises up before us, even against our wills, when old scenes and old associations which the bustle of every day life and every day thought had crowded out of our minds, return, how or why we know not; when we begin to ask ourselves, "is this right?" of the things which we have been doing half our lives, without thinking or caring whether they were right or wrong. And what St. John tells us is, that in such times of self-examination, if God's love were perfected in us—if it were carried out to its full development—if there were no sin-born mists to interpose between us and the brightness of our Father's face—then in such times we should have *boldness* or *confidence*, because as He is, so should we be in this world.

Let us notice carefully the ground of this confidence. "Because as He—that is, our Saviour—is, so are we in this world." Because we are in earth what he is in Heaven. Then, indeed, if we could say this, we could have confidence. If we were as He is, in the first place in actual holiness. St. John, in this same epistle, points out how it should be the great object of the Christian's ambition to secure that holiness. "He that hath this hope (of seeing our Lord as he is) purifieth himself," or rather is purifying, tries to purify himself, "even as He is pure." And notice, even if that state could actually be attained to (and we must always remember that though we may come as near to it as we please, we can never quite attain to it in this life) there would be nothing life self-trust, nothing like depending upon our own righteousness in feeling this confidence of which the Apostle speaks. The perfected Christian would truly feel that he owed his state of happy innocence to Him who died to gain him the power to become innocent, even as every one who is conscious that by God's grace he is gaining ground in the battle with evil, feels not *proud* of his progress, but only deeply *thankful* for it. But if we would truly say that as he is so, so are we in this world, if we would truly say that our human nature had been made entirely conformable to that glorious Manhood which He carried with Him

into the Heavens, then we might well feel confident as being the happy objects of God's perfect love, and, for the sake of our great Example, free from that fear which hath torment, the fear of the condemning power of our past offences. And let us remember, also, another point in which this resemblance to our Lord must be found in us—I mean the love of God. This, indeed, involves the other point. For consider what, so far as we can understand, must be our Saviour's love for His Father. It must be the perfect unqualified love of the Good One for the Good, the delight of Him who is perfectly pure and benevolent in the contemplation of Him whose nature is the very law of purity and benevolence, and so this love would be absolutely irreconcilable with the least taint of sin. He who *thus* loved God would shrink away from all evil as necessarily horrible, just as we shrink away from what is loathsome or painful. And here again, is an essential mark of the perfection of God's love bestowed on us, that we should *so* love Him—love Him with a love that should outweigh all the passions and propensities of our mortal nature, and make us willing to suffer any pain or self-denial rather than do anything which would be displeasing in His sight.

Herein, then, would the love of God be perfected with us so that we might have confidence in the day

of judging when we were called upon to examine and pass sentence upon ourselves. Let us however carefully remember that it is the *perfection* of God's love, and that we are not to assume because it is not perfect that therefore it does not exist at all. We are not to say that any one who has not this confidence in the day of self judging is shut out from God's love. As St. John tells us in the next verse to our text, "Perfect love casteth out fear;" but then when he speaks of one in whom fear does exist, he does not say that that man has no love at all, but only that he is not made perfect in love. And so with regard to the confidence of which we have been speaking. There is many a one who knows by painful experience what it is to be without that confidence. To many a one when that day of judging comes which we have described before, when the soul's gaze seems turned inward upon itself, it comes with darkness, and terror and misery. The memory of long past, perhaps long forgotten, evil seems to shut out the very sight of God; makes the man feel instead of boldness, nothing but terrible apprehension; and renders him unable to hold fast to the confidence which he ought to feel in his Saviour and Redeemer. What shall we say to such a one? Shall we say that the sad experience of such a time shews that you are an outcast from God's

love? That He is hiding away His face from you and refusing to listen to your prayer? No, my brethren; thank God, we have a better and more cheering message to give to any one who is troubled with the memory of the past evil of his life. God's love in such a case is not made perfect with you; you do not yet enjoy the full sunshine of His favour—how can you expect that you should?—but it is the very suggestion of the devil that for you the sun is taken out of the heavens, that you are beyond the reach of God's love: the suggestion of the devil, I say, who having formerly seduced you into breaking God's command, is now trying to seduce you into distrusting His promise. Remember how absolute, how unqualified that promise is. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Believe me that an anxious doubting mind, a crushing sense of our own unworthiness, is *not* a proof that God's love is withheld from us. Nay, it is the very opposite; in such times His love is working within us, and preparing us by self accusation and self-distrust now, for meeting with boldness the greater judgment day which must come hereafter. Only let such strive earnestly after greater obedience, greater purity now. Remember that it is another of the delusions of

the evil one to try and make the remembrance of past faults as it were paralyse a person and make him unfit to perform his present duties, and so lay up another stock of sins to produce fresh bitter memories hereafter. Let such remember the example of her, of whom our Lord said with words of gracious approval, "she hath done what she could." Something all of us can do to show that we love Him, if it is only to show a cheerful face in our homes, and to try to enter into the feelings, the pleasures and sorrows of those around us. This remember is St. John's great test of whether we have the love of God abiding in us, whether we have in our heart the love of our brethren.

And with regard to those who feel strongly upon religious matters, there is just one hint which may perhaps be useful, and keep some of us from a mistake. We sometimes hear such persons say, "Ah my husband, or my wife, or my parents, or my children don't care about these matters as I do : I have nothing in common with them ;" and then this is made an excuse for treating them "like heathen men and publicans," and not trying to enter into any of their feelings or pursuits. This will never do. Depend upon it that so long as we feel anything like *anger* at any one for not sharing our religious feelings, there is something in our own heart which needs plucking out.

It is not that we would have you give up the dislike of what is evil; but it is the part of the Christian to be in the first place very slow to believe that any one is guilty of evil, and when he is convinced of it to be *sorry* for it, and not to feel either anger or triumph. If the love of God is to be perfected with us at the last, we must be gradually becoming perfect in the love of our neighbour, in the love especially of those with whom we live; and showing that love actively in our daily lives, by ministering to their comfort, and trying to feel and show an interest in all their joys and sorrows.

For thus we shall be preparing for the great and final day of Judgment, when the Judge shall be not ourselves but our Blessed Lord. Surely when that day shall come—when we shall be called up to receive our sentence—it will be worth all the riches and honours of the world, ten thousand times over, to be able to stand forward with boldness to hear the award. With boldness—with freedom of speech, as the word literally means. When the king in our Lord's parable said to one of his guests, “How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?” we are told that he was *speechless*. He had nothing to plead by way of excuse. What shall we say when the negligences, the follies, perhaps the crimes of our lives are

all laid before us at the great day, and with one lightning glance we are made conscious of the whole catalogue of our offences? It must depend upon what we are doing now. If we will go on without trying to obey God, if we will not make His law the rule of our life; if we will not seek pardon for our past offences because we do not want to leave off offending in the future, then we shall be speechless—without excuse: and can we imagine anything more terrible than our shame and self reproach will then be? But if we do otherwise; if we do set ourselves by God's help to obey His will, and refuse ourselves those indulgences which He has forbidden, then will His love be made perfect with us in that day, and we shall stand before His throne with freedom of speech. We can plead then the sacrifice of Him who died to save us from our sins, by Whose help we shall have overcome some of the evil within us here, and shall then be delivered from its power for ever.

No doubt the greatest earthly blessing must be to feel something of this confidence here; and I believe that there are those who do attain to a large share of it; who, although conscious of their own infirmities, yet are possessed with a sense of God's love to them which seems almost to swallow up fear. We see it sometimes in those who are near their end—their war-

fare nearly finished—their work nearly done: the peace of those whose mind is stayed on God. But there are those to whom that peace is not given here, whose minds are troubled to the last at times, whose sense of their own unworthiness now and then overpowers their belief in the tender love of their God. And yet while we pity the state of such persons' minds, and would fain if we could give them comfort by turning their eyes to Him who is the source of all comfort and consolation, yet we cannot but look upon their imperfect love which has not yet cast out fear, as better *far* than the state of those who fear not because they love not—who are free from anxieties about the world to come because their whole souls are absorbed in the business or pleasures of this life. For these are storing up a fearful amount of trouble for a future day of reckoning. Some day or other this careless or selfish part of their lives through which they passed so gaily or so busily—this time when they shut God out of their thoughts, and would not let His love be perfected in them—this time shall rise up before them, full of the memories of forgotten, unrepented sins, and shall avenge itself upon them by the long lists of evil habits of thoughts and actions which it will have brought forth. Some day or other. The hope is that it may be in this life: if not, the result must be speechlessness

at the day of final judgment. Let us, if we have any care for the things of God, any love of Him, any fear of displeasing Him, let us above all things dread that state where the conscience gives no trouble because it is dull and blunted: let us rouse ourselves to fresh exertion if we seem drifting into that almost hopeless state. Any suffering, any remorse, any fear, is better than unconsciousness of danger. “From hardness of heart and contempt of thy word and commandment, Good Lord deliver us!”

SERMON VIII.

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING.

PHIL. iv. 5, 6, 7.

The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

THERE is some difference of opinion as to whether the first words of my text ought to be connected with what follows, or with what goes before them; whether the fact that “the Lord is at hand” is meant by the Apostle to be a reason why his converts should let their moderation be known unto all men, or why they should be careful or anxious for nothing. There seems to be no conclusive reason why we should settle this question in the one way rather than the other; and perhaps the suggestion of a recent commentator may be the right one, namely, that the words in question are to be referred to both the preceding and succeeding clauses; and that St. Paul having written the sentence in the first place as an enforcement of the precept about

moderation or gentleness, was afterwards led on by the sentence itself to give the second precept, of which, as well as of the former, that sentence would be a justification. At any rate, I think that we are perfectly at liberty to refer the words to that which follows them, in spite of the way in which the verses are divided in our Bibles; and I therefore propose now to consider in what way the fact, that the Lord is at hand, should be an inducement to us to be careful for nothing.

In the first place, however, let us attend a few moments to the strict meaning of some of the words employed. And first I may remind you what is meant by the term *being careful*. The Greek word used is the same as that which we find in our Lord's parable of the ravens and lilies, when he bids his hearers *take no thought* for the morrow. Both the phrases — to take no thought, and to be careful — have lost much of their force in our language; I mean, that they do not imply nearly as much as they used to imply. At the time when our version of the Bible was made, these expressions, as well as the Greek words which they translate, meant to *be very anxious*. Perhaps the English reader would most nearly catch the force of the Apostle's expression in our text, if we were to render it, "Do not let yourself be distressed or worried about any matters: do not let

them be to you a subject of engrossing care, but with regard to them all make your wants known unto God." And according to our view, the Apostle's reason why we should thus seek to avoid undue anxiety about earthly matters is, that the Lord is at hand. Here again we have to choose between two interpretations. That which is most generally adopted, and which the words would certainly at first sight suggest, is that the Apostle means to imply that our Lord's coming to judge the world was near at hand. Nor must it be objected to this that these words were written some two thousand years ago, and still the world lasts and the day of the Son of Man has not yet arrived. There can be no doubt that the Apostles did, in some sense or other, speak of the second coming of our Lord as being near; and from the second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, we may see that their converts understood their words much more literally than they were meant, and believed that the Advent was to happen during their own lifetime. There can, however, be no doubt, that in other places the Apostles do speak of this coming as near at hand. And we may suppose that they made use of the expression in the same way in which it is said that the life of man is only a span long, or in which St. Paul himself speaks of the bitter suffering of years as "our light affliction

which is but for a moment." Just as that suffering was light and transient compared with the glorious reward that was to follow it, so is the second coming of our Lord near, though for aught we know the world has not lived out half its days. The interval that divides us from that second coming is short compared with the endless ages that are to follow—the undying existence of which that event is to be the beginning. And thus, taking this view of the words, St. Paul is here exhorting the Philippians to avoid an over anxiety about the affairs of this life, because there is an event of far more overwhelming importance which in a comparatively short time must come to pass, and which, when it does come to pass, will make all the anxieties of this life look small and insignificant indeed. This, then, is the general interpretation; but I am strongly inclined myself to adopt another view, in spite of the high authorities who support the former. The words when literally rendered are, "The Lord is near." Why should we not take those words as expressing that truth, which is so continually set before us in the Scriptures, namely, that our blessed Lord, though he has gone away from us into heaven, is not really removed—is not really separated from us? I need scarcely quote any passages in proof of the assertion, that both in the Old and New Testament, God is thus spoken of as being *near* us. "He is

nigh to all them that call upon him," says the Psalmist. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" "What people is there," asks Moses of the children of Israel, "What people is there that have had the Lord so nigh unto them as the Lord thy God has been unto thee?" "He is not far from every one of us," says St. Paul in his speech to the Athenians. And here also, as I believe, he is making the *nearness* of God—of our blessed Lord—a reason for avoiding over anxiety about the affairs of this life. The Lord is near you, he seems to say—near you to witness all your struggles—near you to listen to all your prayers; therefore do not go on torturing yourselves with care and worry about the affairs of this life, but take your troubles and lay them before Him, casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you.

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." In *everything*. Let us remember this; there is *no* exception. We are naturally inclined to draw distinctions, and to fancy that one kind of troubles ought and another kind of troubles ought not to be made the subject of prayer to God. Or again I find that I had nearly fallen myself into the error which I was just going to point out, that of drawing a distinc-

tion between the times of prosperity and adversity, and fancying that while we ought to go to God for comfort in our troubles, there is no need, or even that it is not right, to seek his blessing on our ordinary work in life. Or to go back to times of sorrow ; we are naturally inclined to think that one kind of sorrow is more fit to be brought before the throne of grace than another. The sorrow which is caused by the remembrance of past offences, the grief which we feel when we turn around to look at some past period of our life, and find that we have been acting in defiance of our best convictions ; this is a case in which all can feel, who ever think about such matters, that it is right and wise to make our requests known unto God. And most men will feel the same with regard to the *great* trials and troubles of this life. Nay it is a kind of instinct with people in general to get them to their Lord right humbly, when the hand of heavy suffering is upon them, when they are crushed down by cruel disease or still more cruel bereavement. But how do we feel with regard to the more ordinary cases—the petty annoyances and vexations of our every day life ? Have we any idea that the Apostle's precept extends even to these ? His words are plain enough. In everything—in little troubles as well as great, let your requests be made known unto God. And notice how the reason on

which St. Paul grounds his precept will remove the false notion which lies at the foundation of this wrong distinction. Why is it that we fancy that our little everyday troubles are not to be made the subject of prayer? Just for this reason, I believe, that we forget that He to whom we pray is so very near to us. We think of Him as the great and glorious Being who lives in Heaven, and we think that praying to Him is like making a request to some earthly superior—only, of course, the difference between us is very much greater. And then we think that difference is the same as distance, and just as we should feel ashamed to present a petition to our Sovereign about some trifling domestic matter, so we hesitate about bringing little griefs before God, and feel, if we do not say, that such things are too small for Him to take heed of. But, my brethren, this is a most false and unworthy notion of the extent of God's power and knowledge. It is His perfection, that while He rules supreme over the whole creation, there is no part of it so small as to escape His scrutiny. He who arranged the wondrous courses of the heavenly hosts; He who with lavish hand has strewed the sky with myriads of suns—whose number and whose distance it turns man's brain dizzy to try to comprehend; He has ordained also, the shape and growth of the humblest weed; nay, He has created and gifted with

a wonderful construction whole worlds of minute creatures, which men's unassisted eye cannot even perceive. It is only a part of man's weakness, that they who rule upon a great scale are unable to look into more minute affairs. With God difference is not distance.

Different to His creatures—excellent above them all—beyond all bounds of comparison, He *is*. Distant from any—the least of them—He is *not*. Remember the emphatic words of our Lord, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father ;” that is, without His knowing it: and again, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Yes, however insignificant, *we* are not beneath God's notice, however trifling our troubles may be, *they* are not beneath God's notice. “The Lord is at hand”—unseen by us, He still is by our side as we pass along the journey of life. He looks upon us in the time of business and in the hours of rest, in the market place and in our homes; and He sees us and all our doings, and notes them down all as clearly as if we were the *only* objects on which His attention was fixed. He is near us in all our trials the small as well as the great. He is at hand when our tempers are tried by ill success in our worldly calling, by perverseness or ingratitude in those around us, or by weakness of bodily health, just as truly as He

stood beside the three children in the midst of the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, or sent his angel to save Daniel from the mouth of the lions of Darius. Therefore is it our part—the part of all Christian people—to strive to learn this lesson; to be careful, to be troubled and anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto God.

“By prayer and supplication”—or rather in your prayers and supplications. A distinction is to be drawn between the meanings of the two words which are thus rendered. The former means prayer in general; the latter, especially that portion of prayers which consist in laying our wants before God. Perhaps we should get the *spirit* of the words, (though not their literal meaning) if we were to render them, “in your public service of God, and in your private petitions to Him,” or as if the Apostle had said, Do not be afraid to include these everyday troubles in the list of those evils from which *in general terms* you pray God to deliver you; and do not neglect either to make them the subject of *special* private request to Him. And he bids them to accompany this prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving*. While they laid their cares and troubles before the throne of mercy, they were to look to it that they were thankful—that they did not

come as those who *complained* of the way in which God dealt with them. They must be thankful for all the mercies which God in time past had bestowed upon them, and not ungratefully forget all about them because of their present trouble. They must be thankful too that they have the right thus to approach God in all their trials—that the cares which perhaps they could not tell to men, may all be poured out before Him—that he is the God of the Bible, close at hand to every one of us to listen to us as our Father, not the God of mere natural religion—a cold and stately Being, far above out of our sight and out of sight of us. And once more, St. Paul would have us make known our requests with thanksgiving, because we know that whatever may be the result it will necessarily be for the best for us; that if our petition is not granted and our trouble removed, it will only be that it is really for our good that we should be denied, and that trouble here is meant to work out for us salvation hereafter.

“In everything, in your prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Need we say much about this last verse? Surely for the man who has thus learned to come before God with thanksgiving even

in the time of trouble, *we* can understand why the peace of God should be given. The peace of God—the peace which they have who are at one with Him. That peace passeth all the understanding of every mind. It can be felt, not understood—enjoyed, but not explained. It is that peace, that entire and absolute freedom from all pain and care and toil, which in its perfection can be found only in the church triumphant, but foretastes of which are vouchsafed to us here on earth. If we can really feel that the Lord is at hand, ever ready to hear our prayers and to fulfil all our desires and petitions as may be most expedient for us—if we have learned to cast all our care upon Him because we know that he careth for us, then may we have something like an earnest of that peace. Not the full peace itself. There is one care which we can never get rid of altogether, so long as we are in this world—a care which perhaps will only become the heavier as we learn more entirely to depend upon God—I mean the care which arises from the consciousness of our own weakness and infirmity, of which our very progress in the Christian life must make us more and more aware. But still to say that even under the painful consciousness of the remaining evil in ourselves that peace does not sometimes exist, would be to contradict the experience of many and many a humble

follower of our Lord. He can bear even this care for us: even here the devout Christian can make his wants known unto Him with thanksgiving: and as for worldly cares—worldly troubles—worldly disappointments, it is our own fault if such shadows are not lost in the glory of the peace of God—our own fault if in all these things we are not more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Our own fault—and if so, let us try to amend it. Let us remember that the eager gnawing anxiety about the things of this world, which is destructive of all peace, is not only an evil in itself, but is a sign of a much worse evil. Our caring too much about this life is a sure sign that we care too little about the life to come. Let us try to bear in mind the first and most obvious meaning of the words of my text—the Lord is at hand. Yes—at hand; soon to come to judge the quick and the dead—soon to put an end to all that course of the world's business which now causes us pleasure or care. We may not indeed even venture to guess at the time which is to elapse before His coming; but come when it may, the interval must be short compared with the eternity that is to succeed it. And moreover, though it may be long before He shall come, it cannot be long before we shall go to Him, when all our sources of anxiety here will look as trifling

and as silly as the foolish griefs of children. Only remember it will not be trifling how we shall have borne them. If we have fretted and grieved over them as if this life were the only place where we have to look for happiness, and thanklessly forgotten all the many reasons we have for gratitude, we shall find that in thus living for earth alone we have neglected to secure the life in heaven ; whereas if we have gradually learned to be less and less careful about earthly things, in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known unto God, we shall have been showing ourselves His faithful servants ; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds for ever through Christ Jesus.

SERMON IX.

THE CLERGYMAN, A PRIEST AND A CITIZEN.

Ordination of Deacons.

St. Luke xii. 34—36.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

ON such an occasion as the present, the preacher is scarcely allowed a choice of subject. The first rubric in the "Form and Manner of making Deacons" prescribes that "after Morning Prayer is ended there shall be a Sermon or Exhortation declaring the duty and office of such as come to be admitted Deacons, how necessary that order is in the Church of Christ, and also how the people ought to esteem them in their office." In the discharge of the duty laid upon me to-day, I wish not to dwell so much upon the general aspect of the question, as to draw your attention to one or two special points the consideration of which may, I think, help us to clear up our ideas of what the rela-

tions of clergy and people *ought* to be, and perhaps may be of some service to us as guides of conduct when through the fault of either they have become such as they ought *not* to be.

Let me however in the first place, very briefly remind you what is the nature of the Deacon's office ; what it was originally, and what it has become practically in our own Church. I need hardly do more than glance at the familiar history of the first institution of the office. You will probably all remember that the first Deacons were the almoners of the Christian society. The believers, in those first days, seem to have had all things in common ; and as the society grew, it became necessary to have special officers to manage the common funds and provide for the daily wants of the members. So the seven first Deacons were chosen for the work, and set apart for it by the Apostles, who laid their hands upon them for that purpose. The English reader, in reading the sixth chapter of the Acts, in which this history is contained, would hardly see any trace of the word "deacons" in the story. But if we remember that deacon signifies *servant*, and make one slight alteration in the translation, we shall see it more plainly. "It is not reason," said the Apostles, "that we should leave the word of God and *serve tables*"; and again, "we will

give ourselves to the ministry “or *service* of the word.” Thus it would seem that at first the Apostles would have described themselves as *ministers* or *servants* or *deacons* of the Word ; the Seven, as ministers or servants or deacons of *tables*—that is, of the finances of the Church. But it seems that from the very first these deacons were also engaged in the ministry of the Word. We find Stephen disputing and arguing with the Jews on behalf of the new religion. Philip has given to him the name of the Evangelist from his success in preaching the Gospel. And although the *name* of deacon is not used in the Acts, there can be little doubt that the office described by St. Paul in the first Epistle to Timothy was looked upon as virtually the same as that of the Seven, though even by that time their temporal functions had apparently merged in the more spiritual ones. And as the Church in after days took form and consistency, and its institutions assumed more of their permanent shape, the office of the Diaconate became recognized as the third order of the Ministry ; an order of Divine origin, though its functions may have been somewhat changed from the time of its first institution. In our own branch of the Church, the Diaconate has for the most part become practically a period of probation for the Priesthood.

I am not now going to touch upon the much debated question of the propriety of restoring or creating an order of permanent Deacons. I believe no one has ever proposed that a man should be ordained Priest without being first a Deacon ; so that all will agree that in most cases the office of Deacon must be introductory to that of Priest. And it is with that phase of the office that we are concerned to-day ; for those who come to receive the powers and responsibilities of Deacons now are to be admitted only to the lower functions of the ministry whose full work they look forward to engaging in hereafter.

It is indeed to be deplored that the necessities of the Church should prevent our young Deacons from reaping the benefits which their year of probation is intended by the Church to secure to them. It is plain enough, from the description of the office in the Ordination Service, that the idea of a Deacon holding a separate cure of souls is quite foreign to the mind of the Church. He is there represented as the assistant of the Priest ; helping him in the administration of the Holy Communion, in reading, in teaching the young ; in searching for the sick and the poor, to prepare the way for the visits of the Priest ; to preach only when specially licensed. Probably the newly ordained Deacon, more than any

one else, will regret the urgent necessities of the Church, which deprive him of this year of sailing in comparatively quiet waters before entering upon the troubled sea of an independent career, and prevent him from experiencing the benefit of a relationship which in England often is one upon which a man looks back in after years with extreme gratitude—the relationship, I mean, between Incumbent and Curate; where, if things go rightly, just in proportion to the eagerness of the latter to do his work well, is his satisfaction at having that counsel which experience alone *can* enable a man to give. I take it that the theory of our Church, if it could be carried out, is this—a Priest in each parish surrounded by his staff of Deacons, learning their work by working under him, working *with* one another, and gaining that clerical *animus*—that *professional* spirit, the want of which is, I am afraid, an evil which it is the tendency of our age to produce.

And this brings me to the point which I wish specially to put before you this morning. I mean the relations of the clergy as a body to the people, and the points in which those relations need amending. There is one most marked difference between the clerical theory of almost all the Reformed communities and that of the Church of Rome; and I think it is

even more pronounced in our own Church than it is in other Protestant bodies. The two theories stand sharply and distinctly opposed to each other. In the one, the clergy are almost a caste ; in the other, they are merely an order. What I mean is this. The Priest or Deacon of the English Church remains as he was before, fully and completely a member of the society in which he moves. He is neither theoretically nor practically separated from those among whom he lives. His interests, his pursuits, his amusements, are mainly the same as theirs. He has a certain amount of professional work which it may be he does well and heartily ; but outside of that, he is more or less completely assimilated to the society in which he dwells. But what a contrast is here to the position of the Priest of the Church of Rome ! He is essentially and always a Priest. I mean that his interests and feelings are necessarily bound up with those of his order. I am not now considering the personal character of the two men, their zeal and earnestness or the want of them. I am supposing the two to be on the same footing as regards these, and I wish to point out the utterly different position which they occupy. The one is a citizen *and* a Priest ; the other is a citizen turned into a Priest. Nor will the celibacy of the Romish priesthood alone account for this,

though no doubt it has a large influence in producing the result of which we are speaking. But if we wish to see it in perfection, we must go to nations where we find the institution of caste actually existing. It is in Brahminism that we see the full development of clerical caste; the complete separation of the interests of the clerical order from those of the general community. And moreover we see the principal very differently developed even in the Church of Rome itself. In the secular clergy, especially in the northern nations, there seems to be a tendency to identify themselves more with those among whom they minister. They can enter more into their joys and sorrows and amusements; their interests seem more bound up in their people and less in their order. It was, I take it, to repress and counteract this tendency that the regular orders were instituted—to send out among the people a body of men bound more to one another and less to the world among whom they came. Now let us try fairly to estimate the advantages and disadvantages of each of these two systems. For each has its advantages; and to see them, we must try to look at each when working under favorable circumstances. And by favorable circumstances I mean chiefly the presence of a certain degree of earnestness exhibiting itself in the generation,

both in clergy and laity. That is the *salt* without which any institution will become corrupt. Now I think there can be no doubt that a clergy strongly imbued with the spirit of their order, in whom the uppermost thought should always be that they *are* clergy, are likely to command a greater degree of consideration, to wield a larger share of power, than those who are more identified with the people among whom they minister. There is a certain dignity of attitude secured by the very fact that the petty cares and troubles of our every day life are not the cares and troubles of the Priest. It is easier and more natural to look upon a man as invested with a certain share of authority as a teacher and adviser when he is to some extent withdrawn from the contests of our social existence and stands out markedly as the member of an Order swayed by motives and hopes and views peculiar to itself. And if a man be in earnest, there can be no doubt, I think, that his clerical efficiency must in many ways be greatly increased by the influence which his position must have upon his own mind. This separation of the clerical order would just meet the great difficulty of the English clergy. I do not for a moment mean to ignore the advantages of their position as it stands. It is obvious enough how the absence of this line of demarcation must tend to the

increase of *sympathy* between the Pastor and his flock. In reading the history of our mother country, it is scarcely possible to avoid observing how the oneness of sentiment between the clergy and the people has tended to moderate the violence of the political crises through which the nation has passed ; and I think that there are few relations which issue in more kindly and human feelings than that of the English Parish-Priest and his people, at any rate in country districts. But the danger arises from the very same source as the advantage. The power of sympathy which is generated by the fact that the clergy are bound by a thousand ties to the society in which they live is indeed a vast addition to their influence for good, *if* it is added to a deep abiding sense of their own sacred character and functions, if they are careful so to conduct themselves that those among whom they minister shall not forget their real position. But this very same sympathy becomes a downright mischief if it leads to the obliteration of those marks which ought to distinguish the Minister from the people, if the priestly character is overlaid by lay interests in which he is absorbed. It is well that the clergyman should be able to enter into the pursuits and daily work of his parishioners ; well perhaps that he should be brought into contact with them in daily business and

innocent recreation ; well that he should not look down upon the daily life of his parish as a drama enacting before his eyes with which he has little to do, but that he should come down into the battle of existence and fight in the ranks by the side of those whom it is his great work to urge on to be valiant in the conflict. But it is very ill if the minister is lost in the man of business, or the man of taste, or the man of pleasure—even refined and innocent pleasures—or even the mere head of a household with interests lying chiefly within his own domain. It is well that the earnest Priest should remain a good citizen : but it is very ill that his earnestness should be lost in his citizenship.

And it is in this direction I take it, that the danger of our own day lies. We ought to consider as protests against this danger all the efforts that are made—sometimes no doubt ill-judged and even grotesque—to revive among our clergy the true *esprit de corps*, to realize among them the fact that throughout their lives the first guiding principle ought to be, that by their ordination they have been set apart into a distinct order, bound to each other by a tie which does not bind them to others. I say that it is the great danger of the day that both teachers and taught do so sadly lose sight of the sacred character of the min-

istry itself, and that for this reason more I think than any other we have not before our eyes anything which exhibits the corporate character of the ministry, anything which shews us the members of it visibly united by a special bond. In too many cases the idea of the body does not exist at all. The "ministry" with most means very little more than the two or three individual clergymen with whom they are brought in contact. I suppose it is hardly necessary here to adopt the apologetic tone which it seems considered necessary in general to adopt when speaking on this subject, and to guard against the idea that we are contending for more authority or a position of greater dignity for the clergy. You will see that the idea which I have tried to put out is that we ought, both clergy and people, to seek to raise the influence and efficiency of the former by sinking the individual in the order, and that to that end it is most desirable that the present state of isolation in which men too often minister should be broken through, and that they should be enabled to show themselves to the world as fellow members of one great Order, carrying on to the best of their power its great work and claiming authority for *it*, not for themselves; grounding their demand for influence and respect not on their own character, their own earnestness, their own in-

dustry, but mainly on the fact that they are members of the corporation of labourers whom Christ, through His Apostles and their successors, has sent to work in His vineyard.

Especially would I commend these thoughts to your consideration, my Brethren who are about to be admitted to the lower order of the ministry, and to those who are looking forward to being so admitted hereafter. Year by year the post which you are seeking becomes a harder one ; harder to discharge to our own satisfaction or to that of others. Year by year, as education spreads and thought grows freer and more daring, the work of the teacher becomes more difficult, the criticism to which he is exposed more searching. I would not have you neglect the advantages which I have described as resulting from that sympathy which arises from your still retaining your position in the social body. I would rather say use it to the uttermost. Go and find what your contemporaries in the laity are thinking about, what are the difficulties which are running in their heads. Try and find out whether it is *merely* the love of things present, merely the lusts of the flesh, merely the carelessness of animal life that alienates them from the service of God, or whether, as you will find sometimes in cases where you would little expect it, there

are doubts and difficulties which are spoiling the Christian life. It is the work of all others which is most needed to bring our young men to be conscious of the unutterable seriousness of the great problem of their life: and it is you and such as you who using your position of equality with them are likely to be able to win them from indifference to thoughtfulness or from scepticism to faith. But when you find, as you will find, the burden heavy on your back, when the cry "who is sufficient for these things" rises bitterly to your lips, when you find your own inexperience, your own want of learning, may be your own defects of character, speaking to you like so many protests against your claim to authority in the Church; then try and think that whatever appearances may be, you do not strive *alone*. You will hardly indeed fall into the error of thinking yourself alone in one sense of the word. It needs not that I should remind you of One who while you remain faithful will ever be at your side, nay, who will not let you stay away in faithlessness without tenderly recalling you. But beside that remember the help which He has given you in your association with others. Not alone even as regards your fellow creatures will you have to maintain your warfare, and you ought not to forego the support which it should be to you to feel that you are *not*

alone. You will be but units in the army which your Lord has sent to fight against the powers of evil. The thought may make you feel very deeply your own personal insignificance (though even that feeling may to many be a source of comfort), but it ought greatly to enhance your sense of the strength of your position. To realize that support, you must by God's help resolve to make it the effort of your lives to keep ever before you the distinctive character of your profession, the bond that unites you to your brethren. You must feel yourself one of the band of servants waiting with loins girded and lamps burning to welcome the Master when He returns. *Waiting*—let us all remember that word—through all the business all the interests of life, having our eyes fixed on the great future, the expectation of which must colour all our existence, must penetrate all the interests of the present. He will come and knock by and by. Alas for us if He is an unwelcome guest, if He has to force an entrance! Well for us if we have been looking for Him, if in our several stations we have been about His work, so that when He cometh and knocketh we may open unto Him immediately!

SCHOOL SERMONS.

The following Sermons were preached in the Chapel
of Bishop's College to the boys of the Grammar School.

SERMON I.
GLORYING IN INFIRMITIES.

Sexagesima Sunday.

2 Cor. xi. 30.

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

IN other words, *I will boast of my weakness*. A strange thing to boast of, and an especially strange thing for St. Paul to boast of! How do we think of him? What is the first idea which his name calls up in our mind? Surely we think of the man who never seemed to know what fear was; who stood without dismay before the Roman Proconsul—among the screaming mob at Ephesus—in the sinking ship off Melita. No weakness here. We think again of the acute well stored mind—the dexterous combatant with words—the finished courtesy with which he could address Agrippa—the exquisite irony with which in the very chapter before us he can shame the Corinthians out of their partizanship; and we say to ourselves, there is no *intellectual* weakness in the man.

What does he mean then by saying that he will boast of his *weakness* ?

You must remember what was the state of things among those to whom he was writing. It was St. Paul himself who had first preached Christ in Corinth. He, as himself said, planted. But then there came other teachers who wanted rather to exalt themselves than to preach the gospel. These men seemed to have tried to make the Corinthians *despise* St. Paul. They made out that they had claims upon the attention of the Corinthians which he had not. And in this chapter, specially in the part which was read as the Epistle for the day, St. Paul is trying to convince the Corinthians that he really has as many claims as his rivals and more too. We have not time to go into the details of this rather difficult passage, but this is the general drift of it. And notice the end of it again. He tells them all that he had gone through in his course of preaching—how he had been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, in perils by land and sea among enemies and false friends ; and he ends by saying, I will boast, not of the brave way in which I have fought through all these dangers, not of the courage which made me face my enemies, not of the eloquence or skill with which I proclaimed my message, but of my weakness, of the things which concern my infirmities.

We may ask perhaps in the first place what were these infirmities ? Perhaps we may think of that which he himself calls his thorn in the flesh. Many guesses have been made about this, but I think the most probable one is, that it was some impediment which made speaking difficult to him, and at the same time exposed him to ridicule—a most painful thing to one a great part of whose life was to be spent in public speaking. And more than this. Out of his past life he picks out as subjects of boasting just the very things which most men would have passed over. There was something grand in the stoning and the shipwreck : but the weariness and painfulness, the hunger and thirst, the cold and nakedness were the prosaic details of his daily martyrdom which many a man would have passed over in drawing the picture of his life : they argued feebleness, they represent him in a position unheroic, they are assertions not of the noble endurance which carried him through, but of the poor feeble bodily frame which made him bend beneath the sufferings. And I think there can be little doubt that in the two last verses of the chapter he means to give an instance of the things which concern his infirmities, and of which he is prepared to boast. “ In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me ;

and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." Here was a case in which he might be taunted with the meanness and undignified nature of his mode of escape. It was one of the points for which among men he would get no credit; and it was exactly because he would get no credit for them that he means to boast of them; more than that, that he means to appeal to them before these Corinthians as an evidence that his claims to their consideration are at least equal to those of his rivals.

And how so? For this reason, I believe, which will be found to be the key to much that is difficult in this and the following chapter. It was his success in spite of human weakness which showed that God was with him. He turned back to the record of his Apostolic life and he picked out, not the natural gifts which aided him in his work, but the natural defects which hindered him; not the instances of wondrous heroism, which would draw down the admiration of the world, but the evidences of bodily weakness which would excite its scorn, or the voluntary withdrawing from danger which to it would seem like timidity; and it was through them that he challenged the Corinthians to see a proof that the finger of God was with him. 'When I am weak then am I strong. I will not dare to speak of anything which Christ hath not wrought in me. It

is here that you may see that it is not I, but Christ that worketh in me.'

We may apply this appeal in two ways, I think, for our more confirmation in the faith. In these days of doubt and heresy, we need to cling firm to our first principles, we need something to fall back upon when sceptics assail the gospel as the Corinthians assailed St. Paul. And it cannot be too often repeated, it must be to external evidence, to the *history* of Christianity, that we must go for our main defence. Let us learn to glory in the infirmities, the weaknesses of the Christian Church. It sounds strangely, but we may well do it. What is the very first answer to the doubter? 'How do you account for the triumph of Christianity over the religions of the Roman Empire?' What gives point to that question? Surely the lowliness of its Founder, the obscurity of the nation among whom it originated, the general unfitness of its first preachers to cope with the fearful difficulties of their task, in a word the things which concerned its infirmities. Trace its history lower down. See it nearly drowned in blood, staggering against the power of the Empire as it strove first to crush and then to corrupt it. Look at it as it lives through that direst danger, which our Lord said no human kingdom, no devil's kingdom could withstand. "If a house be divided

against itself, it cannot stand." Christ's Church is divided against itself, and we mourn over and deplore her divisions ; but yet in one way we may exult over them too for she *does* stand. The weakness which would ruin aught else cannot vanquish her. To those who doubt her divine original she may point with glorying to the things which concern her infirmities.

I have done no more than just suggest what may open a very wide field of meditation which may be pursued by some of you hereafter. I must go on to the second application of the Apostle's words of which I spoke. We may, we ought to learn to use them ourselves as we look back on the history of our own lives. They may help us in learning what is one of the hardest of all Christian lessons, the lesson that we are truly and really in the hands of God, that He in the events of our life is as really and truly educating us for another life as you are being here educated for the work of maturer days. It is a hard lesson I know especially for the young. If we speak to you of the Christian fight you can understand us. You all know what it means to be trying earnestly to avoid what is wrong, even if you are conscious that you are not trying yourselves. If you have tried, you know the feeling of satisfaction with which you look back to some day when you did try and succeeded. You feel that

what you have done once you can do again ; even if you are conscious as you ought to be that you owe the victory to God's having helped you, still you feel that with the same aid in the future you may conquer again. But the danger is that you may think too much of your own share in the victory, that you may be inclined to boast of your own strength, as if your resolutions, your own wish to do right were enough to carry you through. The Apostle's words would teach you to think of other times, of other parts of your history. We shall none of us need to look very closely to find instances of our own *weakness*. There is some temptation that most easily besets every one of us—some evil propensity which, left unchecked, would develop into proportions that would ruin the character. And I think that almost all of us who have been in any degree in earnest in the desire to serve God, any of us with whom the love of His purity and His love has been something more than a name, any of us who have really felt even feebly and fitfully the longing to be like Him, and to get quit of the evil which makes us *unlike* Him ; I say, I think that almost all such will be able to recall the experience of which I am speaking, to remember times when their own strength was overpowered, when temptation set upon them with peculiar force, when the very will to fight was gone,

and yet they have been carried through as it were by the strength of the Grace which former prayer, former aspirations have laid up in store against the evil time. Do you understand what I mean? Some of you, I have no doubt do. Many more of you will hereafter. It would be of no use to multiply instances, let one suffice. Suppose a boy's temptation is to dishonesty, to take something that does not belong to him. Suppose him conscious of this defect and really wishing, resolving not to yield to it. Suppose him left in a room with money left carelessly about so that he might take it without any danger of detection; suppose him standing there irresolute, his love of right fading away before the love of acquisition, his last effort at resolution spent: and there is the sound of a footstep that frightens him from his purpose, and ere he has time to return to the scene of his temptation, the old good thoughts are flooding back into his mind, and the Tempter's chance is over. What shall he feel when he thinks of this? Shall he think as some would tell us that he *has* virtually yielded to the temptation, that it was *only* an *accident* that saved him, that there was no credit in his abstaining from actual guilt? Ah! no, my brethren: it is no small thing to be pure in act even when we have failed in intention: it is a real safeguard, and one which it is a bitter misfortune to

lose, when we can say, I have never been guilty of that evil yet and by God's help I don't mean to begin. And as for its being no *credit* to abstain, why that is just putting into words the very worst religious blunder that we can make. We are to abstain from evil, we are to do our duty, not with the notion that by any number of acts of obedience we can purchase our salvation, but that we may be making ourselves less unlike what we ought to be, more like what God can look upon with favour. And therefore, to turn back to our illustration, I say that any one having escaped temptation in the way I have described ought to learn to glory, to exult in the things which concern his infirmities. He may, indeed, be ashamed of his own weakness *in itself*, he may repent for the sin of intention. But when he remembers that by God's mercy it was prevented from becoming a sin of action too, if to him God's providence is something more than a bare phrase—if he has been able to take in the idea that that footfall which saved him was a part of the wondrous Government of Him, who uses as His tools not merely the laws of the inanimate creation, but man's own free will—then his weakness will be to him the most convincing proof that God's help was really with him, the surest pledge that that help can carry him through like

trials hereafter. "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities."

Only one caution in conclusion, though I should hope it can be hardly necessary. You will not think that I mean for a moment to represent that our own efforts are not needed to the uttermost in the struggle with evil. If we are not set to do our best we have no right to hope that God will help us. It is only when our very best is so utterly feeble that there is the weakness in which, when the danger is past, we may exult. We should be like soldiers in the army of some great general. As they look back on the past campaign, they see a time of deadly peril, when personal bravery would have availed them nothing, where they seemed on the point of falling hopelessly into the hands of the enemy. They were rescued by what seemed an accident : but now they learn that the whole crisis formed a part of the plans of the commander, that he had foreseen the danger, that it was he who had provided the rescue. With what confidence will they go forward under him now, confidence born of the sense that his guidance has carried them through a peril out of which their own struggles could never have brought them ! They will fight with all the energy of old, with the same sense that if they do not fight bravely the battle must be lost ; but they will fight also

with the sense that it is their general's wisdom to which they must mainly trust, that it is that which puts them into the position where they can fight with hope of victory. Brethren, cannot we learn so to trust the Captain of our Army, with a trust which shall quicken not paralyse our efforts ?

SERMON II.

THE STRUGGLE TO DO RIGHT.—THE FLESH LUSTING AGAINST THE SPIRIT.

GAL. V. 17.

Ye cannot do the things that ye would.

VERY unlike this to the language we hear around us every day. “I will do as I please;” “No one shall interfere with me, or prevent me from acting as I like;” this is what people say or mean every day of their lives. And yet here St. Paul says “Ye cannot do the things that ye would.” What does he mean by it? Let us go back to the beginning of the verse to see. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” The *reason* then why we cannot do the things that we would is, that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit. St. Paul, remember, is speaking to Christians—to men who had been baptized as we have been; to men who had been given the great gift of the Holy Spirit of God; that Holy Spirit of whom you say in your Catechism that He “sanctifieth me

and all the elect people of God." Now how does He sanctify you or make you holy? How does He—if we may so speak—*try* to make you holy if you will only let Him? Most of you know the answer. It is by putting good thoughts into your hearts or making you ashamed of bad ones. It is by making you *wish* to do right instead of doing wrong. Even you very little ones can understand that. Don't you know what it is to feel that you would give a great deal to be always good—never to be passionate—never to use bad language—never to be untrue—never to be selfish? Don't you know what it is to be very sorry when you have been any one of these? I do not mean because you are afraid of being punished, but because these things make you ashamed of yourself; and you long to do better for the future.

And perhaps you make up your mind that you *will* do better. You come to school the next day, and before it is over you are provoked or tempted into the old mischief again. You forget how ugly the evil looked the night before, and you take up the forbidden pleasure, or forget to check the ungoverned passion. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." The Spirit lusted or desired against the flesh the night before, God's Holy Spirit then made you wish—eagerly desire—to restrain the flesh, that is, your

own wayward unruly self, which it takes so much trouble to keep in order. And now this self is lusting against the Spirit, stirring up desires which are wholly opposed to those which the Holy Spirit arouses. Take one instance. Suppose a boy is not always firm in telling the truth. He hears a sermon or reads a story which shows him how mean and cowardly and shameful lying is ; how it must bring upon him God's displeasure. He resolves earnestly that he will *never* be guilty of it again. The next day he is in danger of punishment from which he can screen himself by a lie ; or, which is to many a worse temptation, he finds that unless he tells a lie he will bring another into trouble. Then the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit. The flesh says—' The punishment is hard, the disgrace of betraying difficult to bear ; listen to me, tell the lie — it is only this once—it cannot be much harm.' On the other hand the Spirit says—' A lie is always a lie, you will look at it to night as you did last night, don't give way and be cowardly.' And so the boy cannot do the thing that he would. He seems to have two wills, one of them must give way. And this simple case is only a type of the whole life ; as it advances the battle has to be fought on different ground, with different enemies ; but with the same armour, the same mode of warfare.

Not only St. Paul teaches but experience forces home the truth that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit."

And this is true of almost every one. At least there is only one way in which it can be *not* true. There may be some in whom the Spirit has ceased to lust against the flesh—who have utterly quenched the Spirit, who have indulged in what is forbidden till they have lost the wish to do better. I do hope none such are here, that none of you are like this. I know there must be evil among us: it is an awful thought as we look at your young faces to feel that sin is at work among you—that not *one* heart could bear inspection; that if we could see behind the scenes we should find evil passions and corrupt habits even where we least expect them. But I cannot believe—I will not believe that there is one among you who is dead to a wish for better things altogether. I will hope that there is the double will in every one of you. The evil will we know there must be which says, 'I will do what seems pleasant without stopping to think whether right or wrong;' but we will hope there is the better will too which says, 'I will do what is true, and manly and pure and honest,' which brings disgust at what is evil and a craving for what is good. At any rate I trust there are none in whom this will is not to be found *at times*. Even if as a regular thing this better will is overborne,

if you go about your daily work or daily play without thinking of such things—if you are carried away by bad examples, if you take up the wretched notion that it is *manly* to use coarse evil language—a fine thing to indulge in dissipation and excess: still there must be times when the truth will come home; when the beauty of holiness will shine through the clouds; when you will see, what you must learn some day either to your intense happiness or utter sorrow, that after all they have made the right choice who have chosen the good. I say I hope and believe there is not one of you who does not feel this at times, not one in whom the Spirit does not at times make himself heard against the flesh. Here in chapel or in church for instance, when for the moment temptation is removed; when our daily life seems at a distance, and we get such a view of it as we cannot get when in the thick of the fight; when we can look upon our daily path almost as something apart from our present existence; when if we think of our daily troubles and trials and falls at all, it is under quite a different light to that in which we see them every day: then I am sure in those of you who are good for anything, the Spirit lusteth against the flesh. Ah! in the calm of God's presence, how miserable, how unworthy, how unmanly, look the very indulgences for the sake of which during the week

we have broken God's law! Nay, isn't it hard for some of you *now* to think how such things were ever temptations at all? Surely it does seem strange that you could barter your self-respect, your sense of a satisfied conscience and the peace of God abiding with you, for the mere childish indulgence in profane or coarse language; strange when we are brought face to face with the stainless humanity of our Master, that we could not conquer a momentary craving for the sake of abiding in His love; strange that we could yield to the indolence that bade us shirk our daily work, when we realize the fact that in doing that work heartily, as to Him, consists the main portion of our Christian service. Surely when the Spirit thus lusteth against the flesh, when the desires of the flesh—our worse selves—our every-day selves—are checked, and the desires of the Spirit spring up free and unfettered, we must feel that in order to be happy what we want, is not to be always allowed to do as we like, but rather to learn to like to do as we know we ought. But let us remember this: in our calmer more solemn moments, when we feel however strongly that we would give anything to be kept from the danger of going wrong again, let us remember that of itself this feeling will not last. Above all let us beware of thinking that having such feelings is religion. Religion is

not *feeling*—it is *being* and *acting*. Beware of the miserable mistake of feeling anything like pride because you are conscious of a displeasure at your own evil and a desire for better things. I don't mean to say that you are not to feel a *satisfaction*: but it must be the satisfaction not of a person who has done something for himself, but of one who has had something done for him. Here now at this moment, or at any such times, if in you the Spirit desires against the flesh, remember I pray you that you are enjoying a vast privilege given you by God: snatch at it, be eager to secure the golden opportunity, for you know not whether it will be offered again. It is God who by His special grace has put into your hearts good desires. Send those desires up to Him again in real hearty prayer that He will *steadily* in you the work of His Spirit. For to-morrow, nay to-day as you are leaving these walls, you will be in the thick of the world again. If those wishes are not steadied, five minutes of your ordinary worldly talk will drive them out again. You will find that you cannot do the things that you would. Pleasure will look pleasant again, work will look irksome, self-denial painful, self-restraint wearisome. The flesh will lust against the Spirit and drag you down to the old position.

And is this state of things to go on forever?

There is only one way of bringing it to an end, only one way of making ourselves able to say that we *can* do as we would. That is, by making God's will our will; by letting the lusts of the flesh be swallowed up in the desires of the Spirit. That is the great lesson to be learned by the Christian, and the world is the school where he has to learn it. Since that world was made, there has been but One Man of whom it could be said that He could and did do the things that He would; and He is our Pattern as well as our atonement, even our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him the will was one and undivided. Even though He learned sympathy for us by submitting to the bitterness of temptation, there was in Him no perverted will to meet temptation half way, and so He ever conquered—could not do otherwise than conquer. It is our Christian profession 'to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him.' Like unto Him in this above all, that we should love and desire what is good, and turn away at once in disgust from what is evil.

And remember that the lesson of your life ought to be begun here; begun in school, carried on still more earnestly in College. It is the very purpose with which this College was founded, to preach out to the world the great truth which all are so apt

to forget, that the battle with temptation doesn't wait for the entrance into active life. And unless you remember this, you may fail to catch the spirit of the place altogether. It is not enough here, as it would be in some other places of education, to ask yourselves whether you have been storing up knowledge and expanding your minds. You must ask yourselves that, but you must ask yourselves something more if you would find out whether you have been doing the work of this place. We would indeed fain send you forth hence well-instructed, with the talents which God has given you well-developed; but we want something above and beyond that: we want to send you forth with the consciousness deep-seated in your hearts that you are in very truth members of that glorious One who sits at the right hand of God; that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; that every sin you commit is a treachery against your loving Master, a desecration of that which he has made His sanctuary. But in order that this consciousness may be deep-seated, it must be one on which you are learning to act in daily life. It must not be cleared away out of your heads in the school-room and the play-ground. But you know it *will go* out of your heads if you do nothing to keep it there, and the only thing you can do to prevent its so departing is to

pray heartily to God to keep it there. When a man or a boy is going on carelessly in evil, and this sense of his real position comes home to him, he is like one sliding down the face of a steep precipice whose foot suddenly strikes against a projecting ledge of rock. It isn't safety—there is a weary climb before him ere he can reach that; but it is the first step to safety. The first thing he has to do is to make sure of that, and then starting from it to mount up higher. Let it be so with your feeling of the reality of your Christian calling. To many of you I have only been repeating in varied words a truth which I have tried to impress upon you again and again. To some of you I am speaking now for the first time from this place. To these latter especially, but to all most earnestly I say, Remember what is the great lesson which here you ought to be learning—learning in addition to your lessons in hours of work—to be learning even more constantly in the times of amusement—the lesson how to be able to do what you would in this world and the world to come. Only in one way, as I said before, can this be done, by learning to will what God wills—to hate what he hates.

And if we are inclined to grudge the labour, think what a reward to look forward to! To be set free from all fear of evil—to be able always to follow our

own inclinations without a dread of their ever leading us wrong! Can it ever be? Can we ever be thus transformed? Brethren, it was that it might be—that He might thus transform—that our Lord laid down His most precious life. We have but to ask His help—to seek Him in daily prayer; to strengthen the bonds that bind us to Him by feeding on Him in the Holy Communion: and then the desires of the Spirit will burn up in us brighter and brighter until the great day of adoption when our bodies shall be redeemed to the service of God. We know the pleasure of being praised by those whom we respect on earth: we know the delight of seeing that we have satisfied the longings of those whom we love here: but think of the ineffable happiness of seeing that Face bending down upon us at the last with looks of unutterable love, and showing that in our feeble efforts He has seen of the travail of His soul, and ask yourself is not this a prize for the sake of which it is worth while to fight the daily battle of self-denial, to give up *anything*, though for the moment it may seem harder to part with than life itself?

SERMON III.

FOLLOWING CHRIST.

ST. MATT. XIX. 21.

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come and follow me.

THIS was the answer which the young man brought upon himself who came to our Lord with the question "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And it is an answer which, when we see the full meaning of it, will give serious lessons even to those among us who seem least able to follow it literally.

Notice first the words which come before the command. If thou wilt be perfect—or if thou wishest to be perfect. For here is the key to the whole matter. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," says our Lord elsewhere. It is no finite model that is set before us, no finite amount of work that we can ever get to the end of. The young man in the story didn't understand this.

He came and cried " Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life ?" He seems to think that there might be some one exceedingly good deed by which he might make himself safe. There seems scarcely a doubt that our Lord's reply according to St. Matthew ought to be, not as in our version, " Why callest thou Me good ?" but " Why dost thou ask Me about goodness ? The Good One is only One." As if He had said, What do you mean by coming to Me with this question about this imaginary good deed, as if there were any deed of man which could earn eternal life ? There is only One who can properly be said to be good, and that is God. If you are to gain eternal life it must be not by doing some good thing but by being good : by being perfect " even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Such is the standard which our Lord set before this young man. The ideal of Christian perfection is likeness to God himself. And in actual practice we can no more reach to this ideal than the mark which we make upon paper can be made to satisfy the conditions of the geometrical definition of lines. You know that the finest line that can be drawn with the most delicate instruments is not a line at all : that if viewed by means of a powerful microscope, not only would its breadth become apparent, but the very paper

on which it is drawn would seem a succession of hills and valleys instead of a plane surface. As mechanical skill improves, we may make surfaces more and more nearly plane, and draw lines of which it will take higher and higher magnifying power to discern the irregularity : but even where we cannot *see* the divergence, we must be always sure that it still exists. And yet we do not abstain in practice from speaking of straight lines and lines correctly drawn, and that as opposed to crooked lines and lines incorrectly drawn. And mind this ; that it is by keeping before us the real definition, though we know that we can never fully comply with it, that we become able to draw lines which diverge less and less from the standard. Now I think that this illustration may help us to reconcile two classes of passages in the Scriptures which do seem at first rather opposed to each other. First, there is the far more numerous class in which an exceedingly strong view is maintained of the sinfulness of human nature—a view which sometimes seems almost over-strained and exaggerated. I need hardly quote passages of the sort. You know how we are reminded that there is none righteous, no not one : that all our righteousness is as filthy rags ; that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying

sors. Now, of course all this is perfectly true ; just as it is true to say of the most delicate line that you can trace on paper that it is not a line at all according to the strict definition. When you compare any man's character with the requirements of God's Law, the fact is that the longer you look into it the more deviations you must expect to find from the law of infinite purity. But are we at the same time to say that there is no such thing as a real difference between a good man and a bad one ? That making due allowance for a man's position and circumstances we may not fairly say of one man that he is good and of another he is bad ? just as we may say of lines, allowing for the scale on which they are drawn and the roughness of the materials, this is straight and that is crooked ? The passages that tell us we may say this, are sharp and decided enough, though not so numerous as the others. I will mention only two. What was St. Peter's exclamation about Cornelius' case ? " Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him *and worketh righteousness* is accepted with Him." In some sense, therefore, it *is* possible for men to work righteousness. And we have another conspicuous example of the same truth in the story before us. The young ruler who came to our Lord

was clearly no pretender, like the Pharisees. He may have got hold of their false notion, that it was possible by doing one great act of obedience to the law to secure eternal life: but he came in all honesty to ask what that was. And you will notice that though he does assert what we should call his *goodness*, he does so as it were quite by accident, and apparently without the least idea of boasting of it. Our Lord answers his question by telling him to keep the Commandments, which are summed up in the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." His reply is, "All these things have I kept from my youth;" as if he had said, 'you are only telling me that which lies at the foundation of religion: of course I have kept such commandments as these. What lack I yet?' Now, no doubt our Lord might have replied by showing him that if he thought of the *spirit* as well as the letter of those commands, he might well hesitate before he ventured to say, "all these things have I kept." If he had remembered that he might break the fifth commandment by disobeying his parents, or those in authority—or the sixth, by indulging in fierce anger—or the seventh, by ungoverned thoughts or evil words—or the ninth, by spreading some false tale to his neighbour's hurt; he could hardly have said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." In

fact, we might have expected that his answer would bring upon him a very severe reproof for his presumption; and some of the Commentators seem to be considerably disappointed that it did not. But, instead of this, in St. Mark's version of the story, we have a very remarkable sentence, "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him." Yes, the One Man who alone was good, looking on this young man as he stood there eagerly expecting the Teacher's words,—knowing, as He alone could know, the honesty of the profession, which even in the narrower sense of the words very few men could make with truth; made too without any purpose of self-exaltation, and almost with an unconsciousness of what he was claiming for himself; the One Man who alone of all men had the right to challenge the slightest departure from the absolute rule of goodness—*He*, looking upon this young ruler, *loved him*. What would we give, my brethren, to be in his place? Which of us can venture to think, as he turns back to the history of his life, as he thinks of the evil inclinations, the unamiable tempers, the half-curbed passions that are in him—which of us could venture to think that our Master, looking down from heaven, loved *him*? And yet we have a clear intimation in this story, that this love we may gain even from the Perfect One—a real human love founded

upon a sympathy with the main bent of the character. Probably it would be found resting on one who would be the most earnest in disclaiming it—one in whom goodness is most unconscious of itself—one who thinks but little of himself at all. At any rate, it seems pretty clear that this was the case with the young man in the story before us. His whole heart was set upon learning from the new Teacher what was to be the condition of his attaining to eternal life, and he passed over the fact of his having kept the Commandments as a mere matter of course. And Jesus, beholding him, loved him—was filled, we may suppose, with a divine affection for the purity and simplicity of his character, which, whatever might be its faults, was at any rate in earnest—did not admit of his shutting his eyes to all that was amiss, and then proclaiming that nothing was amiss.

But the important thing to bear in mind is this: that while it is right enough to speak of such a character as this as *good* in a certain relative sense, since it won the love of our Blessed Lord himself, yet such goodness is by no means enough. It would be a fatal mistake to imagine that we may put before us any such character as our model. We see plenty of them in the world, in spite of all its evil: people of pure lives and lovable dispositions of whom all speak well,

and in whose well-balanced useful lives there seems no reason to suspect the existence of any grievous hidden evil. Gifted by nature with a disposition which seems to exempt them from the strong temptations which assail others, these happy ones are they whom, as we look upon, we love, and whom we believe our Master loves likewise. And yet—and yet—this is not enough. It is not at this that we are to aim. The line may be finely drawn, but is it *as* fine as the nature of the material will admit? Has religion done or is it doing its work? No one will pretend to say that such a character is perfect. There must be defects—are they being filled up? If not, the man in spite of his advantages may be standing actually below some unfortunate wretch who, cursed with worse propensities, is really trying to strive against them. Remember how it was with this young man whom Jesus loved. “If thou wishest or desirest to be perfect, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.” One doesn’t like to think of the result. Not as one would have hoped, an eager compliance with the demand: not a ready springing-forth of the heart’s best love to meet that wondrous affection bestowed upon him, but, “When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.” Our

Lord has dragged out his infirmity into the light. No doubt it was a hard demand, but he had almost challenged it; and now when it came he could not make up his mind to comply with it. He went away sorrowing—sorrowing we may well believe, not only at the severity of our Lord's requirement, but also at the discovery of his own weakness—with the sorrow which every honest mind must feel when it is brought face to face with some deficiency in itself which it had not apprehended before—something of self-reproach—something of self-disgust—and an entire self-dissatisfaction. He had never dreamt that a demand could be made of him which he would not cheerfully comply with, in order to make sure of eternal life. But He who could see into man's heart knew where the weak spot was and probed *that*. He was a rich man and loved his riches. It seemed an unreasonable thing that he should be required to give them up. And yet you see he does not even venture to remonstrate. He only goes away sorrowful—but he does go away and heeds not the invitation, "Come and follow Me." His case is one of the best comments upon that stern saying of St. James, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" the whole work of a really

good life rendered ineffectual by a wilful indulgence in one thing that is forbidden.

We must remember carefully, in applying this story to ourselves, it was not that our Lord here attributes any special virtue to the giving up of wealth or property. The command "Follow me" is addressed to us all—the other part of it, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor," was addressed only to the person then before Him. And it was addressed to him with the view of making him see where he was deficient. If his failing had been in a different direction, no doubt the demand made upon him would have been accommodated to it. He came to our Lord asking really "What is there for me to do? what sacrifice to make? what hard duty to perform?" And something like this is not an uncommon question now. It is the question of many a one who is leading a steady orderly life, in the quiet discharge of the routine duties of every day. I am sure that there are many such who really hardly understand the strong language of the Bible, about the sinfulness of the human heart: who feel almost that they are doing all that is required of them; and who are disposed to ask almost impatiently, "Lord, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" To all such, His answer is "Come and follow me." And to follow Him will always in-

volve trouble or suffering, more or less. It will involve giving up something. Perhaps we should be ready enough to follow Him if we could only keep that something. No doubt the young ruler would gladly have followed Him as one of His disciples if only he might have kept his lands and money for himself. But there lay this terrible condition at the outset, and so he went away sorrowful. Sometimes our Lord may make a similar demand of us. We admire the beauty of His character: we feel that to be like Him would be our truest happiness—to be pure and calm and holy—unruffled by bad desires and evil passions—to be one's own master—never to be in danger of saying or doing that for which the next day we shall hate ourselves. But often before He bids us follow Him in holiness of living, He has bid us "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor"—give up that which thou lovest best on earth, or that which it is hardest for thee to part with.

Of course you understand what I mean by saying that our Lord tells you that you must act in such a way. He does tell it you whenever you hear or read a warning that something must be given up. You may know, even some of the younger of you, what it means to wish to please God and to have the hope of going to heaven when you die. But has it ever come into your mind "Ah, it is of no use my trying to please

God, unless I can make up my mind to give up some bad habit, such as using evil language or deceiving, or without trying to keep under my temper?" Then you are just like the ruler who would have liked to follow Christ and have eternal life, but went away sorrowful because he couldn't do so without giving up his wealth which he loved so dearly.

And we all of us, my brethren, may find ourselves in a similar case. The question of the ruler may be answered year after year in the same general terms; but at last at some crisis of our life there comes a new and startling demand; startling, not only because we are required to give up so much, but because we are shown defects in our character which we never realized before, and we find that our work has, as it were, to be begun all over again. If a man suddenly wakes up to the knowledge of the truth that he is a slave of pride, or selfishness, or indolence, or irresolution, and that he has got to fight his Christian battle from the very beginning on a new field with new foes, he is sorely tempted to go away sorrowful and to decline to make the sacrifice required of him. It is the natural punishment of self-complacency that a man should have to go through this trial: should have to see suddenly and painfully, how utterly short his practice falls of the Christian ideal at which he ought to be aiming.

We do not know what was the future history of the young ruler, we cannot help hoping that such a character may afterwards have recovered himself and made the sacrifice which now he declined: but for the time being, with all his amiableness, with all his earnestness, he separated himself from the great Master. If we would avoid his danger, let us beware of his fault of character. "How hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" And by riches, I take it, our Lord doesn't here mean only money or lands, but anything which belongs to us, or which we count valuable. It is those who, like the rich man in the parable, are receiving their good things now, who are in danger of refusing to make the first sacrifice that their religion demands of them. In one word, we must rise above the state in which the first object of our life is to get through this world easily, and then, when that is achieved, to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. When we come to ask "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" we must ask it without any reserve and without any self-trust, and then we may be sure that He whom we ask will nerve us to the discharge of the duty which He enjoins, instead of our departing from Him cast down and sorrowful.

SERMON IV.
REALIZING THE UNSEEN.

2 COR. iv. 18.

The things which are not seen are eternal.

ST. Paul uses these words as a reason why we should think much more of the things which are not seen than of those which are seen. It is a reason with him why we should guide our lives not by asking ourselves what is pleasant for the moment, but by thinking what is right—what God would wish us to do. And yet strangely enough, in these very words is expressed or implied that which is the great difficulty in our way when we try to guide our life by religion. The things which are not seen *and those only* are eternal. Or converting the proposition, the things which are eternal are not seen. Why is it that people in general think so little about religion? Why do we read the words of our Lord with so little concern? Why can we listen without fear to such declarations as this, “They that have done good shall

go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire?" Mainly, I believe, because we do not *see* the things of which they speak. We do not *see* God—we do not *see* our blessed Saviour seated on the right hand of God—we do not see His frown when we do wrong, His smile when we do right—we do not see the holy Angels watching over us and marking our steps—we do not see the joys of heaven or the woes of hell. But we do see and feel too the things which are temporal. If we gratify our appetites we know that we feel pleasure; if we stop ourselves from doing wrong we know that it costs us a painful effort. It is often—you boys know it—a sad temptation to snatch at a pleasure that comes in your way without stopping to consider whether it is right or wrong. The fact is that in general the things of religion seem a long way off from you. You don't do anything that hurts you because you are afraid of pain. Often you will not do things that are against rules because you are afraid of being punished. If any body said to you, Don't do that, it will hurt you; or Don't do this, you will be punished for it, you would listen to him. But supposing you were going to do something wrong, which it seemed impossible that any one should find out, and a person were to say to you, Don't do this because our Blessed Lord will be angry with you, I am afraid that

too many of you would receive the warning with something like ridicule. And why? Again because you do not *see* Jesus Christ. He is in heaven; and though you say you believe He is there, yet that doesn't seem a thing which has to do with your every day life.

It is rather curious to notice how every form of false religion has evaded the difficulty of which we speak by some device or other. Almost every form of heathenism takes refuge in idolatry. The gods are represented in visible form. In the Mahometan system the same end is accomplished in another way. Indulgence in most of the pleasures of sense is not considered to shut a man out of the Divine favour; and, moreover, the "eternal" things promised to the believer are only an excess of the sensual enjoyments of earth. Christianity alone actually encounters the difficulty and draws the line sharply between the things of earth and the things of heaven. "God is a Spirit"—unseen, past finding out. True, He has revealed Himself in His Son; for a while the Eternal dwelt within the limits of time and place. But what did He say Himself? "It is expedient for you that I go away." How terribly hard it is to realize that. I suppose that there are very many who have been inclined to say that it *cannot* be so. If He had remained on

earth—if He were now reigning in Jerusalem—would it not be much easier to believe in Him, to be always thinking of Him than it is now ?

We must trust Him that it is not so—that the gift of the Holy Ghost to stir up good thoughts within us is more than enough to make up for His own absence ; is but it is not an easy thing to believe. And not only has He gone away Himself, but He has left nothing belonging to Him that we can see or touch. As if effectually to check our fastening our thoughts on real relics of Him, He has allowed superstition so to multiply false ones that we can only now discredit all alike. We have not an authentic likeness of His face, not an original copy of His word. I do not stop now to ask whether we can see any reason for His dealing with us after this plan ; I only want to point out to you how it is His plan : that it is a part of our trial in this life that we have continually *by an effort* to recall to ourselves the great truths of religion, to walk by faith not by sight, because it is the things which are not seen which are eternal.

“ The things which are seen are temporal,”—will last only for a time, and pass away for ever. It is hard again to feel this thoroughly, especially in early life, when you have as yet left little behind you. But so it is ; your school life is temporal. I

don't mean merely that the time will come when you will have to leave school, but that there will grow up in you a change in the way in which you look at things ; that thoughts and desires and fears, which now seem a very part of yourself, will have given way to new ones. When you become men, you must put away childish things. College life with its more manly tone of thought will pass away too, and leave you on the threshold of the great world not the same as when you entered the course. Then, or in some cases without this, comes the fierce struggle of life, the burden and heat of the day, when amidst the hurry of business, thrown among men of whom a terrible number avowedly care nothing about the things eternal, and with the warmer and purer feelings of youth blunted in spite of yourselves, you will find it harder than ever to remember that the things which are seen are temporal. And yet manhood and its ways of thinking will slide into the weariness of old age, longing for its rest. And after that—perhaps long before you reach that stage—the great wondrous change which will take us away from what we see into the presence of the Eternal. You lie down quietly to sleep every night, believing that you will wake to-morrow to go on with the pleasures or the work of yesterday. Some day you must lie down to die, and wake up

in a new world where all will be changed : where our blessed Lord — His judgment — His wrath or His approval — will be the things present before your eyes ; and all your earthly pleasures and occupations will seem dim and distant.

One would think that this solemn truth could hardly be classed among the things that are not seen ; even the youngest have generally some experience of its truth. And yet we are so constituted that the uncertainty of life makes very little natural impression on us. The death of our neighbours fail too often to remind us of our own. Yet now and again we have a warning which we can hardly slight. Let us lay to heart that of this past week. With terrible suddenness, a brother of two of our number—once a scholar of this place—a young man in the full vigor of health, has been taken away from among us. For him, the things eternal have now become the things which are seen ; his body returned to the earth ; his soul gone to the place of waiting, to abide the great day of account. My dear brethren, what is the source of comfort to those who are lamenting his loss ; what is it, that even a stranger who sympathises with them, hears of him with satisfaction ? Not his cleverness—not his aptitude for business—not his promise of success in life. These are among the things that were. Rather the signs

which give us reason to hope that in him the Christian life was a reality, and that the Master into whose presence he has gone was remembered and served in the days of his youth. But is it not an awful thought—one which comes home to us in this place crowded with youthful life—that even when we were assembling after our vacation, he was walking about among his associates with nothing to distinguish him from them? That no one could read on his forehead the writing of the Angel of Death? It may be so with some among us now; no one can tell which of us may bear that mark; no one can tell that he himself does not bear it. No one can tell but that there may be among us those of whom God sees that their work is just done, and they nearly ready to go home to their rest—or, terrible as the thought is—that they have so long misused their privileges—so long been getting worse instead of better—that their time of trial is nearly over—His patience nearly exhausted: of whom He knows that their work never will be done at all.

I do not want to terrify you with gloomy thoughts of the possible nearness of death; but I do want you to see how this sudden loss is to us a warning not to put off our work in the fancied security that we are too young or too healthy for death to come to us. What is that work? What is it that I have told you before is

the very essence of all religion, the sum and substance of that which our Lord died to enable us to do? Brethren, our work is to learn to hate evil and to love good—not now and then but always—to hate what is false and cruel and impure and profane, as we hate what is painful or ugly: to love what is true and kind and holy and reverent, as we love those who are dear to us—as we like what naturally causes us pleasure. You may do that work all day long—in the school-room or at play. And the way to do it is very simple. The more you do right the easier it becomes to do right, and the more you will like doing right. Every temptation you resist will leave you with more strength to fight the next.

But if you do otherwise—especially if you indulge in grosser forms of evil—bad words, bad actions, bad habits, you are every moment increasing the work to be done. A selfish unholy man or child cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. He would not enjoy himself there if he could enter. The people and the pleasures which he would find there would be alike distasteful. He must be cured of his evil before he can be saved. And we must always remember that our Lord died, not only to save us from the punishment of sin, but from sin itself. Even now He puts into our minds good desires by His

special grace preventing us. We are made to have good thoughts rise up in our hearts, we are made sorry for what we have done wrong, and we are made to wish to do better in many ways—by a sermon it may be—a book—such a warning as that of which we have been speaking. But remember that in every such case it is God that stirs us up; it is He who by any of these outward means is putting into our hearts good desires. We have only seriously to ask Him for His continued help, and we may be sure that He will enable us to bring those desires to good effect—even to this, that they make us ready when our time shall come to exchange things temporal for things eternal.

One word to you elder boys and students, especially those who were but lately among my own pupils. I speak to those of you—and I thank God there are so many—who are, I know, no strangers to such thoughts as these, who have fairly faced the thought of the battle with evil, who are more or less in earnest in the resolution to fight with it. Remember while you are here under a discipline which is intended to shield you to a certain extent from temptation, it is part of your work to lay up strength for severer conflicts which may have to come. The time will surely arrive—some of you may have felt it even now—when the Devil, the world, and the flesh, will close around you—tempt

you through your pride, or your indolence, or your passions, till you are fairly overwhelmed—till the will turns traitor, the tongue refuses to pray, the eyes to be lifted up to heaven. What is to be then your hope of escape? Shall there be nothing for it but a fall, with a possible rising again? Brethren, you may be carried through such a time, not by anything you can do *then*, but by what you are doing *now*. The prayers of to-day may save you from your enemies in years to come. But beware of trusting to your own strength. You must unlearn that before you can be said to have done your work—you must learn to trust *only* in God. Can you not do so by the warning of those who *have* learnt the lesson, instead of waiting for the bitter teaching of experience? And let me urge upon you especially the need of regularly availing yourselves of our privilege in having the Holy Communion offered to us more frequently than is usually the case. In this instance, our Lord does deal with us through tangible means. The eternal verities of heaven are set forth in visible form. Let us remember the two texts which should ever be in our minds when we think of the Lord's Supper;—the first, which tells us the need of feeding on Christ; the second, which tells us the Holy Communion is a means of feeding on Him. “Except ye eat the flesh of

the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" To stay away is to starve the soul; to increase the difficulty of rising above the visible and the temporal. We are but strangers sojourning among those who are too often our Master's enemies: surely it is foolish to pass by any opportunity which may thus put us in direct communication with our unseen home. Go there regularly, thinking of what you may have to meet hereafter, as well as of what is coming on you now: strive there to learn both humility and trust; and so shall you go forth—dwelling in Christ and Christ in you, gathered closer to him than ever—ready to meet the unseen future with a thorough knowledge of your own weakness and an absolute confidence in His strength.

SERMON V.
THE DANGER OF SEEKING FOR SIGNS AND
WONDERS.

ST. JOHN iv. 48.

Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.

IN order to see the full force of this answer of our Lord it is necessary to remember who the person was to whom it was given. At first sight it seems almost out of place. You will all remember the story in St. John's Gospel. "There was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum;" and he went to our Lord, and "besought him that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." Perhaps we might be inclined to say, the nobleman showed that he did believe by coming to our Lord to ask for help; why should our Lord have spoken to him as if he suspected that he only wanted to put his power to the proof? I believe that the answer to this would be found in

the position of this "nobleman," and the character of the class to which he belonged. He is described in the Greek as a βασιλικός. This word does not seem to have been used to denote any special office, or as a title. It probably means "Courtier,"—and as denoting one attached to the party of the king, it would probably be about equivalent to "Herodian." Some indeed have supposed that the person in question was Chuza, Herod's steward: but there does not seem any sufficient ground for our believing this. We may however suppose that he was one of Herod's courtiers. Now turn to St. Luke xxiii. 8, and there we find these words. Pilate has just sent our Lord to Herod, and Herod we are told "was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season because he had heard many things of Him; *and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.*" Here we have, I think, the clue to our Lord's answer. Herod and his courtiers were known to be feeling a kind of languid curiosity to see our Lord, and to witness one of his miracles: just the kind of longing for something new in the way of excitement which such a set of men would be likely to feel. One of them comes to our Lord and asks Him to heal his son. Our Lord of course knew that the case was a real one; but perhaps for the sake of convincing those around

Him—perhaps in order to test the man himself—He answers as if He had doubted whether he had any other object than to put to trial the powers of the new Teacher. “Except ye”—the set to whom you belong—“except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.” The father does not stop to defend himself from the imputation, but uses language which shows at once that his case is genuine, “Sir, come down ere my child die.” He may have been a languid trifier before, but he is an earnest suppliant now. It is not to gratify an idle curiosity but to spare him from a terrible calamity, that he asks our Lord to exert His power. And the earnestness of his faith is shown by the way in which he bore, without staggering, another trial of it which followed, when our Lord granted his request in a way so different to that in which he expected that it would be granted. He was urgent that the Master should “come down”—and “ere his child die.” He was all in haste to bring the Healer to his sick child’s bedside, before it was—as he would have said—too late. But the Lord would not have it so; “Go thy way, thy son liveth.” I know nothing to match the simple dignity of the command, but the simple and child-like faith with which it was obeyed; “The man believed the word which Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way”—and found that the

promise had been more than fulfilled. He had not come to seek for signs and wonders as a condition of his belief—he came with belief in his heart already, and the signs and wonders came freely.

“Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.” Could these words be spoken to any of us? I am afraid that we may indulge a temper very much like that which our Lord here rebukes. I suspect that some of us may know the feeling which makes people say or think, ‘You may say what you like about the reality of religion, but the world goes on much as usual—they plant, they build, they buy, they sell, they marry and are given in marriage; these are the things that seem real. Would that we were like those who were alive when our Saviour was on the earth: would that we could have our minds settled and fixed by seeing one of those wondrous works by which He showed His power when on earth!’ The last time that I spoke to you from this place I dwelt chiefly on the difficulty that meets us in the fact that religion deals with things that are not seen. The spirit of which I am now speaking is one that is always asking for an escape from this difficulty. No doubt it may be more blamable in some than in others. The weary brain bewildered with speculative difficulties may crave for some outward token of God’s power

and presence, and claim our sympathy rather than deserve our blame. But these are not the persons who are like Herod and his courtiers. I am speaking rather of those who would make an excuse for not obeying the laws of religion by complaining that they want evidence of its reality; who want signs and wonders before they will believe. And there is one special kind of error connected with this point, against which I would very earnestly warn some of you, because you may be led into it by partly misunderstanding some religious teaching that you may hear. I suppose that no one of us is likely to say, 'I will not begin to try to serve God until I have seen the blind made to see, the deaf hear, or the dead restored to life:' but there may be a danger of some of you thinking that you are justified in expecting some change in your own mind of which you may be sensible, which shall lie at the very beginning of a religious life. I believe—nay, I know by experience—that there is nothing more distressing to a boy who is inclined to wish to serve God, than that he should get the notion into his head that he cannot do so until some sudden change has passed upon him of which he shall be conscious. Of course, there are cases where such sudden changes do come—cases where men who have led evil careless lives have been, as it were, woken

up by a sudden alarm : but to represent such a sudden change as a necessary introduction to religious thoughtfulness—to represent it even as a very common one, is I believe most dangerous. To wait for such a fancied call, is to say, “ Except I see signs and wonders I will not believe.” Our Christian life dates not from our first consciousness of it, but from the day when it was given us ; when we were admitted into Christ’s church and made members of His body. It is our business to live in the daily remembrance of the signs and wonders that were wrought for us at our Baptism—in remembrance that we were made God’s children—made heirs of the kingdom of Heaven ; made members of Him who died to gain for us the gift of the Holy Ghost—to put good thoughts into our minds—to make us discontented with our evil and eager to be better. Remember you boys, that every time you are reminded of these things, you are receiving a call from God which you neglect at your peril. I speak to you of the beauty and brightness of truth, and one boy’s conscience grows uneasy because he knows he has been false and dishonest—I speak to you of the repulsiveness of selfishness, and the greedy self-seeking boy feels ashamed. I tell you how only the pure in heart—those whose souls are unsullied with vile thoughts and language and actions

—how they alone shall see God, and the ears of one who knows that his thoughts and words won't bear the light, begin to tingle. Boys, do you think that it is my words that arouse these feelings within you—that it is the preacher's doing that the evil of your lives—even in the lives of the best of you, rises up and smites you? I tell you, no! they might be to you, as they are to many, mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal—“like a tale of little meaning though the words are strong.” It is God the Holy Ghost who is using the words which you hear to rouse you to long to be better and holier than you are. Signs and wonders do you ask for?—are there not signs and wonders enough here? Surely you know that the very worst mischief of indulging in a course of wrongdoing is that a man learns gradually not to feel that it is wrong, and listens to the advice that is given him as if it were something with which he had nothing to do. If this careless state is broken in upon: if you go to Church and hear words in the service or the sermon which awake you, do you mean to say there is no wonder here? Only think of the number of accidents, as we should call them, which have had to be worked together to bring about the fact that you should hear those words—accidents in the life of him who speaks, and him who hears: how small a thing might

have made the two careers diverge so that each might never have seen the other's face in this world : how the vast plan of the Almighty has worked itself out through the complicated machinery of the human will and natural law, till it has resulted in the appointed seed falling on the ground prepared for it. Ah ! there are signs and wonders enough around us if we will only look for them, proofs that we are in the hand of our loving and most merciful Master. Do not let us wait more, but let us listen patiently and obediently to His commands. Let us try to be like the nobleman in the story we have been considering, who was not staggered by the unexpected nature of the relief which our Lord gave him ; but when he heard the word which Jesus spake unto him, he believed and went his way.

I have spoken of the head bewildered with speculative difficulties. It is the last thing I should wish to do to put any such difficulties into your heads ; but they are so widely spread abroad that some of you may have met with them and been distressed by them : not perhaps to the extent of having your faith shaken, but only so far as to be puzzled to see how faith and reason can be reconciled. In such a state, people are specially liable to the craving for signs and wonders. ' Oh ! for something tangible, something on which to rest

—something to be a foundation of pure matter-of-fact on which to build up the edifice of the faith.' Again I say, you *have* signs and wonders enough if you will only look for them. I can here only just hint at one such sign. You may see it in the very existence and external history of the Christian Church. Just consider what happened between the days of Tiberius and those of Constantine. A religion sprung from an unknown, despised province, and from a Teacher despised even amongst those who dwelt there, rises with an irrepressible vitality and uproots the established religions of the Roman Empire. Not a religion of the sword, like Mahomet's—not a religion addressed to the imagination or the poetical sentiment of men—but a religion of stern and severe morality, whose most essential principle is that of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Is not this a wonder? Is not this a phenomenon that needs accounting for? And where, we may boldly ask, is the theory that does account for it, except the theory that the story on which it professes to be based is real? I know of none. Clever sceptics may do something in the way of destruction. Allow that the Bible history is to be subject to the same kind of criticism as other early history, and an ingenious mind will find much that it is convenient to dispose of as legendary and mythical: but what I want

to impress upon you now is, that there is no room for this hypothesis. Some of the elder of you will remember how careful I have been in going through the early history of Rome to point out to you that it is the absence of authentic history that opens the door to historical criticism: that had it not been for the destruction of the records by the Gauls, there would not have been scope for the ingenious conjectures of Niebuhr. But until anyone will give us a reasonable theory to account for the fact that Christianity has become the religion of civilization—conquered and moulded such varying tribes of the great family of man—and that Christianity is not historically true, we may fairly decline to let its records be made subject of experiment to every would-be critic. If a very strange story is told you which has produced apparently no results, you feel yourself at liberty to question its truth: but if you are shewn great possessions which have been won or great works accomplished, which form a part of the story, then your judgment will not be so free. You would say, I might think this impossible if it were not for these *results*, as it is I must at any rate account for them before I begin to dwell on the improbabilities of the story.

And once more, let us remember how it was that the courtier came at last to see the very signs and

wonders which he and his master had so long wished to see in vain. It was when he came to our Lord—not to gratify his curiosity—not to put His powers to the test—but to obtain from Him help which he so urgently needed. “To him that hath shall be given.” The very moment that a man feels in any one way a sense of his dependence upon Christ, it seems as if there began in him a process of deepening and strengthening that sense. With the nobleman it was the illness and threatened death of his son which sent him to seek after our Lord’s aid, instead of indolently remaining at home, and *wishing* to see some miracle performed by Him. And if any one of us thinks that he has no need of such aid he only shows that he does not know himself. What? is there no temper which you know you ought to keep under, and don’t? No indolence that needs to be spurred up to exertion? No selfishness which needs to be trampled under foot? You *do* need His help: it is your own Christian life which is in danger: it is for you to go to Him for the help that may keep it alive. Only be content to receive His help in His own way. In one case he says, “Go thy way, thy son liveth”—in another “I will come and heal him”—in a third, He abides yet two days in the same place where He was, till the beloved friend is actually dead. And yet in all, the mercy is

bestowed at last, and the sense of confidence in Him strengthened by the signs and wonders which He wrought. And so with us: whether they be dangers ghostly or bodily which drive us to Him, He may not see fit to set us free at once, or our freedom may come in a way very different from that in which we look for it; but it *will* come at last if we do but go on asking for it; and the conquered enemy, which had so often defeated our unaided strength, shall be to us a sign and a wonder which shall make us believe and trust Him more earnestly than ever.

SERMON VI.

CHRIST'S DEPARTURE EXPEDIENT.

ST. JOHN xvi. 7.

It is expedient for you that I go away.

THE Apostles might well have said of these words "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" It must have been even harder when it was spoken, than it was afterwards. Remember, it was spoken the night before our Lord's *death*. When He talked to them of going away—of going to Him that sent Him, they would very naturally think that He was speaking of that death: and He had told them plainly enough what a cruel scene of suffering it was to be. But take the words as they would sound to them even afterwards—after He had risen from the dead—after they found that His going away meant His ascending into heaven—even then there is enough in them to perplex them and try their faith. Try and put yourselves into their place. Fancy yourselves following our Blessed Lord through His life—learning to love Him with all

your souls—learning to trust Him—to find Him always kind, and patient, and unselfish—to find Him never once disappointing you as others do so often, but always to be depended upon. Then suppose you had gone through the utter agony of seeing this dearest of friends—to save whom from a moment’s weariness you would willingly have given your heart’s blood—of seeing Him, I say, in the hands of the ruffian soldiery, shrinking from their brutal blows, quivering in anguish on the cross, and you not able to strike a blow in His defence: then fancy the dead misery of Easter Eve when He lay in the grave, and you thought “I shall never never see His face again,” then the bewildering incredible rush of joy on Easter Day, when you did see Him again; and then in the full burst and torrent of your happiness there comes over your mind the memory of those grave, calm, solemn words, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” No, it cannot be—there can be nothing which can make up for the loss of that Wondrous Presence. Even if He is ascending to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God, it surely cannot be expedient for us that he should go away.

So no doubt felt the disciples at first. We see that they did. We see even that they did not at first believe that He was going away. “Lord, wilt thou at

this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" they asked. And surely it was very natural. No doubt they now felt that it would be a very different sort of kingdom to what they expected at first. But it was natural to expect that, having thus triumphed over His enemies, He should set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, and thence rule over the whole earth. And what a glorious vision it is to dream of even now! Of course we shall not now imagine that the glory of that kingdom would have consisted in earthly wealth and glory—in the pomp and grandeur of a court like Solomon's. We may picture these indeed as surrounding the Mighty King, but only as outward symbols of glories infinitely higher. Think of Him as the centre of unfailling justice—the curber of every evil—delivering by His powerful rule our poor humanity from misery, and oppression, and guilt—giving it room to develop into the full unspoiled likeness of Himself, and ask yourself whether *that* would not have been a grand issue of the terrible scenes of Calvary—whether it was not natural that His Apostles should look for some such beating down of Satan under their feet.

Natural, I say again, not only to them but to us: disappointing sometimes that so it was not. We should naturally have looked for the great Sacrifice at the end, not in the middle of the history of the world, we

should have thought that when He had conquered death, there would be the end of the weary fight between good and evil.

But so it was not to be. It is a case where God's rule of expediency is far above out of our sight, and we can but bow our heads and worship. Even as God did not see fit to make His creatures perfect, as those poor creatures would sometimes complain that He might have made them: as He saw something infinitely greater to be attained by making that creation subject to vanity—liable to being spoiled: even so after the great Act of Restoration had been accomplished, it pleased him—some day we may learn why—that it should remain so; that His new creation should be subject to vanity likewise: that it should be expedient for Christ to go away and leave His Empire bereaved of its Lord. Yes, and not only expedient on the whole—it is not only that thus a greater amount of happiness in the gross may be achieved—we might have a glimmering how that could be. But, he says, it is expedient for *you* that I go away, speaking clearly not only to His Apostles but to His whole Church. Better for us who are here now—better that he should be away out of our sight and reign in Heaven, than that He should be reigning this moment on earth. It is hard to believe it. I have told you so often—you

know so well what is our great danger as Christians : to forget our Lord—to let Him become a mere unreal person—not a living, loving Friend whom we should always be longing to please. I am sure that there are some of you who can feel and think ‘If He were only here—if I could only see Him—if I could only go to Him and tell Him of my troubles, and ask Him what I ought to do, I am sure I should get on better. How can it be expedient for me that He should have gone away?’

I do not wish to make out that your difficulties are less than they are. I do not wish you to imagine that our Lord's presence so that we could see Him, would not be a great help to us if we had it. I want you to make the very most of what *might have been* : but then to remember that what *is* is greater. We have, every one of us, something more than enough to make up for our Lord's absence. He Himself told His disciples why it was expedient that He should go away. “If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you.” Again, if we are asked ‘Why could we not have both gifts—why could we not enjoy at the same time the presence of our Lord and the in-dwelling of the Comforter?’ we can only answer that we do not know—cannot pretend to explain. The reason probably is far above out of our sight, in the wondrous relations

existing between the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity. We have to take it on our Lord's word as a fact, and then we may well ask ourselves what is that Gift which is to more than compensate for the withdrawal of our Master's presence? In what sense was it expedient that He should go away because His doing so was needed that we might have the Comforter to abide with us? The Comforter—the Paraclete. It is hard, perhaps impossible, to find any one English word which will convey all that is contained in the Greek. It denotes, in the first instance, a person summoned or called in to one's aid—and so may mean a Comforter—a Strengthenener—an Advocate. And all these three names belong to the Third Person—the Holy Spirit who came down to dwell with Christ's Church after its Head had returned to Heaven. He is the Comforter in the hard battle with evil—the Strengthenener in the time of danger—the Advocate, the one who pleads *in* us and *for* us: pleads for us by prompting and inspiring the words in which we plead for ourselves: and pleads within us the cause of God—the cause of Truth, of Love, of Purity, against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. And to return to our question: why is it better that we should have Him than the visible presence of our Lord? how far can we see that it is better? I think we may get a

glimmering of the reason if we put His words into this shape: "It is expedient for you that you should be ruled from within, rather than from without; by a power that shall do more than supply motives and quicken resolution, which shall be capable of gradually changing—not your acts—not your words—not your course of life—but your own very selves: changing you so that truth and purity and goodness shall become *natural* to you." Surely if we felt and knew that such a power was at work within us—that the very moment we make one staggering feeble step towards good, that gracious Helper casts His mighty arms around us, and we walk in His strength not in our own; the only wonder would be that we could ever resist His guidance: and follow our own wayward wills; we should feel that no *outward* Presence however sublime, could take the place of that inward Aid.

And, my brethren, remember that this Power *is* at work within us—at work, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, in every one of us. "By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." When we were made Members of Christ we were all made to drink into one Spirit. We cannot see Him—we cannot hear Him—but none the less is He in us. God the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier sanctifying us, making

us holy, and so making our position sure as elect children of God: or else bearing witness against us that our own obstinacy would not let us be sanctified. Assuredly if we can resist Him thus working in our inmost souls, we have no reason to think that the sight of our Lord's earthly kingdom could keep us in the right way. And remember that it would be the greatest possible mistake to imagine, that in thus saying that the presence of the Holy Ghost is a compensation for the want of our Lord's bodily presence, we imply that we are in any way separated from Him. Rather it is the very office of the Comforter to draw us closer to Him with whom He is one: to bring to our remembrance the Saviour's utterances and to apply them with force to our souls. What does our Lord say Himself? "He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Through His operation it is that we are to be brought day by day into closer union with that wondrous Humanity, which else must have been ever something outside of us, but now, thanks to Him, is brought to dwell within us.

And this especially would I urge upon you, who are now about to be confirmed, though my words must be few. I want to remind you that the grace of Confirmation—apart from its pledges—the result to you of the laying on of hands, is the stirring up and renewing

of the gift of your Baptism. That the great gift of the Eucharist to which Confirmation introduces you, is, that you are through the operation of the Holy Spirit, again and again united to Christ's Human Nature and receive Divine aid afresh. I need not remind you now how the Comforter works. You were reminded this morning how every chance word, every unbidden thought, tending to *good*, is really His voice. What I want you to remember is, that both in Confirmation and in the Holy Communion, you are to *go to get* something. To have a real gift bestowed upon you. It is not merely that you are to have your feelings quickened and your minds drawn up for a time to Heaven: it is not merely that it is to be a time of good resolutions, which the solemnity of the season will be likely to make lasting. We know all that the sentiment of piety, however powerfully aroused, will flutter and droop again—we know that good resolutions however earnest will need support themselves instead of supporting us. You are to go for something more than this—for a Strength—a Power which is to come into you from without you—a fresh in-breathing of that Holy Spirit whereby already once you were sealed unto the day of redemption. Look forward especially to your admission to the great Christian Feast—and you who have been already confirmed, let me urge upon you not

to neglect it as so many have unhappily neglected it of late. If the Comforter is to do His gracious work in you, it is there you must seek His influence. The Spirit of Christ is to be found by feeding on the precious food which He there gives us. Surely when we think of our daily and hourly sins, negligences, and ignorances,—when we think how little carelessnesses lead us into grievous sins—when we know that we cannot trust to ourselves for a day even for the *wish* to do right, it is little short of madness to turn away from the opportunities of getting help. It is not at the moment of partaking that we are to exhaust the benefit, it is not at the moment of eating, that food gives us strength. It is afterwards that the effects will make themselves felt, though perhaps it may not be till the end when we read the tale of our life complete, (if by God's mercy the end is a happy one,) that we shall see how they have worked. Then we may see many a temptation turned aside by the grace won at some Communion, where at the time our hearts were heavy and sorrowful—many a danger passed by, calmly and unconsciously in the power of the strength there found, we may see how that mighty advocate has pleaded within us, and forced home to us the love of the good, just at the critical moment, when if we had been left to our own frail wills, we

should have been lost: and then renewed and sanctified—free from every thought and desire which could offend our Master—made like to Him—brought at length into His presence in Heaven—we may understand that it was all well as He ordered it: well that He should have been in this life withdrawn from our gaze, if His absence brought us that inward Guide: that if He went to send the Comforter, it was expedient for us that he should go away.

SERMON VII.

PRAYER.

I THESS. v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

SUCH are St. Paul's familiar words. We have heard them often, what meaning have they had for us? If we have thought about them at all, we have probably thought that they cannot in the nature of things be meant to be obeyed literally; and then having ascertained something which they do *not* mean we have been quite content, without proceeding to find out what they do mean. And yet they contain a very solemn precept, one which we not only *can*, but *must* obey if we are trying to serve God at all. Let us try and look somewhat into their meaning.

First the Apostle bids us "Pray." And that one word contains a world of teaching and of mystery. *Pray*: not merely as some would have it, "be filled with the spirit of devotion," but *pray*. It is the same word as is used in Phil. iv. 6, "In everything

by *prayer* and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." Your requests—the things for which you beg. In two different ways opposite classes of men regard such words in a wrong spirit. There are some who have learned to look upon the command to pray as a matter of course; an injunction it may be of which they are rather weary of hearing. To pray is to them only a duty to be regularly performed at best: there is no thought of how wonderful a privilege it is that we should be allowed to pray: how wonderful that we should be told that our feeble cries will be heard by the great Ruler of All, and influence His government of the world. On the other hand there are those who dwell far too much upon this vast difficulty. They are those whose teaching is widely spread at the present day; and it may not be amiss, to put clearly before some of you both the difficulty and the true way to meet it. Those of you who are intended for the office of the Christian ministry will be sure to meet only too often with such objections, and though the limits of a sermon and the claims of the great majority of my hearers will not permit me to do more than indicate what I believe to be the true method of defence, it may by God's blessing be of some avail to do this, if it only suggest to some of

you a train of thought to be followed out at leisure for yourselves.

The modern objector, then, will always tell you, that while he can see the benefit of prayer subjectively—that is, with regard to the effect produced upon the mind of him who offers it—while he can understand that the habit of prayer may quicken a man's aspirations after holiness, and purify and strengthen his soul, he *cannot* believe that it can produce any *objective* effect, that anything will ever happen in consequence of such prayers, which would not have happened if they had not been offered. In other and plainer words, such people say, that prayer if answered would be an interference with the course of events, a disturbance of the plans of the Creator, or—if they are advanced a little further—a negation of the general laws by which the world is governed. Now I take it that the true answer to this is, that if we mean anything by the providence and the omniscience of God, we must consider that the answer to the prayers of believers may be, not an interference with the Almighty's plan, but a part of that plan. We are very fond of talking about general laws: and no doubt the tendency of modern science is to widen the range of those laws, to get rid one after another of exceptional cases in the kingdom of nature. But

after all, these laws are mere results—nay they boast of being mere results of *induction*: they are a systematic grouping of facts, not an explanation of them. And unless we are assured that we have *all* the facts before us, how can we depend upon our general law to prove a negative? What do we know of *spiritual* forces? Forces I mean that produce outward material effects. Something indeed we do know, though such speculators choose to forget it. We know for instance that there is *some* force which makes the difference between a living body and a dead corpse; which will raise that body from the ground in opposition to the earth's gravitation, and keep it balanced under circumstances where *Mechanics* would tell you that inert matter could not stand for a moment. And the hint which I would throw out for further consideration is this; that the modern science which seeks the account of everything in general laws, and the Bible statements which tell us of the direct operations of spiritual agencies are perfectly reconcilable, if we think of those spiritual agencies as additional physical forces, regulated by their own laws; we admit that it is no contradiction of the law of gravitation that matter should be raised by mechanical power: it is a mere matter of *evidence* whether there is or is not a higher spiritual force, which acting according to its

own laws, overrules all the lower forces which are the objects of our scientific study. Among these spiritual forces we must include the presence of the Divine Being in the world, and I cannot help thinking that we have one or too remarkable indications of that Power acting as an additional physical force, rather than an arbitrary suspension of other laws. I mean the passages where the multitudes were healed by touching our Lord's garments; and where the sick are described as having been cured by handkerchiefs and aprons taken from St. Paul's person. In both these cases we see apparently the existence of a new power, working under its own law—which seems to be that the power requires a certain condition in the person to be operated upon which is described as faith: but the *power* of the Lord was present to heal. And in the same way we may believe that it is a part of God's constitution of the world that prayer should be a similar additional *force* just as much as gravitation or chemical action. Of course there comes in the vast difficulty which lies at the root of all such questions: How can the plan of the Creator embrace all our actions as instruments of one great plan, and yet we be in any sense free and unrestrained? But that is a difficulty which must remain to the end of time, the great fundamental paradox of all religion

natural and revealed—an attempt to escape from which leads on the one hand through all the shades of Calvinism down to fatalism ; on the other, through the various phases of Pantheism to downright infidelity. Let us only fairly admit both the truths ; God is Almighty, man is responsible : let us agree never to argue from the one statement without confronting our results with the other, and we shall escape from many a theological pitfall. We cannot understand how we can be free to offer or not to offer prayers, which all the time when offered are parts of God's eternal plan for governing the world. But neither can we understand how we are free to do any action trifling or important, which forms a part of that plan ; but if we are to believe in a God at all we must admit that this *is* so : and what I want now especially to insist upon is this—that the recognition of prayer as a *force* in the government of the world, introduces no difficulty which would not exist without it—a force subject to its own laws and conditions, and inoperative if we attempt to use it apart from those conditions—but under them a mighty engine put into our hands by our merciful Father, to be used to turn aside the craft and subtlety of the devil and man, and to subdue the evil of our own hearts.

Pray then without ceasing—says the Apostle. Do

not neglect or intermit to use this spiritual power placed in your hands. And we are to use it as we use the other gifts of God—without ceasing; that is, not at every single moment, which would be impossible; but whenever occasion arises. We should get the Apostle's meaning perhaps better, if we were to render the words "Do not leave off praying." You would not say that a man had left off taking exercise because he did not spend the whole day in it. And so a person cannot be said to have left off praying who does not neglect the stated periods of prayer—who prays night and morning, and joins in Church in the prayers of our service, not only with his lips, but in his heart.

And let us consider what we have to pray for. We have to pray first, for what are called spiritual blessings. We have to pray to be *forgiven* for what we have done amiss. I have had to remind some of you specially—I have had to warn the whole school, that offences which are punished in school as breaches of human laws, are to be regarded by you besides in a *much* more serious light: that dishonesty—deceit—falsehood—bad language—these are offences not only against man but against God; that if after you have received punishment for them, or have contrived to escape punishment, you don't go

and ask God to forgive you, they will remain as things to be accounted for and punished hereafter. And we should never forget that one punishment of every sin comes *at once*: it makes it so much easier to sin again. The first lie is a hard one to tell—but once told, the second is far easier, and the third easier still. When we are conscious of having done wrong we must use the power of prayer to stop this natural tendency. We must pray God that His special grace may prevent us, i. e. go before us—be in front of us to ward off evil—that he will put into our minds good desires: that He will make us think just when we are going to do wrong, *how* wrong it is; how ungrateful to Him for all his kindness. And when we remember how much we are affected by the conduct of those around us, we must not forget to pray that the outward circumstances of our lives may be favourable to us: “that the course of this world may be so ordered by God’s providence,” that we may be kept out of evil. When we say, “Lead us not into temptation,” our prayer must have reference to the actions of others as well as to our own. And it was because this is so—because I feel that any prayer which comes short of this is not the prayer of full *faith* that I have been led to lay before the elder of my hearers something which may help them to a solution of the

serious theoretical difficulties which beset the subject. Practical difficulties, we may be thankful, there are none. The most feeble understanding can grasp the idea of an Almighty Father in whose presence is life—who can order all things well—who can make all things work together for good to those who love Him. Time forbids me to say anything to-day about prayer for temporal blessings or for the welfare of others: let us for the present think that when the Apostle bids us pray without ceasing, he means us thus to pray that we may be forgiven for what we have done amiss, and helped to do better for the future. For these things, pray *without ceasing*: whenever the opportunity presents itself. It does present itself to you all at least twice a day when you are required to be present at public or domestic worship. If you are not trying to pray then, if you are not trying to take the words of the prayers and make them your own words—to use them to express your own wants, then there is a *gap* in your prayers—you cannot be said to pray without ceasing. And in the same way, to keep to the Apostle's precept you must learn to be regular—*quite* regular—in saying your private prayers night and morning. I know that in saying this I may be telling some of you to do that which is by no means easy: I know the difficulties that will meet a boy who deter-

mines to keep this custom when he is thrown among a large number of other boys. I know that there is unhappily such a thing as downright persecution in this matter, though I most solemnly warn any of you who may have been guilty of such conduct that in driving any boy from his prayers, you are incurring a most frightful responsibility: and your punishment hereafter may be, to be made to see how your deed has brought another to ruin—how his weakly yielding to the temptation of which you were the author, was the cause of the shipwreck of a character, and a soul. Let me most earnestly warn you against being drawn in through thoughtlessness or folly to join those who make others ashamed or afraid to say their prayers. And to those who are in danger of being ashamed or frightened, I would say, Only stand fast, and be content to share even in your boyhood the sufferings of your Master. To some extent you must bear your burden alone, and imitate in your measure the heroism of Daniel when he refused to obey the impious order of Darius. But I would most earnestly try to impress upon you *all*, that in neglecting to pray you are not only neglecting a duty—something much more than that. I want you to feel that if you enter on a day without prayer, you have as it were cut yourself adrift from God: let go of the Hand that was guiding

you so tenderly—entered a new reach of the river of existence full of rapids and rocks, without the Guide who alone can steer you through the dangers.

Pray then without ceasing. Do not say I will go without saying my prayers to-day, but will say them again to-morrow. In that pause may come fierce temptation, which shall hurry you into evil and make you hate and despise yourself or lead you on to destruction. Pray ever, remembering in whose Name you pray, even the name of Him who Himself shewed us how we ought to pray—as whose Members Incorporate we have the right to come boldly to the throne of grace—who has bidden us watch and pray lest we enter into temptation, and has said to us through His disciples, “Whatsoever ye ask the Father in My name He will give it to you.”

SERMON VIII.

EVIL SPIRITS.

ST. LUKE XI. 26.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first.

WHEN our Lord spoke these words he had just been healing a man possessed by an evil spirit. We know very little about this possession of people by evil spirits. We have no information on which we can rely except that which we get from the New Testament, and in several ways that leaves us very much in the dark. One thing I think is clear, that any attempt to represent the possession as a mere physical malady is quite hopeless. Some have tried to show that it was madness—others epilepsy—others a combination of the two. But there is one account of a miracle wrought by our Lord which is quite inconsistent with any such hypothesis. I mean the case where the devils, after being cast out, entered into the swine and destroyed them. Neither madness, nor any other disease in the possessed person could have

done that. It seems plain that we have here a direct assertion of the objective existence of evil spirits, and of their having been allowed at the time when our Lord was on earth to take possession of some unhappy wretches among mankind. Our Lord you know in many cases drove out these evil spirits, and restored the afflicted persons to their right mind. You might have thought that such a wonderful show of His power must have forced all who saw it to believe that He was all that He claimed to be. I do not say that it would be enough to show that he was a Divine Person. It seems that there were some among the Jews, who had this power of casting out evil spirits, and yet were mere ordinary men. But when a Teacher did such wonderful works and plainly told them, "I am the Son of God," then one would have thought that they could scarcely help believing Him. No man could do such miracles unless God were with him—as some of themselves said : and God surely could not have been with any one who said *falsely*—"Before Abraham was I am." But the Pharisees determined not to believe that our Lord was the Messiah if they could help it; and so to avoid this inference they accounted for His having this power by a most terrible supposition : "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the chief of the devils." Our Lord's first answer is that if

this were so, Satan would be "divided against himself," and so his kingdom would come to an end. He compares the evil spirit who had possession of a man to a strong man armed keeping his palace; then comes our Lord himself—the Stronger than he—and overcometh him, and taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted and divideth his spoils. And then follows the passage to which I wish especially to direct your attention. It is introduced by the words "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." That is to say there is no such thing as being *neutral* in religion—you must be either on one side or the other—you must either be doing My work or the devil's work. Unless the stronger man keeps possession of the palace, the old owner will come back again. And he enforces this by telling us what would naturally happen when an evil spirit left a man, supposing him to go out from any other cause than that his abode was seized by another. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than

himself ; and they enter in and dwell there ; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

What lesson have these words of our Lord for us ? Can we see anything beyond the plain matter of fact meaning of them ? The old commentators dwelt at great length upon the application of this parable to the history of the Jews ; some modern ones are inclined to read in it a symbolical history of some part of the career of the Christian Church ; but I think that we shall dwell upon it with more profit if we consider it in relation to our own lives. Is there anything to which we are liable which is at all like being possessed by an evil spirit ? The literal evil itself, thanks to our Master, is gone. The stronger has divided the spoils of the strong, and when the evil one would try, as of old, to take possession of one of Christ's little ones, he finds his house not empty, thank God, but possessed by One who laughs to scorn his efforts to remove Him. Our bodies are no longer liable to be made the sport of evil spirits. While we are in this world—we baptized Christians—nay, all the race of mankind for whom He died—seem to have been saved from these outward manifestations of Satanic power. But our great enemy and his servants still assail us inwardly. From the very moment that the enemy is driven out of the child when admitted

to his Master's Church, the devil is engaged in a life-long struggle to make him his own again. And how sadly often he seems to have succeeded ! The spirits that he sends are, bad passions—bad desires—bad habits. They win, or force, or steal their way into the soul ; and the man or boy, or child, is possessed by them. A single one of them thoroughly seated in the heart, is enough to turn the soldier of Christ into the mere tool of the devil. Mind, I say, *thoroughly* seated in the heart. I don't mean one that is being heartily fought with and now and again manages to get in for a time. I shall make myself better understood perhaps if I take an instance or two. There are evil spirits which are only too ready to go to work among you boys—nay which are at work among you, and which may gain possession of you. There is the evil spirit of irreverence. He begins with very little matters and is always very busy in a large school, making those who have learnt his lessons the means of teaching others. A boy comes here from home well taught and well trained : in the habit of saying his prayers night and morning and reading his bible : he has never used an oath in his life, he thinks of God with solemn fear and love : he would feel unutterably shocked at the idea of insulting Him or anything belonging to his services. Probably the evil spirit of

irreverence begins by teaching him to leave off doing what is *good* first. Bad companions teach him that religious habits are unmanly. The liars that they and their masters are! The bravest, the most heroic men the world has ever seen have been men of prayer. And even in our own sense of manliness, which is braver, the boy who perseveres in habits of devotion, even if it cost him persecution—or the boy who is afraid and gives it up? I dare say many of you will remember in a well known story of school life at Rugby, an account of a boy bravely returning to his habit of morning and evening prayer, and I am sure that every boy that is worth anything felt as he read it, that he would be proud indeed of showing such courage as that.

But after the habit of prayer is once lost, the downward course is very easy. We have seldom here anything like outward irreverence in Church or Chapel. I think that there is a right and healthy feeling among you, *as far as it goes*, that such behaviour would be unworthy of a gentleman and so should be avoided. But the most grievous irreverence may be shown by what we *do not* do. It is really very little short of an insult to Almighty God to come into his house without even pretending to worship Him. And here in passing let me speak to you once more on that

subject which I have urged upon you again and again, and upon which you have been lately spoken to more than once from this place—I mean your dead depressing silence both in Church and Chapel in those parts of the service in which the Congregation ought to join. It is worst of all in the prayers, which too often come to an end without our hearing a solitary boy's voice proclaim by an "Amen" that he considers he has had any share in it. I know that there are plenty among you who are not indifferent and who are restrained from doing their duty in this matter only by a miserable feeling of false shame. And I do very earnestly entreat you elder boys to put a stop to this evil. A very few of you combining together *can* stop it: no one in the world besides can. We need no external ornament to make our service here and in church one of the most impressive that can be; we only want your voices in speaking and in singing; but while they are mute, your very presence and numbers seems to crush out the spirit of devotion.

But I have been led astray too far from my main subject. I was speaking of the way in which a boy may become as it were possessed by the spirit of reverence. He may begin by giving up good habits; he will go on by learning bad ones. He learns to swear; to use lightly and without reverence the name

of God, to jest over the solemn realities of the world to come; and at last he seems to think that God's will is no more to be heeded than those who are set over him in this world when he is out of their sight. Or again a boy may be possessed by the spirit of falsehood, of systematic disregard of truth. I am not thinking now of cases where a boy is surprised or frightened into telling a lie, to shield himself or a companion. A boy who is really truthful may do that, and perhaps the worst part of his punishment will be his feeling of disgust with himself for having yielded to the temptation. But I mean cases where from the continual practice of lying, the very principle of truth seems to have been lost. I know that I remember one or two marked cases—extreme cases we may call them—in my own school-boy days—cases where a boy's word was literally worth *nothing*: where if an assertion was made, one felt that it was simply a little more likely that it should be false than that it should be true. Oh! the mischief that I remember done by those lying tongues, the way that the best friends were made to suspect one another—the monstrous stories that were set floating about the school, and then handed on in good faith by others. That is what I mean by a boy being possessed by the spirit of falsehood.

One more example on which a few words must suffice. You must know unhappily what it is to see a boy possessed by the evil spirit of impurity. One is naturally loath to speak on this subject, but when one sees the signs of it peeping out one is bound to do so. It is the very worst of the evil spirits which haunt you boys, and in God's name I bid you beware of it. Would that I could teach any of you who are in danger of being carried away by such an evil spirit, to look at the matter as you will look at it years hence : would that you could be made to learn otherwise than by losing it the priceless value of a soul unspotted by sinful thoughts and words and deeds : would that I could make you dread, as you would have dreaded the poor demoniac of ancient days, the boy possessed by this unclean spirit. And would to God that any language of ours could avail to cast out that spirit or the other evil spirits of which we have spoken, from those in whom they dwell.

And let us remember, my brethren, that we are all in danger of the attacks of one or more of such evil spirits ; perhaps we might all say that there is none of us in whose heart they have not more or less found a home. But as of old, they are cast forth now and again. Various are the means which our Master uses to do it ; the words of friends, of teachers, of books.

He who has paltered with the truth wakes up to feel that truth after all is a grand thing, and that he is to be envied who can say, I have never told a lie. The careless and profane are brought to see the senseless folly of their course, the impure and defiled to blush with hot shame as they contrast their soiled souls with those of the pure and fresh and innocent.

And thank God the road to recovery is open to them; the house is cleared of its evil inhabitants by the mighty voice of the great Master. And the feeling which is uppermost in the mind is, I have had a lesson which will last me my life, I can never fall into that evil again. It is the feeling natural to us whenever we are aroused from our ordinary religious laziness, at such a time as confirmation for instance, when the young soldier of Christ exulting in the strength of his religious impressions is apt to undervalue the sternness of the conflict through which he has to win his way. It is the lesson of our text, a sad and a solemn lesson, that such feelings are dangerous to trust to; that at least they should be largely tempered with fear. The evil spirit which exhibits itself as an evil habit of mind and thought, is not easily dispossessed. The excitement of the moment, the present influence of God's Spirit, may drive him howling into the wilderness; and it is not only that he may

come back, we know that he will. And he will find the house swept and garnished, all the pleasanter to dwell in because he has been away for a time. A wrong indulgence never seems so tempting as when it has been given up for a season. The evil spirit returns with seven-fold force. The reaction naturally succeeds the excitement of resistance, and good resolutions are too often swept away. And if the evil is resumed it is almost sure to be under less control than before. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." It is like running water which has been kept out by an embankment; it has gained height and power which it was without at its natural level.

And yet not the last state either we may hope for most of us. Certainly not for those in whom is renewed the wish for better things. The evil spirits may be harder to cast out after they return, but He who cast out those whose name was Legion, can cast them out of us. Only if any of you ever feel mortified and dispirited when you think of good resolutions in times past and contrast them with subsequent failures, if you ever feel almost afraid to try again, lest it should only lead to a renewal of your defeat, take heart and think that no strange thing has happened to you, but only that which was to be looked for and feared. A failure or two may have been necessary to teach you the conditions of your warfare; you have

learnt them now. You know that the hour of high resolve is just the hour of greatest danger ; that while you are exulting in your deliverance, your enemy is mustering his forces in the distant mountains. When he comes back let him find you not empty. Our Master expects you to prepare yourself for the return of the foe ; to prepare yourself against the time when the old state of mind will come sweeping back upon you and you cannot see through the mists of earth-born passion or indolence. And how prepare yourself? The house must be occupied by the Stronger or the strong man will return. It is not in our own strength that we can keep him out. And I need hardly remind you how to get that strength. He will give us if we ask ; He will be with us if we wish to have Him. And especially would I exhort the elder of you to seek to gain His presence by going regularly to His Table. It is no mere excitement, no mere elevation of feeling that you get there, It is a real gift from without that you may get if you truly want it. There is no question of reaction there, reaction does not come after taking our natural food. " He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him : " and if He dwell in us, if we can but have Him with us, we may laugh to scorn the impotent fury of the powers of evil, though they crowd around us till their name is Legion.